**Modular Advertising on My Mind**

While debating the advantages of moving to a modular advertising model is neither new nor newsworthy, I am always intrigued when hearing about another company that has made the switch and is singing its praises. Is it simply a case of converts being the most zealous or is a move to modular advertising simply something that every publisher should seriously ponder?

Consider the stories of two recent converts—one in Georgia, the other in Maine. Both publications scrapped their rate cards and started over from scratch, rebuilding their approach to advertising sales and pricing to fit the needs of their advertisers—particularly the smaller, independent businesses that make up the majority of their customers. In both cases, advertising and customer satisfaction rose significantly and the publications successfully transformed once-in-a-while business into regular, monthly revenue.

Interestingly, executives at both publications cite more effective client communication as the key to the success of their new advertising models. One noted that traditional advertising rates are “…too complex for advertisers to grasp quickly and there was no question that we were losing sales and revenue as a result.” With a simplified rate card that allows for greater transparency, simplicity and flexibility, sales reps at both publications are building budget-friendly monthly packages for local advertisers that reflect both their goals in terms of mixing print and digital media and the seasonal flow of their businesses.

The transition to a modular model also simplifies the sales process. Rather than selling business owners on individual ads for particular events or products, sales reps simply ask, “What kind of budget do you have in mind?” and then find or create a monthly package that fits the bill. And when new advertisers sign on for a full month, publications have the opportunity—and time—to show business owners what they can do. At the other end, when advertisers receive monthly bills at their agreed-upon rate, no one has to spend time deciphering elaborate advertising charges to understand the bottom line.

Another advantage of modular advertising is that it unleashes creativity and the potential for selling campaigns. Monthly packages typically include a mix of different ad sizes and types and lend themselves to coordinated campaigns featuring themed artwork, layouts and messages. Selling packages and campaigns also underscores the importance of spec ads, which give advertisers a clear sense of how their ads will look and allow publications to “wow” customers with creative and eye-catching designs that will drive business to their doorsteps.

In the words of one recent convert, “All I have to say is, ‘Do it!.’ There’s absolutely no down side to giving customers what they want in a way they can easily comprehend.”