



2008 Project Round Up

MC-centric Advertising Network

Successful web advertising strategies have the potential to generate significant amounts of income, however the field is often difficult to parse and even harder to navigate. The solution? Build an advertising network/ joint effort that pools the collective inventories of Consortium members to make a highly-marketable package. This concept had been percolating since the Consortium's very first meeting at Pocantico. Recent developments in third party ad management interfaces, and the rise of the vertical ad network as viable competition against entrenched search-engine advertising firms have made this project feasible, and it was revived at December's all-Consortium meeting.

The Media Consortium has begun to investigate how to launch a vertical or joint ad network—a network that sells ads that run on all participating members' websites. Vertical networks are valuable to advertisers because they can tap into highly targeted demographics. We're currently in the midst of a feasibility study to determine this project could significantly benefit participating groups and its logistical operations. The first step was to survey participating groups about their own online advertising abilities and models, technical know how, and web site traffic. Initial results include:

- 26 organizations responded, with a total of 4,549,753 unique visitors and 55,776,186 pageviews per month.
- 24 organizations have email products that go out around 1x/week, reaching approximately 1,002,671 names. Of those 26 respondents, 12 offer ads on their email products.
- 12 respondents currently offer ads on their websites and three to four are interested in incorporating them.
- Currently, 19 organizations are interested in an MC ad network, with additional maybes.

It is clear that more than a third of current members (survey respondents and non-survey respondents) have interest in breaking into online advertising or building out their capacity to increase online advertising sales. As part of building out this project, we are also looking into ways to provide technical consulting to members who are interested in joining this project. The Media Consortium is currently working with Hart Hooten of Marketech to determine next steps in building out a Media Consortium-sponsored joint advertising effort.

How can you opt in?

Contact Erin Polgreen (314.210.2553) to fill out a short survey regarding your website's monthly metrics and sales management strategies. The better we understand our members needs, the better product we can craft.

Progressive Media Wire

The core mission of The Media Consortium is to leverage the existing resources of Media Consortium members to have a significant impact on the political discourse in this country. Part of this mission is to also take advantage of new opportunities to build the audience of individual MC members and the collective sector.

We're taking advantage of new technologies, social networking applications and distribution opportunities to create a media wire system that will allow members to share content, increase web traffic, and reach new audiences. We're working with consultants from CommonSense NMS to build out this project on the newsladder platform--you can view a sample wire at johnmccain.newsladder.net.

Syndicated Reporting Project

After many consortium members noted that they did not have the resources to cover specific beats on an ongoing basis, The Media Consortium launched a syndicated reporting service that has become an innovative model of open-source journalism creation and distribution. In July 2007, The Media Consortium hired reporter Brian Beutler as its Washington Correspondent to cover the House Judiciary and Oversight and Government Reform committees.

In exchange for publication of this content with a byline crediting both Beutler and The Media Consortium, participating members have a 24-hour exclusive on the content before it is posted on the Consortium's reporting website at www.themediaconsortium.com/reporting. Thanks to RSS and hyperlink technology, as well as to Brian's reputation within Washington D.C.'s progressive blogging community, the articles have moved from members' sites to the larger public. Over the past four months, Beutler's 40 reported stories have been published by seven Consortium member organizations, including Alternet, ColorLines, In These Times, Mother Jones, The American Prospect, The Progressive, and the Women's Media Center. In addition, his reporting has been linked to by a number of blogs and websites including Slate, The Atlantic Online, Care 2, Common Dreams, and Talking Points Memo.

In September 2007, Brian's beat was reorganized to focus on Congressional oversight and war making—allowing him to follow, anticipate and investigate stories throughout Congress. We have also integrated daily blogging into the project. Since this time, the Consortium developed plans to expand the syndicated reporting project to cover an additional beat (not necessarily DC or congressional focused) in early 2008. This new beat will continue to open new, and important audiences up for our members. We are also looking at coupling this reporting with audio and video supplements. Combining the joint publication by participating Consortium members with a communications effort makes the echo chamber for these stories limitless.

How can you opt in?

The Syndicated Reporting Project is available to members at a cost of \$50/month. Contact Adele Stan (astan@themediaconsortium.com) for access to the articles and blog posts. We also recommend that you join the DC Reporting project listserv on TheMediaConsortium.org.

Live From Main Street

Live from Main Street, a tour of America during the 2008 election season hosted by radio personality Laura Flanders and produced by The Media Consortium, will launch in Spring 2008. The concept of a traveling show and election collaboration was first discussed in a 2006 meeting of Consortium coordinating members, and gained focus and traction at the

2007 all-member meeting in New York.

Live From Main Street's town halls will help place local issues and social movements within a national context. Each show will be broadcast on multiple television, radio and satellite channels, streamed across the web and written about in print and online outlets. Individual Consortium members will help create vital complementary content, building out a unique collaborative and cross-platform media initiative. Live From Main Street will provide integral opportunities for learning and relationship building, as well as a new standard for electoral coverage that will build a base for lasting independent media infrastructure.

See Live From Main Street packet for town hall schedule and information as to how you can participate.

Research and Development

In addition the current initiatives we are engaging to support the independent media market, we are also looking towards the future. Many of the Consortium's members (but definitely not all) are facing a long-term decline in a core audience that is over 50, white, well-off, and classically liberal. We can and should do a much better job of reaching this core audience in the short run, but the long-term reality is that the future audience will not be who consumes our content now. For one thing, technology and Internet advancements are upending traditional journalism models, including the rise of user-generated content and citizen journalism. And just as importantly, the future audience will be more diverse, particularly around matters of race and ethnicity, age, and gender identification. Both of these audiences are critical from a community building perspective (which impacts editorial work) and market-building opportunities for our members.

The Media Consortium has commissioned Tony Deifell, Chief Strategist and Founding Board Member, KaBOOM!, to explore future business models for independent media. The report will assess the current, cumulative state of the progressive, independent media sector; report on existing and new (traditional and non-traditional) models, assess future opportunities for sustainability, and last but not least, provide recommendations. This report will provide a road map for individual media outlets and for The Media

Consortium itself as it continues to develop its ongoing initiatives and support for members.