

NON-TRADITIONAL WEB SPONSORSHIP IDEAS

Hotsheets

BY MARTIN WHITE, founder of Online Magazine Marketing, an associate consultancy established in 2002

WHAT IS NON-TRADITIONAL SPONSORSHIP?

A dictionary definition for non-traditional looks like this: “new and different from an established norm, custom or method.” And sponsorship: “an organization that provides funds for a project or activity carried out by another.” Therefore, what we are discussing here is not about display advertising or contests and the like, but rather what projects or activities your magazine may implement online that are of value to your readers and attractive to your advertisers.

NON-TRADITIONAL SALES CONSIDERATIONS

Non-traditional sponsorships can be looked at in two ways. Is the initiative non-traditional to you the publication, or to the advertiser? If it's the publication, are there issues of execution that need to be addressed? If it's the advertiser, is there an education hurdle for the advertiser to overcome in considering the option? The sponsorship of a webinar series, for example, may be traditional to certain advertisers, but does the publication have confidence in taking on a new venture of delivering a product consistent with the perceived brand of the prospective sponsor? For the publication, if the advertiser hasn't done this sort of thing before, there may be an education process that could interfere with the prospect of the advertiser making a commitment.

FINDING INSPIRATION AT HOME

The most successful non-traditional online initiatives are usually born at home. The shortest route to finding yours is made possible by making a list of all the content you create (articles, newsletters, videos, interviews, audio—anything and everything), all the activities and product you have access to (consumer and trade shows, webinars, e-commerce, merchandise, auctions, charity events, festivals and so on), all the audiences you reach (databases, subscribers, demographic segments, social media

and their respective extended networks) and finally, a list of your advertiser categories (committed and prospective).

Look at the lists and ask yourself this question:

What are we not doing with what we have that will align our advertisers with our audiences? Asking yourself that will lead to ideas for valued non-traditional sponsorship ideas.

From this question, and with sponsorship support, a celebrated business publication can create a premium subscription offer for access to special events, an adventure travel magazine could offer its subscribers bucket-list travel adventures, a business publication could create a proprietary online lead generation program, a hobby magazine could turn its searchable archive into a resource library, etc. Furthermore these non-traditional extensions open up content opportunities, online membership options, social media activity and so on, all of which foster increased sponsor value.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

A highly regarded marketing director for a major cosmetics company once told me that while content is king, distribution is queen, and the queen wears the pants. The point being that magazines have content and distribution, as well as potential for extended distribution. Advertisers become willing sponsors when the non-traditional opportunity aligns with their marketing direction, offers an initiative outside their own expertise, has a turnkey element to it and is consistent with the cache of their brand.

In years past, magazines created content issue after issue and distributed solely to its readership. In today's world, content shelf life is unlimited, audiences can be found anywhere and audiences consume content on multiple platforms. Content creators have the opportunity to publish, re-purpose and distribute to their heart's content. Consider for example the variety of platforms Vice distributes its varied content to, from HBO to Viceland and beyond.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO



Ontario

Ontario Media Development
Corporation
Société de développement
de l'industrie des médias
de l'Ontario

Magazines
Canada

Alongside the expansion of the 'all the content, all the time, everywhere' syndrome, advertorial content has evolved from paid content or sponsored content to native advertising. Advertisers have ventured into social media, viral marketing, YouTube channel sponsorship, and on and on in efforts to access potential customers, create brand ambassadors, and tap into whatever engagement options the internet will yield. Advertisers are creating, or are having created, more "non-traditional" content than ever before and these efforts will only continue to increase.

What is truly non-traditional is your magazine looking at the lists mentioned earlier in this article and connecting what you do with creating engagement for your advertisers and taking it to your and others' audiences, while delivering value and setting yourself apart from the abundance of choice that online offers in content and distribution.

First and foremost, identify what you have to offer and what the benefit potential is to audiences, then align and create sponsorships with the advertisers best suited—then determine whether the effort is best suited for desktop, tablet, mobile, app or all of it.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO



Ontario

Ontario Media Development
Corporation

Société de développement
de l'industrie des médias
de l'Ontario

Magazines
Canada