Reining in the Bulls with Michael Marx
Interview with Jim Arkedis of Electica
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Name: Jim Arkedis
Current Title: President and Co-Founder
Current Organization: Electica

Summary: Electica is a digital advertising technology company, spanning the breadth of the US, UK, EU, and other countries around the world, working with their clients primarily in the political and advocacy space using digital campaign strategies to help them persuade persuadable audiences and raise awareness around issues that they care about to the general public, or to highly targeted audiences of governments and other key stakeholders.

00:10 Michael Marx:
Jim Arkedis, welcome to the interview.

00:13 Jim Arkedis:
Thank you. Thanks for having me.

00:14 MM:
Thanks for making time available. I appreciate it.

00:17 JA:
Sure thing.

00:18 MM:
Why don't we start with who is your company and what's your role with them?

00:25 JA:
I am the President of Electica. We are a digital advertising technology company. We span the breadth of the US, UK, EU, and other countries around the world. And we focus on working with our clients primarily in the political and advocacy space to help them persuade persuadable audiences and raise awareness around issues that our candidates care about. And that can be to the general public, or that can be to highly targeted audiences of governments and other key stakeholders.

01:39 MM:
What kind of groups do you work with?

01:43 JA:
A variety. Most of our work is divided into two main industries. The first is politics, political parties, candidates. The second is nonprofit and advocacy organizations. And those are across the three geographies I listed: US, UK, and Europe primarily. A lot of them can be environmentally focused campaigners. They could be charities. We work largely with the charity section in the UK.

02:14 JA:
We work with unions, organizations that want to talk to their stakeholders, talk to their membership. We do a bit of online fundraising but most of our work is focused on awareness and persuasion.

02:31 MM:
Great. I want to start with the big picture. How have online campaign strategy and tactics really evolved over the last 20 years? Break it into major stages of their evolution, if you can.

02:52 JA:
When it comes to politics and online engagement, the first major explosion happened in 2004 with the Howard Dean campaign, where they realized that there were all of these hundreds of thousands of supporters who could give money online. Actually, I would even take it (further) back. I remember having a discussion with somebody in the year 2000 talking about how John McCain's website, when he was running in the Republican primary, had this pop-up window that would encourage you to donate.

03:29 JA:
And it was sort of like, oh my gosh, what is this crazy thing? But it really kind of came on the scene with Howard Dean and a democratic consultant in DC called Joe Trippy, who realized that the internet was a distinctive power that could and should be harnessed for political and advocacy campaigns.

03:50 JA:
Howard Dean raised a bunch of money online. Like one of the famous stories that was associated with the Dean campaign, is they put this little baseball bat on their website to raise money and it would fill up. And that was sort of like the first time there was a real big visual symbol that donors from around the country thought, I'm making a contribution, and that contribution is making a difference, because every time I give money, we see the baseball bat fill up a little bit. So that was sort of the big moment. Of course, Dean went on to be head of the DNC afterwards and tried to bring some of that online fundraising knowledge to the DNC. It was very difficult to begin to really bake in, as a core part of the Democratic party's fundraising at that point.

04:43 JA:
The next big milestone was the Obama campaign in 2008 and the adoption of social media that the fact that you could talk to people and one single individual could have so many touchpoints.

And the realization that Facebook and the algorithm behind Facebook was written in such a way that it grouped these people together who thought about the same things and had the same values and followed the same political parties. And that was kind of the next major revelation. That was, around the time of the 2008 campaign, the first digital political ad that was launched on social media. The next big thing on social media and sort of advocacy and social media and Meta and Facebook have gotten so much shit recently.

05:35 JA:
But it is worth remembering back to a time when Facebook was more productive in our social discourse. And that would've been the 2010 Arab Spring, when millions of people across North Africa and the Middle East realized that they could come together and coordinate activities around protests and social movements so that they could make their feelings heard to authoritarian dictators who ruled over them. I've done a lot of work in Tunisia in a past life. It was absolutely critical to Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain and several other countries, bringing down authoritarian dictators who'd ruled over populations for decades. And then, coming back domestically, in 2012, was the first time we saw a lot of heavy data processing in digital campaigns, the idea that in the US you could take the voter file and you could model it in such a way that you would have this layered campaign where you could knock on somebody's door, deliver them a piece of direct mail and target them with a digital ad.

06:57 JA:
That was all happening around the campaign 10 years ago. And then of course, 2016 happened, and we have another negative example of Russian interference where the GRU and Russian Security Services were essentially doing really fascinating stuff. They would set up, for example, a Facebook group, and they would organize people around Tea Party Patriots for Trump or something, and they'd say, "Hey, we're going to meet at this church on Thursday night."

07:30 JA:
And because the way the Facebook AI algorithm was written, they'd get all these people together. And then the Russian guy, the GRU guy hiding out in Moscow would be the organizer. And then he would message the group and say "Hey, I'm sorry, I can't show up. Can somebody else run the meeting for me?"

07:49 JA:
And that's how they agitated a lot online in the 2016 election. And then, of course, around the same time, we had Cambridge Analytica where this company built an app that was on Facebook, and every time you played the game associated with the app, it scraped your data and then scraped everybody else's data, who you were connected to. Right. And then of course we had investigations and all that sort of stuff. And then finally by 2018 and 2020, social media got wise, well, tried to start to get wise to how it needed to protect the platforms.

08:26 JA:
They still do a very bad job. But those conversations started then, while we were formalizing a lot of the usage of data in terms of audience modeling from legal sources. And then this is kind

of when the migration of a lot of this stuff really starts to get to Europe. We always say in my line of work that Europe is always, somewhere between five and 10 years behind the United States when it comes to digital campaigning. That's still very much accurate, but they're trying to catch up. So that's a lot of information. I hope that wasn't too much overload, and I hope that most of it was actually accurate.

09:14 MM:
I'm curious, in terms of this arc of evolution of digital campaigns, any sense of where things might be going next?

09:27 JA:
We have AI beginning to be injected into political and advocacy campaigns in ways that are pretty foreboding in the United States. A little bit less so, so far in Europe, but we're not sure. Social media is so reactive to the popular narrative. So, you know, there's a lot of really potentially ugly stuff that could happen after the election, presuming Trump is the nominee, presuming that he loses, we know what it looks like when Donald Trump loses an election. And it's pretty ugly. And the extent to which that's been manifest already was just going to be on steroids, especially when you inject AI into the conversation or the worst interpretation of AI, which is essentially, plausible deniability of actual events by blaming it on AI. This is called the Liar's Dividend.

10:31 JA:
The Access Hollywood tape in 2016 that appeared on October 7th, right before the election. If that happens again, Trump's just not going to go on and issue a national apology. He's basically going to say, Nope, that wasn't me. Somebody used AI for this. Right. There's so much online harm that is happening, especially against female candidates online that the platforms have grappled so very badly with. There's so much new technology being injected into our modern political discourse, that I don't think that regulators can move fast enough to really have an effect on it. When it comes to this stuff, I think that there's a lot to be concerned about for 2024 and beyond.

11:21 MM:
Let's talk about the unpaid campaign tactics. I want to ask you three questions about each. First, I want to identify them, what are they? And then secondly, I want to talk about with each of them what's required for their success. You know, the numbers, the nature of the message, for example. And then the third is, what are some of the biggest mistakes to avoid? Because as we both know, a lot of NGOs really where their campaigns begin, at least their online campaigns begin, is the unpaid online campaign tactics. What are they?

12:07 JA:
It's really tough to get started. You can put a post on Facebook, you can tweet or X something, you can put up a picture on Instagram, and then you're going to sit there and be like, Ugh, why isn't this going anywhere? It takes a lot of dedication and teamwork, and it takes a lot of dedication, especially if you're starting from relatively zero, right? You've started an NGO and

well, we should have a Facebook page or a Twitter account, or a Instagram page, and then you do that, and then you could spend a lot of time putting up posts that nobody sees and nobody reacts to because of the way the algorithms are written. So, I think the best thing to do is if you're just getting started, to do a lot of research about what works and what doesn't, and don't get dissuaded when stuff doesn't work.

13:08 JA:
Social media. Every campaign is different. Every organization is different. Every organization's target audience that they want to engage is a little bit different. If you do things right, the algorithms will help you find those people, but it takes a lot of dedicated time and energy and creativity, especially when it comes to content to reach a threshold level of visibility where you're seeing a critical mass of followers follow your pages or like your stuff or engage with your stuff. Right. So I think rule number one is, you've got to dedicate the time to it. You've got to be organized, and you've got to be willing to experiment all while not getting discouraged when a lot of stuff doesn't work.

13:55 MM:
So it sounds at least one of the unpaid tactics, right from the very beginning for groups is posting information possibly on their website, et cetera, and possibly on social media and then it's experimentation and seeing what's getting picked up, responded to, and adapting from there.

14:23 JA:
When we say unpaid, it can be unpaid insofar as you're not paying a platform to advertise. But, you're paying a team to create content, or you're paying communications professionals to figure out what your messages are. And it's a bit difficult on the advocacy side of things, but figuring out what your authentic, true voice and personality is on these platforms goes a long way. Finding your voice in a way that resonates with your audience and attaching some authentic personality insofar as maybe the leader of your organization is particularly good, or supporters of your organizations want to engage and post videos of themselves supporting your organizations or whatever. A lot of that coordination and teamwork has to happen to find an authentic voice that produces a lot of content.

15:34 MM:
I remember going back several years, one of the very first things we would do in NGOs is send out an action alert, ask people to sign a petition, and then that evolved from there to saying, alright, now here's a letter, sign it and send it and an email to the CEO or to an elected representative who may be relevant to the campaign. And then it evolved from there to saying, okay, now we want you to call a representative or call the CEO, but more likely call a representative and it would direct you, depending on your number, it would direct you to your particular federal representative, for example. And then it seemed like things kind of evolved from there too, to where it was asking people to generate their own content and also to share on their social media with their followers, the action alert. It seems like that particular strategy or tactic has really ebbed in recent years. It's not as successful.

16:52 JA:
Those types of things can work at scale. If you have a dedicated group of supporters who really love your organization and they're in their thousands and they're willing to follow you, then, absolutely. I work quite extensively with one advocacy organization that's organized around a single issue. And there's quite a bit of conversation amongst the board and other stakeholders; everybody should be on Twitter talking about this thing.

17:30 JA:
And well, we're a new organization. We don't have that many followers. It's tough, four or five people retweeting something or sharing a post or whatever, it's not going to get you there. You need to spend the time building up your follower list and having everybody coordinated on a regular basis to take some action that is going to start to drive impact. The other thing I'd say is it is really difficult, though not impossible, but difficult to get people to translate online calls to action into offline action.

18:05 JA:
Understanding how you give a call to action to call your representative. Great. Maybe some people will actually do that, but it's tough if you're doing it in an unpaid environment, if you don't have hundreds of thousands of people following you.

18:22 MM:
That definitely leads into the second question, what's required for success? And it sounds like definitely numbers are critical.

18:31 JA:
The name of the game is scale because otherwise you're the proverbial tree falling in the woods that nobody's going to hear.

18:39 MM:
What are some of the biggest mistakes that NGOs make in those early stages or younger NGOs tend to make, or for that matter, even more experienced NGOs tend to make when they're pursuing the more unpaid, and by that, I mean they're not buying time.

18:59 JA:
They assume that social media is easy. That's the number one mistake by far. That the idea is, well, we'll just put some stuff out there and things will percolate throughout the internet, and we'll be famous. The idea that you need a dedicated team that is going to carefully think through every aspect of the strategy from: let's plan your objectives. Is there an election day that your action is tied to? Maybe, maybe not. Is there some other newsworthy event that your election day is or that your objective is tied to? Maybe, maybe not. Find something and then build a calendar of engagement that works back from there. And make sure that you have a team that is dedicated to working on all of the aspects of that plan over the lifecycle of that calendar, getting to your North star. Because otherwise, having everybody try to engage in a

spontaneous tweet storm is not the pathway to success. And especially when you have people who are newer at social media or less experienced, there's this assumption that, well, we'll put out a couple tweets, and we think that the algorithms are going to think that our messages is as important as we do. And so, boom, presto, change-o, everybody knows us. It's just not that way. It needs a careful plan of objective strategy and tactics that you're dedicated to pursuing over the long term.

20:35 MM:
Got it. I really like that idea too, that you connected and work backwards to some triggering event. And that there's a plan and there's a team working on different aspects of it to make it really happen. This may not be possible to give, but numbers, is there a critical number of petition signatures, for example, or clicks throughs, that when you're putting something out there as a group and it's generally unpaid, whatever your action alerts, is there a critical number that you need to achieve to have any credibility and not have it actually backlash against you with the company?

21:23 JA:
I worry about that sort of stuff all the time. Because if you launch a campaign and the campaign is 'call your representative,' and then nobody calls their representative, it's not great. So I'd say that there's probably always an upside, even if the campaign under achieves because you've learned something. But also say, I launched an organic petition campaign a few months ago, and we got 2,600 signatures or something.

22:03 JA:
It was pretty well coordinated and pretty well thought out but didn't have a mass of people who were really dedicated to executing it. There's the silver lining of raising awareness of your organization and the probability that everybody who sees the ad that knows that you're out there, not the ad, the content that sees the content, knows that you're out there and you've raised the profile ever so slightly of your organization, even though 2,600 signatures on a petition is not world changing.

22:40 JA:
But it's also beneficial because now your organization has those 2,600 email addresses that you didn't have before, and you know that those people are bought into your mission. So if you're collecting emails and that's part of your goal and you've got a disclaimer on the website that says that that's what you're doing then even smaller campaigns can be successful if you've properly kind of metered them out and defined what success looks like.

23:09 MM:
And in terms of getting the larger numbers, I think about Avaaz, for example, what does it take to get them to advocate on your issue? And what's the arrangement usually that you require?

23:29 JA:
I've had some discussions with Avaaz, for example, but it's been quite some time now. To get an organization to pick up your idea and kind of go with it, or to get any influencer to pick up your idea and run with it, I think the main driver is what gets any issue attention. It's the right idea at the right time. You're campaigning about something, and it is well tied into the news, and other organizations instinctively want to help you promote it because people are talking and thinking about these things. And so, when we talk about building a calendar, understanding what's coming up in the news cycle is helpful. It's also spicy well-done content, edgy content, like what really breaks through.

24:32 JA:
And, that's probably the holy grail. If you have a well-timed campaign that picks up on the news and has an incredibly creative video or static piece of content that is just like undeniably interesting, that's what's going to get people's attention.

24:47 MM:
I've been told that you really need that. You've got that first critical five seconds. You either get 'em there or you're not going to get them. And so that makes the content so critical.

25:03 JA:
I was just having a conversation with one of our clients a few weeks ago about how, and this was more on the paid side, but they were producing content videos that were 90 seconds long, and these were testimonials of voters who like had switched over and were going to vote for them, and they're 90 seconds long. And they wanted to do some paid promotion around 'em, and I was like, why would you ever pay to promote a 90 second ad? Nobody's going to sit through that. And they said, the message is in the first six seconds. And I was like, okay, fair enough. If you can grab people in the first couple seconds, then good.

25:44 MM:
Then you may be able to hook them for the remainder.

25:46 JA:
Or even if you can't, you've still gotten your point across.

25:51 MM:
Okay. Although I would imagine it might have cost more to pay for 90 second rather than…

25:59 JA:
That's a whole other discussion.

26:01 MM:
Well, let's go there. Okay. I want to spend some time to take on the paid, which really takes advantage of your professional experience. What are the paid online options? Three things: What are the options? If you're sitting down as campaigners saying, okay, we've got this option,

we can do this, we can do this. Second question is what's required for them to be successful? You've already hinted at the message and the third, again, what are the biggest mistakes to avoid? So first, what are the various options?

26:37 JA:
I'm going to start with the last question and kind of work backwards a little bit. The answer, the number one first mistake, because it bleeds into the other answers, the number one thing to avoid is assuming that you put some money on Facebook, and that is your paid digital campaign. The trick is in understanding what channels are available and how each channel achieves a slightly different objective by talking to a different audience. That's the ball game, right? So if you are a campaigner at an NGO and you're like, well, I've got my 5,000 bucks for this month, let's go give it to Mark Zuckerberg. Please stop and think through what are you trying to achieve? And is Facebook the best place to achieve that? Because in all likelihood, it's not. So Facebook and Instagram obviously are the dominant paid platforms. However, just rattling some off the top of my head: There's search, there's programmatic – which is bread and butter of what I do, which I could talk about quite extensively, which are the digital video ads, banner ads, and native ads, which are the sponsored content. There's also streaming television, which is skyrocketing in terms of its adoption. Those ads are incredibly powerful for raising awareness, and I can talk more about that. YouTube is a great option for promoting video content in the six and 15 second formats. The targeting is a bit more limited on YouTube, but happy to talk through that too. And then the sky is the limit.

28:34 JA:
You could throw in some LinkedIn, you can throw in some Snapchat. You can throw in some text promotion, you can throw in some of this, that, or the other. There's like a solid 15 of 'em. It just depends on where you're trying to go, and what you're trying to achieve.

28:52 MM:
Why don't we go through each of those, or at least let's go through a core set of them, the main ones. Facebook, for example, when would I want to use Facebook?

29:03 JA:
Facebook, as we know, is a wonderful place. Well, it's not a wonderful place. It's a wonderful place for grouping together people who identify with the same things and have the same values and have the same interests, right? So if you're an NGO and you are focused on finding your people, Facebook isn't that bad. You could put some money there for sure. In those cases, I would focus on using the interest-based targeting features in Facebook to ask people who share your interests to follow your page or to go to your website to engage with your content or something. Because essentially, you're grouping people together. And then once you understand, you will get a list, you'll get a report on the backend of the profiles of people who have engaged with your content or responded to your campaign somehow.

30:02 JA:
And then you can have an intern to physically invite those people who haven't already, to go follow your page. That's how you'd use Facebook. The thing that you should stop using Facebook for, whether it's politics or advocacy, is trying to persuade people that the thing that you are doing, or the candidate that you're promoting is the right person at the right time. And the reason is simple. It's very tough to break the algorithm on Facebook and actually get into a more persuasion based audience.

30:39 JA:
And when you do think about your mentality, when you're scrolling on social media, you are predisposed to look for content as you're scrolling through that you like and identify with. So if you're somebody who likes Death metal and some nice climate NGO all of a sudden shows up in your feed and you're just looking for the latest guitar licks, you're going to scroll right by that paid ad, but the NGO's getting charged for it anyway. So be careful. Search is, especially in the NGO and advocacy community, incredibly powerful. It is malpractice for advocacy organizations to not run basic search campaigns for two reasons, maybe three, if I can remember them all. It's super cheap. You can put 20, 25 bucks a week on search, and the other two reasons are what you are going to get for that money.

31:41 JA:
You are not charged based on the impression. So if somebody searches climate change in your geography, you want your organization to be the top result, and you are getting the awareness dopamine hit of the user who sees your organization's name across the top of the search bar, even if they don't do anything else, and that's for free. The bonus, and last reason is, if they click on it, they're getting you, you then get charged. If somebody clicks on the link, they're only on the webpage. You're going through to their webpage. It is really, really powerful, particularly in the advocacy community. Anybody who watches this, please go put 25 bucks on search automatically to support your organization. It is well worth it.

32:26 MM:
That would be through Google.

32:29 JA:
Yes, or my company's tool called Advocate where we actually offer a tool which we call programmatic search. With one ad you can populate your search terms on Google, Bing, and Yahoo at the same time. Google is obviously the monster of search. You're going to get 80% of the search market essentially through Google, but Bing is, you know, through ChatGPT, whatever, Bing is becoming more prevalent and Microsoft also owns Yahoo. And so, you're covering a hundred percent of that search market.

33:05 MM:
You mentioned some others.

33:09 JA:
Yes. Let's talk about programmatic advertising which you can also get on my company's tool called Advocate. Programmatic ads are good for persuasion and awareness raising. Programmatic ads are when you want to see the football highlights from the weekend, and you just go on espn.com and you're trying to see your sports team, or you're watching a cooking blog or whatever, that's where you can pay to get a 15 or a 30 second video ad, what we call a pre-roll ad.

33:52 JA:
So you've got to watch the organization's message before you get to the sports highlights. So programmatic ads are ads that are bought, are outside of social media, they're on your website, websites and apps all throughout the internet. And the targeting is essentially audience first. I don't care that you're on ESPN or the local news station website or Candy Crush or any other app. The point is, all of that advertising inventory is bought on an auction system, and it is bought based on the profile of the people that you are trying to reach, which we know because you've accepted a bunch of cookies on your browser

34:35 JA:
So if I'm trying to reach 18 to 35-year-old women in certain zip codes, I can do that through programmatic advertising, whatever activity they're engaging in online. Because the advertisement, a digital video ad in that case is non-skippable, you have to watch that for 15 or 30 seconds. Your message is going to get across. And there, we really care about video completion rate. How much of the ads are people watching?

35:06 JA:
And this is where we draw key differences between programmatic ads and social media ads for video completion rate, the programmatic video completion rate is always going to be usually about 50%. Where on Facebook, the video completion rate is going to be three.

35:25 MM:
And the programmatic ads, is there a limit? Are they like 30 seconds for most effective? Usually?

35:31 JA:
To the 90 second ad question from a bit ago, yes, keep them under 30 seconds. You technically can buy your 90 second ad, but the inventory is limited and nobody's going to watch.

35:43 MM:
In that case, you say exactly who you're looking for in terms of your audience, and your ads could get placed anywhere across a whole variety of different apps or platforms.

35:57 JA:
That's right. YouTube is somewhat similar. Now, you could do some, some highly precise targeting on programmatic. This is the bread and butter of a lot of political campaigns. They will

essentially buy the voter file, and then they will model the voter file. And so they will say, Michael Marx lives at such and such an address, he is registered for this political party, and you know how often Michael comes to vote, because that's public record. So you can model that, and then you can take Michael at such and such an address and essentially upload it onto the internet. And when you bought your shoes on Amazon, your address, that same address, that same name and address are saved in your cookie and it finds you based on your browser and through programmatic ads, we could target people essentially on a one-to-one basis in the United States.

37:04 JA:
Europe has significantly stronger data privacy laws, and you can't do that. It's very limited in Canada, for example. But you can do that on programmatic. It is incredibly powerful. It makes your budgets go a lot farther. It makes the audience that you care about see your ads at higher frequencies. In YouTube and all of Google's properties, the targeting is more restricted. So we're really talking about age, demographics and locations. Still a 15 or a six second ad on YouTube is very powerful, even given the targeting restrictions to sort of lay the base of fire, if you will, more prevalent out there to get your message across.

37:52 MM:
Let's talk about the targeting restrictions on some of them. If we wanted to geofence a headquarters for a particular company, so we really target their employees, would we need to be careful which of these avenues we use just because they may say location is not an option here.

38:14 JA:
With programmatic ads, you can target individual buildings. You can drop a pin on a lat long and you can target a building with a 25 meter radius. On Facebook or on YouTube, the minimum radius is like usually a kilometer, so it's less precise.

38:39 JA:
The other platform worth mentioning is streaming television. It has just taken off, obviously in popularity. I'm sure that anybody who would ever watch this video now watches a significant chunk of their TV via an app and no longer via cable or broadcast. Those ads are more expensive, but are so incredibly powerful for persuasion and awareness because think about the mindset you've adopted. If you're watching a show on an app, you open Hulu and you have said, I'm going to watch, "Welcome to Wrexham," or whatever it is, which I just finished and there are four or five ad blocks during your 45 minute show.

39:29 JA:
I've made the choice that I'm going to watch that show. I will sit through those ads. I'm not going to channel flip like I would on cable tv. So the ads are more expensive, but the video completion rates are always 90% or above, and the audio is always on.

39:44 JA:
Some people can, with a digital video or YouTube ad, you can turn the volume off on your computer. Your TV volume is probably going to be on, you are probably going to watch the ad. You are probably going to complete watching the ad, and you're probably going to hear the entirety of the audio. It's really, really powerful for persuasion and awareness raising. The targeting is also quite precise. It's essentially down to the household level. You can't always guarantee that you're getting the exact person who signed up for the account, but you know that you're targeting people at a certain address.

40:19 MM:
If we wanted to target employees, which turns out employees are really important in terms of influencing companies, particularly high tech, more expensive, well-trained, better educated employees, it sounds like this is also a way to reach them, but is there a way to really focus in on them and get their email addresses, for example?

40:47 JA:
Probably not, that's going to be more limited. You could try, I don't know, you could do a bunch of stuff. SeeTV is going to be most effective at the household level because people watch shows in their homes, right? There's not a ton of SeeTV in the workplace. You can certainly watch SeeTV on your phone or on your computer but a lot of it has replaced how we watch broadcast or cable tv. And that's done where you live. It's not necessarily done where you work. So that's kind of a restriction. The second is if you were legally and ethically to acquire an email list of a certain company or something, chances are that those would be that company's email list that would be that company, those would be emails at that company's domain. Right? Nobody's using their professional address to log into their SeeTV account and be able to target them that way. That said, you might have more luck targeting people on a company by company basis on LinkedIn.

42:09 MM:
That's what I was wondering is how easy is it to really get some kind of a list from LinkedIn? Or would that be I assume, that might also be paid.

42:22 JA:
I only have limited experience doing paid ads on LinkedIn, but they're more expensive. You could target people generally by industry. You could target people by location. And so if you want people, I think you can probably target people by keyword. So if you're trying to target people based on a company that they work for or have worked for, LinkedIn is probably going to be the best bang for your buck.

42:48 MM:
Okay. Before I move, could you give me just kind of a hierarchy. It sounds like with streaming videos you mentioned 90% views, and then you also mentioned well over 50%.

43:02 JA:
Streaming TV is going to have the highest video completion rate. YouTube and programmatic digital video are going to have similarly higher video completion rates in sort of the 50 to 65% range usually. Sometimes you'll suffer from problems like the audio being off or people closing their browser. So that's why those are a little bit less effective, but they're cheaper. And then you have Facebook where the video completion rates can be quite low, like 10% or less usually.

43:33 MM:
I want to flip over to social media influencers. They've obviously become really important. How do you identify them and enlist them, and what are some of the costs associated with that, and is it that effective?

43:51 JA:
It can be quite effective for sure. If the influencer promotes your cause in an authentic way. So you have to work with that person to figure out them mentioning the organization or cause that they care about in a way that doesn't seem like they were paid to do it. It's like any spokesperson, it's any paid celebrity spokesperson. There's a certain expectation that if Celebrity X is doing an auto insurance commercial, you know they're getting paid and that's fine and that's effective in its own way.

44:38 JA:
Social media is a place that thrives on authenticity. So you have to be very careful about how to insert the message that you need the influencer to insert in a way that does not betray your brand or their authenticity. To your question on how do you find and reach out to those people? It's literally just a lot of legwork diving into the platform and figuring out who people follow. And once you do, it's worth a bit of research to making sure that the people that you might approach to talk about your cause are somewhat associated or aligned with it to begin with, and have that baked in as part of their brand and the thing that they talk about. And then quite often it's as easy as reaching out to somebody via direct message and just say, Hey, would you be interested in talking about the thing that we'd love for you to talk about? And they'll come back to you and they'll probably give you a price.

45:36 MM:
That's good to know because I have heard that influencers and getting and enlisting them, but I think of Mark Ruffalo, for example, was very influential in terms of fracking campaigns and other environment related campaigns and clearly authentic, seriously engaged.

46:00 JA:
Now there's a difference there between a genuine celebrity like Mark Ruffalo and somebody who is a pure social media influencer who has become famous for being famous on social media. Mark Ruffalo might cut a paid ad or even post on their own social media, Hey, I'm a big environmentalist and this cause is important to me and I'd love for everybody who follows me on social media to do X, Y, and Z because I really love this thing. That's one thing.

46:31 JA:
Then it's quite something else to have somebody who makes funny videos about, I don't know, people falling off their surfboards or something, suddenly be talking about environmentalism.

46:44 MM:
Got it.

46:45 JA:
Right. So finding the person or the account who talks about something else and has a lot of followers and figuring out how to get them to engage.

46:55 MM:
Okay. Is this something, by the way, that media firms like your own really can help NGOs with?

47:02 JA:
We don't spend a lot of time. We've had a couple of internal conversations about whether we should help with social media, in particular TikTok. The platform we've not discussed is TikTok where there are tons and tons and tons of influencers. I am not a huge TikTok person because I think that in the interest of full disclosure, I think that there's significant risk that we're giving a bunch of data to the Chinese government. And that's definitely not a great thing. And we have to be wary of that. That said, if you choose to use TikTok, the influencers are incredibly powerful. It's generally a more positive platform. Like the positive reinforcement on that platform is much better than Facebook, where you post something and everybody's like, oh, you suck. And like, we hate you. And like, why are you doing this? TikTok is a lot more like, yeah, go! All right. Way to be. So there's some powerful stuff you could do there. They don't take paid ads. So it's all the influencer game up TikTok.

48:14 MM:
I see. One of the things that we talk about, in terms of campaigns, is escalation. That companies will start out saying, okay, I've gotta see if these guys are real. And then, the campaign will start at one level, but it'll begin to escalate over time to where it really builds the credibility of the company. Do you have any examples you could share of how an online strategy and set of tactics in a particular campaign escalated?

48:47 JA:
Are you talking about a paid campaign?

48:51 MM:
Yes. Paid campaign.

48:54 JA:
In my experience, a lot of advocacy groups don't have hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of dollars falling from the sky to plow into large scale campaigns. So the first thing that I always tell clients who have like 10 to $20,000, not a hundred to $200,000 is your targeting should be

pretty darn good. Let's really think through the strategy behind the targeting so that, like any of this stuff, the audience that should be seeing your content sees it as frequently as possible. Getting the targeting right is really important. The second thing is leveraging paid campaigns into earned media. So if you're running a $15,000 campaign, you should put a press release out.

50:02 JA:
If you're running a $15,000 campaign targeting a bunch of corporate executives, you should also put a press release out that says, we're running a digital paid campaign targeting the executives of this company, and here's our message, and here's a link to the ad and blah, blah, blah. Because journalists will pick up on that and write it. And then all of a sudden you've amplified your campaign and you're talking to a lot more people. So those are the main things that I tell clients, get the targeting right. And figure out can we leverage this into some earned media.

50:33 MM:
Great. So to just bring it into a close, at the end of the day, what are some of the big lessons learned from online digital campaigns that you'd leave campaigners with.

50:49 JA:
Paid or unpaid or everything?

50:52 MM:
Paid.

50:53 JA:
Okay. Understand your objectives, understand your objective. What are you trying to accomplish? Second, match your objectives to the proper channels, to the proper platforms. Third, make sure that your content is platform appropriate, like down to the specs. Are you making a video and a 16 to nine aspect ratio, or a one-to-one, like stupid stuff that you don't naturally think of but counts because that's the quality of the impression that people will see. Put a lot of time in to make sure that the content is also appropriate for the platform. If you're running paid digital ads, they don't have to be television quality, but they should be decent quality. And then last on each channel, get the targeting right. Really think through who are we trying to reach? How much money do we have? And given those two parameters, how do we make sure that we increase the frequency as high as possible amongst that target group?

52:14 MM:
Okay. All right. That's very helpful and it's a good place to end. Any final comments? Any questions I should have asked you and I missed?

52:23 JA:
Not off the top of my head. It's been pretty comprehensive.

52:28 MM:
Good. Yeah, thanks. I really appreciate your time and your insights on online digital campaign strategy. It's become so important obviously in corporate campaigns, and so I think really an area that is constantly evolving, but it's one we need to understand if we're going to really influence major corporations to change and also build movements.

52:54 JA:
Thanks for doing that. I think that one of the missions of our company is we're a progressive company. We work with progressive organizations. That's important. It's part of our DNA. There is so much capacity building to be done amongst our client base to really understand this and execute campaigns confidently. Because if you're going to put the time and energy into doing this stuff and I know I'm preaching to the choir, it's worth it to take the time to learn about what you're doing so that you can put your relatively limited resources and spend them the most effective way possible to achieve impact.

53:38 MM:
I think that's a perfect place to end because with NGOs, so often in these corporate campaigns we're talking about NGOs that maybe have budgets of under a hundred thousand or they've got a couple million, but they're up against the biggest corporations in the world with tens of billions of dollars. So being able to really efficiently use our resources is absolutely critical. And you're right, it really takes getting educated and being very strategic about how we invest those resources.

54:10 JA:
For sure. That's the name of the game.

54:13 MM:
Thank you very much. Much appreciate the interview.

54:17 JA:
Good. Yes. Hope it was useful.

54:19 MM:
We'll talk again. Thanks. All right, thanks.

54:21 JA:
Catch you later.