



tactics & techniques

IDEAS AND CASE STUDIES

NEW APPLICATIONS

Circ Day Takeaways From a Creative Point of View

A copywriter/creative consultant sorts through a full day's sessions.

BY SHIRA LINDEN

Circ Day is an idea fest, a veritable carnival of tips and tactics that are working for other publishers now. It's an opportunity to pick up some gems, adapt them to your market and test new concepts. Here are 10, no 11 nuggets that will inform my creative recommendations in the months ahead:

1. According to *The Nation*, email promos work. Ditto for radio and cable TV ads (relatively inexpensive) that drive traffic to the Web. One spot can lead to 250 orders, and is more effective for this niche than buying key words.

2. When *The Nation* added a link to subscribe at the end of each online article, subscriptions increased 10 percent.

3. E-zines are an effective tool to turn prospects into customers for *The Nation*. They convert 4 to 5 percent into paid subscribers with each promotion to this group.

4. Some publishers are using video to enhance the online experience. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* features a video clip of kids solving a Rubik's cube in 12 seconds,

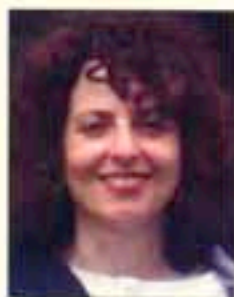
which has attracted a lot of attention.

5. Vouchers are morphing from bill-like to promotional-looking, some with multiple inserts. *This Old House* used a clever theme of a proposal from a contractor, which became its control. Voucher packages are also getting bigger. Time Inc. and Meredith agree: bigger is better.

6. Another trend in 2006 is the movement to a hard offer—with 56 percent of publishers going to the hard offer in 2006, up 3 percent in 2005.

7. The use of incentives (premiums and freemiums) encompassing branded and unbranded merchandise is increasing steadily, especially the premium on payment, which now comprises 6-7 percent of packages. Outer envelope copy for freemium packages often reads *Free Gift Enclosed* or *Do not Bend*.

8. Premiums work well when they solve a problem the consumer faces. For example, research showed consumers like to tear out articles from *Real Simple*, which led to clut-



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ter. A binder for those who renew for two years addressed this issue and was a home run. Giving consumers a choice of six premiums helped *Sports Illustrated* save money, as most consumers selected less costly premiums than the pricy fleece they were

offering. A mystery gift was also successful.

9. In a free-to-paid conversion for the *New York Sun*, an invitation-style package performed better than a postcard series, but the postcards pulled better on a cost per acquisition basis.

10. According to Rodale, strong creative can win over segmentation.

11. Email blasts before and after a direct mail campaign boost response. The look should resemble the DM creative—but the headlines should change. ❧

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