

How papers sell Digital Advertising

1. Structure matters less than commitment

Organizational commitment is more important than organizational structure, some companies believe.

Some argues that separate companies and competing sales forces are required to manage “dual transformation.”

Some believes a variety of organizational structures can work. There is no “one answer,”.

Each organization can assess and take advantage of the strengths of its sales staff.

Many have used a variety of organizational structures in different places – from dedicated direct sellers to integrated teams where everyone sells everything.

The key is that a company be truly committed to digital and identify the five elements of commitment or pillars

2. The five essential elements to sustain digital

The five elements that ensure commitment to digital sales are:

Focus: Companies that set clear objectives and expectations and effectively communicate them throughout the organization have a much better chance of getting buy-in at all levels. They also must be “owned,” or fully committed to, at the top of the company, also makes sure that there are consistent goals and action plans across the company and at each of its papers so that they can be consistently monitored and measured.

Commitment: Once goals are established and a strategic plan adopted, managers must commit themselves to aggressively executing the plan. It cannot be half-hearted. enforce that commitment with the rest of the pillars.

Accountability: The next key is to make people accountable for meeting company revenue goals. To do this, use a variety of metrics to measure individual performance and success at each market. Also rely on scorecards and sales tracking reports designed to help managers communicate expectations and goals, monitor and evaluate progress, and predict future performance.

Encourage competition among your markets to motivate performance. An All-Star Contest, for instance, rewarded top sales efforts for three company-wide products – banner ads, coupons, and overall online revenue goals. Sales representatives compete both individually and as part of a market tier for bonuses.

Compensation: How sales associates are paid for digital sales is an issue confronting newspapers across the country. Industry wide, revenue from digital products remains a fraction of the revenue generated by print. At some papers, it is higher than the industry average, close to a quarter of overall revenue. Typically, sales reps who sell print newspaper advertising are typically compensated at higher levels than their digital counterparts.

Even though revenue is not equal, some companies tries to level the playing field by offering incentive programs for selling digital products. These programs are part of a sales plan for each digital product.

Monetary incentives are used to drive results. Some companies rewards both the newspapers and the individual sales representatives for performance that meets or exceeds overall digital revenue goals.

Viable solutions: No single “silver bullet” solution, will replace the revenue of print advertising. That idea is increasingly accepted across the industry now. Some

papers approach is to offer an extensive “suite” of products, all of which yield revenue.

This portfolio of digital revenue sources creates what are called “viable solutions.” In effect, its sales staff is not selling products. They are becoming digital marketing consultants for clients, the group formerly known as advertisers.

3. Quality journalism is the ultimate goal

For Newspapers, the overriding objective of growing revenue is to provide the resources to produce quality journalism. That is more than a business. It is also a social mission. And it is expensive, an investment that most competitors for revenue in the digital marketplace are not making.

That is the challenge. At the same time, trust in that editorial brand, driven by quality, is also the asset that makes selling digital work.

But the journalism has to change and adapt to a digital marketplace. As it moves from the printed page to digital platforms, the journalism requires new skills and forms of presentation.

The reporters and editors who once exclusively published newspapers, now may be asked to produce video or audio broadcasts, interpret data to generate maps, provide links to related stories appearing on other

channels, and author versions of a story that are styled for social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Business models, too, are evolving with these new capabilities. Different platforms require different sources of revenue to support expanding forms of journalism, some of which evolved from printed newspapers, others that developed for specific devices.

Some newspapers goes beyond the digital duplication of the analog products such as classifieds and verticals that traditionally funded its journalism.

4. Follow the reader

One concept behind selling digital is creating different kinds of journalistic products for the different times of day and the different places where people consume news.

In other words, follow the audiences and adapt the style of the content to fit their behavior. Don't expect them to adapt their behavior to fit your journalism.