



PRINT MATTERS

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Digital vs. print: Considering your options...

Digital vs. print. Our conversation continues.

For those of you who missed it, the lead story in the May 2010 issue of *Print Matters* explored whether publishers should go digital (you can read the story at www.jpapontiac.com). The article covered three main points:

- digital magazines should be viewed as an add-on — not a replacement — product;
- digital and print magazines can (and should) co-exist peacefully; and
- opt-in rates for digital magazines are around 20%.

“Many associations are finding that a majority of their members want print publications,” says Carla Kalogeridis of ARION Media Services, a publishing consultant and services provider for associations. “That said, however, you can’t disenfranchise those members who want a digital publication. A good strategy is to serve people with a tool that best suits their needs and wishes.”

Further, Kalogeridis says that associations that do not offer a digital product might be perceived as out of touch. “A lot of people are reading a lot of content online, and if you’re not asking the print vs. digital question, people might think you have your head in the sand,” she says.

Survey says...

So this raises the question — if you are going to explore digital options, how do you go about it? The first answer may seem obvious — survey your readers and advertisers — but you’d be surprised at the number of publishers who disregard this step. And even some of the publishers who do conduct surveys don’t set them up properly. ►

You might think that in these times, don't read magazines anymore, that with the of the online world magazines have fallen out of . But it's not true. From through their years, folks are reading MORE magazines than just a few years ago. Sure, there's a being spent online. But there's also a lot of being spent on magazines, with nearly 300 million paid subscriptions.



MAGAZINES
The Power of Print

There were 300 million paid magazine subscriptions in 2009, according to Magazine Publishers of America. This stat is one of many that are being touted in an ad campaign that is being sponsored by five major magazine companies. The print ad campaign, which promotes the vitality of magazines as a medium, is one of the largest ever created. The ad shown here is one of many that will appear in 100 titles over the course of seven months.



Exceeding our customers' expectations for more than 60 years...

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“If you say to your members, ‘Hey we’re eliminating print to go digital because it will save money and it’s better for the environment,’ of course they’re going to say ‘yes’ to going digital,” Kalogeridis says. “Associations ask questions that are skewed to the responses they want, and then they’re shocked when digital doesn’t work out for them.”

Another factor at play is the notion that people are often resistant to change. “When the digital product comes out, it may not be what your readers thought it would be. It doesn’t matter how simple something is, sometimes people flat don’t want to take the time to learn how to navigate it.”

Kalogeridis says the best strategy is to keep your print publication in place while introducing a digital version. “Have them side by side for at least a year, and then you can see how many people are using it and how many people prefer it. At that point your members can answer a survey from a standpoint of intelligence, and then you can make an educated decision on how to proceed from there.”

Bells and whistles

One point that was mentioned in the May issue that bears repeating is the fact that content will differ in a digital



Real life examples...

Here are a few examples of how publishers are utilizing digital technology.

Premier Guitar Magazine offers news, reviews and a live video channel feed on its iPhone application. A reader survey found that individual users went back to the app an average of five times in a 30 day period and spent an average of 22 minutes per session for a total engagement of 110 minutes. “Even between issues, this app keeps people going back to see what’s new, and that’s a clear advantage with apps — enhanced reader engagement,” says Kim Kett of *Texterity*, which specializes in digital publications and mobile magazine solutions.

Accounting Today magazine has a 30 second welcome video from

the editor on each digital edition. “He’s looking right into the camera, making a personal connection with the readers,” Kett says.

Flip flop

Conventional wisdom has been that digital magazines are a threat to their printed counterparts, but many publishers are actually using their digital publications to promote their printed magazines. “Many publishers are using digital magazines to drive readers to their printed publications,” says *Texterity*’s Kim Kett. “It’s so much easier and more cost-effective to e-mail a digital copy of the magazine, and then you can entice readers to subscribe to your printed edition. It also makes it easier to tailor your marketing message to different groups.”

publication vs. what you would offer in print — shorter, hard-hitting articles vs. in-depth features, for example. And it goes without saying that you’ve got to take advantage of all the technological features digital has to offer, and this means more than just posting a link people can click on to reach Web sites that are mentioned in ads or editorial. Some basic examples include:

- you can incorporate sound, video or slide shows in editorial content, which would be particularly helpful for “how to” or technical columns;
- you can integrate forum and blog links with editorial content to increase reader engagement;
- readers can post the digital magazine on their favorite social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc.);
- advertisers can embed sound, video or slide shows in their ads;
- advertisers can purchase special placement “leaderboard” ads or “blow-in card” ads; and

- advertisers can offer direct link coupons in their ads.

Kalogeridis feels it is essential to educate advertisers when launching a digital publication. “You can’t just take a stagnant print ad and place it into a digital magazine. In order to maximize results, you have to take advantage of the technology that digital has to offer — you want to encourage the reader to click on the ad.”

Indeed, digital magazines are all about reader interaction, and increased interplay between the reader and the publisher serves to strengthen that relationship. In light of the current state of the economy, this is certainly good news for publishers.

In the end, Kalogeridis recommends a balanced approach on the digital vs. print question. “The bottom line is that you should look at digital and print for their strengths, and then cater to those strengths and formulate your strategies and products accordingly,” she said. ■