

# Internet Advertising: 6 Keys to High ROI

By [Lisa Pelish](#) of [Massive Impressions](#)



Before extolling the virtues of Internet Advertising it's important to understand what it is and what it isn't. It's *not* search engine optimization, or search engine paid placements – and it's not e-mail marketing. It's also not a website.

Internet Advertising specifically refers to the use of banner ads, e-mail newsletter sponsorships, text ads, e-mail blasts to rented lists and other exposure opportunities offered by the very same publishers who sell offline advertising.

So how does Internet Advertising differ from buying traditional ads? Most importantly it's about getting feedback from an investment. While print ads have their place in an integrated advertising effort, and reach the same audiences for the most part, they're very expensive. Worse yet, there's no way of knowing if they're working. When compared to offline, Internet Advertising always stacks up as the better value because it provides immediate feedback.

Here are six considerations when planning your annual advertising programs, and suggestions for using the Internet to maximize those investments.

## 1. **Develop Campaign Strategies with Clear Goals**

Advertising campaigns should always have measurable goals. It's important to not approach Internet Advertising with the idea that you're going to reach everyone, everywhere. The best values are targeted.

A detailed audience analysis is a good place to begin. Once the message and audience are clear, effort should be taken to determine what media outlets and tactics provide the best value. A thorough review of all media claiming to reach target audiences should be conducted to compare audience demographics, website traffic, print circulation and online advertising opportunities. Promotional and creative strategies should always stay true to the brand, but in order to be effective they must focus on achieving the stated goals of the campaign. Be careful not to allow creative to be diluted by agendas outside the focus of the campaign goals.

## 2. Don't Neglect Collecting Performance Metrics

Too many advertisers on the internet don't collect performance data on their ad buys. Too many Fortune 500 corporations depend on inherently inaccurate, third party tracking services rather than making a small investment in their own ability to collect their data and keep it safe and in-house. Some surprisingly big entities don't even do campaign tracking.

So why the neglect? Many marketing departments and senior executives lack the basic knowledge of Internet Advertising necessary to set benchmarks and gauge results. The importance of data is never emphasized, so no resources are put towards collecting it. If data is never collected, ROI cannot be demonstrated and future ad buys can not be optimized. Some key metrics to consider are responses (a.k.a. click-throughs), cost per response, response rates, conversions, cost per conversion and conversion rates.

## 3. Optimize Cost Efficiency with Media Effectiveness Testing

The web provides a unique platform to test the effectiveness of media outlets, offers, creative and messaging. Leverage the Internet to validate media selections before investing heavily in any particular medium. Collect data about the audiences being reached through the media buys, including what promotions they responded to and what media vehicles delivered them. This advertising intelligence is leveraged during planning to improve the ROI and the effectiveness of future ad campaigns.

Effectiveness testing provides the information needed to improve the cost efficiency of ad buys. In the past, the only way to be cost efficient when planning an advertising schedule was to buy *more* and for longer durations. However, today's publications have a multitude of online opportunities that are considerably less expensive than their print counterparts – a perfect opportunity to “test” before committing.

## 4. Plan in Cycles to Leverage Data Driven Media Strategies

When executing an Internet Advertising campaign, it's best to plan in cycles. In most cases quarterly, or every six months is optimal. This gives you the opportunity to collect metrics, establish benchmarks and identify offers and creative that performs. These findings can then be integrated into the next round of planning. Media outlets that do not achieve campaign goals can be eliminated, and dollars can be focused on publications that deliver.

## 5. Develop Strong Relationships with Media Representatives

This area of advertising has not changed much since the shift from print to online began. Establishing long term relationships with publication sales reps is a key to negotiating the best rates as well as securing complimentary value-added exposure opportunities. However, maintaining relationships with multiple sales reps can be a full-time job.

Depending on the budget and resources available internally, it is often a better value to enlist the services of a media buying professional. Experienced media buyers know how to get things for free that other people don't know how to ask for. Ad buyers are afforded a 15% or more discount on their buys, because they are representing multiple clients.

## 6. Integrated Marketing Communications is Still Key

As with any marketing communications program, the most effective advertising campaigns are integrated, accurately reflect the brand, leverage multiple media (print, banners, e-newsletters, event sponsorships, etc.) and support sales, business or other strategic goals in a quantifiable way.

Leading with online is wise to test media effectiveness, but depending on company goals, don't forget the power of print and other offline media. Online tactics are great to build better advertising intelligence, but some brand interactions are simply more powerful when you can touch, hear or engage offline.

Likewise, advertising should not be planned in a vacuum. It's important to take into account direct mail programs, event sponsorships, sales promotions, public relations and other marketing communications programs that can run in parallel with an advertising campaign. Synergy and consistency are critical for maximum impact.

Return on advertising investment can be easily demonstrated when Internet Advertising is leveraged. Internet Advertising provides Marketing Executives with the feedback they need to optimize all advertising efforts.

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