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Understanding Reach and Frequency

At Fred Riger Advertising Agency, the terms "reach" and "frequency" are used more than any others when it comes to planning media. Reach and frequency are the means by which we develop an advertising schedule that is both effective and efficient. Are you getting the most for your dollars?

What is reach?

Reach is simply the percentage of persons in a target population that is exposed to an advertising schedule at least once. It can also be expressed as "cume" and "unduplicated audience."

What are ratings, and how do they affect reach?

A rating refers to the percentage of a target population that is actually watching a TV program or listening to a radio station. For instance, if Murder She Wrote has a rating of 15.0 for Women 25-54, it means that fifteen percent of that target population is watching that particular program (as opposed to, just say, a 9.0 rating for Men 14-49).

The rating for a TV/radio program can also be called its reach. Using the same example of *Murder She Wrote*—if its rating is 15.0, it reaches fifteen percent of the audience. When we add several groups of ratings together, we get Gross Rating Points, or GRPs. We are then able to determine how much of our target audience we are reaching with the total number of GRPs in our schedule.

What is frequency?

Frequency simply measures the number of times a person sees your message in a given advertising schedule. One person may see your commercial three times over your advertising flight. That would be a frequency of three.

That's not all.

Ratings aren't the only factor in determining reach and frequency. "Daypart," which refers to the time of day a program is aired, also affects how we determine reach and frequency. For instance, we can look at Murder She Wrote again and compare it to a Sunday NFL Football game. Both may have a 15.0 rating. However, Murder She Wrote is on Sunday night at 8:00 PM—a prime viewing hour. NFL Football, on the other hand, is on Sunday afternoon. Both have the same rating, but because of their dayparts, we know that a commercial message in each program will deliver a very different reach and frequency. A schedule that has 100.0 GRPs in primetime viewing may reach 55 percent of the target audience 1.7 times, while 100.0 GRPs in daytime programming would reach only 40 percent of our target audience, but the frequency would be 2.4.

To maximize reach and frequency in an advertising schedule for the best possible cost, we can hand-pick the programs on TV and the dayparts on radio that will achieve that goal. We are able to choose from several different scenarios that will strive to reach the maximum target audience most often, at the least cost.

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