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Four Ways to Aim Better

WeatherBug explains four things advertisers should keep in mind to lock onto the audience that they seek.

By [Andy Jedynak](#), Contributor

Since its beginnings four years ago, the desktop weather application provider has collected information from an unusually willing and 100-percent registered user base. These days, most WeatherBug clients use that registration data to target their advertising on WeatherBug with very little waste, and this brand has no regrets about the strategy it has taken from the start.

General Manager Andy Jedynak shares lessons the company has learned in the process of building the WeatherBug business and brand.

Lesson #1: Online demographic targeting really does work.

Demo-based targeting may be the cornerstone of traditional media buys, but it's ironically undervalued in the online buying world where it has the potential to be most effective. Internet gives us the ability to segment and database users precisely by demographic. But early in the land-grab days of the Internet age, most publishers did not go the route of requiring their users to register their key demographics (age, gender, income, ZIP, etc.) for fear that would be a barrier to acquisition that would hurt market share and growth.

Today, as more and more publishers ask their users to register, advertisers are just beginning to find how immensely effective online demo targeting can be. As a registration-based site, fully 80 percent of our advertisers successfully target their online buys with us by using the demographics we gathered through our customer registration process.

We've found that our advertisers prefer to demo-target for any of three reasons:

First, it shows synergy with the broader advertising strategy for that product or service, which, at the highest levels, almost always identifies some key target demo (for example,

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18- to 49-year-old women).

Second, it helps them demonstrate greater overall efficiencies in reaching their target demo, because they pay for 100 percent concentration (in other words, only 18- to 49-year-old women see the ad). Being in line with the broader advertising strategy in these two ways have helped our clients justify a greater shift of dollars from traditional to online budgets.

Thirdly, they find it simply works better. They discover this in a couple ways: (1) they decide to demo target right off the bat, and realize it is more efficient than their other "contextual content" buys. Or, (2) after we work with them to find out which broad demos are clicking and converting, they adjust their targeting scope to purify their buy to reach only the audiences that yield the greatest efficiencies.

An important thing to note here: While registration-based demo targeting works, you won't find the increasing number of publishers who offer it by doing a site segmentation run with tools like @Plan. Because @Plan doesn't currently identify registration-based sites, either publishers have to tell or you have to ask them. In other words, if you rely solely on a tool like @Plan to find audience concentrations, you may miss the best opportunities to demo target your message, and boost results, with the relative purity of registration-based targeting.

Lesson #2: Use Internet applications to target large, loyal audiences.

The way that people use the Internet is changing. Internet applications have massive reach, they're more likely to offer registration-based targeting, they're far less cluttered with advertising, and they tend to have highly loyal audiences. That makes them ideal for ad placement. Let's look at the data:

Recently, Nielsen//NetRatings reported that the vast majority of Web surfers also access Internet via applications. "With 76 percent of Web surfers using Internet applications, functionality has grown beyond the browser to become a fundamental piece of the overall desktop," says Abha Bhagat, senior analyst at Nielsen//NetRatings. "It's become harder to distinguish when you're on the Internet, blurring the lines between what's sitting on the desktop and what's coming from the World Wide Web."

ComScore Media Metrix uses two metrics that are particularly useful in indicating publisher loyalty: "Daily Reach" and "Days Visited per User per Month." Nine out of the top 10 major publishers with the highest daily reach, and seven out of the top 10 in terms of visits per month, all now offer an Internet application as either the primary or secondary way to access their service.

Why do most top sites offer an Internet application? This is partly because applications have more onboard processing power than Web sites, which makes them faster, easier and more powerful in accomplishing user needs. Part of it is this: consumers who decide to use a publisher's application consist of people who were willing to invest the time to actually download and install it. And taking such extra effort to get to a service naturally makes people more likely to value what they have. Thirdly these publishers, through their desktop application, have established a true desktop customer relationship with their consumers. They are literally one click away from the desktop. No more opening a browser and navigating your way in.

The bottom line: Numerous studies show that the more loyal an audience is to a media brand, the more likely they will take advantage of the advertisements they see in conjunction with that brand. And a media brand that interacts with its users through a dedicated application tends to have customers who are more loyal.

Lesson #3: Target people in their world.



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"Local" is how people live, think, plan and work. If you can advertise on a media property that allows you to target, and even customize, your message by market, you are truly getting into the minds of your potential customers. Many advertisers force themselves to think nationally or globally, but act locally. One great example of late is how Campbell's, through its efforts to connect with people on a local, or perceived local, level, has recently begun to beat back some of its aggressive competition in the soup arena.

The rise of the WeatherBug brand is a classic example of how this works so well. As a broadcast syndication property (somewhat like "Oprah" or "Wheel of Fortune"), WeatherBug takes on an absolutely local feel in most all top 50 markets. This helps us become far more personally relevant than competitive national brands. With less work than you would think, you can use the geotargeting capabilities of many sites to act locally, and thus be perceived as far more relevant to people's lives. That engenders improved loyalty, action and results.

Lesson #4: Target outside the box.

It's not quite time to fully regiment Internet advertising methods. Frankly, we're where television advertising was in 1954. In the early 1950's they hadn't even conceived of the 30-second spot. Chances are the "30-second spot" of the Internet hasn't been invented yet either. Continually try to capture customers through new platforms or methods that seem to have promise.

As a publisher, half of our business comes from completely out-of-the-box programs that we created to serve advertiser needs. One of those is a targeting method called Sponsor Select, which is an intensely honest form of ad targeting where we simply ask each WeatherBug user what specific advertiser or offer they would like to see this month. Many publishers offer unique targeting tools. Try them. You may stumble on the holy grail of targeted Internet advertising.

Andy Jedynak is the senior vice president and general manager of WeatherBug, which is owned by AWS Convergence Technologies Inc. Jedynak began at AWS in 1999 and is responsible for the WeatherBug business unit. He has directed the growth of WeatherBug from a concept in 2000 to become a top online weather property in 2003. Prior to joining AWS in 1999, Jedynak spent 9 years at NBC working within a number of disciplines, including manager of new media.

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