



# channel mastery

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Kristin Carpenter:

Welcome everybody to a brand new season of Channel Mastery. I'm really excited to introduce one of our most popular guests from previous seasons, Akvile DeFazio. Welcome to the show, and I'm so excited for you to tell our guests exactly what it is you do and what your crystal ball is showing for 2022.

Akvile DeFazio:

Hi, Kristin. So great to be back. Thank you for having me. As she so kindly introduced me, I'm Akvile DeFazio, and I'm the president of Akvertise, and we are a social media advertising agency. And it's been very interesting how things have played out the last two years, especially when COVID, and then now there's turning into global supply chain issues, so our business has really morphed in the last two years. I think many people can relate to that from all different industries. We primarily offer ad account management services and consulting. And what's been interesting that prior to COVID-19, about 90% of our business was active ad account management for clients on different social media networks. But since COVID that ratio's flipped a little bit to where we've seen a lot of brands go in-house, maybe become leaner, and understand the power of social media advertising and the knowing that they have to get online through these different mediums to make their business not only survive the pandemic, but to start thriving through it. So, we've seen a very significant influx last year and even more so this year for consulting needs.

It's been interesting to become more of a social media advertising trainer to agencies that maybe aren't as familiar with those, but know that they have to offer that to clients to kind of have a more well-rounded service offering. But as well as brands, startups of all different sizes that are coming to us and asking us to help them through the different challenges that they're going through and how we can amplify their goals and their needs to get in front of their target audiences, because so many people did realize that they did have to be online to get to this point and survive as a business.

Kristin:

Oh my gosh. That sounds so stressful, but also like you said, it's just steeped in opportunity, right? So it sounds like you're talking to the agencies. I know you also talk directly with a lot of brands.

Akvile:

Yes.

Kristin:



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And I hear you. I'm right there with you in terms of the teams have really changed inside the brands, also at a lot of agencies, so there's also that. You might be almost the most legacy person around a brand sometimes with all these changes. But I guess my first question is, how are you doing consulting? It seems like it's almost got to be ongoing. It's changing so much because as we got through kind of the huge push of COVID, maybe middle of 2020, we were really seeing kind of from that point to the end of the year that the social media platforms were changing so much, in terms of what they were trying to do to get in front of this consumer, for their people who are paying to be in front of the people on those platforms.

So just kind of knowing that, the inventory has changed so much. And I say that as your ad account management, the inventory has changed, but it's almost like you've really popped up above an inventory level and it's more like you're at the 30,000 foot with these brands on channel strategy. Doesn't that sound about right?

Akvile:

Yes. Yes. Very much so. It's been interesting because I'm the only one at my company that does the consulting, since it is my company. I've been doing it a long time. So, it's taken a lot more of my time, but I also learned that I've enjoyed it a lot more, and kind of providing help to people that do need it, and I've found fulfillment through it. So, it's been good in that way.

But on top of COVID-19, this year we had, as of April, iOS 14 rolled out and that completely changed things for online advertisers. We lost a lot of tracking ability. We've had to amplify our data detective skills in really trying to find how to properly attribute to be able to tell clients, "Here's how we're successful and where and why, and what levers we need to pull to change something." So, it's made it a lot more challenging in that aspect, so I feel like we get hit globally with things, and then as an industry, we got hit this year. And I think it's really setting the scene for what it's going to look like in a cookie-less type of world, like Europe's already seeing, as we see that in North America as well.

Kristin:

Oh, that's a big one. So, should we start there, as in terms of looking at ... What we're trying to do isn't so much like, "Here's your blueprint," because literally nobody can give you that. So, if anybody tries to, just get them out of your sphere, because they can't.

Akvile:

Exactly.

Kristin:

It's more a matter of continuing to be nimble and fluent in terms of all of the important levers that you do need to pull to make sure that you're getting in front of people in an authentic way.



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And so, I think that is actually a really good place for us to start, and I think giving a little bit of a lay of the land there as we're in Q4 of 2021, what does the landscape look like in North America with that?

Akvile:

Ah, so I know we're already in Q4, but this is kind of, I think ... I don't have a crystal ball, but I suspect that it's going to set a trend for the next year where we really need to start planning sooner and sooner for different things we're going to put out through marketing strategy, maybe holistically, everything you do from organic to paid to email. This year a lot of brands, because of COVID-19, shipping delays, the supply chain issues that we're experiencing for a lot of e-commerce brands in particular, we've had to start launching. So today we launched a lot of our holiday gift guides for clients, where typically we don't do that until closer to Thanksgiving. But now it's the 1st of November and here we are launching this now because people can't guarantee delivery by certain dates for the holidays. We're having to strategize earlier.

So with us needing more time in the platforms to get more data to be able to kind of accomplish those goals, depending on your objectives, I think that going to next year, this is just the beginning of the supply chain issue. It's not going to correct itself overnight. We've seen on the news how many ships are at the LA ports in particular, but from what I'm also reading is that there's a shortage of truck drivers across the country to deliver those goods. So, that's only going to back up FedEx, UPS, USPS, and getting those goods to clients, or to customers, that we really have to start doing things ahead of time.

Talk to your teams, talk to your clients, and determine, how do we reach our people so that we can get them what they want, whether it's products or services. And then with other clients, we're noticing there's an issue of there's a lot of delays, so instead of ... We're trying to change how we are advertising and marketing to these people. So, instead of saying, "There's a 14-week delay," we're calling it a wait list, just to change the tone of it. And that's helped because people are like, "Oh, it's in demand? I want this too." Right?

So, we're trying to test different messaging and kind of manage people's expectations through whatever means that we don't have full control over things in a global scale. But we try to do what we can to educate, inform, and still provide incentive because there's only so much we can do at the end of the day. But as long as we are transparent for our brands and put together a strategy ahead of time, I think that you'll still be successful in the new year, given all the delays, as long as you just convey it properly.

Kristin:

I think everybody who's tuned in with us here today has received those emails where it's basically saying, "You really should start shopping now." And then also there's the counterpart to that, which is, "We may not have a lot of stock and we may have a hard time getting it to you."



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So I have seen that brands and some leading online retailers are really trying to take a proactive approach there, but that also is so transactional, and you and I deal in a world of passion brands.

Akvile:

Yeah.

Kristin:

So is storytelling becoming more popular or a good go-to for you programmatically on social media, just to keep, almost, people interested and also keep them nurtured, but show that level of transparency as well?

Akvile:

Yes. I feel like it's a good thing to be transparent and vulnerable, even as a brand. As humans, we appreciate vulnerability. It's difficult to convey and we're nervous. It might backfire, but at the same time, it is very human and we're all going through a very interesting human experience, so I think that storytelling is more important than ever.

There's no shame in saying, "Hey, you know what? This is what's going on. We only have so much control, but we're doing X, Y, and Z. So instead we're offering other things to ... or to customers," to where previous years we used gift cards as, you know, "Here's something," as you're getting strapped for the last week before Christmas, maybe. And you know, if you've missed out on buying something, you can get a gift card. But we've moved those up in priority because then that way, we don't have to disappoint anybody by not receiving something in the mail for themselves or for someone else for the holidays.

So we're just changing, like, "You can buy this, but you can get this now." And we're trying to figure out ways, especially for clients that might have things based in the US, where they don't have to deal with shipping delays, the carriers are still going to be backed up. So, we're still trying to be like ... We're faster, and we're trying to leverage that in storytelling of, "We can supply things. We're a small shop. We're based in the US, so that means shorter shipping times."

So we're just really trying to be transparent, and so far it's been helping, even though we launched a lot of new holiday things just this week, but we've been kind of promoting that in email marketing. We're not running email campaigns for clients, but we're part of that because we can use that in advertising and repurpose that in different mediums. So we've been saying, "Hey, start early," like you were saying. That's very important and brands aren't just saying that just because they want you to buy now and get that money from you, but they really want you to have what you're paying for before it's too late.

Kristin:



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And it's so interesting because some brands were, well before COVID, trying to move Black Friday up more and more to try and just stick their head in the door, if you will. That's a little bit of crying wolf, isn't it, for some of those brands?

Akvile:

It is. Yes.

Kristin:

And I realize we're looking in the rear view mirror, which doesn't help anyone. But I guess the point to me bringing that up is, I think that this is going to create a lot of disruption, even going forward in next year's calendar year, because the consumers are getting trained right now. I mean, I usually am a pretty last-minute shopper myself and I've already started Christmas shopping because I'm so afraid that I won't have what I need.

That whole scarcity thing has worked miracles on me, so as a consumer that might carry forward to next year, even if people are trying to get me to have a different behavior. So, I think that's actually really exciting because there was a lot of fatigue around all of the weight with Cyber Tuesday, Black Friday, et cetera. So, I'm just so curious to hear kind of what your take is. A lot of your clients, I would imagine, don't have the benchmark that they usually look at when they're investing with you for solutions, so are you kind of doing more real-time data analysis with them? Or ...

Akvile:

Yeah, so, now that we're at the end of Q4 and this is our busy time of the year, we are checking things several times a day, even just in case we need to adjust anything. You know, there are data delays, especially with Facebook, but we try to look through at least transactional data through Google Analytics or Shopify. So that's been helpful in us assessing in the morning, and in the afternoon if we need to course correct, whether spend up or down based on what we're seeing, and how many people are competing for those different types of audiences that we're targeting. But I think to your point, I think Amazon's been training us this year as well. I'm like, "If Amazon's having delays, everyone's going to have delays."

Kristin:

Yeah. It's true. Now that you mentioned Facebook, I think we would be remiss if we didn't talk about some key platforms and what you're seeing. And again, a legal disclaimer, not really legal, we don't have crystal balls, but we do spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about these things for our clients. And Akvile has a range of clients, so I feel like you're just a great person to give us your instinctive lay of the land on maybe some different social platforms, or maybe it's something around a specific type of thing your clients are investing in, but we're all ears.



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Akvile:

Thank you. And yes, traditionally Facebook and Instagram, with the bulk of the budget, right? It has been around the longest. It has the most robust targeting. The pricing is really good. And we've always been proponents in trying to encourage our clients, even pre-COVID, to diversify, because audiences behave differently on different channels. Let's learn and see where we can find the most lucrative audiences and the most lucrative channels.

This year, I feel like most of our clients, new and preexisting, have a much larger appetite for testing and are willing to try new things, which has been really great and exciting for us because that's what we love to do, and I want to dig in and see what types of opportunities are available. We have been testing beyond Facebook and Instagram because of the whole iOS 14 thing, but also because we want to see where else people on the internet are that we can turn into customers.

So, other successful platforms we've been running are Reddit ads. There's so many great communities there. I feel like it's highly underutilized. I think for healthcare to products to services, people are getting back out into the world, but there's still some things where people are still being very cautious and rightfully so about COVID and just the variants to where they might need to learn how to do something at home. So that's a great area to test out.

LinkedIn ads, if there's anything professional, great, great platform. However, just know that you do have to spend a little bit more and have larger audiences to work with. So just for a comparison of anyone that's listening, is that on Facebook, you can expect to pay about a dollar or so a click, give or take, where for a new prospecting traffic campaign to hit cold audiences. On Pinterest, which I'll touch in a second, Pinterest, we're seeing about 10 to 20 cents per click, though LinkedIn is kind of the higher end, but it can be very successful if your audience is there and you're messaging properly. Then we're seeing about five to six, \$7 a click, but you know, the smaller the audience, the more you're going to pay because of competition.

So LinkedIn's great. Stick to feed ads. The text ads are really too small, so don't spend your money and your time running those because there's not much that you're going to get out of it, even though they're the least expensive. And LinkedIn has really great InMail. I think they just rebranded the name of InMail ads. That changes so frequently, but those ones are the ones that are like emails that you get, so those work really great, but you can pay anywhere from \$10 to \$50 an open, which ... it's quite high. But if you do it tailored, particularly maybe to warmer retargeting audiences where someone's already familiar with your brand, and just make it very personalized, we have seen success there in getting people becoming bigger ... have a larger lifetime value.

And then Pinterest, Pinterest is also great. But from what we've seen, it's hard to convert somebody directly to make a purchase on Pinterest because people go there to get inspiration, ideas, look around. They may not necessarily buy because they're a lot of DIYers. They could do it themselves, or they might shop around because they're smart consumers and find something



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else online that's similar or maybe that other product. So just know that going into it, it's a better brand awareness play. It's great for driving really inexpensive but targeted website traffic, but you may not get as many direct conversions from it. You will, you can, but just know that you won't get as much as say Facebook or Instagram, for instance.

Kristin:

That's great. No, thank you. And then I think when I first reached out to you, there was potentially some fake news going around that-

Akvile:

Oh, yeah.

Kristin:

Who was going to buy Pinterest? Remember when I was talking with you about that before?

Akvile:

Yeah. There was a rumor that PayPal was going to buy Pinterest.

Kristin:

That's right. Juicy.

Akvile:

Yes.

Kristin:

But that, I guess, was fake news, but how interesting would that have been? Very.

Akvile:

Very interesting. I feel like, yeah, Pinterest had a rough year, so they did grow, but not as much, since people are going back out into the world. One of their co-founders, I think, ended up leaving the company, and then now this whole rumor about PayPal, but then PayPal is saying they're not buying them, so their stock dropped. I'm like, "Ugh."

But it would've been great because I feel like if PayPal or someone else doesn't buy it, it's a great e-com play, because then that way they can get in front of people and then have people use PayPal to check out, and that's great for them. But for Pinterest, they're struggling a little bit, but something like PayPal buying them for billions would've been great for them to have access to their resources. But I don't know. I feel like it's not the end of the day for Pinterest. It still has a



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lot of potential. I feel like someone's going to buy them eventually, and just ... It'll be interesting to see who.

Kristin:

Exactly. And then what about some more ... I wouldn't say they're up-and-comers, because they're well established, but are there any social commerce trends of note on maybe some platforms that are not part of this conversation yet, such as TikTok or Snapchat?

Akvile:

Yeah, I was going to say, but there's so many platforms I could just, you know your brain off. So yeah, Snapchat's good, though we're seeing much more success on TikTok. It has just exploded since COVID began with people doing anything from dances to just going down the rabbit hole of videos, but it's a really great place for advertisers too. You can spend a fraction of what you'd spend on Facebook or somewhere else and get millions more video views, for instance, get people into your funnel so then you could retarget them and just keep your brand out there, keep it top of mind. So, if you have video content, that is a place to be organically and through paid. It's still inexpensive in comparison, so highly recommend TikTok ads.

Twitter, I love Twitter for personal reasons.

Kristin:

I know you do.

Akvile:

But for advertising, unfortunately I don't recommend advertising there unless you have extra budget, you just want to do a brand awareness campaign. Maybe traffic, but it's not as great in terms of targeting options and to get people to convert. So I usually say, like, "Keep that in the back of your mind, but don't go there first." Sorry, Twitter.

And what else? There's Quora. Quora is also really great. Still underutilized, kind of like Reddit. I feel like it's not really talked about very often, but there's a lot of great opportunity there, especially if you want to find people that are looking with intent to ask questions, that's a really great place to right in front of them to either provide a solution or just something that's relevant to whatever their conversations are.

Kristin:

Those are super interesting additions for sure. Do you anticipate, or have you been hearing within your network, of future consolidation or maybe larger changes around regulation with some of the social media platforms?



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Akvile:

Regulation in terms of tracking? Or ...

Kristin:

I think just anything that might be tied to sharing personal information, which I know is the wild, wild west, but I would be remiss if I didn't ask.

Akvile:

Yeah. No, that's an excellent question. Things are changing. Reddit, for instance, you can sign up for Reddit and give them as little or as much information about yourself as you want. And their targeting's very different because you can't target by like, "I want to target Kristin who lives here at this zip code, five-mile radius, whatever, is into mountain climbing," or something like that. Where there, it's just different how you reach people through conversations or maybe other features that they have. So if more brands kind of took that approach, I feel like people would be more forthcoming maybe with certain things. Just people have developed such a distrust for Facebook and Instagram, but they still use it because it is addictive and a lot of people are there, right? So, it has historical data and you've shared so much willingly.

I know with laws have changed, and then we have certain limitations as advertisers of what we can see and who we can advertise to. But I feel like things are going to keep innovating. We have a very future-forward society and I feel like it's not the end of our work. Things will change. We'll evolve. We'll be creative in finding other ways. Just because the data's going away, people are giving less information, doesn't mean that our customers are going away. So, we just have to become more innovative, creative, and use psychology and leverage that to be like, "Let's tell stories," and let's also kind of tap into the brain of like, what is enticing to people? How can I help provide a solution?

So in terms of laws, I don't know what's going to change. I imagine that it's going to keep pushing us towards a cookie-less world, but I just kind of try to think back of like, what was advertising like when I was a kid before the internet? And I think of radio and I think of billboards and I'm like, "Well, they're just aimed at everybody," and if it's relevant to you, it'll stand out a lot more. Right? So I'm wondering if maybe we're doing a lot of open targeting now that Facebook's recommending, we're testing it out as well, just blasting everyone with our ads and seeing what sticks in some campaigns. And it does perform really well, so I don't know. Maybe it's okay that we're not hyper-targeting anymore, even though that's something that we enjoy doing and we've seen a lot of success over the years, but it's not the end.

Kristin:



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So is it fair to say we might be entering a future that is not about hyper-targeting? And what does that look like in terms of the big takeaway, which we're going to be adding to all of our episodes now, is like, what is the one thing that the Channel Mastery audience should be making actionable?

Akvile:

Oh. Start early, plan ahead, make sure your tracking is dialed in. Just know that you're not going to get 100% attribution, because say you're advertising on Facebook, Facebook and every other platform over-attribute for themselves. They're going to report more purchases because now they're using a modeled algorithm of what they think the conversions are. If you're using something like Shopify, that's probably more accurate to what the reality is, in terms of sales. And Google Analytics, we found that it's very close to what Shopify is reporting. So know that one may be under-reporting, one's over-reporting, so the truth is somewhere in the middle.

So if you can just set yourself up to use UTM parameters to track everything from each channel and make sure that you're coding it appropriately so you get the best data that you can to fully understand how your audiences are behaving, what's interesting for them, what's not interesting? And what levers you can pull using that data to maybe scale in that particular area. So I guess that was kind of a twofer. I was going say, "Start early and plan ahead because of shipping delays and supply chain issues," which I think this is just going to be the start of it.

So don't wait until the last minute to be like, "Oh, it's September. Let's start doing back-to-school now." No, start thinking about back-to-school maybe in May, June, before the summer hits so you can nail that in with your team, put a strategy together, develop the assets and launch it. Same thing for the holiday season. You should be really ahead of that. I know it's hard to think about certain holidays or seasons or product launches months in advance, but it's very important. It's always been important, but I feel like going into 2022, put things on ... create a calendar, if you don't have one yet. Start assigning things, set reminders for yourself to start thinking about things. Start looking for examples, maybe looking at last year's historical data, if you have any. And just start early, be prepared and track all the things so you can go into it with the most success that you can right out of the gate.

Kristin:

I love that too because you're also equipping yourself as the brand leader to talk to your C-suite peers and informing them on what the consumer's actually doing with what you're putting out there, which I think is going to become more and more important. And I think it's a part of the role of the brand leader that I think has been overlooked in the past and is going to become just of paramount importance going forward. And so, that sense of nimbleness tied to the data is also really key as much as we've been training for this. And we might feel fatigued at this point. Just know that the muscle you've built over the past almost two years is going to serve you well, in terms of being able to really shift and try some new strategies and quickly change course, and



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kind of carry forward from there. As you said, you're checking multiple times a day for your clients, it sounds like.

Akvile:

Exactly.

Kristin:

Yup. Awesome. Well, this is fantastic, and I really want to thank you for coming back, and I'm welcoming you as much as you want to come, but I definitely want to have you every quarter to give us your assessment. And it might have a little bit of like, this is what happened, and then this is what I'm thinking is going to happen now. But tell us, the audience, how they can learn more about what you do and give you a follow on some of your channels that you're sharing some things on.

Akvile:

Thank you. You can find me at [akvertise.com](http://akvertise.com) or [@AkvileDeFazio](https://twitter.com/AkvileDeFazio) on Twitter. I'm very active there, but [Akvertise.com](http://Akvertise.com) is probably the easier route, considering my name is a little bit different.

Kristin:

And could you spell that for us just to make sure everybody knows it's not advertise.

Akvile:

Correct. It's A-K-V-E-R-T-I-S-E.

Kristin:

Yep. That's great. All right. Thank you so much, and we will see you back here in probably a few weeks to a month or so.

Akvile:

Thank you, Kristin.