

EYE ON ADVERTISING
IRIS DORBIAN



THERE ARE PLENTY OF AD-SALES HELP-WANTEDS

Unless you live in an information void, it's hard to escape the endless stream of negative magazine news: sliding ad pages, slashed marketing budgets, and downsized staffs. All reflect the flagging economy, and even magazines' one bright spot, digital, where the still nascent business is growing, is not overriding the gloom. .

And yet, according to several executive recruiters, business has never been better. "The revenue-producing positions, including digital, haven't been downsizing at all," says J.D. Rehm, managing partner at **Mercury Group**, a New York-based executive recruitment firm specializing in sales, marketing and executive positions at media and media technology companies. "They need these people in an economy like this."

"We're probably busier this year than last year," admits Carrie Molay, a partner at New York's **Howard-Sloan-Koller Group**, which places qualified candidates in publishing, advertising, and entertainment. Yet, she is quick to point out that current demands in the marketplace, as evidenced by the digital explosion, have given certain types of ad-sales personnel higher rankings than others in terms of professional viability.

"Digital sales reps at the moment command a premium in a lot of markets around the U.S., certainly in the New York media market. There's not a lot of room for anyone who's not talented right now."

This doesn't mean that there aren't a lot of jobs available right now, says Risa Goldberg, president of Irvington, N.Y.-based **Media Recruiting Group**, which specializes in finding digital and print sales talent. There are jobs, but mainly at the junior to mid-level (although senior level positions are available, too--publisher spots not as much). The problem is finding competent people to hire. "People call me thinking I have candidates lined up around the block," she says. "That's a [fallacy]."

For junior sales positions, both print and digital clients want candidates who have three-to-five years ad-sales experience, excellent agency contacts, and can hit the ground running with the account list as soon as they're hired.

How about ad-sales people who are not trained in digital? Are they left in the dust or do they have to retrain themselves to come up to speed with the market?

"It depends on whether it's a straight sales role," says Molay. "Some employers are more open-minded than others at where people come from. It helps if you have very good client contacts, category experience, and you're smart. But, not every organization is that broad thinking."

Goldberg often advises these candidates to seek out workshops, such as digital ad sales courses or one-day digital sales seminars, to broaden their skills. "I recommend seminars to everyone--mid-level and above--because you really need to learn."

The executives in trouble, says Rehm, are "those that don't have the desire or curiosity to want to learn other aspects of the business, such as integrated marketing. Even 20 years of experience won't help." Adds his **Mercury Group** managing partner Jeff Lundwall: "People who can't bring fresh ideas and creativity are going to be left behind."

Becoming hybrids and donning several hats is more important now if ad-sales people want to groom themselves as attractive job candidates.

"It's the sales person who wears the marketing hat and the marketing person who wears the sales hat--those are the kind of people who are going to succeed," says Rehm. "[Their skills must be] multidimensional in a sophisticated sales arena."

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