

# Test, Test and Re-test

By Bob Osgoodby

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We could all take a lesson from children. As they are growing up, and learning right from wrong, they are constantly testing to see what they can do, and what is not acceptable.

I see hundreds of ads everyday on the web, and while there are some good ones, most fall into the "ho-hum" variety, and some are downright awful. Now this isn't bad, if they are testing to see what is going to work, and what isn't.

Many put up an ad with no idea as to whether it will produce or not. They let the same ad run for a period of time, and wonder why they didn't get results. They then do one of two things. They either blame the publication for not generating business for them, or give up entirely and go out of business. Others will run an ad once, and when the world doesn't beat a path to their door, they react the same way.

It is a proven fact that an ad must be seen five to seven times before someone can be expected to take action. If your ad is targeted to your market, and you are not getting responses, the odds are you have a "crummy ad". It is not then time to quit or blame the publication. It is time to change the ad.

All successful marketers have one thing in common. They are constantly testing the effectiveness of their ads. One of the most successful that I know, almost always runs more than one ad in the same or similar publication at the same time. You could put the ads side by side, and not realize they were from the same person for the same thing. She lets each ad run five times, always keeping careful track of the drawing power of the ads, and keeps the strongest and changes the weakest.

Mechanically, her method is really quite simple. She uses a different email address in each ad, and a different website address as well. Both websites are exactly the same, but have different URL's. She got her websites from a low cost web space provider where she not only reserved the name of her site, but got web space as well for less than the cost of her ads. There are several low cost web space providers. I can recommend <http://bitshack.com> and <http://esosoft.com> - You really should go with the one that meets your needs at the best price. Don't fall for the "hoopla" that you get "jillions" of characters of online storage for a few bucks more. You don't need all that room. I have dozens of web sites, and they are all under 10MB of storage. Capabilities being equal - price is boss.

She uses a popular ISP, but doesn't use that address in her ads. She feels, and I agree, that an ISP

email address does not conjure up a strong "business image". Your choice of an ISP is important if you hope to do business on the web. Be sure yours provides an industry standard POP3 email capability. While AOL is great for many things, it does use their own proprietary email system, and isn't, in my judgement, the best choice for running a business.

She got a POP3 email address with each of her web sites, so she uses those. She also uses a different email address on her web sites - most web space providers give you unlimited email aliases. She then installed the Eudora email package with a different folder for each address she uses. When she gets an email, which was sent to one of those addresses, she has Eudora automatically file it in the appropriate folder, and send an immediate response. This lets her prospect know she got the message, but more importantly, allows her to track which ad it came from. If the email address was one of the addresses in her ads, she knows which one. If it came from one of the web sites, she knows which ad sent the prospect to that site.

But what has happened here? A quick count of the emails in each of the folders reveals which ad is pulling, and where the prospect is coming from. Now, remember the unlimited aliases, she got with her web space. If she is going to try to test the effectiveness of several publications, she simply uses a different alias for that ad in each publication, and sets up a separate folder in Eudora for it.

There are other ways of course to track the ads by forcing the subject in your email address, and having a different subject for each ad. The cost of web space however, and email addresses has come down so much in the last few years, that having separate email addresses is most likely the easiest way to track the results of your ads, and present a professional image.

You must test, test, and retest your ads. If you do, you will find the winning combination, and realize the power of the web.

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