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Online Advertising Sinks into the Abyss!

By Lee Traupel

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Back in the ancient days of 1994 when Mark Andreesen and his band of hardy programmers were inventing a ground-breaking product/application/way of life called a browser, a dedicated group of entrepreneurs started publishing Netsurfer Digest a modern day "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" for the web. I subscribed to this wonderful newsletter and reference guide back in those heady days of yesteryear and have been a loyal subscriber and advocate since then. Sadly on this past Sunday I received notice that Netsurfer was moving to a paid subscription only model and would no longer be able to continue publishing their three primary newsletters by utilizing inserted ads as their sole source of revenue.

Netsurfer became the proverbial canary in the coalmine that succumbed to the hazardous winds blowing across the online advertising market. They simply couldn't build a sustainable business model via ad inserts, even by delivering a million impressions a month to an upscale, well educated, target rich demographic group. This denouement has broad implications to many who are dependent on advertising supported business models. If this wonderful award winning publication with excellent graphics, topical information delivered in snappy "let's get to the point" journalism can't make it then it's time to batten down the hatches – the rough ride is still underway for online advertising.

What's worse in my opinion is the founders of Netsurfer Communications said they were throwing in the towel and moving to a paid subscription model because they didn't want to be a part of the intrusive (my words paraphrasing a bit) online ad technology that has become so "annoying." You have to give them significant karma points for this brave stance, especially when you contrast it to the "greed is great" news that's been hitting us all via the Enron debacle – thank God for real entrepreneurs who are putting their ethics ahead of their revenue stream, there may be some hope in the business community after all.

So, what does this mean to the broader community? It means it's getting increasingly difficult to make a buck/euro selling advertising without selling your soul to the devil by deploying increasing invasive

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(does anyone really like pop ups?) technology that may irritate the hell out of your customers. Ad rates are plummeting, even the once mighty Yahoo is struggling to make revenue and their sales reps even return calls now, which is definitely au contraire to their I'm too busy to talk with customers .com glory days.

You couldn't read a Fast Company or a Business 2.0 the last two years without reading some slick article by another reporter breathlessly telling us how the Wall Street Journal (Dow Jones) was pioneering the concept of building a viable online content subscription revenue model. This is hogwash, if we all had the type of branded content, excellent editors and the sterling reputation of one of the top five newspapers published in the world then this model would work for thousands of unique content publishers. But, most do not even have the subscriber base and branded content of a Netsurfer Digest – stay tuned to see if this model works for the Netsurfer folks (I hope so); but don't hold your breath, I don't think they will be ordering their \$1,500. Herman Miller chairs right and left like the folks at Webvan and Quokka Sports – VC bucks don't come around like they used to, but that's

another article.

I don't have any silver bullets for those who are headed down the track of trying to sell advertising supported newsletters and/or shift to a subscription model. The obvious advice is this may work, but you better have other revenue sources that leverage your demographics. And, if you don't have mutually reinforcing revenue streams, then take a hard look at your business and modify accordingly. The greatest shift in online advertising is via opt-in e-mail marketing – we all want to receive information that is timely, informative and presented in a compelling manner. So, find a business model that lets you narrowcast products and services to a community of people who want to receive content (contact) from your company – good luck to all and by the way, signup for Netsurfer's paid subscription newsletter – I did, we all have to vote with our visa cards once in a while to keep the karmic balance on an even plane.

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Everything...Plus The Kitchen Sink

By Mike Yeager

Looking to do some remodeling in your kitchen sink area or maybe the whole kitchen? There are many options out there for any idea you may have. Kitchen appliances on down to kitchen tables, and kitchen sinks are available at your finger tips online. So, whether you are repairing or remodeling, take a minute to notice all of your options.

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Kitchen sinks and kitchen faucets are among the many things you can find online. Sinks ranging from stainless steel to tiled in every size and shape can be found. Faucets with many features like spraying hoses and tilting heads are available. Check out the designs and shapes! Another item every kitchen needs are Kitchen Exhaust Hoods. These, sucking up steam as well as smoke from cooking can help to prevent a fire. If your kitchen stove is small or oddly shaped, you may have a rough time finding the right size or style hood if you look in retail stores. But, online your options are numerous.

For larger items like Kitchen appliances and kitchen tables, the shipping charges of a product online to your home may not be worth it. But, browsing online at the many different online retailers and taking your time to choose what you like, will tell you where to go once you are able to. For instance, if I am looking to replace my Kitchen Island, I can take my time, in my pajamas if I choose, and browse the dealers online until I find one or even a few that I like. Then, having this in mind, I can go to my local store and know what I am looking for. Or, perhaps, with something like kitchen islands, I will need to order it and have it delivered due to specific size requirements. Having an understanding of what I need and want, I can do this easier.

So, even our kitchen needs can be satisfied by searching online. You will benefit by taking the time to do the research or even, just browsing until you know what you want. Let's face it, the average salesman isn't concerned about our needs, but making the sale. So, he may rush or push us along without us even realizing we have other options. Knowing the approximate cost of items will also help with these salesmen. Whatever the kitchen item is, even the kitchen sink, information is available to you online to help. A simple search can save you time and energy and even money.

Mike Yeager
Publisher

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