

Add Local Online Listings to Media Mix

Many credit union marketers hesitate to invest in search engine or directory marketing—purchasing keywords or online directory listings—because they believe there's significant wasted coverage. They think this type of advertising is irrelevant for geographically focused organizations or those with restrictive memberships.

This is true for credit unions with a restricted field of membership. But for community-chartered credit unions, it's important to take advantage of the more focused localized directory and search engine marketing opportunities coming to the forefront.

Jupiter Research, New York, says 60% of consumers regularly look for local content online. The firm's research shows consumers use the Internet to look up business addresses and phone numbers for organizations with which they're familiar. They forgo print media.

So in what Internet directories should your credit union be listed? Try vertical directories providing a database listing of all credit unions. And if you haven't already done so, register your credit union with the Open Directory Project (www.dmoz.org), a free directory with editors who categorize and index sites.

This directory listing is the foundation for many other directory and search engine listings. As of June 4, this site indicated its 63,427 editors had indexed 4.4 million sites in more than 590,000 categories.

Consider expanding or shifting online some of your yellow pages media spending. With prospects and members increasingly accessing contact information online, provide information the way they want to access it. Members want to click on an e-mail address and contact your credit union.

Some want to use their computers for phone calls directly dialed from their computers. Many Internet yellow pages also have added a click-to-call feature allowing consumers to click and submit their phone number if they'd like a call from a local advertiser.

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Among Internet yellow pages to consider are Yellow.com, Yahoo! Yellow Pages (edit.yip.yahoo.com/learnmore), SMARTpages.com, RealPages.com, SuperPages.com, and Switchboard.com. Yahoo! Yellow Pages sources its directory information from Bell South, Atlanta; and infoUSA, Omaha, Neb. It offers advertisers a preferred placement in three levels of search results for \$25 to \$60 a month for a single-city listing.

In March 2004, Google.com announced the beta introduction of its local search function (local.google.com/lochp) that searches by business type—book store, credit union, and so on—along with geographic location. Google will retrieve address, e-mail, and phone number, and also other information such as press contact information, commentary, and reviews from the Internet community.

The Google AdWords program now allows you to purchase keyword ads targeting potential members based on a specific city or geographic radius around a city. Prior to this, Google generated advertising results based on the unique Internet protocol address of the searcher's computer.

Now if members or potential members search Google for credit unions in Buffalo, N.Y., they get results delineating credit unions in Buffalo, which Google has indexed through organic search and those credit unions that might have purchased a local keyword with the Buffalo, N.Y., geographic criteria.

As you look at expanding your e-marketing approaches, keep your eye on local search and directory listing options. Purchasing this advertising allows you to track results and modify your approaches to ensure an adequate return on investment for your advertising program. ■

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