

# THE POWER OF ADVERTORIALS

*"Advertorials are actually stronger sales tools than either articles or ads!"*

## **The advertorial experience goes something like this:**

You open a magazine and notice this interesting one-page article with a compelling headline. Yes, you notice the word, 'Advertising' in tiny print at the top, but because it looks so much like an article (even matching the magazine's design format), you start reading it. And what you read both informs and intrigues you. You see a mild call-to-action, phone number and email at the end, so, moved by the editorial content and objective writing, you decide to check the product out further.

### ***Chalk up another qualified prospect!***

Advertorials marry skillfully slanted editorial content with a direct response device or two to create a very powerful hybrid-marketing tool. They are designed to blend in with a magazine's background and sound almost as editorial as the articles in there, which tends to keep advertorials wonderfully camouflaged.

Advertorials deliver a respectable chunk of useful and well written content, theoretically right in line with the philosophy of the magazines they appear in. Readers should come away feeling almost as informed as when they've read a real article.

Yet, for all their editorial horsepower, advertorials exist to make sales and, occasionally, to serve a PR purpose. That said, here's why advertorials are actually *stronger* sales tools than either articles or ads are on their own.

## **Five Killer Advertorial Advantages**

- First off, you can put an advertorial anywhere you can put an ad not so with articles where you'd need, of course, hard-to-get editorial approval (and sometimes that's an *impossible-to-get* approval). And even if you could get that go-ahead, articles get edited and bumped all the time. Fortunately you can place an unedited advertorial in any magazine you want whenever you want...and that's like placing an unedited *article* in any magazine you want whenever you want.

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- Next, and as mentioned, advertorials carry a lot of the credibility of genuine articles—readers can't always distinguish them from the actual thing. But even when readers do recognize an advertorial, they still respond differently to that format than they do ads. We are, after all, creatures of conditioning, and, when it comes to magazines, we're conditioned to respond to what looks like an ad one way and what looks like an article quite another. Readers simply attach more credibility to article-looking advertorials over mere ads.
- Speaking of credibility, advertorials often come with the "implied endorsement" of the host magazine. Somewhere in the reader's brain it registers that the magazine has approved this "article" to appear on its cherished pages...and that also lifts advertorial credibility above the pedestrian ad level.
- Owing to its advertorial format, you can also deliver a lot more convincing content than you can in a regular ad, which often leads to highly qualified prospects. Sure, that means a lot of words, but that's okay. People equate articles with content. Moreover, even the world's best copy is still, well, *copy*—words designed to get readers to buy something. Aren't the words in an advertorial designed to do the same thing? Yes...but in far more subtle fashion. Advertorials use an editorial tone to inform the reader about a product or service. But it doesn't stop there. Like a very supportive article, it gently promotes what's being sold.

### **Copywriting and advertorial writing are two very different animals:**

- No need to worry about an advertorial's *restrained* response section. Curious readers craving more information still hit it hard. "It just feels a lot safer responding to an advertorial than an ad," was the way one astute reader put it.

These are, of course, generalized advantages. As with most things in life, success is determined by how well an advertorial is actually executed.

But print advertorials are not the only kind out there.

### **Are Online Advertorials Just As Effective?**

You've probably already read more than your share of online advertorials and not known it. Talk about camouflage! Online advertorials, the best ones anyway, are skillfully woven right into a Website or article at the right time and in the right tone to make it appear as just another part of the content. A strategically placed link or two characterizes them. Done correctly an online advertorial takes your offer out of the realm of "advertisement" and places it seamlessly into the category of "useful information."

Remember, the entire premise of the Internet is supposed to be information. Not advertising. Most people don't spend their online time looking for ads. They spend it looking for facts, articles, opinions, reviews. That's why the online advertorial can be such a promotional jewel. It fits right in with the format. The fact that online advertorials exist within the "playing field" of the site's content or editorial is another credibility advantage in its favor. Remove it from that playing field, put it in a banner separate from the content and viewers will simply see it as the naked advertising it is and respond accordingly...which is to say, they often don't respond at all.

Moreover, if the Website owner concedes to blend a testimonial or some other supportive language with the advertorial, its credibility, which is already considerable, can shoot right through the roof.

It is generally conceded that the quality of advertorial leads is far superior to banner prospects. Just ask the Wall Street Journal online. They are among a number of big boys who put the power of advertorial affiliate programs to good use. And if the big boys are employing advertorials, then maybe it's time businesses, big and small alike, consider this novel brand of camouflaged advertising.

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