

Getting Started With Electronic Media

The Barwis Digital Checklist

Step 1: Establish A Digital Foundation With The Membership Application

- ✓ Capture the email addresses of your members. Add the necessary fields to your application form and to your membership renewal form. Use regular mail to solicit missing email addresses from current members, as needed.
- ✓ Ask members permission to send them e-mail (opt-in), including special offers that are carefully screened to be appropriate.
- ✓ Offer members the opportunity to agree or opt-out of receiving special offers and information from carefully screened vendors.
- ✓ It is recommended that your message seeking permission to send email use the words “Yes” and “No.” Studies have proven that response is greater when “Yes” and “No” are employed rather than simply “Check here” to opt-in.

Step 2: Don't Let Rights Get You Wrong

BEFORE YOU MAKE THE FORAY into e-publishing:

- ✓ Make sure your author agreements, licenses, rights and permissions are up-to-date.
- ✓ Expect to pay freelance writers a 5% to 10% premium for “articles for hire” that in addition to print will be distributed in electronic channels.

Recommendation: Contact McHugh Publications, for comprehensive information about rights permissions, processes and procedures. A good start is McHugh's, "20 E-Publishing Questions and 10 suggestions For Successful E-Publishing."

A list of McHugh publications about rights and permissions can be found in the Resources section, most are available at no charge at: www.johnbmchugh.com

Step 3: Establish Policy & Procedures To Support Electronic Commerce

DOES YOUR ASSOCIATION have a policy regarding the acceptance of advertising from industry suppliers/vendors? If not, it should. And it is important that it cover all your forms of print and electronic media, including website advertising. Policy is important not only to ensure appropriate advertising acceptability but it will also serve to protect the association from potential issues ranging from libel and copyright infringement to payment.

Your policies should cover:

- ✓ Contracts and insertion order requirements
- ✓ Payment, terms, frequency discounts, etc.
- ✓ Acceptable/unacceptable advertising content
- ✓ Right to reject advertising
- ✓ Limitation of liability for advertising materials accepted
- ✓ Permitted uses of email list (rentals)
- ✓ Miscellaneous contract terms and conditions

Step 4: Carefully Assess and Plan a Digital Media Launch

DON'T TRY TO HIT A MOVING TARGET. In launching digital media first establish the objectives of each vehicle as fully as you can when you first begin development. You can make changes as you gather data, but start with a specific objective in mind.

What type of vehicle best meets your members' informational needs? Is your membership segmented with specific interests? Can those interests be served with highly targeted vehicles such as electronic newsletters?

How much and what type of information will you convey? What frequency is best? Monthly? Weekly? Perhaps monthly in print supplemented with weekly e-newsletters. What are the marketing needs of your potential advertisers? Will they welcome a large format unit such as banners and skyscrapers on your website or e-newsletters? Or will small-space or text only advertising match their needs?

Step 5: Staff for Success

THE CREATION OF CONTENT for a print publication or electronic media of any size or frequency cannot be just the latest item added to the bottom of someone's to-do list. The single, most common reason websites and other media ventures fail is the lack of solid, timely content. If you aren't willing to make the commitment to generate quality content, abandon the venture.

Of course, staffing needs will vary. You may need subject specialists who are also good communicators. Most often you'll find these subject experts within your membership, but typically they are not professional writers and few will have the time to dedicate to a steady stream of fast-hitting deadlines.

Professional, trained and experienced journalists have the skills to learn the ins and outs of your subject matter and may be a better choice for effectively organizing and conveying information.

Or you may choose to subcontract editorial development to an independent contractor — particularly those skilled in electronic media. The independent contractor brings many benefits, not the least of which is obtaining highly-skilled and experienced writers sans the full burden of salary, office space, phone, computer equipment, cell phones, insurance, retirement benefits, vacations, etc.

Just as in defining and planning digital media early, carefully think through who will create relevant, high-quality content on a continuing basis, meet deadlines, identify new opportunities and adopt new technologies, and what resources they will be able to employ.

Digital media is distinct from print media and has different requirements. Digital media is best entered as a separate business operation with its own strategic plan.

To be successful in digital media requires strong interaction between editor, web staff and IT. Digital media demands this staff stay up-to-date with changing technology and work as a team.

Step 6: Collect Traffic Statistics/Analytics

SELLING ADVERTISING and sponsorships on the association website will require some critical data to attract advertiser interest and investment.

Media markets are shifting toward using outcome-focused metrics to determine the value of advertising to specific audiences. Marketers also use these metrics to guide the development and “fine tuning” of their messages. Conversely, third party cookies are proving to be an unreliable technology, because too many people regularly delete them.

You will need either a statistical reporting software package or the services of an ISP to collect this data. Does your Internet Service Provider (ISP) hosting service provide you with report functionality of your website activity and “ad performance overview reports” that track advertising performance? Is this information accessible, daily, weekly, monthly? Having this data available for sales support is essential.

KEY METRICS INCLUDE;

- ✓ The number of unique visitors the site hosts per month.
- ✓ What visitors do when they arrive on the site.
- ✓ The number of click-through’s generated for offers on the site.
- ✓ Length of time of the average user session.
- ✓ Total monthly page views.
- ✓ Number of “impressions” on each page.

Metrics for measuring website advertising are continually changing and expanding. Metrics can include use rate, interaction, click-through rate, conversion rate, distribution and cost per click.

To explore metric measurements in depth the Web Analytics Association publishes standard definitions of web analytics metrics.

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Tracking Dynamic Digital Media Activity

The same concern for statistics that gauge website advertising also applies to e-newsletter advertising, sponsorships and email list rentals (blasts). As anxious as marketers are to employ email promotion, they also need to determine its effectiveness. It is wise to gather performance statistics such as:

- ✓ Number of emails delivered
- ✓ Number of recipients
- ✓ The email “open rate”
- ✓ The “click-through” rate (for embedded hyperlinks)

Most important for the publisher is ensuring deliverability. Inform the advertiser of the number of emails delivered, and whenever possible, the number of recipients who opened the email.

Step 7: Establish Digital Ad Rates

ESTABLISHING ADVERTISING and sponsorship rates is critical to attracting advertisers and providing an appropriate profit margin. When setting rates first get a feel for the market, scout the competition and keep in mind that established practice may vary significantly from one market to another.

Remember, the process of setting ad rates is more art than science. But you must know your total net cost of manufacturing, distributing, operating and staffing in order to ensure your rates exceed your costs.

Determine the basis on which you will price website and e-newsletter advertising:

- ✓ Cost Per-Thousand (CPM): the amount the advertiser pays for each one thousand impressions
- ✓ Static/Fixed: ads appear for a specific period of time, i.e.: 1-month, 6-months, 12 months, at a fixed cost

Advertising rates vary based on ad format/size, location, and the perceived value of the audience.

- ✓ Highly targeted audiences with proven purchasing power command the highest rates
- ✓ Ads in premium position “above the fold” on the website home page can be priced higher than those positioned below the fold and on secondary pages

- ✓ Establish a minimum purchase for CPM-based advertising, such as 5,000 impressions
- ✓ Determine fair rates for “fixed-price” advertising units

Publish and distribute your rates in a comprehensive rate card, keeping in mind that each vehicle will have its own rates. Decide if you need one rate card or individual rate cards for each vehicle.

Refer to the chapter “Selling Media” for a detailed discussion of this vital topic.

Step 8: Sell Advertising & Sponsorships

DETERMINE WHO should sell your advertising:

- ✓ Internal full-time advertising sales employee
- ✓ An independent advertising representative
Which is best for your organization?
- ✓ Professional advertising sale representation is a necessary ingredient for successfully selling advertising.
- ✓ The responsibility of managing and directing internal advertising sales representatives is a dynamic and time-consuming assignment.
- ✓ If you don’t have a full-time media staff experienced in managing and directing an advertising sales staff, you’re a candidate for engaging an independent advertising sales representative.
- ✓ Independent advertising representatives are paid on a commission basis for the advertising they sell.

Refer to the chapter “Selling Media” for a detailed discussion of the choices in advertising representation and how to choose wisely.

Step 9: Plan to Promote

CAREFULLY PLANNED, well-executed promotion is essential for successfully selling advertising for both traditional print and electronic media. No promotion, no sales.

- ✓ Determine what materials are needed that will establish your publication, define its audience and position its editorial slant for consumption by marketers who plan and purchase advertising.
- ✓ Establish a budget for advertising sales promotion.

- ✓ Assign responsibility for promotion activity; creation of materials, inventory, distribution.
- ✓ Carefully consider what materials will best support the sales representatives for presenting a persuasive case for your organization's media.
- ✓ Ensure your promotional materials are a good reflection of the image and positioning of your organization and media.

Refer to the chapter "Advertising Promotion" for ideas you can use to create effective advertising sales promotion.