

Don't overlook print in multimedia development

AMSTERDAM: When newspaper executives talk about multimedia development, they often mean digital development. But that approach overlooks their biggest asset their newspaper in print, which brings great value to multimedia delivery. That was a key message from the World Digital Publishing and the World Readership conferences recently concluded in Amsterdam.

At the conferences, experts advised developing both digital and print properties to enhance the unique and valuable combination that newspapers bring to multimedia development for editorial content and for advertising effectiveness.

"We are in a position to exploit multimedia in a way that Google, or Yahoo, or our TV competitors are not," said Eamonn Byrne, business director of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN). "We have print. We have digital, which offers the opportunity for us to become broadcasters, to become radio. We have the opportunity to become multimedia companies that other companies don't have. We can offer print, mobile, video, and audio combinations across our media, to the advantage of our advertisers."

"We're in a unique position to offer multimedia advertising packages and they work harder than single media offerings," he said. "You get better results."

"The most trusted media"

"Print, by any standard, is the trusted media in most markets, even amongst online users," he said. "The first lesson is, print brings something very significant to the table, other than just its audience."

That point was underscored by PricewaterhouseCoopers' most recent forecast of media growth to 2012. Print advertising will grow to US\$123.3 billion world-wide in 2012, while digital advertising will grow to US\$13.4 billion, according to PwC. While the growth rate for digital advertising will be around 19%, the total digital advertising revenue in 2012 will represent only 10% of total newspaper advertising revenue not nearly enough, and far lower than the digital evangelists have been predicting.

Newspapers continue to hold an advantage that will become even more important in the future a franchise on quality journalism, said Marcel Fenez, global leader for the Entertainment & Media Practice for PricewaterhouseCoopers.

"We hear a lot about user generated content from the 'net generation'. It's very, very, very important. But premium content is still really valuable. Even the 'net generation' values premium content. They're tired of watching videos of a dog running up a tree," he said.

Even Google is promoting the value of print advertising, through its print advertising sales initiative in the US. But do newspapers need Google to talk up print ads? Newspapers should be doing it themselves, several speakers said.

Perhaps no company is leveraging the print-digital combination better than VG in Norway, which is increasing its profits despite circulation declines for its flagship. It's doing so by diversifying both print and digital offerings. Torry Pederson, the company CEO, said the Internet is superb for its speed and depth, but sometimes it can be too deep, or, as he puts it: "On the Internet, you can follow the links until you die." By offering a well-edited selection of editorial content, newspapers provide a "middle ground" between speed and depth that provides readers with time-saving, welcome organisation.

Bring the values

And even when focusing on digital developments, it is important to bring the values that exist in print, said Caroline Little, former CEO and publisher of *Washington Post/Newsweek Interactive* and an adviser to Guardian News & Media for its digital expansion into the US.

"Keep one foot rooted in the core journalism values of the core product, and one that happens to be delivering the most revenue, and with the other, stretch as far as possible to try new things in this new medium," she said.

Summaries of all presentations at the World Digital Publishing Conference can be found at www.wan-press.org/digital2008, for Readership Conference at www.wan-press.org/amsterdam2008 and the WAN calendar of upcoming events at www.wan-press.org/calendar.

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