

RESEARCH BRIEF (Ezine Advertising)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING WEB CLINIC

1. Wednesday, December 1 – 4 PM EST – Online Competitive Analysis

To participate in the above clinic, please email THE NAME OF THE CLINIC to:
editor@marketingexperiments.com

We will respond with instructions on how to participate in the call.

UPCOMING RESEARCH BRIEFS

1. Testing eBay's New PPC Service
2. Optimizing Subscription Revenue
3. Cross-Selling on the Web
4. How Customer Ratings Impact Sales



SYNOPSIS

Topic: Ezine Advertising — How our 18 tested techniques can optimize your email newsletter advertising campaigns

We recently released the recording of our Dynamic Web Pages clinic. You can listen to a recording of this clinic here:

Windows Media Audio:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?czw>

RealMedia:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?czr>

This research brief will answer the following questions:

1. [How effective is ezine \(email newsletter\) advertising?](#)
2. [How can you gauge the effectiveness of your ezine advertising campaigns?](#)
3. [How can you get the most out of your ezine advertising dollars? \(18 effective techniques\)](#)



1. How effective is ezine advertising?

In the early days of the Internet, ezine (email newsletter) advertising was very effective. As time went on, many believed that its effectiveness as a marketing medium was diminished due to the dot-com crash and the glut of commercial email messages that most people receive.

However, in the last 12 months of research, we have discovered that targeted ezine advertising is still one of the most effective means of marketing on the Internet. It has the potential to produce a strong return on investment. And it is being overlooked by many companies because they lack the time or expertise to optimize these types of campaigns.

In October, we ran a very specialized ezine advertising campaign for one of our test sites. Our ad ran once in a well-respected business newsletter. Here are the results:

Ezine Advertising Campaign	
Metric	Campaign A
Total Email Messages	500,000
Click-Throughs	307
Information Requests	25
Click Through Rate (CTR)	0.06%
Click-to-Action Rate	8.14%
Campaign Cost	\$1000
Total Projected Revenue (12 Months)	\$84,000
Return on Investment (ROI)	8300%



What You Need To UNDERSTAND: Half a million emails were delivered that contained our ad, but we generated only 25 leads. The 0.06% CTR is well below the industry average. However, this campaign will still generate at least \$84,000 over the next twelve months.

This campaign cost \$1000. With only 307 clicks and 25 leads generated, this campaign appears at first glance to be horribly unsuccessful.

However, because of the nature of this campaign, if just one of the 25 companies who requested information goes on to become a paying client, this campaign would be profitable. This campaign has already led to one client and has the potential to create several others. The \$84,000 revenue projection is actually a conservative estimate.

Our ad contained a strong call to action that highly qualified the responses we did receive. It was crafted specifically to create long-term clients. This approach was one we hadn't tested before, as the conventional wisdom with ezine advertising is simply to go after new customers in the hope that they will become repeat buyers.

KEY POINT: Think of creative ways to generate profitable ezine advertising campaigns. If your threshold to success is relatively easy to achieve, any additional traffic, sales, and exposure will be icing on the cake. See especially our third point under Section 3 (18 Effective Techniques), below.

2. How can you gauge the effectiveness of your ezine advertising campaigns?

Without suitable tracking in place, you will be left guessing at the effectiveness of your ezine advertising campaigns. In order of descending importance, the three fundamental levels of tracking sophistication are:

1. Click-Through Tracking – This is the absolute minimum that you must track for all ezine advertising campaigns. Click-through tracking will tell you the number of clicks each of your ads generate, which will allow you to calculate your click-through rate (CTR) by dividing the number of clicks by the total number of email messages sent.

One simple and effective script for tracking click-throughs is ProLinkz, available at: <http://www.prolinkz.com/>

2. Conversion/Sales Tracking – Beyond click-through data, a better indicator of the success of an ezine advertising campaign (or any ad campaign) is return on investment (ROI). Tracking conversions or sales from an ezine ad requires a more sophisticated tracking solution than tracking click-throughs alone.
3. Visitor-Path Tracking – To be the most thorough (and to derive the most valuable insights), you would track not only click-throughs and conversions, but also the actual path that visitors take through your site. For example, you might find that although CTR is high, visitors may never reach the most important areas of your site.

Are the visitors from your ezine campaigns viewing certain products on your site? How much time do they spend on your site? Are they signing up for your own newsletter? Joining your affiliate program? Visitor-path tracking can answer these questions and more.

For advice and solutions on tracking click-throughs, conversions, and visitor path, see our previous reports on website metrics and analysis:

Web Metrics Part 1:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mm1>

Web Metrics Part 2:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mm2>

3. How can you get the most out of your ezine advertising dollars? (18 effective techniques)

1. Use strong, proven ad copy. Ezine advertising often does not offer the abundant opportunities for micro-testing available in other areas, such as PPC engines and the pages of your own website. It is much easier to test ad copy beforehand and bring tested copy to your first ezine campaigns.

This is not to suggest that testing and refining your copy shouldn't continue as you explore ezine advertising. Using the tracking methods outlined above, you should continue to find tune your ads for this unique medium.

2. Avoid hype in your ezine ads; the postmodern consumer won't buy it. But do include a call to action. Review our report on Transparent Marketing: How to Earn the Trust of a Skeptical Consumer:
<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mtm>
3. **KEY POINT:** Give yourself multiple ways to win. If the primary goal of your ezine ad campaigns is to sell products, don't overlook the secondary benefits. These might include generating newsletter sign-ups, members of your affiliate program, members of your online community, strategic partnerships, and so on. Many retailers are so focused on the immediate monetary return that they miss the true potential of reaching a new audience through ezine advertising.
4. Utilize the expertise of the ezine publisher. He or she should know the ezine's audience better than anyone. While the publisher does have an interest in selling you an ad (and thus may overestimate the audience's value), he or she should still be able to advise you on the types of ads that perform the best with the given audience.
5. Create your own email list. Don't pay to reach the same individuals twice. If interested visitors click through to your site but are unsure about buying, they should have an opportunity to sign up to be reminded about your offering in the future.

Several of our past reports have dealt with creating an in-house email list. Two of them are:

Email Capture Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mec>

Email Capture Pop-Ups Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mep>

6. Format your ads well. Most publishers will provide specific guidelines for the dimensions of your ad. If possible, use ample white space to set your ad apart from the surrounding content. Make your ads easy to read and understand. Use bullet points when possible and outline the key benefits of your offer/company/website.

Some publishers will accept text-only ads while others will allow you to use HTML that incorporates graphics. Both can be effective, depending on the expectations of the audience. Ask the publisher's advice on the ideal ad format.

7. Use an effective ad headline. Utilize this headline analysis tool:
<http://www.aminstitute.com/headline/index.htm>
8. Don't ignore branding. Include your domain name and/or company name prominently in your ad copy. This is especially important when your ad will be seen by tens or hundreds of thousands of recipients (as in the example above). Some ad recipients may remember your URL and check it out later, or they may be more likely to click your ads when they see them in the future.
9. Shop around. Utilize ezine directories (see the Literature Review, below) and traditional search engines (Google, Yahoo!, etc.) to locate the best ezines catering to your target audience. Don't look only for the best price on ads, but focus on finding the most authoritative voices in your sector of the market.
10. Weigh cost against exposure. CPM (cost per thousand impressions) is often the best indicator of the kind of value you are getting, but it ignores quality. An ezine with 3000 avid, engaged readers may perform better overall than an ezine with a million disinterested subscribers.
11. Ask your colleagues and customers about the ezines they read. This is often a more effective means of finding quality, targeted ezines than searching for them online.
12. **KEY POINT:** Before placing an ad in an ezine, subscribe to it and read several issues. Pay attention to the tone of the copy, the consistency of the publication schedule, and other factors that may impact the reception of your ad.
13. Pay attention to ad placement. Different publishers will offer a multitude of placement options and ad dimensions. Test a variety of approaches.
14. Micro-test where possible. While many ezine publishers have a minimum ad buy, some do allow smaller buys to evaluate the service. Micro-testing allows you to measure your potential return with the minimum risk (outlay of cash).
15. Don't shy away from repetition of your marketing message, especially where multiple ads will get you a discounted rate. Studies have shown that consumers often need to see a marketing message as many as seven times before they will respond.

16. Utilize custom landing pages for individual ezine ad campaigns. For specific advice on optimizing landing pages, see our recent report:
<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mlp>

For example, you might create a page that welcomes visitors from the specific ezine in which your ad runs. You could offer an additional, customized incentive for these visitors.

Customized landing pages can also be used as an alternative means of tracking the response of your ad campaigns.

17. Utilize incentives. Give readers a reason to click your ads and check out your website. Tailor the incentive for readers of the specific ezine in which your ads run.

For example, you might offer free shipping for any "XYZ Ezine subscriber" who clicks the special URL below in the next three days. This provides a clear call to action and a sense of urgency to respond to the ad.

18. Review our report on Effective Email Campaigns for additional ideas on optimizing your email marketing messages:
<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mem>

Ezine advertising is very much a "learn by doing" endeavor. By utilizing the techniques above and implementing effective ad tracking solutions, you should find that your ezine advertising campaigns meet with increasing success.



RELATED MEC REPORTS:

Email Campaigns Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mem>

Email Capture Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mec>

Email Capture Pop-Ups Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mep>

Web Metrics Part 1:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mm1>

Web Metrics Part 2:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mm2>

Content Sales Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mco>

Ideal Subscription Path Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mis>

Landing Pages Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mlp>

Long Copy vs. Short Copy Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mlc>

Order Process Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mdr>

Order Recovery Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mor>

Welcome Message Sequence Tested:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mws>

PPC for Subscription Sites:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mpss>

Transparent Marketing:

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?mtm>



As part of our research on this topic, we have prepared a review of the best Internet resources on this topic.

Rating System

These sites were rated for usefulness and clarity, but alas, the rating is purely subjective.

* = Decent | ** = Good | *** = Excellent | **** = Indispensable

131 (Legitimate) Link Building Strategies ****

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2160301>

ClickZ Link Building Archives ****

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?clb>

MarketLeap.com – Link Popularity Check **

<http://www.marketleap.com/publinkpop/>

Characterizing the Competition for Links on the Web **

<http://modelingtheweb.com/>

The Road to Link Popularity **

<http://www.clickz.com/experts/search/opt/article.php/891831>

Building Your Site's Link Popularity **

<http://www.seorank.com/link-popularity.htm>

How to Get Non-Reciprocal Links to Your Website **

<http://webmasterstop.com/articles/non-reciprocal-links.shtml>

The Art of Advanced Link Building **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3100291>

Search Engine Strategies: Looking at Links **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2160981>

Ten Things You Need to Know about Linking and Link Popularity **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2159391>

Aggressive Linking Strategies **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2175161>

Link Popularity and the Myth of the Guestbook Link **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2190651>

Link Generating Programs: Good or Bad for Search Engines? **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2159141>

Using Google to Identify High Quality Link Targets **

http://www.searchengineguide.com/ericward/2002/0305_ew1.html

How Important Are Reciprocal Links? **

<http://meclabs.com/cgi-bin/pl/pl.cgi?rl>

Search Engine Link Popularity **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/2159711>

Measuring Link Popularity **

<http://searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/article.php/2167951>

Top Ten Things Not to Do When Asking to Trade Reciprocal Links **

<http://www.reciprocallink.com/article1.html>

Reciprocal Links: The Glue Behind the Web **

<http://www.igoldrush.com/missing/>

ReciprocalLink.com

<http://www.reciprocallink.com/>



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