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Commentary

Creating Online Campaigns That Convert

Mason Wiley, Mar 23, 2009 05:00 AM

Anyone can throw ads up online. But, running ads that actually motivate people to take immediate action -- beyond a simple click -- is not easy. So, how can you convert ad viewers into product buyers, leads, new-member signups and video viewers?

Working in a performance-based ad network with more than 1,000 active campaigns at anytime, I've seen the tactics that work. Generally, they follow tried-and-true principles of direct response advertising but are adapted to the fact that people online tend to absorb information by superficial browsing.

- 1. Stand out from the crowd:** Getting attention is a major challenge in the oversaturated advertising world in which we live, and no one will respond to your ad if they don't see it. So be bold, be in your face, be different.
- 2. Make them an offer that sounds too good to pass up:** Direct marketers have long understood that it's the offer that makes people "act now and save." However, nowadays, any discount under 50% off doesn't get people excited. Better yet, find something you can offer for *free*. Try to state the offer in a way that seems to provide tremendous value.

For example, a theme park I once worked with offered to waive \$15 off of its admission price to upgrade to an annual pass. By restating the offer as "Buy a day, get a year free," consumers immediately began multiplying their savings by 364 days and came up with the incredible number of \$18,200! It was a deal too good to pass up.

- 3. Assume your audience has ADD:** Studies show the Internet is a browsing medium, filled with multi-tasking. So don't make people wait for your fancy Flash animation to play out or have to scroll down to the bottom and read through all the fine print. *Get to the point!* Generously speaking, you've got about two seconds to state your value proposition and make your amazing offer in order to hook them.
- 4. Create a landing page designed to do one thing only -- close the deal:** Here are a few rules to create a landing page that works to convert:
 - Keep them captive -- Get rid of *all* navigation. Once you've got the prospect in the showroom, would you show them the door? If you need to cram more info in to your landing page, do it with a pop-up.
 - Make the desired action the point of focus -- If you want orders or leads, start your form above the fold. Put in a big arrow that points to it and lay out your page to lead the eye to that form. If you are using a play button, the same rule applies. Drive the eye to the desired action!
 - Alleviate all fear -- There are a lot of fly-by-night operators online. Add credibility enhancers like testimonials, press quotes and logos, third party endorsements, and an "About the Company" paragraph to show you can be trusted. Use money-back guarantees or other risk reducers to overcome people's reluctance to part with their money. If you're asking for personal information, include a privacy statement to make prospects feel that their info is safe.
- 5. Tell them what you want them to do:** If you want people to take a specific action, don't make it a guessing game. Come right out and tell them! (It's incredible how many people don't.)

Of course there's more, but if you keep the above in mind when designing your next online

campaign, you'll be well ahead of the curve in your ability to drive conversions.