

## **GOOGLE – THE BIGGEST MAGAZINE OF THEM ALL**

### **LIBRARIAN TURNS MAGAZINE PUBLISHER**

By Ian Deavin BSc, M.D. – The Industrial Marketing Agency

e-mail: [ian@theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk](mailto:ian@theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk), [www.theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk](http://www.theindustrialmarketingagency.co.uk)

For a long time now we have become used to the idea that Google and other search engines have acted as librarians of the internet. Caching and searching, presenting us with their selection of what they think we want. Becoming ever more selective in what they present to us and always ensuring that we see advertisements related to our searches – just like a magazine publisher in fact.

Google and other search or interactive sites, such as social media, are primary channels of choice for information flow on the internet and like any publisher their first need is for an audience who can then be “sold” to advertisers. Also, like any good magazine, they use interesting content to keep the audience engaged – and like many excellent publishing houses before them they gain theirs for free – from all of us who upload our material online.

Yes, we provide Google for free with the material they use to attract an audience which they then sell on to advertisers - so far a traditional B2B publishing model, but in this case with ever increasing sophistication of data analysis.

I guess the next question is “when will they come up with an editorial policy?” Of course – they already have, they just call it an algorithm and they enforce what we publish by the way they deal with material in line with that editorial policy.

Now we understand that our website and our publicity is in a 3 way relationship between ourselves, our customers (potential) and Google, how does that influence our own publishing choices?

Perhaps – to mix my metaphors – it is all about shelf space, with Google in the role of the shelf owner. This leads us to recognise the quantity vs quality considerations inherent in a system where page 1 is the shelf offering limited appearances, but where there are as many shelves as search terms (keywords) on your industry. However, not all search terms are created equal – we should focus on the ones that are most important, i.e. most meaningful to our audience.

And we must recognise that there are alternatives to the big search companies as there are alternatives to the big supermarkets and the big mainstream news press.

By now, I suggest, there is a fairly well formed view of how to work with Google et al – in our case we believe in creating valuable content which we seek to place before a relevant audience, ultimately leading to website traffic, sales enquiries and sales for our clients.

Perhaps it is worth a look at the alternatives – analogous if you like to the corner shop chains or the local newspaper groups.

Who else stands in place of a global search engine as a marketing option?

- Well of course the independent publishers themselves, whether of web journals or printed magazines or of online directories. Let us not in any way discount these publishers, most of whom work hard to establish their targeted audience and use their own market expertise to ensure that the service they provide offers better value than the “one- size fits all” search engine model which is probably best suited to B2C audiences. These publishers include niche nationals like Fastening and Assembly Solutions & Technology, or Industrial Technology to spotlight only 2 of many – but they also include the large directories like yell.com with segmented data and an active B2B sector.
- Exhibitions – which have survived the onslaught of the internet with greater stratification and niche success. Big national B2C shows still exist of course, but often look more like entertainment. In the B2B arena we now see national and regional specialist exhibitions. Although at much higher cost per enquiry than internet promotion, they do a significantly different job and are refining the way they do it to offer a more personal interactive experience.
- Traditional sales, nowadays fed warm enquiries from the internet, operating once again on a personal relationship basis, backed by in-depth individual expertise with online presentation material and technical data.

So actually the marketing components have probably changed little (even newsletters and direct/e-mail are just reworking of old formats), the big difference is how to blend the components and integrate them – in the rush to “Google Marketing” is it possible we have lost sight of the rest of the mix and especially the way that they are hugely enhanced by the internet as a single data channel?

There seems to be substantial enthusiasm amongst publishers of printed journals who have survived the best the internet can throw at them and found formats which continue to loyally engage engineers by virtue of the quality of their content. Interestingly, it also seems key that the most successful of these have developed a very effective online presence – so balancing

the traditional with the new in an innovative mix. One or two of these have taken it a step further by adding specialist exhibitions to their portfolio.

The view is strongly held by print magazine editors of my acquaintance that the supply chain operates something like this:

- Original search online to establish a possible supplier list
- Further search of websites to refine a short list
- Search of respected magazines with technical credibility for material about the short list
- Actual contact with candidate suppliers

In parallel of course with independent publishing houses and online search engines, we now have a highly active area of self-publishing which covers a much increased span of valuable material, much, if not all of which, can feed the PR distribution program.

- Videos
- Website
- Blog
- Social Media
- E-newsletters
- Brochures and catalogues online
- Data sheets
- Whitepapers
- Application notes
- Installation notes
- Selection guides
- Technology seminars
- In-house technology centres
- Webinars

We are used to the idea that organic search engine results are there on merit, i.e. because they are judged to be in some way worthy of their position – whereas the adverts are there only because someone is paying for them. Somewhat comparable to the established print journal practice of having a knowledgeable editor who selects and presents material considered to be valuable to readers. This expert filter gives credibility to organic/editorial material that advertisements simply do not have.

However, we do see in Google an almost complete blurring of the boundary between adverts and editorial/organic results which erodes this added value. A situation reminiscent of

“advertorials” and of those print journals who chose some years ago to charge for “separations” or simply to charge for “editorial” entries. I can’t think of any now – where did they all go?

In light of this search for the monetisation of results and the consequent predominance of adverts online, it behoves us to consider the alternatives – in the way that a supermarket only sells products it is paid to put on its shelves then customers may soon look elsewhere – at specialist shops for example or other publishers with different business models perhaps better suited to the B2B market.