

Even in cyberspace, leads are still the golden eggs

In snail-mail's heyday, it was easy to keep track of inquiries: you opened the envelope and counted them. Now that e-inquiries have largely replaced snail-mail, tracking and qualifying them in cyberspace isn't quite as simple. Not only are the internet, e-media and today's computer tools much faster, most of the inquiries (or click-throughs) are going to your website and not to you. For Brewer clients, this adds up to thousands of click-throughs so far this year, and we all need to know where they're coming from.

Part of Brewer's on-going media services is requesting regular reports from the publishers of print and on-line media carrying our clients' advertising, and following up continuously to make sure that we get them. Then we consolidate the key data in a matrix we've developed. Here, for example, is one that summarizes click-throughs for two clients who are currently advertising in e-newsletters.

Note the click-through counts: these are the e-inquiries. Beyond those who went to the clients' websites to obtain further information, the matrix also lists the numbers of recipients who opened the newsletter and thus were exposed to the clients' ads. The delivery rate indicates a clean and current mailing list, and the

open rate shows recipient interest in the newsletter's subject matter... or editorial vitality, if you will. Both are measurements of the newsletter's quality.

How do you convert click-throughs to qualified leads? The place to do that, obviously, is in your ad and on your website. Applying the age-old principle of "You don't get somethin' for nothin'", a good approach is to offer them something they can use in their jobs in exchange for registering on your website... ideally, something that is also related to your product. Here are a few incentives that some of our clients have successfully used:

- a white paper, engineering bulletins, data sheets, and/or catalog, or case studies demonstrating your product applications;
- a product demonstration CD/DVD;
- engineering software to help prospects design your products into their applications;
- e-newsletter subscription offer;
- CAD-3D engineering drawings of your products;
- product samples.

According to New Equipment Digest's 30-year advertising inquiry database, nearly 75 percent of ad respondents have an application in mind at the time they inquire, so don't forget to ask the prospect if he or she would like an application specialist to provide a no-cost engineering review.

You may also want to capture the prospect's name, title, company name, address, phone and fax numbers, application, and permission to send him or her news about your future new products and applications.

The next step? Get the qualified leads to your salespeople for follow-up and reporting. Then watch your revenues grow. And, at the risk of stating the obvious, keep the click-throughs flowing with consistent print and on-line advertising, publicity, direct mail (including permission-based e-mail), trade shows, and other proven marcom tools in your kit. An aggressive marketing communications program is the cyber-geese that lays the golden eggs.

(The above first appeared in "Sudden Impact," a Design News e-newsletter, in November, 2005.)