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Current Issue



# The New Art of the Sell

Advertising agencies have a new set of tools for the information age

By: Jason Kirk

It's an ad, ad, ad, ad world. That is, unless you ask the advertising community, which increasingly prefers to think of itself in terms of "marketing." As executives continue to grasp the possibilities in new and emerging media, the advertising industry is reinventing itself.

Even as agencies grapple with the challenges posed by new media, they're moving from creating communications to creating experiences. Savvy advertising executives no longer see their target audiences as passive media users, but rather active media co-creators. "Interactive advertising" is the industry's buzz term.

Several Seattle-based agencies are forging new strategic ad campaigns as the evolving field of online media creates new niches and new opportunities.

One agency has developed an eclectic online community of basketball fans whose attention is coveted by a major cell phone provider.

Another has embraced a process it calls "hyper-localizing," developing expertise about regional media outlets so its national clients don't have to.

Another agency calls itself a little agency "that can do anything" by adapting and restructuring its internal staff to meet the needs of the client.

A fourth has channeled the Northwest's trailblazing cultural history, infusing it with a nose for basic human truths and satire, resulting in a multi-media campaign with skyscraping results.

These companies differ in size, approach and product, but they share a pioneering spirit in their strategies for capitalizing on the new and continually evolving media environment. As emergent technologies present complex new issues, they see happy challenges.



Conrad Jungmann (Photo courtesy of Charles Peterson)

## Space Is the Place

LION New Media's Odwalla campaign

In the rush to take advantage of new and emerging media, LION New Media (LNM) has found and exploited a niche. "It's been difficult for national clients to place a buy across local media websites," says Conrad Jungmann, co-founder of LION New Media. "They have different rates, different ad-buying technologies, different billing. We built a database that allowed us to standardize a buy in a local market."

Jungmann calls this concept "hyper-localizing." When, for example, the Starcom MediaVest Group came looking for a company to help place its online media buys for the Coca-Cola-owned Odwalla line of juices, Jungmann and company rose to the occasion.

Online advertising is still a very young industry. When a decade or more in the business practically merits "grandfather" status, Jungmann would have to be considered a seasoned pro since he has been selling the Internet for 12 years. "I think I sold the very first banner ad in the state of Idaho."

Young though they are, new and emerging media have already seen early business models tried and tested, and new kinds of companies arise to meet new challenges. LNM is one of them. Like an inventive middle man, Jungmann's company parlays a deep understanding of traditional, regional media - from small community newspapers to local television and radio stations - into a kind of regional expertise that the big houses in New York and L.A. couldn't or wouldn't think to access on their own.

"One part of this campaign was just to run the Odwalla online pieces in Seattle, Phoenix and Boston," Jungmann explains. "The agency called us to place those three local media buys in those markets, [but now] the Odwalla campaign is running on at least 20 local media websites in each of those markets."

Of course, clients want real metrics. A given number of websites alone can't spell success, which is why LNM bolsters its "hyper-localizing" package with a complete, standardized tracking apparatus. "The Internet is the most trackable media out there," Jungmann says. "The challenge is having one report that shows all the sites - apples to apples - and that's a service we provide, tracking everything: impressions served on each site, what ad site is doing better, how many unique people see the ad in each market, the optimal frequency, and once they get to our client's site, what are they doing."

Knowing these metrics allows the company to make changes, and fast. Jungmann says this yields an average click-through rate that's two to six times the national average. Running the numbers ultimately serves LION New Media's dual masters: the ad agencies who hire the company and the publishers from which the company buys ads.

By capitalizing on relationships with local, traditional media - themselves experiencing well-publicized growing pains in this young digital age - Lion's business model in the emerging media marketplace rewards seasoned experience.

Jason Kirk is a Seattle-based journalist who covers media and advertising.