

# Don't Fumble Your Marketing: Answering the Questions You Should be Asking When Building Online Media Plans

By Jeff Adelson-Yan

Being from Indiana and having lived some of the best years of my life in the “Windy City”, you can imagine my excitement with having the Bears and Colts make it to Super Bowl XLI. I, like increasingly many other Americans, tune in to the Super Bowl as much for the commercials as for the football.

Television has traditionally been the work horse for many marketers, commanding the lion-share of marketing dollars year-over-year. And don't get me wrong, it is an extremely powerful channel with great reach. However, I am continually surprised to see so many great offline campaigns fail to make the transition online and in some cases, miss the online opportunity entirely.

To illustrate my point, Ford had one of the more memorable commercials of the 2006 Super Bowl, a spot starring Kermit The Frog for the Escape Hybrid. I'm not a banker, but with production costs for the spot, price to license the rights for the usage of the famous Muppet, and actual media cost for :30 of air time during the big game, I'm guessing that Ford paid out more than a pretty penny, and yet they failed to spend a few thousand dollars online buying search engine keywords around their commercial. Competitor, General Motors seizing the opportunity, bought the keyword, “Kermit” to promote their own hybrid line of vehicles, thus, reaping the benefits of a Super Bowl ad at a fraction of the cost.

This example is not an anomaly, but a sign that there is a growing need for a more diligent online media plan. When it comes to your online marketing efforts, ask yourself (or your agency) these 4 questions:

1. Are my online initiatives congruent with the online behaviors and expectations of my target audience? Consumers interact differently with different marketing channels. Yet, I see many advertisers simply repurpose their offline content and stick it on the web. A :30 second TV spot during an hour program may be acceptable to a viewer; but that same :30 second spot being pre-rolled before a 1 minute online video, might be more irritating than effective. To market effectively, it is imperative to understand your audience in the context of what they are engaged in.

2. What opportunities am I missing out on and how can I remedy this?

Consumers are bombarded with a variety of messages from numerous advertisers, through multiple communication channels every day. If consumers can't find you online, they will surely find your competitors. Use offline marketing efforts to direct consumers to your web site or landing pages to articulate more detailed information. This can be as simple as including a web site address on your TV, print, radio, and other offline advertising. Optimize your web site to improve natural search engine rankings for relevant keywords. Buy keywords (Search Engine Marketing) that consumers might use when searching for your products or services (my experience is that most companies greatly underestimate the number of keywords that are important to their business). Use third-party endorsements, customer testimonials, and real-time customer interaction tools to ease purchase tensions.

3. Am I testing new campaigns on a small scale and making changes based upon consumer feedback prior to full campaign launch?

The Internet is a great sounding board to test new ideas and new campaigns. The cost-barrier to entry is minimal and the feedback is nearly instantaneous. The knowledge that you gain should be used to tailor your online and offline campaigns.

4. Is my message to the consumer creating the most perceived value for the least perceived risk?

Multiple messages and creative should be employed to speak to a consumer at their specific point in the buy-cycle. For instance, a consumer using the search keywords "flat screen TV" might be just beginning the process of shopping for a new TV and would be most responsive to an information-based message heavy with benefit statements, whereas a consumer using the keywords "sony bravia 40" is likely further along in their buy-cycle and more receptive to a purchase incentive. Understanding the consumer and anticipating the broadest spectrum of consequences from all of your marketing initiatives, will help you to avoid the pitfall that Ford experienced.

The Internet continues to grow by leaps and bounds and advertisers are embracing it more than ever before, yet it still seems to be the channel with the most unrealized potential. Never before has there been a tool more geared for information gathering, commerce, and community. The better you truly understand this channel, the more efficient your online and offline advertising spending will be.