

Connect Your Creative To The Internet

Why Integrating Websites Into Commercials Is Crucial

As Roy Williams has often pointed out, if we can first get listeners to go to our client's business in their minds, getting them there in person is a much less daunting task. People are more likely to avail themselves of an advertiser's product or service if they can preview it before actually crossing the threshold into the store, showroom, or office.

In the 20th century, creative services dealt with this by producing radio commercials that evoked visual imagery and emotional tones. Using nothing more than words, sound effects, and music, we created a stage upon which theater of the mind was acted out in 60-second increments.

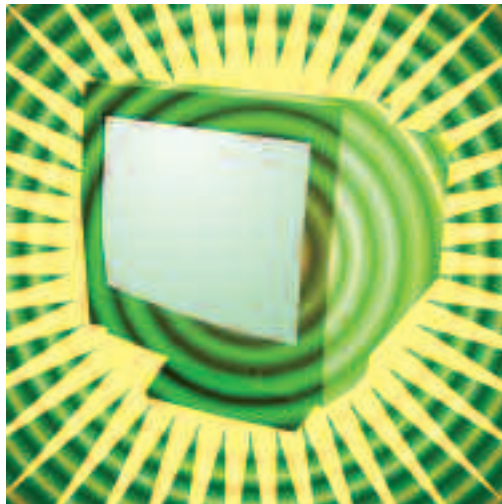
Now, in the 21st century, a new tool has emerged to take that visualization to another level. From a creatively induced *internalized* visualization process, we can now guide listeners to an easy-to-reach *external* resource that provides a real-world peek into our advertisers' domains. In short, we make cerebral paintings with words, then guide them to the photographs on the Internet.

Today, when I meet with account executives to discuss the creative needs of their clients, one of the first questions I ask is about their Internet presence. If I meet with the client directly, I make sure to take a virtual tour of their business before the appointment.

In the spots I now write, the client's website isn't merely relegated to an afterthought or small bit of mandated information, like the telephone number or address. There has been a huge paradigm shift in the past decade. Ten years ago, Internet access was as uncommon as color television ownership was in the early 1950s. Today, everyone, from my 9-year-old son to my 83-year-old mother, seems to be Internet savvy. Consumers have come a long, long way from "Let your fingers do the walking."

Every indicator points to a greater and greater reliance on the World Wide Web as a gateway to businesses and buying decisions. Here are the steps I take with every client for whom I get a copy request:

1. Before I write one word, I go online and take a tour. Since I cannot visit every advertiser's place of business, this allows me to at least viscerally live the product.
2. I look for key elements — photos of the store, personnel,



and merchandise. An "about us" paragraph or two. A stylized map that shows the business's exact location in relation to the rest of the community. Directions from various locales. Phone, fax, and e-mail contacts.

3. Our advertisers enjoy a marketing partnership with our stations, so if any of these key features are missing, I relay the information to the account executive with a suggestion that they be added. I have never yet found a client resistant to this type of help.

4. As I write the spot, I often cut and paste certain phrases directly from

the website. This does two things: It creates a halo effect, which forms a synergy between the spot and the website presence, and establishes a comfort zone around the client, with language they have pre-approved.

5. I tell the client's story, but in the end — unless specifically directed to draw attention to an event, like a grand opening or clearance sale — I make sure the call to action relates to going online. That's because my clients universally agree that the preponderance of customers who walk through their doors have already visited online (assuming there's a website).
6. I never use the "www" or "dub dub dub" preface. It's time-consuming and unnecessary.

If the advertiser's URL address is difficult to understand — bearing in mind most businesses don't create them with radio in mind — I will spell it out carefully in the spot. If it is too difficult to understand, I recommend that the client keep his existing URL address, but buy a parallel domain name that links to it, and is easier to comprehend audibly. It's a relatively small annual expense that is worth its weight in gold.

It's important to encourage listeners to do what their own 21st-century buying habits have already ingrained in their minds: *Go to the website.* Then make sure the website is articulated in such a way that there can be no mistakes.

If you do, your chances for growing the advertiser's business aren't just enhanced, they're virtually assured. ☎

Steven J. Steinberg is creative services director for Nassau Broadcasting Partners in Portland, ME. He can be reached at 207-797-0780 or e-mail him at ssteinberg@nassaubroadcasting.com.