



A New Leader of The Pack

How Television Advertising is Losing Ground

by Bob Steddum

Many will say: *people have been forecasting the demise of television for a long time while at the same time extolling the virtues of the Internet.* True.

And although television has been and still is a valuable tool (and is currently the reigning champ), here in our firm, advertising clients don't pay us to drive their brands by looking in the rearview mirror; they want us to accurately predict what's over the horizon.

Below are some of the key reasons why we are strongly advocating that the Internet is not just over the horizon, but is here now — and here to stay!

Troubling Evidence

First let me address the "Doubting Thomases" out there who don't believe me about the downturn in the effectiveness of television advertising. Let's start with a quick "for instance"... Just the other day, a client called me and told me that he had learned from a media buyer that there were **over 100** different outdoors-related television shows that had not yet booked the majority of their 2006 commercial inventory—and here we are already into the beginning of this New Year. **Wow**, that's probably 75 more shows than most of us realized existed!

Want another common sense "for instance?" The market is saturated with outdoors television shows: ESPN2, Outdoor Channel, OLN, Men's Channel, Comcast Sports South, Fox Sports Net, etc. All of them have **huge** lineups of outdoors-centric programming. Now, some programs will do well just because they were the first or the category killers, but the rest are simply "white noise" when it comes to attracting a loyal, week-after-week audience.

How about one more clue to the decreasing status of television advertising: large manufacturing companies are cutting **way** back their sponsorships and concentrating their ad-spend in other places. Wonder why? Below are a few common sense ("stare and compare") facts that will have the vast majority of you saying, "yep...makes sense." Read and enjoy...

The Internet vs. Television

Why is Internet-based branding and advertising becoming so popular with **all** industries?

• **Proximity:** People sit (on average) between 8–12 feet away from their television. To an advertiser or marketer, that's way too much space into which

something or someone else can get between your message and the consumer.

With Internet marketing, your prospect is sitting (again, on average) between 2–3 feet away from their computer screen—much less room for something to squeeze in and distract them from your brand message.

• **Programming:** Unless you've arranged for your brand or product to be placed directly into the production of the television programs (via the aptly named trend of "product placement"), your message will instead be slated to air during commercial breaks: the time that your prospects will be either headed to the restroom, dropping by the kitchen, or turning their attention to someone else in the room—or in my wife's case, yelling to some other room.

Online advertising provides for an uninterrupted stream of product and brand consciousness...yes, pop-ups can be annoying (and blocked), but you will still see links and banners.

• **Technology:** Let's consider one of the year's primary gift gadgets: TiVo, that neat little box that assists its users in what?... That's right, **eliminating commercials!** This little dream allows even the most technologically challenged consumer to get rid of the very commercial **you paid top dollar for!** Take a minute and let that one sink in... What's that telling you about the current consumer culture?

Now, on the Internet side of things, over 70% of all corporate employees in America have broadband at work, and an exponentially increasing number gaining DSL, Cable, or Fast Access at home. There is a wide open field for running with your brand online. Couple that with an ever-lowering barrier to online entry, and "**pow!**"—then it's just about placement and content. (Discussions about placement and content, however, are other stories for other days...)

• **The Nature:** Television is stagnant. There is very little interactivity between the consumer and your ad collaterals.

Conversely, how many e-mails did you have in your "in-box" this morning? (I know, way more than you wanted.) You may seem to get a never-ending stream of pictures, jokes, solicitations, and so on... however, if just one made you laugh, think, or offered a compelling story or value proposition, didn't you click the link, possibly save it for later viewing, or better yet, pass it along to people in your address book? Yep, you did—and so do tens of millions of others on the planet. This is the very best definition of Internet

"viral marketing."

Finally...The Future

It's been reported that Anheuser-Busch is launching a direct-to-consumer network called "The Bud Screen." This network will offer all manner of programming, branded content and advertising delivered to computer desktop or iPod format (initially). AB intends the network to be long-lived and to eventually be named "Bud TV." It's only a matter of time before the Cabela's, Realtrees and Mossy Oaks of the world do the same.

The middleman—the television networks—just aren't needed any longer. When a brand (such as those industry giants I just mentioned) or a program producer can deliver content

directly to the consumer (via the Internet), there's no need for the current television network set up and cost. Oh sure, big changes are years away, but it's starting to happen, and it will continue to happen faster and faster as more brands and content producers realize they can have their own channel of distribution.

I hope that you've taken something away from my few observations and comments about the nature and future of building brand equity online. There are other reasons and strategy considerations as well, but we do need to keep some things for our clients. Just make sure that whomever is driving your brand isn't looking in that rearview mirror at what's worked in the past...it's the quickest way for brands to wind up at fatally wrong destination.

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If your current advertising or marketing plan isn't working like you think it should, let WPM take a look at it...maybe we can help, maybe we can't...but when it comes to the life of your business, isn't it at least worth *talking* about?

Contact **Bob Steddum** for a no-BS, no-cost evaluation at (281) 252-4409 (ok, so the phone call will cost, but that's it) or bobsteddum@wildernesspros.com.

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