

Adwanted Consulting & Solutions_

ADWANTED CONSULTING CASE STUDY

Centralised, standardised, independently verified proof-of-play for a digital-first OOH market

PLAYOUT

1. Challenge

Proof-of-play is the record of which digital screens actually ran a campaign, where and when. Before Playout, buyers had to collect playout reports from every seller, which were in different formats with varying levels of details. Buyers then had the arduous task of consolidating everything before they could analyse, optimise or report on a campaign.

The rapid growth of digital out-of-home made this unsustainable. More volume and more formats meant manual consolidation slower, more error-prone and harder to trust. Without a common standard there was no reliable way to compare delivery across media owners, and the absence of consistent proof-of-play left OOH poorly positioned for the ROI and econometric studies that increasingly decide where advertising budgets go. Outsmart, representing OOH media owners, identified the need for a standardised, centralised approach and ran a formal pitch process to find a partner to build it.

2. Approach

Following the 2022 pitch, Outsmart appointed Adwanted to build and maintain Playout, and make it a long-term foundation for the industry alongside Route and SPACE. Four media owners, Bauer Media Outdoor, Global, JCDecaux and Ocean Outdoor, pooled their investment to fund it, a clear signal that the industry chose to back shared infrastructure rather than compete on fragmented reporting. We worked closely with media owners, agencies and their technology partners to come up with a shared Playout Reporting Standard. The four underwriting owners and a wider Steering Committee of buyers, agencies and technology partners met regularly ensuring the platform was steered and owned by the OOH industry,

“The industry needs a single source of truth.”

Chris Ang, Director, mediasense

Two principles shaped the design. First, the platform had to be neutral and open to all, giving every buyer and seller the same data, in the same format, at the same time, providing the standardisation that was missing. Second, it had to fit the systems the market already used, so it was built on existing standards including SPACE, OpenRTB and OpenDirect. Crucially, independent validation was designed in before launch rather than bolted on later, so the platform was ready for scrutiny from day one: first-party delivery data from the media owners is centrally validated and then checked by an independent party for 100% transparency.

3. The Solution

Playout is a centralised, cloud-based platform built on AWS for the scale and resilience that growing DOOH volumes demand. Each record begins with Campaign Management Systems data from platforms such as Broadsign, which is then enriched by media owners with industry frame IDs from SPACE, brand and agency identifiers and the buyer’s campaign and creative references, so every play is fully traceable. The combined records are assembled into the industry-standard playout file.

Data must pass Playout 50+ automated checks, including duplicate detection across the whole market and confirmation that every frame exists in SPACE with the correct owner and format. Records that fail are rejected with clear error codes; records that pass flow into the Playout data warehouse and on to buyers. A row-level security model ensures that data can only be viewed by the relevant buyer or agency, and access is provided through both exports and direct database connections, feeding analytics tools such as Power BI, Tableau and QuickSight. Media owners can upload as often as every 15 minutes, and once a record is validated it is available to authorised buyers straight away, supporting near real-time monitoring of delivery. The outcome is one consistent, validated dataset with the same structure and granularity from every media owner, independently verified by mediasense (previously PwC).

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1bn
up to a billion playout records processed every week

50+
automated checks on every record

AWS
cloud-based, for the scale and resilience DOOH demands

4. Impact

Two and a half years on from launch, Playout holds almost 100 billion plays, processing up to a billion playout records every week. 99% of the digital frames from the participating media owners now contribute data and 15 agencies have onboarded.

A March 2025 survey of Playout users, spanning media owners, buyers, specialists and agency technology partners, found that every respondent reported improvements to their operations:

- 100% saw increased transparency, efficiency and data accuracy
- 92% reduced manual effort
- 80% improved their decision-making
- 45% reduced cloud computing costs.

Users rated the standardisation of data formats (86%) and centralised reporting (79%) as the most valuable features, and satisfaction was high across both the buy side and the sell side. The benefits were reported in equal measure by the organisations consuming Playout data and those supplying it.

That integrity is independently tested rather than asserted. The pre-launch review findings by PwC's Media Owner Assurance team, since acquired by and now part of mediasense, were conclusive: Playout accurately reflects real-world delivery and reliably rejects non-compliant data. Outsmart has committed to rolling quarterly re-tests to keep that assurance current.

Beyond campaign reporting, the same validated dataset is opening up higher-value uses, from more accurate marketing mix modelling and ROI analysis, where OOH has historically been under-represented, to campaign-level ESG reporting such as carbon-footprint measurement.

"Playout is globally the most advanced industry-level POP system and the first of its kind to collect data across all player types. As such, we hope it will be a model for how the industry can work together to create high levels of trust and transparency in our medium."

Managing Director, Large Media Owner

"Playout is an outstanding technical and strategic achievement, which has only been possible to create by focussed collaboration across the UK OOH industry. It sets the world standard in meeting client needs for a timely, certified, consolidated and accessible Outdoor campaign reporting platform."

Commercial Platform and Product Director, Large Media Owner

"The open communication and willingness to discuss and change with all parties is refreshing to see, and from my perspective, for projects like this, not the norm."

CEO, Small Media Owner