How Teams Evaluate Audience Insight and Media Planning Efficiency

Marketing teams invest significant time and resource into understanding audiences and planning media effectively. Yet quantifying how efficient those processes are is a challenge in itself, particularly because much of the work happens upstream, before campaigns are activated.

Efficiency in audience insight and media planning rarely appears in traditional performance metrics. It sits within the workflows, handovers and decisions that shape strategy long before outcomes are visible. As a result, efficiency is often experienced rather than directly measured.

This article explores why evaluating efficiency across both audience insight and media planning is inherently complex, where effort and value can become misaligned as workflows scale, and how teams can begin assessing their processes in a more deliberate and constructive way.

Why Audience Insight and Planning Efficiency Are Hard to Quantify

Unlike media performance, which can be assessed once campaigns are live, efficiency in audience insight and planning exists before activation. It lives in how questions are framed, how audiences are defined, how insight is developed, and how decisions ultimately take shape.

Because this work happens ahead of execution:

- time spent developing and refining audience insight is rarely logged or benchmarked
- effort is distributed across people, tools and datasets
- progress is measured by outputs delivered rather than decisions enabled

None of this reflects poor practice. It reflects the reality of complex insight and planning environments, where work is iterative by nature and value is not always linear.

Where Effort and Complexity Tend to Accumulate

As organisations grow and insight and planning become more sophisticated, certain pressure points naturally emerge.

Multiple data sources and tools

Audience understanding may be built using one set of systems, while planning decisions are explored elsewhere. When insights must be recreated, reinterpreted or translated between environments, additional effort is required to maintain alignment and consistency.

Manual preparation and validation

Teams frequently invest time validating, structuring or reworking analysis to ensure it is robust and comparable. This effort supports rigour, but it also absorbs time that could otherwise be spent interpreting insight or exploring implications.

Comparability across audiences and markets

As insight expands across segments or regions, comparing audiences becomes more demanding. Ensuring like-for-like views requires careful design, particularly when working with multiple data sources.

Insight that requires translation into planning

Audience insight often provides depth of understanding, while planning decisions require clarity of implication. Bridging that gap involves interpretation, context and iteration rather than simple automation.

These dynamics are not flaws. They are a natural consequence of working with rich, multi-dimensional audience data at scale.
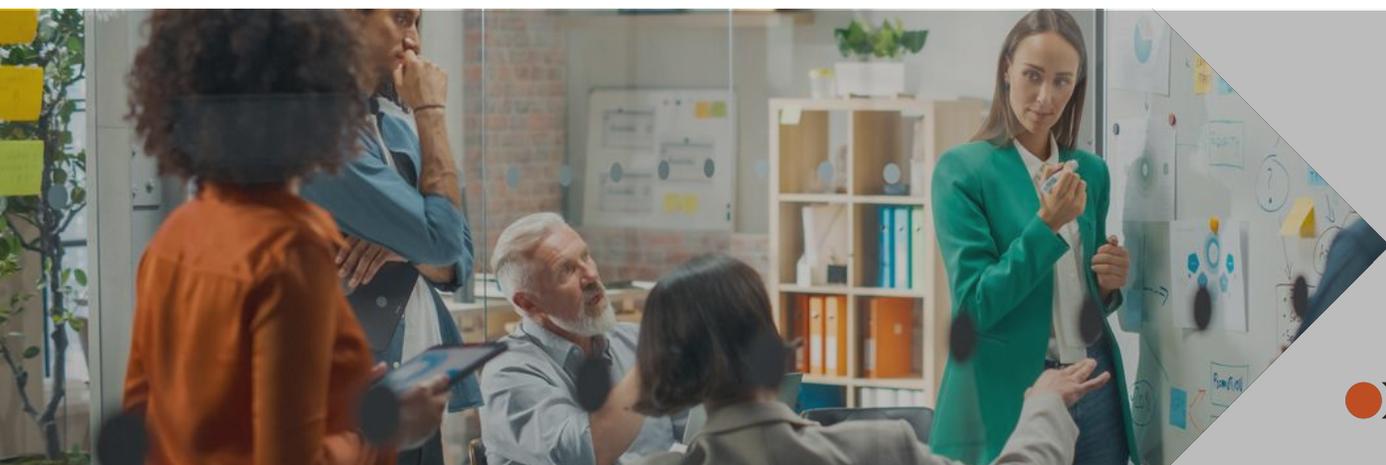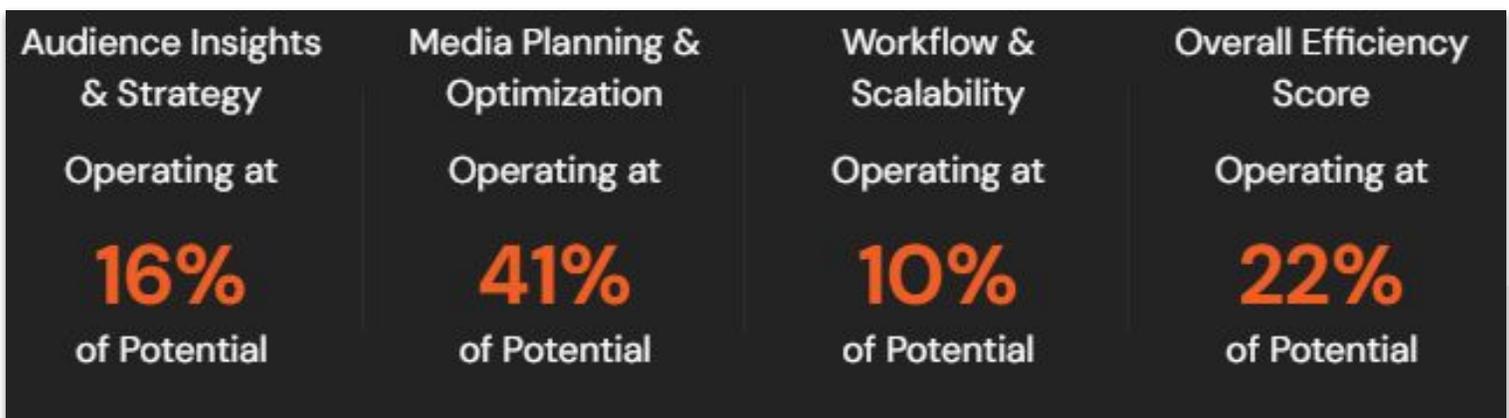
What Efficient Audience Insight and Planning Look Like in Practice

Efficient audience insight and planning do not mean simplifying analysis or reducing depth. They mean creating conditions where audience understanding is developed efficiently and carried forward seamlessly into planning and decision-making, without unnecessary duplication or loss of context.

In practice, efficient workflows often include:

- audience insights that are structured for comparison, reuse and iteration
- shared audience definitions across insight development and planning stages
- visualisations that surface key signals and relationships quickly
- the ability to explore audience differences and "what if" questions without rebuilding analysis
- fewer handovers between insight and planning environments
- stronger alignment around how audience understanding informs decisions

Efficiency is felt not only in time saved, but in smoother transitions from understanding to action and fewer downstream adjustments.

Audience Insights & Strategy	Media Planning & Optimization	Workflow & Scalability	Overall Efficiency Score
Operating at	Operating at	Operating at	Operating at
16%	**41%**	**10%**	**22%**
of Potential	of Potential	of Potential	of Potential

Looking Beyond ROI

Return on investment remains essential, but it does not fully capture how efficiently insight and planning work is done.

Teams increasingly look beyond ROI to consider:

- how long it takes to move from question to audience insight
- how often insight or analysis must be revisited or restructured
- how clearly audience understanding informs planning decisions
- where momentum tends to slow between insight and action
- how much effort is spent aligning different perspectives

It is also important to recognise that value is evaluated differently by brands, creative and media agencies, and media owners, depending on their roles, objectives and decision-making responsibilities.

These considerations apply both to how audience insight is developed and to how planning decisions are made.

Workflow and Scalability

Operating at 10% of Potential

Your Score	10%
Industry Average	25%
TelmarHelixa Score	95%
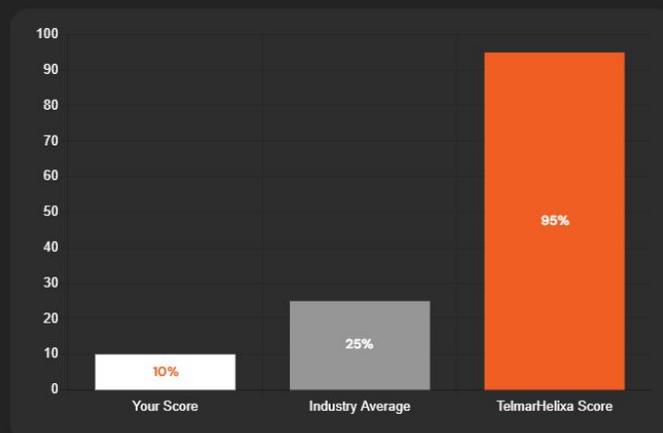
TelmarHelixa: Most systems at this level create bottlenecks, limit collaboration, and require heavy manual intervention. TelmarHelixa replaces those constraints with seamless collaboration, autonomous execution, and broad team access, accelerating agility, usability, and speed.

What This Means for you

At a Low score, your workflows are likely fragmented, and collaboration depends on individual expertise rather than scalable systems. With TelmarHelixa, teams can move from insights to execution seamlessly, collaborate in real time, and operate independently regardless of experience level. This delivers operational flexibility and eliminates the bottlenecks that slow rich audience insights, cross-media planning and optimization..

The Value of Reflective Evaluation

Reflection is particularly valuable where audience insight and planning intersect, as this is where inefficiencies are most likely to accumulate unnoticed.

Because efficiency is not easily visible in performance metrics, it is often best explored through structured evaluation. Reflection helps teams:

- step back from day-to-day execution
- identify where effort delivers the greatest value
- highlight areas where insight and planning processes have grown organically
- build a shared understanding of what effective workflows look like

This is not about identifying shortcomings. It is about making implicit processes more visible and intentional.

Starting the Evaluation Process

A useful starting point is simply asking thoughtful questions:

- Where does most effort tend to concentrate in developing audience insight and planning activity?
- At which points does insight require additional interpretation before informing decisions?
- Which activities are repeated across teams, tools or datasets?
- Where does audience understanding lose momentum before becoming action?

Answering these questions collaboratively often reveals opportunities to improve clarity and flow without compromising rigour.

Why This Matters Now

As audiences fragment and media environments grow more complex, the work of understanding people and planning effectively becomes more demanding. The ability to move smoothly from audience insight to decision becomes increasingly valuable.

Evaluating efficiency across both insight development and planning is not about speed for its own sake. It is about ensuring that insight work supports strategic thinking in a way that feels proportionate, deliberate and sustainable.

When efficiency is better understood, teams can focus their energy where it matters most: developing clear audience understanding and making well-informed decisions with confidence.

Evaluate your audience insight and planning efficiency

Use the value assessment to evaluate how efficiently your audience insights are developed and carried into planning.

Baseline Efficiency

The assessment shows that significant resources are tied up in manual processes and fragmented workflows. Across Audience Insights and Media Planning & Optimization, this represents an estimated $250,000–$300,000 in unrealised productivity annually.

The detailed results highlight exactly where these inefficiencies occur and how TelmarHelixa can release this capacity into measurable savings.

Understand the TelmarHelixa benchmark

Book a demo

Radar chart: Audience Insights & Strategy 88%, Media Planning & Optimization 87%, Workflow & Scalability 95%; Your Score values 16%, 41%, 10%. Legend: Your Score / TelmarHelixa Score