

MSN case study:

From zero to hero

New advertising format gingers up Recipe Finder launch.

Campaign overview

When MSN launched Recipe Finder <http://recipefinder.msn.co.nz/>, the definitive online cooking bible, it considered two broad approaches. One was 'slow burn', peppering the MSN website with targeted banners to build recognition and awareness over time. The other was what might be termed 'big bang', firing a concentrated 'blast' to grab attention and prompt click-through.

In weighing up its options, MSN decided brand launch was best supported by a strongly visual platform with sufficient presence to arrest attention and draw people away from immediate content to the new offering. In the very sense of the word, advertising had to interrupt, though without causing irritation, enticing people to click and look.

MSN solution

Homepage Takeover advertising using an expandable full-page OTP (Over The Page) format. An expandable homepage billboard, capped at two 10-second exposures per browser, with a 300x250 'island' reminder follow-on.

Execution

Launch was a single day event, with advertising click-through transferring browsers to Recipe Finder. The intrusive nature of the format dictates shortened exposure. Launched from MSN content, OTP advertising is first vetted and approved by MSN content managers.

Results

The one-day promotion was a hit, attracting 0.9% click-through – a quantum improvement on the industry accepted 0.2% banner click-through rate. Since launch day, which captured approximately 4,000 unique browsers accounting for 18,000-plus page views, site visitors have swelled. Five weeks down the track page views have increased 69% and unique daily visitors hover between 1,000 and 2,000.

Lessons

Think big. Interrupting an online audience works, but capping the number of interruptions helps avoid audience irritation. For these reasons OTP advertising is best suited to getting the immediate attention of a large audience over a short period. Consequently, the hook must be extremely strong, because the message is literally interrupting viewers and must be strong enough to divert attention and encourage click-through.

Reaching a large national audience online precludes many local online media properties in a small country like New Zealand. They simply don't offer sufficient audience numbers to support a national campaign. MSN New Zealand, with two million-plus people using its network each month, offers the audience critical mass required by big campaigns.

