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Digital Consumer Engagement

Ten Ways to Target Adoption and Response

Technology is an interesting thing: It has the power to influence and change people's behavior, sometimes subconsciously. Take the music industry, for instance. The availability of digital music revolutionized the listening experience for mainstream consumers.. Though digital music was first introduced into the consumer market in the early 90's, its initial adopters were mostly technology lovers or those who desired to be on the cutting edge. Yet, for you, me, or my mother in Pittsburgh, digital music was not something we could imagine right away, since it had never existed before.

For the rest of us, adoption of digital music as a mainstream way to enjoy the songs we love took some time. In order for us to become consumers of digital music, the music industry had to first break through our current set of beliefs and listening habits, and then convince us to take a chance on this new medium.

The introduction of MP3 players and the iPod helped drive mass change. Within a few years, the majority of mainstream consumers—even my mother—began to adapt to a completely new way of enjoying the music they loved. To date, according to Wikipedia, the iPod has sold over 140 million units. This is a pretty valuable statement of impact as far as digital music's

mainstream adoption is concerned. Ask a child born after 1995 what life was like before digital music and the iPod and you will get nothing more than a blank stare. Within 10 years, as the population continues to age, life without digital music will become a distant memory.

As with digital music, digital publication usage and adoption must grow over time. Purveyors of digital solutions must remain grounded and persistent. It takes time, attention, and education to change a consumer's current mind set and behavior pattern. In the digital magazine and newspaper world, a Gilbane study reports that the number of digital subscriptions is up 222% over the previous year, (currently at 1,713,637). While this growth appears impressive at first glance, it is only 15% of the total publication subscription population. That fact, coupled with the reality that digital versions of magazines have been available for about eight years, paints a bit of a different story. Comparing 1.7 million digital publication subscriptions, to 140 million iPod owners indicates that there is still tremendous room for growth in the digital publishing arena.

Over the past eight years, Zinio has been capturing data and tracking trends regarding the influential tactics required to woo a digital consumer. The Zinio

data has provided insights and details regarding engagement levels, attention to advertisements, and even those sections in which readers are more likely to zoom while reading a publication. We have identified 10 key areas required to drive continued growth and adoption of digital publications, in a way that allows and encourages publishers to reduce costs while simultaneously increasing consumer engagement.

#1: Know how tech-savvy your audience is.

This sounds like a simple suggestion, but is often overlooked. For digital magazine reading, highly tech-savvy people will flock to your publications if the content they can access is also geared toward the tech-savvy reader. If your content isn't geared toward the high-tech advocate you will need to adjust your marketing message in a way that your target reader can understand. For example, if I am trying to reach a housewife in the Midwest, I will need to understand what type of technologies she is using, and ensure my copy speaks to her in similar terms. I also need to make sure the content I am offering in my digital publication matches her interest.

#2: Understand the personal motivators for your subscribers.

Regardless of whether you are marketing a digital alternative to your publication, or your print publication itself, a new subscriber is not going to choose to read your publication unless he or she feels it has personal benefit. This means that the subscriber feels that reading your publication will enhance his or her life in one of three ways: it will make him smarter, richer, or more popular. Silly as it sounds, one of these three personal motivators is true for every sale of every product in the world. (Case in point: why do people spend millions on fad diets?) People who choose to read a magazine digitally will choose to do so if they feel the digital version offers one of these three "payoffs" that they cannot get by reading the print. Does your offer promote one of these three benefits?

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#3: Find a way to start a consistent conversation. As with any other form of digital media, the "out of sight, out of mind" rule can be a factor. One of the biggest differentiators between a print and digital publication to the consumer is that you don't have anything to put on your coffee table. Your digital subscriber may need to be reminded to read his or her publication more frequently. This means that you need to start a consistent conversation about your digital magazine outside of the context of the information it contains. This is not suggesting that you send sales-y emails, but instead, sending emails periodically throughout the duration that the issue remains on the digital newsstand to remind subscribers of the great content inside.

#4: Appear in areas of influence. Driving adoption of digital subscriptions can be a slower process than you might like. To help speed up the process, one tactic that works very well is to engage and advertise on websites that your target demo sees as influential. This means you will first need to consider where your target subscriber spends quality time, both online and offline. Then, begin testing ads and influencing bloggers in that sphere. If your target reader is a gardener, for instance, don't assume they won't be interested in digital reading. Instead, you can play to their interest in the earth to begin discussions about the environmental benefit of going digital.

#5: Ask questions. This is an often overlooked suggestion, but shouldn't be: people love to feel like they are involved. Magazines have historically done a fantastic job at asking readers to submit stories, comments, and even enter sweepstakes when they read. While digital magazines offer the same opportunities, they also offer additional benefits. Digital subscribers can answer questions and see how their answer compares to others in real time. One of the fastest ways to help grow influencers and increase readership on an ongoing basis is to

continuously ask questions of your readers and share the results. In a Zinio study that was done in May 2008, findings showed that regardless of the type of digital magazine read, the number one or two most highly read magazine content is the Q&A section, or “ask the experts.”

#6: Offer education. Digital magazine subscriptions are growing for those who have been able to understand the potential benefits and personalize them. All publishers can increase the success of migrating from a print to digital subscription by offering more education about the benefits of reading digitally. To date, most efforts in growing digital subscriptions have focused on the speed of receiving a publication as the main benefit for choosing the digital version. A plethora of other benefits also exist. These include: being able to search inside a magazine, archiving past issues, highlighting copy and interacting with ads. While educational campaigns may not appear to offer an immediate return on investment, the investment will pay off in dividends down the road. It is estimated that 70% of print and distribution costs can be saved when a subscriber chooses a digital version. This is a number that commands attention.

#7: Ask your reader to take action. Sounds silly, right? Often times, publishers may forget to ask a reader to try a digital version, or to remember to read each issue to look for the latest content. Whether you are looking to convert subscribers from print to digital, or reaching out to a new subscriber base, you need to make sure your marketing efforts include an “ask.” Conversion rates for new digital magazine subscribers can double if you start by asking a potentially new subscriber to try the digital edition and enjoy additional benefits.

#8: Review results and revise strategies. Testing is key regardless of what marketing efforts you have in place. That said, we emphasize taking stock in the results of testing, and continuously refining and

revising strategies to reflect these results. As consumers become more savvy about digital publications, their needs will change. The merchandising efforts of even 6 months ago may now be out of date. A few rules that Zinio consistently uses include:

- Making sure the percentage of people who click on the links in your promotional or informational emails is at least 25% of those who opened it
- Setting a benchmark for digital magazine open rates of at least 10-20%, with ongoing engagement rates of no lower than 10% on a monthly basis.

#9: Remember, you are speaking to the man (or woman) on the street. Now that you have a whole list of best practices to follow to promote the digital version of your magazine, take every marketing strategy you have thought of and see if your mom, aunt, cousin or the general person on the street understands what you are saying. We have found that marketing copy relating to digital content typically needs to be revised multiple times before all of the industry “isms” and jargon are removed from the messaging. Does your aunt know what digital reading even is? Probably not. But—and this sounds silly to many—she does know what “read it on your computer” means. Getting the language right is probably the hardest part of your enhanced marketing efforts.

#10: Try rich media! As a last hint or tip, regardless of what type of content you publish, you should be excited and thrilled to utilize rich media inside your publication. With IAB standards ruling the internet, and video advertisements driving results higher and higher, a digital magazine, newspaper, or book will benefit tremendously from the use of rich media you or your advertisers have already created (meaning NO incremental cost). This can be simple: take a current rich media ad you use on your publication’s website and test it inside the publication. Or, create something totally new. In either case, results from a Harrison Group study in late 2007 showed that 87%

of readers paid more attention to advertising in a digital publication than in print. One of the main reasons for this result was the fact that digital advertisements often included rich media, or at least a link as a call to action.

Digital publications offer publishers a solution to the mounting costs of producing a printed magazine, including paper, ink, and production expenses. They also offer an environmentally responsible alternative to enjoying our favorite publications. While removing any barriers to reading, digital publications offer your favorite content at the click of a button.

While growth of digital publications has been consistently high year after year, we still have a long way to go. Top-notch publishers have already started focusing on ways to increase circulation outside of the standard means, and to impact the bottom line. Continued improvements can be seen if we pay close attention to the top 10 ways to increase readership and engagement moving forward. Your customers will thank you for proactively focusing on the future of publishing as they continue to assimilate to, and adopt, new technologies that make their lives easier. Ultimately we can help them feel smarter, richer and more popular.

About Zinio LLC

Zinio is the global leader in digital and interactive publishing products and services, with over 1,000 digital magazine titles currently in its stable. Zinio works with premier American and International publishers to provide digital versions of traditional print publications, creating new circulation and revenue growth opportunities. In addition to its extensive digital delivery, circulation, and fulfillment services, Zinio’s capabilities include the design of marketing programs that focus on consumer acquisition and retention, cross-promotion, and driving e-commerce. Zinio’s suite of publications is available online, is downloadable for offline reading, and can also be read on the iPhone and iPod touch. Zinio is also the exclusive home of VIVmag, the world’s first fully digital and 100% interactive women’s luxury publication. Zinio’s publishing partners include: Bonnier, Hearst, IDG, Gruner + Jahr, Hachette Filipacchi, IPC Media, Mariah Media, McGraw-Hill, The National Magazine Company, Playboy Enterprises, Rogers Publishing and Ziff Davis. Zinio has offices in San Francisco and New York with several worldwide distribution partners. For more information, or to purchase any of the digital magazine-specific titles offered by Zinio, please visit www.zinio.com



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