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Local Search and Banner Sales Result in Six-Digit Growth in Local Online Sales

Synopsis:

Banner sales continue to do well for Gannett and the Cherry Hill (NJ) Courier-Post newspaper. And they do even better when blended with a “local search” offering. That is why the Courier Post brought the Blinder Group back into market to assist with the planning, packaging and actual sales of a new multimedia initiative focusing on combining the newspaper’s new online search application supplied by Planet Discover (PlanetDiscover.com), with online banner ad positions on the local news pages of CourierPostOnline.com. “Local news pages garner great results for us,” states Mike Blinder, President of the Blinder Group. “When we place appropriately designed banner ads on those specific pages of the Web site, we do very well. This is because the reader spends the most time on these pages. Giving the advertiser’s message greater impact.”

Each advertiser who participated in the program, received a specific number of guaranteed monthly online ads, placed on the story pages of the site. Plus, each advertiser received an “enhanced listing” appearing on the top of the results page, of each category or “key word” related online search, performed on the Planet Discover search box, which appears on all pages of the Web site.

The advertiser receive a listing on top of all other businesses, that includes:

- Logo or picture
- Location information
- Phone number
- Business description



Figure #1: Local Search

All advertisers' listings will link to a "Business Profile Page" which will be populated with business information and "keywords" to assist the advertisers listing in being found.

The "Business Profile Page" is placed within the newspaper's Web site. Placing a properly coded page, with advertiser information, within the newspaper's Web site, will actually assist the advertiser in being found higher, on the results pages of online search engines, as part of the "organic results" of the search process. This model of "Search Engine Optimization" has been proven by a number of newspapers, with great success.

Packaging Pricing

There were two levels of advertiser participation offered for this program:

Gold Level participation was limited to 15 advertisers only and included 50,000 monthly, leader board (728 x 90) ad impressions on all news and sports pages of the Web site. Along with the enhanced, online Yellow Page listing, within the Planet Discover local search application. Plus, a business profile page to assist in search engine "optimization" for the advertiser.

Each participating advertiser at this level agreed to invest \$159/ week

Silver Level participation was limited to 10 advertisers only and included 25,000 monthly, leader board (728 x 90) ad impressions on all news and sports pages of the Web

site. Along with the enhanced, online Yellow Page listing, within the Planet Discover local search application. Plus, a business profile page to assist in search engine “optimization” for the advertiser.

Each participating advertiser at this level agreed to invest \$89/ week

Sales Team Training

The Blinder Group conducted an initial training session with the traditional salespeople of the newspaper to instruct on:

- Prospecting new multimedia business
- The basics of multimedia marketing and how the medium works
- Best practices in selling online solutions
- The benefits of bringing interactive products to market
- Methods for using the Web to garner more market share
- How to attack the competition with online offerings

The training also included content informing the sales staff of the Blinder Group’s return visit, in which “4-legged” sales training/closing calls were performed with the reps, to assist in the launching of this initiative. Salespeople were urged and encouraged during the meeting, to set up a large amount of appointments, with qualified “decision-makers” of area businesses.

During that training, the sales staff were supplied with proven support documents that re-enforced the training, as well as provided an appointment- setting script to assist them in setting up the calls.

Sales Support Materials

The Blinder Group also assisted in the production of the associated sales support collaterals necessary for this program’s deployment. A simple, easy-to-follow multiple page flyer was developed so the advertisers (and the sales team) could easily grasp the features and benefits of this sales program being deployed. Too often media companies do not graphically explain the online portions of sales programs in an easy-to-follow manner, thus creating confusion during the sales process. The Blinder Group has vast experience in creating such sales presentations.

(Figure #3 4 sample pages of the 11-page presentation created by The Blinder Group)

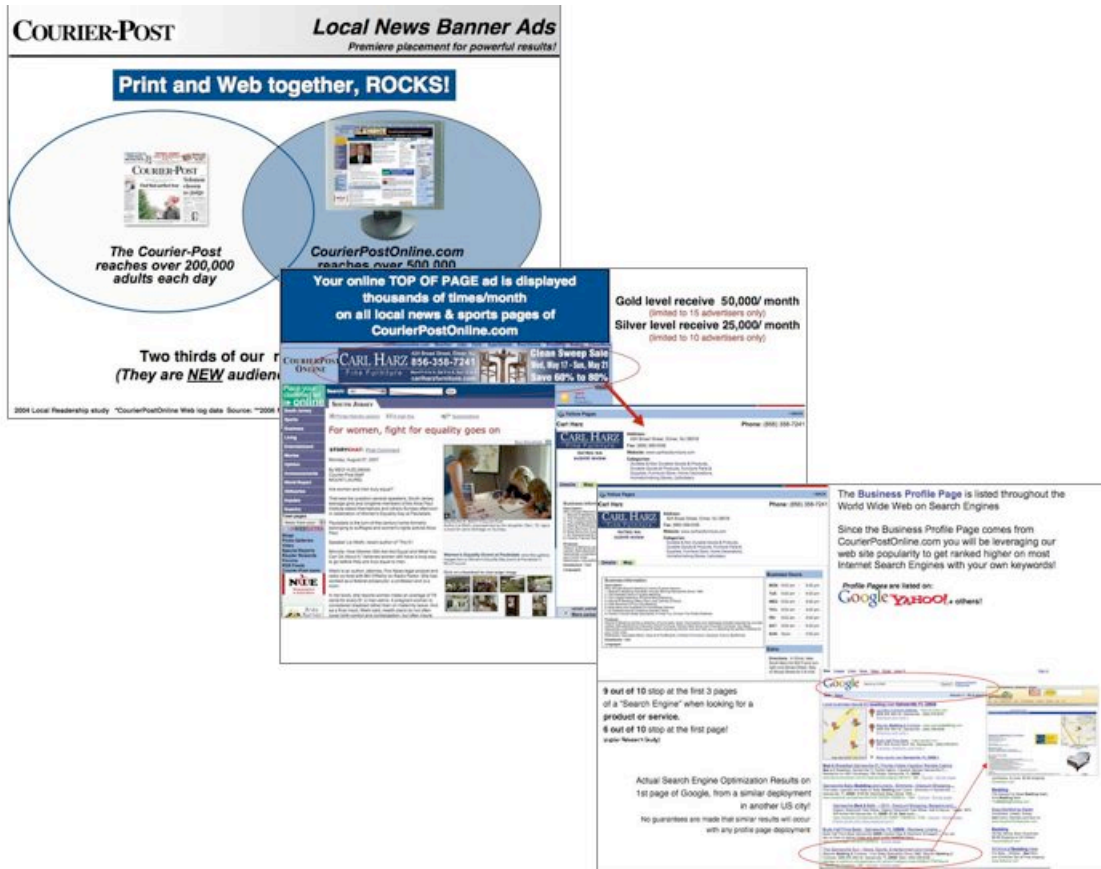


Figure #2: 3 pages of 9-page sales presentation crafted by the Blinder Group

Guaranteed Revenue Generation:

One of the key elements in ensuring sales success of this initiative is garnering advertiser approval of meeting attendance, as well as the validity of the concept in general. Some of these advertisers are new to marketing their business online and feel wary of trying new ideas. One of the most effective means of accomplishing attendance and acceptance is to introduce the advertiser to an industry respected “outside” consultant who has had success with similar programs, with similar businesses, in similar markets, all across North America. That is why many media companies contract with the Blinder Group to perform “4-legged” sales training closing calls with traditional ad reps, to assist in the launch of programs like the one defined in this document.

Also, during these assisted, “4-legged” sales training/ closing calls provided by The Blinder Group, the accompanying salesperson learns new, valuable techniques in how to sell innovative programs, like this one, in an effective manner.

The Blinder Group has a proven track record of generating high “closing” ratios, resulting in significant revenue, for client media companies, that have deployed this form of advertising sales initiative. During these assisted, “4-legged,” sales training/ closing calls, with the sales reps in West Chester PA, The Blinder Group achieved a 53% “closing ratio” during the initial 1st visit, when the call was performed in front of a

“qualified decision-maker,” resulting in over \$135,000 of new online revenue for the Cherry Hill (NJ) Courier Post.

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