



Stella Rising Analytics Lead Zafreen Zerilli Named to Ad Age 2025 Media Buying Power List

Recognition highlights agency's leadership in data-driven media strategy and analytics innovation

SOUTHPORT, CT, UNITED STATES, October 29, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Stella Rising, an independent media and marketing agency that accelerates profitable growth for beauty, health, food and lifestyle brands, announced that Zafreen Zerilli, SVP, Analytics and Customer Insights, has been named to Ad Age's 2025 Media Buying Power List, an annual recognition of the industry's most influential media buyers and strategists.

The Power List honors executives who are shaping the future of media buying through innovation, leadership, and measurable impact. Zafreen's recognition underscores Stella's commitment to advancing the role of data science and analytics in modern media strategy.

"Zafreen has fundamentally transformed how we approach media planning and buying," said Andrea Van Dam, CEO of Stella Rising. "Under her leadership, we've moved beyond traditional media metrics to build proprietary tools that don't just analyze data—they predict performance, optimize consistently, and drive measurable growth."

Under Zafreen's leadership, Stella Rising won Digiday's 2025 Media Planning & Buying Award for Best Use of Media Mix Modeling Award; awarded for our work with insurance marketplace Covered California.

Pioneering Analytics-Driven Media Strategy

Zafreen joined Stella in 2017, bringing with her extensive MMM and advanced analytics experience, and has since redefined the role of analytics—not as a siloed discipline, but as a strategic growth engine embedded across every stage of media planning. Prior to beginning her agency career, Zafreen received her MBA from the Yale School of Management.

What sets Zafreen apart is her ability to turn complexity into clarity. She transforms advanced analytics into intuitive, actionable insights that empower ambitious brands to grow profitably and inclusively. Zafreen has developed a suite of proprietary tools including:

- Spark (predictive forecasting)
- Halo: channel allocation and planning

- Pulse: MMM-backed performance dashboard
- Prism: a first-party customer modeling tool that unlocks lifetime value and behavioral segmentation at scale

These tools fuel smarter decision-making by merging AI, machine learning, and human insight. Zafreen's work powers real-time strategy, optimized investments, and brand profitability—amid shifting consumer behavior and rising acquisition costs.

According to Zafreen “the future of media buying isn't just about where audiences are—it's about understanding how receptive they are to specific messages in specific contexts. Our approach combines predictive analytics with cultural intelligence to ensure every media dollar works harder and every campaign delivers measurable ROI.”

Driving Measurable Results

Clients view Zafreen as a true partner and visionary, shaping the future of media accountability and effectiveness—and redefining what's possible through analytics.

Her work and Stella's analytics-first approach has delivered significant results for client, including:

- Improved media's YoY ROAS by 12% through optimizing the channel mix for a healthcare provider.
- Delivered immediate 13% lift in ROAS through optimizing the tactical mix for a pet wellness brand. Ongoing monthly optimizations over the subsequent four months saw a total ROAS lift of 43% YoY.
- Provided 33% YoY revenue growth for a clean beauty brand

About Ad Age's Media Buying Power List

Ad Age's annual Media Buying Power List recognizes the most influential media buyers and strategists who are shaping the industry through innovation, leadership, and demonstrated impact. The 2025 list features executives from agencies, brands, and platforms who are driving the evolution of media buying in an increasingly complex and data-driven landscape.

About Stella

Stella is an independent media and marketing agency specializing in beauty, health, food and lifestyle brands. The agency combines proprietary analytics tools, cultural intelligence, and strategic agility to drive profitable growth for clients. This year, Stella Rising was named 2025 Ad Age Small Agency of the Year – Media/Silver.

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