



Sponsored Content Is an Increasing Opportunity for Media Sales



Sponsored content and its sister format, branded content, are often promoted as a new marketing tactic for brands and local businesses, but they have their roots in early radio, business profiles in newspapers as a perk for loyal advertisers and the advertorial. Today, they are important as a format to tell a brand or business's story and to provide product and lifestyle content people are already seeking online.

By definition, sponsored content is information from a business that also promotes that business. A business usually collaborates with a publisher to create and publish the content on the publisher's site, which that audience views.

Branded content is typically created by brands and self-published on their content hubs and micro-sites. It also tells a story and offers useful information, but its connection to the brand is more direct. Sponsored content is often considered a softer form and branded content a harder form.

In either case, many brands and businesses are using sponsored content to strengthen their engagement with consumers and customers and to drive foot traffic and sales. For media outlets, sponsored and branded content have become significant revenue streams and a new sales opportunity for media reps.

Research from Borrell Associates during the past two years has found many local businesses “stumbled” onto the value of content marketing (with sponsored content as a subset) at the beginning of the pandemic. Instead of sales messages, these businesses had to provide information to employees, customers and the community about whether they were open, safety protocols, delivery options, etc.

Once they discovered how well this content connected with these audiences, many of these businesses started using sponsored content as part of their marketing strategy. Borrell's March 2022 survey of small- and mid-size businesses found 42% said content marketing would be more of a priority during 2022 than it was during 2021. Businesses using content marketing also purchased advertising, on average, on twice as many media outlets as those that haven't yet added content marketing.

Every local media outlet has a Website and social media platforms and can become publishers of sponsored content from their advertisers and often bundling it with standard advertising. To sell it effectively, however, media reps must think like a marketing consultant more than a salesperson.

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Research Is the High-Octane Fuel for Media Planning



Research in the form of raw data, analysis and content has always been a fundamental tool for media sales, advertising agencies and advertisers. Although consumers have become more independent in their searches for brands, products and retailer information and the process of engaging with consumers more complex, HubSpot's 2022 Content & Media Strategy Report revealed the top two uses of market research for media planners haven't changed for decades.

Media Planners' Most-Effective Media Planning Strategies, May 2022

Media Planning Strategies	Percent
Conducting market research to find the most effective channels to reach the target audience	70%
Conducting market research to understand the demographics of the target audience	64%
Running content audits to inform the media planning strategy	59%
Setting a clearly defined budget	57%
Analyzing the results of your content strategy	57%
Clearly defined goals/KPIs	55%
Using a calendar to schedule content	48%
Leveraging media planning templates	46%

Marketing Charts (HubSpot), June 2022

The report's findings are critical for media salespeople because often media planning is a service more advertising prospects and clients expect from media outlets. Research from multiple sources continues to indicate local businesses/advertisers want marketing insights from reps, not sales pitches. They want consultants who can help reveal and examine their business challenges and partner in the effort to overcome them.

As a media sales manager or rep, you need market research to support local businesses/advertisers based on their needs, not media's. Our job at Media Group Online is to share with you what we've learned from our extensive, daily research and the reports and other insights available on our Website.

Your exclusive access to Localogy's Co-Op Connect database allows you to be an even better marketing consultant for local businesses. You can pair a good media plan with co-op dollars, which many of those businesses aren't aware they are qualified to receive.

Since market research is a pillar of effective media planning, start creating your reputation as a planner and a consultant with the analysis and insights from Media Group Online.

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Facing Challenges Is Rewarding

Digital and Outdoor Media – The May 2022 New Media Insights Report reveals an intriguing correlation between digital and outdoor media to reach more young adults.

It's Back-to-School Season – The Back-to-School 2022 Profiler is filled with vital information about this season's shopping habits, and the season is starting even earlier than usual.

Auto Ad Dollars Continue to Flow – The auto industry may be suffering, but the June 2022 Auto Update Report includes insights about why local dealers must continue to advertise.



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