



Using Traditional Media

By Dan Durbin

Print is Not Dead

I remember when I was a kid and my dad and I were out bass fishing. I was a young buck and it was the first time I was going to switch from casting a bobber and crawler to a rubber worm in an effort to catch largies.

"You can use any kind of rubber worm, just as long as it's purple and says 'Mann's Jelly Worm' on the package," my dad said.

That was all my dad used and for a few years, it was all I used too. You know what? They worked great. A few years later, new rubber worms came out that were scent-impregnated and had prettier colors, so I switched over and gave them a try. They worked, too and I forgot about the purple Jelly Worm for years.

Just this last summer, I found an old bag of Jelly Worms and just for the heck of it, I fished with them for a day. Guess what?

They still worked.

Print Is Not Dead

The point is print advertising worked when there were very few other options several moons ago but there is no reason why it won't work today. Some may argue that it is not as efficient as other ways of reaching consumers and they would have a point but hear me out.

A few years ago, there were many more magazine titles on the market than there are today. The newsstands were flooded with titles: probably too many titles and subscriber numbers began to fall. As those numbers fell, publishers were forced to raise the prices of their ads to compensate for fewer subscription sales. That is a recipe for disaster, so some publications cashed in their chips.

Today, some vertical and regional publications are bucking the system and things have stabilized. While circulation numbers many not be back where they were in the glory days, there are some very respectable numbers out there if a person picks them wisely.

Paid Circulation vs. Free Net Surfing

When a person has to buy a subscription and lay out \$12-\$36 for a year's worth of editorial content, you believe they are going to read what is in it. These types of diehard readers are the ones who actually look at the ads in the magazine because they are hungry for products and/or news on the topic they are passionate about. They want information and are willing to pay for it.

The same cannot always be said about someone simply surfing the net for a few minutes on their coffee break or while making a pit stop after lunch. There is plenty of great



While surfing the web for info surely has taken over a lot of time spent on gathering hunting knowledge, someone who pays for a subscription is likely a person who will spend time intently reading a publication and ultimately spending money on new products.

content on the web about hunting and fishing; there is no doubt about it. However, according to some very unofficial focus group polls, when a person pays for their subscription, they feel like they are cheating themselves when they don't read it.

Think about it, too, in terms of when you pick up free content at the local gas station, whether it is a shopper-stopper or a regional outdoors publication. We have all done it and, at least in my house, those freebies get paged through quickly and are used for starting a campfire the next evening. Because there is no fee for reading the unpaid circulation publications, there is no urgency to read them or guilt factor for just throwing them away.

The Cream Is Rising to the Top

Another thing to consider is that the print vehicles that are surviving most likely have serious readers that do still search for articles pertaining to their passion. If they have hung on to that paid subscription, they simply renew each year or convince their friends to get it too. Maybe the content in the publication itself is better than they can find on the web. Maybe they simply like to hold on to a magazine rather than stare at a screen. Maybe they have a specific writer they follow that doesn't have a blog the readers can find on the web.

To be sure, in many cases, the print publications that are still around have weathered a huge storm. The storm is not over but it might be starting to subside.



In recent years, several print publications in the hunting industry failed but those that are left standing have some of the most diehard readers on the planet.

Good Advertising Is About Balance

Is there really any reason print simply will not work? There have been times when I have completely abandoned a website that served me too many pop-up ads but I have never thrown a magazine out because the ad on the page was too obnoxious.

It is really not a question if print is dead. It's more like this: why should print not be part of an overall advertising plan if it still works? Are there certain products or services that digital advertising simply works better for than print? You bet. But that does not mean you should abandon print altogether. You should simply spend more wisely.

When we set up budgets for most of our clients, they are divided into print, digital, television, radio and co-op. We try not to overload any one category unless the reasons are ultra-compelling. Social media advertising has seen a big uptick in how money is spent, so, naturally, not everyone is getting as big of a piece of the pie but that does not mean print needs to starve.

We try and have spends that complement each other, not battle one another. Our print ads may promote new products or special offers that drive people to our clients' Facebook pages. Our TV ads may do the same. In print, television or radio ads, we have a limited amount of time and space, so we often use these media vehicles to either drive consumers to client Facebook pages or webpages where we have more time to sell them or to a brick-and-mortar store if we are supporting a dealer.

The point is if you put all your eggs in one basket, you are missing part of the market that may not call that basket its home.

Time Will Tell

Will print ever fully go away? I don't think so. Things may have to change a bit, whether print vehicles figure out new ways to grab subscribers or people finally get so sick of social media advertising that they go postal. The thing that scares me is when clients demand that every marketing dollar gets spent on social media. While social media delivers robust numbers in terms of cost per thousand and results can be very trackable, to totally disregard print or any type of advertising means that your portfolio of ads is totally relying on one channel. Don't make that mistake. Purple Jelly Worms still catch fish and print advertisers can still catch the consumer.

Editor's Note: Dan Durbin is the co-owner of Bast Durbin Advertising, a full-service ad agency in the hunting, fishing and conservation industries for over 20 years. Bast Durbin specializes in media planning, public relations, social media, design and photography. For more information about Bast Durbin Advertising, go to www.bastdurbin.com.

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