

# Insider Intelligence - Client Testimonial

Quality data leads to quality decisions, and quality decisions are more critical than ever heading into the economic headwinds of 2023. That's where Insider Intelligence premium research comes in to save you time, money, and resources in the long run.

But don't just take our word for it. We spoke with two executives at Trade School—Duane Smith, Vice President and Group Director of Comms Strategy, and Anne DiNapoli Block, SVP and Head of Communications—one of our most valued clients, to learn how they use Insider Intelligence and why they find it so valuable. The following responses have been edited for clarity.

## What does your company do? What is your market niche?

**Anne DiNapoli Block:** We launched Trade School in 2020, literally six weeks before the pandemic hit. The whole purpose of our agency is to really focus on what's next as it relates to content and the client strategy side

In our communications department specifically, we really lead the cohesion and consolidation of data and media strategy, content strategy, influencer marketing, and all the facets and components that can be leveraged to make informed, smart, effective content for our clients.

We also specialize in in-house content. We have a full production studio. It really collapses the thinking into the making. We always say "Content at the speed of light," because we can actually think of something and then build it within our studio truly same-day if we need to.

## What is your specific role and responsibilities? What does your day-to-day look like?

**Duane Smith:** I oversee a team that provides a handful of different deliverables and offerings related to communication strategy. So that could be customer journey maps, content development, or briefing for our creative team on that side of the house. Also measurement strategy.

And then we also have a little renegade outfit that is a media planning and consulting team, mostly focusing on the retail media side of the business, but also consulting with clients. So I oversee the strategic vision, stewardship, and execution of those different pockets of our strategy offering.

## What are your top three business goals? Top three challenges?

**ADB:** It depends on what area we're talking about. If it comes to the work very specifically, I would say, it's "How do you bring the full data set together to create the most comprehensive creative impact?" I would say that's every creative agency's challenge.

As an organization, we really pride ourselves on bringing hybridized talent to the table, like Duane! He's a brilliant brand strategist and a brilliant content strategist, but he has also led media teams across the board. So how do we source the right Swiss army knives and foster that growth?

That's what every agency wants to do, but for us very specifically—because we always say we use hybridized talent— we ask what are the areas we want to grow in? That's where tools like (yours) come in, because it is so comprehensive for what I believe is brand, content, and media strategy collectively.

**DS:** I'll just add to that. A huge challenge—and this is in some cases client-specific—is when clients have data that lives in disparate silos, and this is where your tool really comes in. We have a really, really big struggle with some clients around benchmarking, leaving us without a foundation for decision making.

So, we're having to start over again as it relates to benchmarking and aggregating data from client campaigns, due to some internal reorgs. We're really helping our clients understand that not all data is useful data and which things to hone in on as to what influences creative work, how that creative work influences business outcomes, and how to understand those correlations.

Up to this point with a lot of marketers, they rely on what I would argue are antiquated KPIs and metrics just because they're comfortable or familiar with them. So a big part of what we are trying to Trojan horse into our strategic offerings are the clear correlations between certain key KPIs and actual business outcomes. Everything is not CTR-related, and I would love to bury that metric, outside of search.

## What do you find to be the most valuable part of your Insider Intelligence subscription?

**DS:** The Briefings and the newsletters that I get. Also, at least weekly or biweekly, the data visualizations within the reports. I am always pulling those and either sharing them within the team to use as talking points for us as strategists to think about consumer trends, or sharing a certain category at a macro level and how that might influence the way in which we brief our creatives. Knowing that consumers are exhibiting the behavior of pulling money back, what does that mean for motivations? So it leads us to the point of having to dive into more research around the feeling of the nation.

**ADB:** We often share a lot of the information with our clients in real time. It's the translation of what you provide—the metrics, the stats, the research, the insights, and the key takeaways in all your reports. We're able to translate that into what it means for our business. That is always invaluable, and we're doing that constantly. Every time you have a major report out, we're sharing it with some of our largest clients, and it just sparks dialogue, which is so critical in keeping relevant with what we're trying to do, as we focus on campaign work and big picture strategy for all of our clients.

**DS:** You often get into cases—and this is totally normal for large market organizations—where the stuff they're pulling and the things they're thinking about are within the echo chamber of that brand. And so having reliable and consistent opportunities to update organizations on the marketplace at large, and pull them out of their echo chambers, is super helpful. They're very appreciative of our ability to apply those takeaways to their businesses, but also our ability to give them a bigger-picture perspective for competitors in the marketplace, or how consumer behavior is going to affect their businesses not just now, but in the future.

## How has Insider Intelligence helped you succeed in your current role?

**DS:** We use it to support a lot of POVs that we write, so those directly turn into generated content and creative opportunities or affect the direction of a certain campaign, based on user behavior, spend, etc. We also use it to help support our weekly newsletters that we provide to our clients. So it's always good to have certain write-ups and then, toward the back end, have key stats and what that means for certain clients, as well. We also make that internal facing and educate our creative teams—who are not in these platforms in that way—and give them context to the hows and the whys and the roles of the digital and social landscape and certain platform usage.

## In a sentence or two, why do you find an Insider Intelligence subscription valuable?

**DS:** As someone who's old enough to remember not having this and having to pull research, the aggregation of all this information into one place makes my life and the efficiency of doing my job so much easier.