

Ten's sales coalition Connect set for cross-platform sales

- by: *Darren Davidson*
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THE Ten Network will within weeks formally launch its sales coalition Connect, with partners including Foxtel and Facebook, as part of its response to rival sales networks -- Seven's SMG Red and Nine's Powered.

The free-to-air network plans to promote the cross-media sales offering, which will include outdoor firm oOh!media, to the market in about four weeks under the Connect banner.

The alliance had been pitching for advertising briefs from clients under the trade name Ten Connect, but the network is to drop Ten from the brand name for the launch with its new partners.

Connect will offer advertisers packages for Ten's media assets, including the DMG Radio network. Ten chairman Lachlan Murdoch owns 50 per cent of DMG through his private investment company Illyria.

The inclusion of oOh!media follows the sale last month of Ten's outdoor advertising business Eye Corp to Champ Private Equity-owned oOh!Media.

Facebook has signed up to Connect on a campaign-by-campaign basis and is already being sold to Connect clients. Pay-TV operator Foxtel has also joined the coalition, and the publications of News Limited (publisher of The Australian) will be included by invitation only.

Champ Private Equity director Darren Smorgon said the purchase of Eye for \$120 million in cash and up to \$25m in deferred payments did not mean the private equity group was legally mandated to continue with Connect, but it was its intention to stay on board.

"I think Eye has benefited from Connect and we see some merit in continuing to work with Ten as part of that," Mr Smorgon said.

"We wouldn't be doing it in an exclusive manner. It wouldn't mean that we couldn't work with Nine or Seven. We think there is strength in being able to sell a combined sales proposition on multiple types of media to clients."

Unlike free-to-air rivals Seven and Nine, Ten does not have a joint venture with a major online search engine and has been exploring the possibility of a revenue share agreement with Google and Telstra's search and directories business Sensis through Connect. Talks with Google continue.

Ten's new chief sales officer, Barry O'Brien, said that Connect would enable Ten to draw upon a wide range of different media assets and offer clients great flexibility by allowing them to add and drop partners at will, depending on the demands of a brief.

"We're agnostic in terms of if we want to bring in another partner, be it a radio network, outdoor company, online company or subscription-television operator," he said.

"It's not just about Ten's own assets and steering advertisers into them. The platform for this is Ten as the base, but then we will work very closely with other operators so the project works for the client."

The former boss of media agency PHD said Ten's social TV app Zeebox, which was part of a joint venture Ten had invested in called Zeeoz Australia, would be launched in mid-October and become part of Connect.

The strategy behind Connect was to offer advertisers a suite of media assets on multiple platforms and media owners to target different demographics, meeting demand from advertisers for targeted integrated solutions.

Seven and Nine already have similar sales divisions through SMG Red and Powered.

News Limited unveiled News Australia Sales in April.