

B2B Magazines number one for information

Business-to-business magazines are used regularly for work purposes by more decision-makers than any other medium, according to two independent research studies.

The typical pattern was that, for a given type of information, the proportion of decision-makers who declared that B2B magazines were the most useful medium was usually around four to six times larger than for the medium in second place, according to a UK study. The remaining eight media then tailed away with few people thinking them the most useful source.

The eleven types of information for which B2B publications were so pre-eminent were:

- Providing thorough coverage of your sector
- Helping you to stay in touch with what's going on in your sector
- Helping you to understand how your sector is changing
- Helping you to learn from the successes and mistakes of others
- Keeping you up to date with news of product launches
- Providing you with information about new products and services
- Helping you select new suppliers
- Looking for jobs, or helping you to keep up to date with the job market
- Helping you spot new business opportunities
- Containing advertising which is useful to you
- Helping you to do your job better

Websites have made a rapid impact in all developed markets. Although well behind B2B magazines, online has become the second most important medium overall (though not for every single type of information need), ahead of the traditional media of national newspapers, general business magazines, conferences/exhibitions and direct mail.

Across seven diverse industrial/professional sectors and 14 different media and information sources, there are seven principal sources that are highly valued and relied upon by business decision-makers, according to the Canadian Starch Information Sources Study*.

The top seven sources for B2B information:

- Specialised business publications
- Trade shows
- Sales people
- Internet
- Direct mail
- General business publications
- Business directories

Over the course of eight years (1996-2004), business publications rank first as the most useful source of information on products and services purchased. As was the case in the UK report, business publications have gained significant ground in recent years over trade shows, the second ranked information source.

Business publications remain the clear leader and appear to be a medium that complements the internet. Business publications are responsible for creating a significant amount of website traffic.

Savvy industrial marketers use their traditional high frequency publication advertising to promote their web sites.

Likewise, web search engines direct traffic back to magazine content that is posted on the internet, or indeed to the web sites of the business publications themselves.

While internet usage will continue to evolve in certain sectors, it appears to have reached a plateau and found its niche with business decision makers.

Part of its success has been the way that marketers have used business publication advertising to generate web site traffic.

While usefulness ratings vary according to the type of industry, business publications are the most useful information source in five out of seven markets measured. They are second only to internet in the information and technology sector.

In retail, a sector requiring significant face-to-face dealings, business publications follow high-cost low-frequency alternatives - sales people and trade shows.

Summary

- Business publications are the logical base buy in any business-to-business marketing communication programme.
 - highly targeted to buyers in virtually every industrial/professional sector
 - low cost per thousand reach
 - high quality credible environment to showcase products and services
 - retention of issues for reference creates multiple ad exposure opportunities
 - business publications are the only medium with the customer every working day (and often taken home)
 - pass along and routing means readership is generally three times greater than circulation.
- Business publications are the original source of most inquiries and sales. Beyond business reply cards, business publication ads carry fax numbers, 1-800 numbers, e-mail addresses and website addresses. Ads in business publications are the reason these inquiry mechanisms are so successful for advertisers.
- Business publications complement all other marketing activities. As the base media buy with the broadest coverage, it supports sales force activity, promotes trade shows, drives website traffic, and promotes conferences/seminars.
- Relevant high quality editorial environments create a credible context for advertisers. Readers are interested and involved and advertisers benefit from that relationship and trust.
- Business publication reading requires the undivided attention of the reader. This results in more concentration and better ad recall than other media can provide.
- As the lowest cost, highest frequency and highest reach medium available to business-to-business advertisers, business publications offer the best return on the media investment
- Business publications are the original source of the inquiries that generate sales.

