

How CCF Makes its Digital Campaigns More Profitable with Pathlabs

Case Study



"Pathlabs is the best digital media partner I've worked with.

They consistently deliver results for our agency - and gave our clients better performance for the same dollars."

Andy Brunn,
Media Director, CCF



Highlights

Challenges

- Managing every detail of digital media in-house
- Feeling the impact on their productivity and profitability
- Struggling to find, hire, and retain digital media talent
- Lacking dashboard solution and losing business
- Looking for partner to act as their digital media team

Solution

Pathlabs provides CCF with:

- Dedicated digital media team that delivers for its clients
- Best-in-class technology that drives down costs
- Media planning and buying that drives performance, leads, and revenue
- Execution and optimization of digital campaigns
- API connections and automated reports that enable CCF to provide transparent data to clients
- Culture of dedication and teamwork

Results

- 30% more profitable on every campaign
- 50% reduction in staff costs
- More hours back to spend on growth-focused priorities
- Delivering for both the agency—and its clients

Client

CCF

CCF is a Minneapolis-based communications advertising agency, with **30+ team members** working to help **20+ active media clients** connect with their customers.

Challenges

Wasting time and resources managing clients' digital media execution in-house

The digital advertising ecosystem is notoriously messy and complex to navigate, particularly for busy agencies. It can easily eat up significant time and resources, leaving problems where there could be profits.

This was the reality for CCF. While the agency was an authority at getting its clients in front of the right prospects at the right time, it was getting stuck in the weeds when it came to digital media.

On top of all the high-level planning and strategic work they were doing, CCF was also managing every intricate detail of execution, including buying ads and trying to identify the right tools and technologies in a market that never stands still.

Having so many levers to pull internally was affecting their profitability and productivity, and making it tough to scale.

Even finding the right people to manage digital media for their clients was a huge pull on time and resources.

"It was difficult to find, hire, and retain any sort of talent in this space," says Media Director Andy Brunn.

“I’d train two or three people a year, they’d stay for six months and then when they were up to speed, they’d leave—and I was left starting from scratch.”

This revolving door of talent didn’t just mean wasted hours for Andy. It impacted the time he had to work on other business priorities.

“I’m our Media Director, yet I’d often have to spend time myself in-platform because I was the only one on the team with expertise there,” he says. “So, I was down in the weeds when I should have been working on the big picture and leading on strategy or working on new business.”

Andy also found it a huge drain on resources to constantly identify and finance the right digital media platforms and tools.

But the challenge didn’t end there. An increasing number of clients were asking for a dashboard solution that pulled all siloed campaign data together, so they could view overall campaign performance at any time they liked. Only CCF didn’t have one.

“More customers wanted data to be transparent and if we couldn’t offer that, they wouldn’t even consider us as their agency,” says Andy. “We estimated we’d lose income of up to \$2m gross if we didn’t get a dashboard solution in place quickly.”

To make his team more efficient, campaigns more profitable, and data more transparent, Andy decided to search out a trusted digital media partner to operate as an extension of his team.

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Solution

Partnering with Pathlabs to grow their digital media business

CCF first reached out to Pathlabs to solve the issue of making campaign data more transparent to its clients. However, they were so impressed by Pathlabs' culture, commitment, and command of digital media, they got the ball rolling on a comprehensive, managed services solution.

Pathlabs' first project for CCF was a small initiative around elder fraud protection. **Because Pathlabs uses best-in-class technology to drive down the cost of media for its clients, CCF was able to deliver better results than its client's small campaign budget would have otherwise allowed.**

"Pathlabs did a great job for our client and ensured they got more for their money," says Andy. "I was so impressed because Pathlabs gave it as much attention as if it was a multi-million dollar campaign!"

Having won CCF's trust from day one, Andy increasingly used Pathlabs as his digital team across the full spectrum of agency campaigns to deliver:

Media planning and buying

Unlike typical digital media providers who focus on a single platform or push technologies with the highest margins, Pathlabs stays agnostic to channel and technology. They focus on the appropriate mix to drive the best performance, sales, leads, and revenue for each of CCF's clients.

"When Pathlabs took over our digital media buying, clients immediately saw better performance for the same dollars," says Andy. "Instead of all the wheel-spinning, we now had more time to service clients in terms of strategy, campaign optimization, and reporting. So it was a huge win for our agency and our clients."

Media execution and optimization

Pathlabs stepped in to bring together all the complex pieces of executing digital campaigns that had been draining so much time and resource from CCF. Plus, they applied leading-edge technologies to automate key steps in the campaign management process and drive costs down.

“Pathlabs consistently goes further for us, relentlessly tweaking and refining campaigns to fine-tune performance and meet clients’ goals,” explains Andy. “Having such a flexible and fluid approach isn’t something most agencies would be able to achieve on their own.”

Reporting and analytics

Pathlabs pulled out all the stops to enable CCF to provide transparent campaign data to its clients.

With most agency clients, Pathlabs leverages its own reporting platforms to connect media and business data and provide reports and insights that their clients can understand and act on. But CCF needed something different.

They wanted to paint a picture of everything they were doing for clients and everything Pathlabs was doing in a holistic way. As a result, Pathlabs set up API connections and automated email reports that make it simple for CCF to ingest and report campaign data.

“This was something that they really went to bat for us on,” says Andy. “They understood exactly why we were looking to have it, understood where that was coming from, and fought for it to happen.”

Because Pathlabs went the extra mile, CCF can now identify correlation and causation between different channels, and hone campaign performance based on those insights.

Of all the qualities Pathlabs displays, Andy says it’s the people and service that set the partnership apart.

“A lot of people talk about partnerships versus vendors, but in this case, I truly believe it and appreciate it,” he says. “Even when individuals on the team change, that service level remains, and that same culture of teamwork and dedication persists.”

Andy adds: “Pathlabs acts as an extension of our digital media team and consistently delivers results for us and overperforms for our clients.”

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Results

Campaigns 30% more profitable, 20% reduction in staff costs, and more time to focus on growth

Since partnering with Pathlabs, managing digital media has gone from exasperating to easy. Thanks to Pathlabs’ niche expertise, dedicated team, and leading-edge technology, CCF has improved campaign performance and profitability. In fact, by moving from an in-house model to putting that money into direct spend with Pathlabs, Andy estimates they’re 30% more profitable on every piece of business.

“We’ve offloaded so much time-consuming and costly work thanks to Pathlabs,” says Andy. “In our business, where we’re selling our time or doing value-based billing, being able to take money to the bottom line is based on how efficient we are—and we’re so much more efficient now thanks to Pathlabs.”

Because CCF no longer has to hire and train new staff to do hands-on, in-platform work, they’re making significant cost savings. In fact, Andy estimates that without Pathlabs, CCF would need to double its media staff to execute everything in-house.

“We’re saving around 50% on staff costs since using Pathlabs,” says Andy. “Those savings go either directly to our bottom line, or are freed up to be billable elsewhere.”

Even better, with so many tasks taken off their plates, CCF has more time back to focus on other priorities that are key to scaling the business.

“With Pathlabs there to facilitate the buy and to act as the expert on other aspects of digital media management, we have more hours to hone our strategy, focus on new business, and find those moments where we can deliver the right message, in the right place, at the right time.”

With Pathlabs managing the intricacies of digital media so thoroughly, improving campaign performance, and saving CCF money, the partnership delivers for both the agency—and its clients.

“From a partnership standpoint, Pathlabs are the best I’ve worked with,” says Andy. “They are very aligned with us and our client goals and they push us. They’re not order takers, so I like that from a strategic council standpoint. And it’s just a really great relationship. So, I definitely highly recommend them.”

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Pathlabs

Learn more about how
Pathlabs helps agencies grow
their media business

Talk with Us

The graphic consists of several elements: a circular inset photo of two women in a professional setting looking at a laptop; a line graph titled 'KPI - 4.2X ROAS' showing a steady increase from 1% in January to approximately 3.8% in April; and a series of overlapping circles in blue, green, and red, each containing a social media icon (Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube).

Month	ROAS (%)
Jan	1%
Feb	2%
Mar	2.8%
Apr	3.8%