

# Native Content

## Using Sponsored Content to Drive Readership & Profits

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The Leadership Institute

*Lighting the Way*

*"Inspiring Dreams, Realizing Potential"*



## Today' s Agenda

**This class is based on the premise that:  
A story is the shortest distance between two  
human beings (or a business and a customer).**

**We're going to talk about a way to increase the  
readership and profitability of your products by  
leveraging humans' deep seated love of story-  
telling.**

*“Sponsored content, also known as native advertising...is  
nothing more than a publication leveraging its best assets—  
reporting, storytelling—and maintaining one of its core value  
propositions as an advertising partner.”*



**Editor & Publisher**



**The Leadership Institute**

*Lighting the Way*

The world is not  
made of atoms,  
it is made of  
stories

Muriel Ruykeser



## Today's Agenda

**We will be talking about sponsored content.**

**Sponsored content is advertising presented in a form similar to editorial content.**

**Sponsored content can take the form of “advertorials,” “native advertising” and “sponsored features”.**

**Sponsored content is a powerful tool for connecting advertisers and readers.**

Those who can  
tell a good story  
rule the world

Hopi proverb



## Today' s Agenda

In true journalistic (and sales) fashion, we are going to talk about:

**Who should write the stories**

**What types of stories constitute sponsored content**

**Where should native ads appear**

**When should reps propose sponsored content**

**How to produce effective native ads**



## Today' s Agenda

Even more important, We're going to talk about:

# Why

**You should offer sponsored content to your advertisers and prospects!**



## Why Sponsored Content?

Sponsored content is a:

**WIN---WIN---WIN**

**Sponsored content is a win for your publications.**

**Sponsored content is a win for your advertisers.**

**Sponsored content is a win for your readers.**

Stories are the  
communal  
currency of  
humanity

Tahir Shaw



## For Your Publication

**Sponsored content provides content for your publications and websites.**

**Sponsored content gives you something “new” to talk about with advertisers.**

**Sponsored content produces measurable results that builds customer loyalty.**

**Sponsored content is a premium and highly profitable addition to your product offerings.**

**Sponsored content leverages the special capabilities of your products to give you a competitive advantage.**



## For Your Advertisers

Sponsored content provides a means for your advertisers to tell their story more completely than in an ad.

Sponsored content engages readers and creates interest in the advertiser's products.

Sponsored content allows advertisers to “borrow” the credibility and reputation of your publication.

Sponsored content gives advertisers a competitive advantage and a way to make their business stand out.

Sponsored content “puts a face” on an advertiser's business allowing them to better “brand” themselves.



## For Your Readers

Sponsored content is “news your customer can use.” Readers are interested in gathering information which helps them to make buying decisions.

Sponsored content makes readers feel more in touch with their communities. People like to feel they are “in the loop.”

Sponsored content helps consumers get to know the business people in their neighborhood which builds trust and helps them to make local buying decisions.

Sponsored content makes readers feel like they’ve learned something rather than given a sales pitch.

*“When you begin to talk in stories, your black-and-white words turn into color. Your drab requests turn into a mission. People find you more compelling.” Annette Simmons*



# Advertorials

The word “advertorial” is a combination of the words “advertising” and “editorial.”

As this suggests, advertorials are ads written in a format similar to an editorial feature.

Advertorials are paid stories about the customer’s business and what they offer.

The content and style of advertorials is clearly promotional and marks them as paid advertising.

Advertorials could also be described as “heavy copy” ads.





# Advertorials

Advertorials are ideal for products/services that need to be sold.

They deliver large amounts of information in an engaging and easy to digest format.

Advertorials help businesses differentiate themselves from their competition.

Advertorials can describe features not easily covered in “bullet points,” such as personalized service.

Advertorials are most effective when combined with traditional ads.



# Advertorials

**Advertorials are very effective.**

**A “split run” test in the Reader’s Digest found that an advertorial pulled 81% better than a traditional ad.**

**Copywriter Joe Vitale observed that “readers are up to 500 times more likely to read an advertorial than a straight ad.”**

**Advertorials make a business more credible and trustworthy.**

**Because readers are far more engaged with advertorial stories, they are more likely to mention them to the advertiser than an ad.**



# Native Advertising

Native advertising is less direct and more subtle than an ad or advertorial.

Native advertising are stories which raise interest in the types of products and services offered by the client.

They may use the advertiser as a “source”, positioning them as an expert in their field.

Native advertising is focused on branding and is not offer oriented.

Native advertising can be used in conjunction with a traditional ad to generate response.



## Native Advertising

Native advertising is popular with professionals and upscale retailers who may feel traditional advertising “cheapens” their image.

For example, an article on the “Importance of Estate Planning” can feature an interview with a local attorney.

This allows the attorney to position himself as an expert in the field and to discuss his qualifications.

Native advertising does not produce the immediate results of traditional ads or advertorials, but is an effective way to build a customer’s brand.

Native advertising is very common on the web.



## Sponsored Features

Sponsored features allow advertisers to “own” features that their potential customers read in your paper or on your site.

This is the publishing equivalent to major corporations buying naming rights (think Coors Stadium or Staples Center).

Examples include:

- An appliance store sponsoring a weekly recipe
- A Christian bookstore sponsoring a bible verse
- A sporting goods store sponsoring the local “High School Athlete of the Week”



## Sponsored Features

Sponsored features allow publishers to add content, driving readership without increasing costs.

Sponsored content creates opportunities to sell non-traditional advertisers into your paper.

Sponsored content gives advertisers a way to offer something back to their community.

Sponsored content can be used to support community organizations.

Example: Local business can sponsor an “Adopt a Pet” feature for a local shelter.



# Sponsored Features

Sources of content that advertisers can sponsor:

**Vendors:** There are many companies providing puzzles, horoscopes and other types of features at a minimal cost.

Local organizations are often good sources of content, for example the local historical society can provide “This day in our town’s history.”

You can create columns such as “Senior interviews” or opinion polls.

Information from almanacs and other open sources.



## The legalities

The Federal Trade Commission places special restrictions on sponsored content.

From the FTC's Native Advertising A Guide for Businesses:

*“A basic truth-in-advertising principle that it’s deceptive to mislead consumers about the commercial nature of content. Advertisements or promotional messages are deceptive if they convey to consumers expressly or by implication that they’re independent, impartial or from a source other than the sponsoring advertiser—in other words, that they’re something other than ads.”*

Complete FTC document is available online.



## The legalities

The best rule to follow is “*Better Safe than Sorry.*”

Advertorials should be clearly labeled, “*Advertisement*” or “*Sponsored Content.*”

Native ads have some “*grey*” areas.

Labeling does not seem to impact the effectiveness of native ads.



# Selling Sponsored Content

**Sales reps should review their customer and prospect lists to identify potential clients for potential advertisers.**

**Special consideration should be given to non-traditional businesses and people who keep saying no.**

**Look at current advertisers for opportunities to expand their programs.**

**Everyone has a story to tell.**

**Don't rule out any business, virtually all businesses can benefit from sponsored content.**



# Selling Sponsored Content

Just like everything else in selling, good things come from asking good questions.

Get the customer to talk about their business.

How they got started...What they do...especially...what makes them special!

Compliment them on their “story.”

Describe what sponsored content is and talk about the benefits of telling their story to the public.

Once sponsored content appears in your paper you will find it is easier to sell additional pieces.



# Producing Content

Before selling sponsored content you need to find someone to write the copy.

Best option is to designate one person to create content if budget allows.

Editorial staff often consider writing “advertorial” as “below them.”

Talk to your staff, people who like to write are often attracted to our industry.

You can work with local colleges and high schools journalism programs to find writers.



# Producing Content

## Freelance writers are another option

### When working with freelancers:

- Read their “clips,” talk to their former customers.
- Remember the person you choose will have to interact with your customers.
- You need writers who are creative and who write quickly.
- Freelancers are notoriously unreliable. Build a list of writers so that you always have a back-up.
- Give writers clear direction and guidelines.

When negotiating with freelancers, don't forget the value of a byline. Many writers who are trying to build their careers will trade dollars for exposure.



## Creating Effective Content

To be effective, sponsored content must be:

# Engaging & Meaningful



# Creating Effective Content

To be engaging, content must:

- **Grab the reader's attention**
- **Be enjoyable to read**
- **Tell the reader something interesting or valuable**
- **Must be a story with a clear beginning, middle and ending**
- **Must not be an ad**
- **Ideally be creative and well written**

***“There are two kinds of native content: There's content I want to read and content I don't. If you're putting content I don't want to read in front of me, it really doesn't matter how much you got paid for it—I'm probably not happy!”***

**Seth Godin**



# Creating Effective Content

Suggested outline for a sponsored content story:

- 1) Give article an attention getting or “catchy” title.
- 2) Catch reader’s attention in first or second sentence.
- 3) Introduce the characters (Business owner or end user).
- 4) Introduce a problem.
- 5) Show how problem can impact reader’s life.
- 6) Introduce the advertiser’s solution.
- 7) Provide “happy ending.” How the advertiser’s product changed the character’s life.
- 8) Provide call to action and advertiser’s contact information.
- 9) Stories should include photos or graphics which help tell the advertiser’s story.



# Creating Effective Content

Additional thoughts on creating a powerful message:

- Use headlines to draw readership.
- Use question headlines, “How to,” “Do you”.
- Use scare tactics, “Is your family at risk?”
- Use charts, graphs and “infographics.”
- Using engaging photographs. Happy smiling faces are far more interesting than a building, a sign or a furnace.
- Write for “Skimmers.” Use subheadings and bullet points to highlight key points.
- Testimonials are a great way to build trust in an advertorial. Interview customers or glean positive comments from Yelp and similar websites.



# Creating Meaningful Content

To be meaningful content must:

- **Help the advertiser advance his/her business objectives**
- **Solve a reader's problems or make their life better in some way**
- **Accurately reflect the advertiser's business**
- **Position the advertiser's business in a positive light**
- **Tell readers something they didn't know before**
- **Help establish a connection between the advertiser and the reader**

**Remember that Sponsored content is not an “ad,” it is a story. The best sponsored articles contain at least 70% “narrative” and no more than 30% product information.**



## Creating Meaningful Content

Sponsored content is effective because it builds a connection between your customer and his/her customers.

The most engaging and meaningful content,

Stirs an ***EMOTIONAL*** response in your readers!

Stories have the power to engage human emotions. If you can touch a reader emotionally they are more likely to remember the customer's message and take action.

“Actions seem to follow feelings”

William James



## In Conclusion

### **Sponsored content:**

**Provides our readers with information they want and need.**

**Gives our advertisers a powerful tool to tell their story to potential customers.**

**Provides sales reps with a new product that produces great results for their advertisers.**

**Gives publishers a competitive edge and a new source of revenue.**



## In Conclusion

Sponsored content is a:

**WIN---WIN---WIN**

Sponsored content is a win for your publications.

Sponsored content is a win for your advertisers.

Sponsored content is a win for your readers.

*Adding sponsored content to your product mix is a winning strategy!*



## The Happy Ending

***“Stories have power. They delight, enchant, touch, teach, recall, inspire, motivate, challenge. They help us understand. They imprint a picture on our minds. Want to make a point or raise an issue? Tell a story.”***

***Janet Litherland***

**When you tell a good story, you, your advertisers and your readers will live happily ever after!**



# THANK YOU

## Questions & Discussion

On behalf of The Leadership Institute, I would like to thank you for attending this training and wish you the best of luck with all of your future endeavors.

THANK YOU!

