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## Banner Design Tips

By David Callan

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Banner advertising is by far the most popular and widespread form of advertising on the Internet, almost every website has some form of banner advertising on it. There's just no escaping the banner on the net.

Even though we have all read the news about the declining effectiveness of banners on the web, I still believe that with the right 'ingredients' banners can be a good source of visitors and income for most webmasters.

There are five of these ingredients that I'd consider the most important, using all or most of them will always enable you to get a higher click through for your various banners. I'll list them and then continue to discuss each one in a bit more detail.

- Small file
- Call to action
- Animation
- Good ad copy
- Fake factor

### 1. Small file

This is one of the most important things you have to get right when designing a banner, if the .gif or .jpg file is large it will take a few seconds to download and by then the visitor might have scrolled down the page, meaning he or she doesn't even get to see your banner. If people don't see your banner they definitely are not going to click on it. So make sure your file stays below 10K, 15K at the absolute most, it's sometimes hard to

do, but if the others can do it, we can do it too.

### 2. Call to action

This is one of the easiest ways to increase the CTR (click through rate) of a banner, on this all the experts agree. Using a call to action simply involves having the words 'click here' or some other words such as 'sign up now' or something similar.

My thoughts on why using a call to action increases the CTR so much include the fact that there is so much advertising off-line, such as TV, Radio, billboards etc. etc. With advertising on these off-line mediums, target audiences are generally just required to

watch or read the ad. All ads online have a link and the purpose is to get people to click on the ad and visit the advertisers website, however with the world being so used to off-line advertising many people just see banners and think that's it, they don't realize that they are actually meant to click on it to find out more. That's why having click here or another call to action improves the effectiveness of a banner.

### 3. Animation

Banners with moving elements attract the eye a lot more than static banners do. The whole idea of designing banners is to grab attention of website visitors, using small animation help to do this. I say small because I don't want you to go overboard and fill a banner with lots of animation, this is a bad idea because, one it increases file size, and two it is generally annoying to people after a while especially when they are trying to read an article or tutorial. If your banner annoys them, they will most likely just leave without clicking on it.

### 4. Good ad copy

This one is kind of a given, but you should always include good ad copy in your banner, lots of fancy animation and pictures won't entice them to click, they look after grabbing the attention of the visitors. It's the actual text that will get people wanting to check out your product. Try to emphasize the benefits, not features of your product or service. Tell people how your product will make their life easier. Keep your wording short and concise, if you can use words that have been proven to attract people such as 'free', 'proven' and 'secret' do.

### 5. Fake factor

Many of the very successful banner ads of late have incorporated

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some kind of fake elements in them. There are various fake element's banner designers can use, such as fake scroll bars, fake text links, fake selection boxes, fake text boxes, fake submit buttons to mention just a few. Banners with fake elements perform so well because people think there clicking on a link to go to another page on the current site (as in the fake text links) or they think they are click on a button, but in fact they are actually clicking on a banner with a picture of a button and text link.

These fake banners are made using the Print Screen button usually found on the right side of any standard keyboard. Simply open a webpage or application and press 'print scrn' then crop the image around the button or scroll bar area (the area you want to fake) and then paste it into your banner, and that's it, you have fake elements in your banner. Alternatively designers simply draw buttons, scroll bars etc. using their graphics program.

Well there you have it, the five most important pointers to remember when designing banners. I'd normally end the article now but before we end, I want to talk about targetting your banner.

Always, always place your banner on sites that cater for your target audience (ie – the people most likely to buy your product). There's no point putting a banner for a new golf club you sell on a site dedicated to software, visitors to the site simply are not going to be interested and you're just wasting your money. You should be aiming to place the golf banner on golf course websites, sites like PGA.com, generally golf related sites, this way you are much more likely to make money. If you are not exposing your banner to your target audience, none of the above tips and tricks can save you.

David Callan – [admin@akamarketing.com](mailto:admin@akamarketing.com) David is the webmaster of <http://www.akamarketing.com>. Visit his site for free internet marketing articles, advice, ebooks, news and lots more.

### **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

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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 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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