

Thought Leaders

AANA and ADMA Are Merging. It's Time For Australia's Agency Associations to Follow Suit

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TrinityP3's Darren Woolley writes that just as the UK has the IPA, and the US the 4As, "Australia desperately needs an equivalent powerhouse"



Yesterday's announcement that the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) and the Association for Data-Driven Marketing and Advertising (ADMA) are uniting marks a watershed moment for the local Australian marketing sector.

For years, the industry has quietly bemoaned the sheer multitude of separate bodies operating in Australia.

By bringing these two heavyweight, marketer-focused bodies together under a single management team, we are finally seeing a structural response to an increasingly complex ecosystem. This is a highly positive initiative because it brings together two quite different, yet entirely complementary, focuses. It represents a pragmatic step forward in an era where data, technology, and brand priorities can no longer be neatly compartmentalised.

To understand why this makes sense, you only have to look at the historical remit of both entities. The AANA has traditionally been responsible for influencing and addressing issues around advertising and media, all while safeguarding our world-class self-regulatory regime. However, as technology has fundamentally reshaped media channels and marketing communications, the AANA has increasingly taken a much broader view of the marketing function.

Conversely, ADMA is widely known for its leading marketing training, particularly around data privacy, compliance, and building general marketing capability. Bringing ADMA's educational prowess and data

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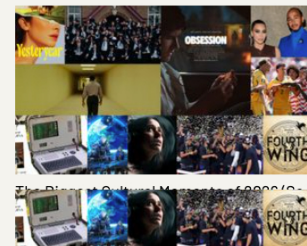
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expertise into the fold alongside the AANA's advocacy strength creates a powerful proposition for the modern marketer navigating shifting consumer expectations and impending privacy reforms.

Yet, as with any major industry consolidation, execution will be everything. The immediate challenge will fall on the AANA to ensure that this merger does not become a prolonged internal distraction. It is vital it keeps a laser focus on its core industry responsibilities, particularly when defending the sector against mounting regulatory threats. At the same time, it must engage the wider marketing community and successfully broaden the offering for an association often seen as focused on the big end of town.

Striking a balance between serving legacy brand-side members and delivering value to the tech, data, and customer experience practitioners transitioning from ADMA will require deft leadership. If the team pulls it off, it will set an excellent benchmark for the rest of the sector.

This raises an even more important question for the broader Australian market: Is there room for further consolidation in our industry? The answer, in many ways, feels like a resounding yes.

While the client-side of Australian adland has taken a bold step toward unification today, the agency landscape remains bafflingly fragmented.

Agencies have a multitude of industry bodies representing them, including: the Media Federation of Australia (MFA), Independent Media Agencies Australia (IMAA), Advertising Council Australia (ACA), Communications & Public Relations Australia (CPRA), the In-House Agency Council (IHAC), and the Australian Influencer Marketing Council (AIMCO).

That amounts to two media-focused associations, one creative, one PR, an in-house focus, and an influencer creator-economy council. Surely, there is an opportunity to consolidate this fragmented representation into a more focused, powerful, and influential organisation.

This level of fragmentation feels entirely antiquated. Technology has moved at such a pace that the traditional distinctions between media and content are rapidly closing. The rise of social media platforms, podcasts, and publishing stacks means that the line separating where a message sits and what it says has effectively evaporated.

From a messaging point of view, everyone across these various agency silos is now speaking the exact same language: driving business growth through the power of creativity. It makes little sense to maintain separate walls when the operational reality has now entirely converged.

Continuing to maintain separate representation for these connected disciplines is no longer sustainable. For too long, the Australian market has watched numerous industry bodies struggle along, trying to do far too much with far too little. When resources are spread thinly across multiple councils, collective lobbying power is diluted, training initiatives become repetitive, and the ability to drive macro-level change is compromised.

Through consolidation, this could easily be solved. By pooling membership fees, intellectual property, and administrative overheads, a unified body would possess the financial muscle and strategic scale required to truly move the needle for the entire sector, ensuring maximum value for everyone involved.

Australia does not have to look far to see how successful a unified approach can be. In the United Kingdom, the IPA is the leading creative organisation. In the United States, it is the ASA providing a singular, highly influential voice that commands respect in both boardrooms and government.

Australia desperately needs an equivalent powerhouse, an industry body that represents advertising and creativity as a primary driver of commercial business growth, rather than a collection of fractured specialisations.

This week's AANA and ADMA merger should not be viewed as an isolated one-off event, but rather as a catalyst for a much-needed wave of consolidation. It is time for our agency bodies to put aside historical turf wars and individual agendas, and instead build a unified voice fit for the future.

voice in for the future.



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