# Why Attribution Is Now Changing 'The Way Media Is Evaluated'.

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Attribution is a big buzzword among advertisers and agencies, so much so that there's an entire conference dedicated to the topic this month—"Attribution Accelerator: The Future of Marketing Measurement," Oct. 12 in New York. Attribution refers to measuring the contribution that specific marketing stimuli makes to sales on a very granular level. The quality of attribution allows advertisers to examine the impact of a specific ad in a

specific daypart on a given date. "It's paced quickly enough that you can measure effectiveness of what's happening right now and change what you want to do next and thereby improve your performance," says Jim Spaeth, a partner at media metrics consultancy Sequent Partners, one of the presenters of the conference. "It's transforming the way media is being evaluated."

Today's type of advertising attribution first took root in digital and is now moving to television, thanks to reams of data from set-top boxes and smart TV panels. But for traditional media channels such as TV and radio to be accurately represented in attribution models requires big data—massive amounts of transaction-level information, the kind you can't get from traditional audience panels because they're too small.

Several radio broadcasters are already using big data to demonstrate the value of their audiences to advertisers. Using data from roughly 104 million registered iHeartRadio listeners, and tens of millions who visit station websites, iHeartMedia allows advertisers to more precisely target their broadcast radio ads using hundreds of audience segment profiles. Powered by start-up data provider AnalyticOwl, CBS Radio, Entercom, Townsquare Media and others have launched their own attribution platforms. NextRadio is using data to prove an ad campaign's impact among the roughly 2.3 million consumers who use the smartphone app. And Cumulus Media's partnership with Nielsen Marketing Cloud is helping it show how its audience stacks up in various product categories. But due to limitations imposed by the size of Nielsen's PPM panel, Westwood One is breaking out the data by national formats instead of on a local basis.

"When you look at radio as a local medium and market by market those samples are nowhere near big data; they're tiny and you can't really track transaction level activities as well as you would like to," Spaeth says. "It just doesn't give you that highly granular fast-tempoed attribution modeling that enables you to prove performance mid-campaign."

While progress is being made, at this juncture there is no magic bullet to allow radio to prove attribution with the type of granular level that digital can. But there are technologies that could potentially provide a solution. Audio content recognition technology offered by companies such as Shazam and Nielsen's Gracenote could, for example, be deployed in a large sample of mobile phones in a sort-of next-generation PPM-type service. Instead of proprietary codes and proprietary hardware it would use software deployed through people's existing mobile phones. While there would be various issues to work through, such as compliance, privacy and proportionality, the technology holds promise for bringing radio into the big data world of attribution.

In July 2016, a group of major radio companies announced a partnership with Shazam to launch a new measurement service for broadcast and digital audio. But since then no specifics on methodologies, metrics, test results and time lines have been announced. "There is measurement technology out there that could potentially solve that problem and give radio the kind of big data sample it would need for attribution and for advanced targeting," Spaeth says. "It's all about what kind of data does radio need to have to be accurately represented in attribution models."