

Six Tips For Local Online Advertising

By **Brett Stevenson**
Guest Columnist



Local retail advertisers know that the Internet is the future, but they face the challenge of learning a new way to advertise. For years they have employed newspaper, television, radio, and direct mail to bring customers into their stores. Lately, these methods have been losing their effectiveness. Newspapers suffer from dwindling readership, television stations and cable have to deal with TiVo, radio is fragmented due to satellite radio, and the cost of direct mail is increasing as the price of paper and postage continues to climb.

In today's market, traditional advertising is competing with

online advertising. Major national brands have sliced their budgets for traditional advertising to move dollars to online advertising. As online grows, local retailers need to understand how to effectively use online advertising to reach a local audience.

As more people venture online to get their local news, online advertising is becoming a new source of revenue for local newspapers, television and radio stations—all of which are enjoying growing audiences, but this growth depends on the attention they give their Web sites.

Here are six simple tips for using banners on local media Web sites:

- Base your banner costs on the traffic that sees your banner. Pay the sites on a cost-per-thousand basis. This will allow

you to compare sites based on their traffic; that way you are comparing apples to apples.

- Use a third-party ad serving company that allows you to gauge the progress of your campaign. Is the site delivering the promised traffic?

- Use a large number of different sites. Our research has shown that consumers do not use a variety of local media sites. They pick one local site and stick with it. This means the local sites' traffic is unique and can't be found on other sites.

- Buy myriad banners, not just a couple. Online is the same as TV and radio when it comes to frequency.

- Use a budget similar to the one you would use for traditional media. You can't use a tiny budget online and expect it to work like a large budget on TV or radio.

- Use landing pages. If your

banner advertises a single product, make sure that banner clicks through to a landing page about that product. Don't send consumers to your home page where they have to search for the item you advertised.

Local media Web sites are the future of local advertising. They are also the saving grace for struggling local media and represent a strong revenue stream for them. Local media needs to spend the time and money to educate local advertisers on the use of the online space. When local media sites work together with local retailers, they both benefit.

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