

ADWANTED CONSULTING CASE STUDY

A single, universal ID and taxonomy for every OOH frame in the UK

space

1. Challenge

Out-of-home inventory was described differently by everyone who touched it. Each media owner held its sites in its own schema, and data moved between owners, agencies, technology partners and research suppliers as multiple files in multiple formats, with reference codes that were unique to each company rather than universal. There was no single source of truth, no consistent definitions and no reliable way to align data across systems.

The cost of that fragmentation was both operational and strategic. Operations teams spent hours mapping, cleaning and deduplicating data, friction built up between owners and buyers, and manual handling allowed errors to seep into planning and reporting, so trust in the data was inconsistent. More fundamentally, without universal IDs the industry could not automate, which limited its ability to trade programmatically, to measure accurately and to attribute across media.

2. Approach

In 2014 the buy side and sell side together recognised that agreed standards were needed for automation in OOH trading, and a cross-industry OOH Standards Committee was formed, jointly governed by the sell side through Outsmart and the buy side through IPA Outdoor so that the roadmap would always reflect both buyers and sellers. The Committee appointed Adwanted, then Mediatel, to build a collaborative platform for sharing inventory data.

Cross industry collaboration was key to achieving a fair solution that worked for all. The Standards Committee helped develop the definitions of formats and environments ensuring the platform would be owned by the industry, for the industry. A deliberate design choice was to model each frame along three independent dimensions, the environment it sits in, its physical format and its type, which makes the data easier to validate, report and plan against while still allowing those dimensions to be recombined for output. The guiding decision was to give every physical advertising frame a single, consistent identity that all parties would reference, and to keep the platform live and continuously maintained so.

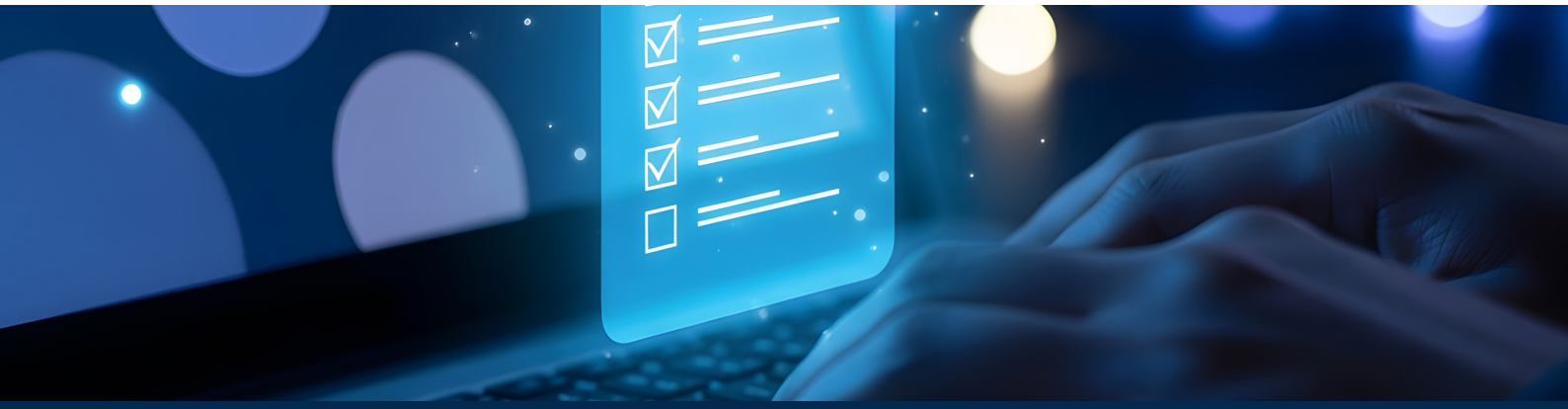
“SPACE is an example of best-in-class collaboration across the out of home industry. It gives us an excellent platform from which to develop the increasing requirement for data management and exchange, which will continue to give brands the confidence to embrace out of home.”

CEO, Outsmart

Adwanted Consulting & Solutions

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A single, universal ID and taxonomy for every OOH frame in the UK



95%
of UK OOH frames held in SPACE

500k
sites in one continuously updated database

90+
subscribed companies

3. Solution

SPACE, launched in 2015, is a single central database that allocates a universal ID, to every OOH location, format and environment in the UK. A Frame ID is created the moment a billboard goes into the ground, so it can be traded immediately, and it stays consistent even when the site changes ownership, with transfers handled through SPACE itself. Each frame carries a full set of standardised attributes, from media owner, format and illumination through to address, environment, TV region and production specification, all visible to everyone.

The platform is accessible by API, the website or through a simple Excel template, so media owners of any size can integrate. It is self-policing: if anyone believes a site's data is wrong, they can raise this in SPACE, and because everyone uses it, any occasional errors surface quickly. The platform continues to evolve with the market, for example a schools database that shows how close frames are to schools so the industry can self-police restrictions on advertising unhealthy foods to younger audiences.

SPACE is a managed service, not simply a database. Inventory must meet a minimum data-quality standard before it is accepted and a Universal ID is issued, ongoing data checks flag omissions for correction, and a customer success team onboards media owners, trains them and works alongside them to keep their inventory clean and current.

4. Impact

SPACE now holds around 95% of UK OOH frames, roughly half a million sites, in one continuously updated database, with about 10% of owners refreshing their inventory on any given working day. It has also become the mechanism for audience measurement.

It is accepted across the industry as the single source of truth for media owners, agencies, technology platforms and Route audience measurement, and it is the shared foundation the rest of the industry's infrastructure is built on.

"If you want to be a player in the out-of-home industry, you have to be on SPACE. It's non-negotiable."

Specialist Agency Planner

"If you don't use Route and SPACE, I can't see how you can operate in this market. Without it we wouldn't be able to do CPM trading."

Media Agency Buyer