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Banner Advertising: News Of Its Demise Is Premature

By Deanna Mascle

You have seen them all over the internet — blinking, flashing, animated and garish. You vow that you will not contribute to this internet graffiti. You feel smug with your decision because after all banner advertising is dead.

Wrong. Banner advertising is not dead — and in fact it is still an effective internet marketing tool. However banner advertising has evolved — or rather I should say successful banner advertising has evolved. Some of the horrible eye-damaging banner ads still exist but successful, knowledgeable internet entrepreneurs have long abandoned those marketing efforts and instead concentrated on targeted, tasteful, and trim banner ads.

Banner ads have a bad reputation in part because of the proliferation of banner farms that killed all the banner swap programs (or at least made them completely ineffectual). Also we all have memories of those hideous banners flashing across the top of so many web sites.

Banners have come along way since then and a cleverly designed banner can be a real asset to any advertising campaign. Also don't forget that you don't have to use one of those big giant banners that span the width of the screen. You can use smaller simple ads that can fit easily into the sidebar or special box on a web site so they can suit the design and work more effectively.

It is also important that you pay close attention to what sites you will choose for displaying your banner. IE. A site about web development for your web hosting service ad or a site about parenting for your ad promoting your potty training book.

Many text link and pay per click advertising vendors also offer the option of banner ads. Similarly many ezine and newsletter publishers sell space on their sites.

And savvy internet marketers are taking them up on these advertising opportunities.

WHY USE BANNER ADVERTISING?

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Consumer research historically shows that most people see an ad several times before they take action. Banners allow you to display your ad over a period of time, increasing the chances that a prospect will see your ad and remember it.

Your banner ad can be targeted to specific audiences and displayed on internet pages and sites matched to that specific audience.

People seeing your advertisement can instantly click through to your web site store to learn more or to make a purchase on the spot.

You can track your results and make adjustments to your campaigns based on response. Analyzing your results can help you finetune your banner, landing page, or target audience to improve your response and sales.

Banner advertising is really a buyers market, as there is always more banner spaces available than advertisers need or want, which means you can find many bargains available.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING YOUR BANNER AD CAMPAIGN

There are several aspects to consider when planning out your banner advertising campaign.

The first consideration should be your ad graphic itself. These are usually animated GIF images but remember you want to attract customers — not simply attention — and remember the overall tone of your ad campaign when designing your graphic. Also keep in mind that many sites limit the file size of the graphic to somewhere between 12 and 16 KB.

Your banner can come in variety of sizes. The full banner size is 468 x 60 pixels. Some other standard banner sizes include:

Size(pixels).Type 468 x 60.....Full banner 234 x 60.....Half banner 392 x 72.....Full banner with vertical navigation bar 120 x 240....Vertical banner 125 x 125....Square button 120 x 90.....Button #1 120 x 60.....Button #2 88 x 31.....Micro button

Your graphic will be hyperlinked to a target url of your choice so you may want to spend some time planning how you will track traffic and clicks. Some programs provide a tracking and statistics service for you but most individual sites can't offer that information.

When selecting where to display your banner ad the first consideration should really be choosing a site offering information that appeals to your target audience. A high-traffic dating site isn't going to be much good for advertising your maternity clothing line, for example.

Then you should look at traffic. When looking at site stats you want to make sure you focus on page views or page impressions rather than hits (which may count individually each graphic viewed). Depending on your banner and market you may be primarily concerned with unique page impressions.

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Banner advertising is often sold by CPM (Cost Per Thousand displays, the Roman numeral "M" stands for one thousand). Many sites also offer a fixed rate price for a set period of time.

Many marketers do not concern themselves as much with click-through rates and instead see banner ads as "branding" tools. They create brand awareness and a brand image in the viewer's mind. The hope is that when the viewer gets ready to make a purchase then your "brand" pops into their mind. Branding can also generate sales over the long-term. Branding is difficult to measure, but can be very powerful.

If you have a big advertising budget then you might want to consider an ad agency or media buyer. They can offer a lot of value for the dollar because they have the experience, knowledge, and contacts to make the most of your budget.

It is quite possible to be your own media buyer, if you are willing and able to handle the increased workload. The biggest difficulty is finding the right sites on which to advertise your product or service. Then after you find a site that might be a good match you need to negotiate the best possible deal. It is important you be as knowledgeable as possible as it is a buyer's market and you don't want to pay too

much. Of course you also don't want to alienate a web master whose site is a perfect match for you.

You also have the option to buy banner space on many search engines and directories. Often this option allows you to display your ad only to a targeted audience which can obviously increase your chances for a successful campaign but it can be a pricey option.

Banner ad networks are another targeted option that might be more affordable. Individual web site owners contract with a single company to serve their banner ads and handle ad sales for them. In turn, these networks divide their sites into categories and subcategories to allow advertisers to advertise on particular sites within the network that are the most highly targeted. They also offer very sophisticated tracking tools that give you lots of valuable information about who is visiting your site, and what actions they are taking.

Some networks offer pay-per-click advertising which only charges you when someone clicks on your banner and comes to your site. However, this approach is subject to fraud by unscrupulous site owners.

A pay-per-sale network, otherwise known as an affiliate program, only charges the advertiser when a purchase is actually made. The advertiser pays both the affiliate and the network but only when there is a sale. Of course the competition to attract quality affiliates is high so while this can be effective it shouldn't be the only method of banner advertising you use.

And some final banner advertising tips:

- * Keep your message brief, direct and simple.
- * Attract more attention using words such as "free" and "now".
- * Put "click here" somewhere on the banner.
- * Create different versions of the banner.
- * Animate your banner but only if it improves it.
- * Keep the file size as small as possible.

Deanna Mascle established her presence on the net in 1999. Read her free tutorial "7 Steps To Establish Your Epresence" at

<http://EstablishYourEpresence.com>

. You can learn about more

advertising opportunities online at

<http://answersaboutinternetadvertising.com>

Ask Mr. D on Banner Exchange

By Bill Daugherty

Ask Mr. D on Banner Exchange by Bill Daugherty

Dear Mr. D,

I recently joined a banner exchange. This is my first venture into banner advertising and I was shocked to see my banner getting a measly .3% click-through rate.

Is this a normal ratio or do I just have a lousy banner?

Signed,

Clickless In Seattle

Dear Clickless,

Back in the good old days (three or four years ago) it was easy to get surfers to click on banners. Today that has changed dramatically, banner advertising has hit hard times.

But even in today's climate, a .3% click-through rate is extremely low. I haven't seen your banner, so I don't know if it is lousy or not. But here are

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some tips to follow when creating your banner.

- * The text should consist of only a few words that offer a clear message.

- * Choose your color scheme with great care. Make sure your text color contrast well with your background color.

- * Animation is great, but don't make it too busy.

- * The two most important words you can put on any banner are "Click Here."

Now for a look at banner placement strategy:

Some banner exchanges allow you to target the type of sites where your banner will appear and some do not. If your exchange doesn't offer this feature, switch to one that does.

Banner advertising may never again enjoy the strength it had in the good old days, but you can get the most out of your banner advertising by following the guidelines above.

Bill Daugherty. Do you have an advertising or marketing question you'd like to see published in this column? Send it to <mailto:MrD@epm.zzn.com> You can visit Mr. D's website at: <http://www.freeadsgalore.com>



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