
Media Planning and Buying Course: Reach, Budget Allocation and Channel Mix

14 – 18 December 2026
Madrid





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Programme Summary

Media planning and buying is the subject of this one-week training course for marketing and communications directors, heads of media and brand managers, ending in a media plan with a budget allocation for one campaign. Many brands buy space channel by channel, so spend follows habit and audience overlap goes unmeasured. The programme moves from audience and objectives through reach and frequency, channel mix and negotiation to measurement, using worked cases and live planning exercises. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this media planning programme for senior marketers from mixed organisations.

The Business Case

When budgets are split by habit, the same audience is reached repeatedly while others are missed, and results are judged on clicks instead of business effect. Leaders who set objectives first, plan reach and frequency deliberately and test what media actually changed spend with more confidence and explain it more clearly to finance colleagues.

- Cost per Unique Reach: Improves as duplication across channels is identified and trimmed.
- Share of Voice: Becomes easier to defend as spend is set against category competitors.
- Budget Accountability: Strengthens as every allocation is tied to an agreed measure of effect.

Principles and Evidence Base

- Reach and frequency, including effective frequency: It governs how exposure is set per audience segment in Sessions 2 and 3.
- Gross rating points and cost per thousand: They provide the common currency for comparing channels and offers in Sessions 3 and 4.
- Viewability standards from the Media Rating Council: They shape the quality terms written into buying briefs in Session 4.
- Marketing mix modelling and incrementality testing: They frame the evidence of effect reviewed in Session 5.

Intended Participants

- Marketing and communications directors who own an annual media budget and defend it to finance.
- Heads of media who brief agencies and judge the plans they return.
- Brand managers who must turn a brand objective into a funded channel plan.
- Senior planners who are preparing to lead media decisions for several brands.

Typical sectors include retail, financial services, telecommunications and consumer goods.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct media objectives and audience definitions that a budget can be tested against.
2. Participants will be able to calculate reach, frequency and gross rating points for a proposed schedule.
3. Participants will be able to compare channels on cost per thousand and on cost per unique reach.
4. Participants will be able to evaluate agency and publisher offers against quality and viewability terms.
5. Participants will be able to diagnose weaknesses in an existing plan using evidence from modelling and tests.
6. Participants will be able to justify a budget allocation and channel mix to finance and executive colleagues.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Media Objectives and Audience Definition

What must the media plan achieve, and for whom?

- Brand and Sales Objective Brief
- Audience Segmentation Profile
- Category Share of Voice Review
- Media Funnel Role Map
- Planning Brief Template

Day 2: Diagnosing Reach, Frequency and Overlap

How much of the audience does current spend reach, and how often?

- Reach and Frequency Curve
- Effective Frequency Threshold
- Gross Rating Points Calculation
- Channel Duplication Matrix
- Cost per Unique Reach Table

Day 3: Designing the Channel Mix and Budget Allocation

How should the budget be divided across channels and periods?

- Channel Role Scorecard
- Budget Allocation Model
- Flighting and Pulsing Schedule
- Cost per Thousand Comparison
- Scenario Trade-off Grid



Day 4: Designing the Buying Approach and Quality Terms

How are offers briefed, compared and negotiated?

- Buying Brief for Agencies and Publishers
- Offer Comparison Sheet
- Viewability and Brand Safety Terms
- Negotiation Position Map
- Make-Good and Billing Checklist

Day 5: Applying Plan, Mix and Measurement to One Campaign

Does the plan hold when tested against evidence and challenge?

- Testing the Session 2 Reach Model on Campaign Data
- Rebalancing the Session 3 Budget Allocation
- Applying the Session 4 Quality Terms to Live Offers
- Reviewing Marketing Mix Modelling and Incrementality Test Results
- Completing the Media Plan with Budget Allocation

Methodology

The programme uses a data workshop method built on anonymised schedules, audience tables, offer sheets and short cases from retail, banking and telecommunications campaigns. Participants plan one campaign in small groups, defend choices to peers who act as finance and agency colleagues, and receive facilitator feedback on each work product.

- Suggested activity: Rebuilding a plan after a thirty per cent budget cut.
- Suggested activity: Comparing three agency offers on cost per unique reach.
- Suggested activity: Presenting a channel mix to a mock finance panel.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a media plan with a budget allocation for one campaign. It holds objectives, an audience definition, a reach and frequency model, a channel mix, buying terms and a measurement plan. The plan is used at work to brief agencies, agree spend with finance and review results after the campaign.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is media planning suitable for managers who have not led a full media budget before?

Yes. Media planning is taught from first principles and assumes responsibility for marketing spend or agency briefs, not earlier ownership of a whole budget.



Which models does media planning rest on in this programme?

Media planning here rests on reach and frequency, gross rating points, cost per thousand, viewability standards, marketing mix modelling and incrementality testing.

How is the media plan used at work after the media planning course?

You use the plan to brief agencies, agree spend with finance and review the effect of each channel after the campaign.

How does media planning differ from a programme on digital marketing strategy?

Media planning centres on audience, exposure, budget and buying across all paid channels, while digital marketing strategy centres on online propositions, content and conversion.