

Are your advertising dollars well spent on incentivized traffic?

By Valerie Tay

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Valerie Tay
webmaster@site-cafe.com

AdHomeBase.com <http://adhomebase.com>

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When it comes to incentivized traffic, advertisers or media buyers are usually polarized into two distinct camps. They either love it or hate it. If you've never heard of "incentivized clicks", or "incentivized traffic", it means traffic that is generated by rewarding users to click through on ads. The basic premise of incentivized traffic is that members of incentive sites are paid cash or other rewards for doing things such as shopping, subscribing to newsletters, responding to offers, and referring friends.

The major incentive sites such as NetFlip, CoolSavings, and Spedia collect all sorts of data on their members and are able to target their advertisers' ads to the relevant niche markets. This is one of the advantages that proponents of incentivized advertising like to bring up.

From the points that we accumulate when using our credit cards to the stamps that we receive when buying a latte, incentive and loyalty programs have for long been central to our lives. Indeed, in the offline world, almost every marketer is using some forms of incentive. Once online, incentives can work wonder if we tie the proper incentive to the proper action. For example, a merchant can't really lose out by paying a user some cash through NetFlip to have her pay more cash to buy a product.

Yet incentive-driven consumer actions are not as simple in all environments. While critics concur that the use of incentive can produce excellent marketing results for a pay-per-sale program, it might be a flop in a pay-per-click or pay-per-lead scenario. Incenting a user to click through or to take a lead usually results in a less qualified visitor or member. For instance, you may have purchased 1000 unique clicks to your

site. There is no deceit in the sense that the incentive site actually sends 1000 of its members to click on your ad and visit your site. But most incentivized users simply hit the "back" button on their browser after your main page loads, so that they can repeat the process with other ads to earn more points or money. Very often, they do not bother to read your site's content, or navigate deeper into your pages. In a pay-per-lead environment, you may have paid for 100 people to sign up free for the MLM program that you are promoting. The risk is that it may turn out that the majority of these so-called new members only sign up to receive the incentive and are uninterested in your program. Hence, your advertising dollars would have been spent for nothing.

The use of incentive sites as a source of advertising comes down to the axiom "caveat emptor" (buyer beware). Of course, there are many advertisers, from the big corporation to the individual home business owner, who successfully use incentivized traffic to boost their sales. That said, one still has to be mindful of the perils. There is reason enough to communicate with a sales rep to discuss what exactly they are selling to you. Always give yourself time to ask questions and think about the suitability of a campaign before you end up with a purchase that leaves your site out in the cold.

Valerie Tay is the Webmistress of AdHomeBase.com, an ezine co-op that provides advertising in multiple ezines. Visit <http://track.ezinetactics.com/?id=ebooks-1528> to receive FREE 500 visits to your Website, grab a FREE copy of Val's eBusiness Starter Kit (worth \$200.85), and place your solo ads.

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