Powering Ad-Tech Campaigns with Data

Simplifying advertising inventory aggregation pipeline and enabling rapid integration of OOH inventory from multiple providers has increased Talon's operational efficiency.

Talon is a specialist Out-of-Home (OOH) agency with over 30% UK market share and operations in the USA, Canada, Europe, UAE, and Asia Pacific regions. OOH is a collective term for advertisements found on public billboards, wallscapes, and posters seen while "on the go". Traditionally, OOH agencies have been managing and running campaigns manually. Even for Talon, handling campaign planning to media buying, pricing, placement, and tracking was not an automated process. In addition, lack of industry standards created information silos making measurement and accountability complicated.

Talon partnered with Sahaj Software for their expertise in the OOH and ad industry to build a robust campaign management tool, "Plato," which surpasses off-the-shelf tools by adapting to various regions and integrating with the end-to-end ecosystem of the Talon group. Plato is now widely used as the de facto tool to research media inventory and plan campaigns that cater to the specific needs of customers in the UK, North America, and other international markets.

The Ask

Talon started its UK operations back in 2012 and, by 2017, became one of the top specialists in OOH campaign planning and execution. Traditional tools like spreadsheets and some of-the-shelf tools served them well in smaller markets, but as their business expanded, they needed more robust tools to manage large volumes of inventory and run campaigns in multiple regions across the globe. Most traditional campaign execution occurred either via manual interactions or ad hoc B2B platforms.

The major bottlenecks of the process were:
- Lack of a standardized inventory of OOH media across multiple regions.
- Different regions had localized nuances in the media buying process.
- New partnerships with agencies and vendors demanded more integrated workflows.
- The existing finance system could not adapt to new geographies, putting significant pressure on finance teams to manually validate and process finances.

Their earlier attempts to build a custom solution to these problems did not yield good results. The system was brittle and did not provide value throughout the complete campaign lifecycle. In 2018, Talon onboarded Sahaj Software to envision a platform that would allow them to scale and increase team efficiency by standardizing workflows and streamlining finances. In just four months, we delivered a working solution ready for production, to be used by their teams.
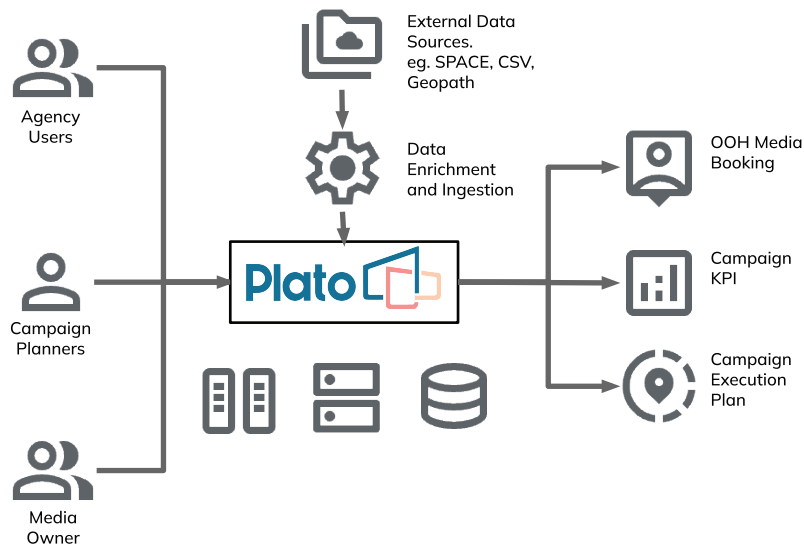
The Solution

We spent considerable time understanding the domain and business use-case. There was no existing solution for inspiration, but users had some ideas about how a tool could benefit them. A team was formed with Sahaj consultants and Talon business stakeholders that conducted multiple discovery workshops to understand the scope of the problem and designed the first version, which began delivering value by increasing campaign planning efficiency from day one.

The interactive approach helped us learn from usage, and continuous collaboration with users, and product owners guided us in defining new features as the platform was developed piece by piece in every iteration.

We built a multifaceted platform with each module targeting a specific aspect of campaign management, combining them into an extensible suite of application tools named PLATO - an automated trading platform that aggregates all OOH inventory into a single, intuitive campaign planning and delivery system. It allows users to explore, plan, check availability, reserve, and trade static and digital inventory across multiple markets.

Plato is a complete end-to-end planning and buying platform designed for planners to use from campaign inception through transaction completion. The platform hosts all OOH inventory in one place with real-time market intelligence, live availability, and automated trading for efficient

External Data Sources.
eg. SPACE, CSV, Geopath

Data Enrichment and Ingestion

Agency Users

Campaign Planners

Media Owner

Plato

OOH Media Booking

Campaign KPI

Campaign Execution Plan

campaign activation. Unique features include a smart search function that allows users to list and map all frames in the UK and North America by geography or points of interest, along with an in-built audience analysis tool that uses Route audience data in the UK and Geopath in the US to create demographic audience-based frame lists instantly. Plato also integrates with other in-house data platforms like Ada to plan campaigns based on audience behavior.

Impact

A standardized data pipeline and integration with third-party systems allowed planners to execute campaigns efficiently with more confidence and less time. This helped Talon expand its horizons and work with multiple agencies and partners from the UK to North America.

The key areas where Plato made an impact include:

Simplified Inventory Aggregation
A robust scalable data ingestion pipeline simplifies integration with new data sources. OOH inventory sourced from different providers can be searched in one place using standardized parameters.

Speed, Efficiency, and Scaliability
User-friendly tools save time when finding the right set of OOH inventory to fulfill campaign objectives. Users can employ POI-based searches to pinpoint relevant media. Smart geography, prohibition, and availability filters alleviate the evaluation burden for each media location, allowing planners to focus on developing more specific campaign plans quickly.

Growth Driver

Increased efficiency and scalable infrastructure enabled Talon to grow beyond the UK into larger markets like the US. The data platform facilitated effective integration with new inventory providers, significantly reducing time spent operating in new markets.

To summarise, Plato is capable of operating at the following scale:

Inventory of over 2 million media outlets on a single platform.

More than 7 million points of interest available for search.

Availability of 10 million frame hours over the next 3 to 12 months refreshing

A Solid Foundation

Sahaj's consistent engagement with stakeholders to understand their domain not only made the product more suitable but also suggested novel solutions that exceeded initial problem statements, enhancing system performance further. The deep understanding of OOH domain nuances and a constant drive for increased efficiency in campaign planning have propelled Plato's growth for over six years.

Road Ahead

Increased usage across new territories continually demands more optimization methods for campaign planning processes. As a step forward, Talon and Sahaj are developing sophisticated algorithm-driven generation of optimized plans to minimize user time spent selecting plans that meet campaign objectives. Our teams are perpetually seeking further optimization opportunities and cost savings.

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