



WEB SAVVY STRATEGIES: TOOLS & SECRETS FOR THE RADIO CONTROL HOBBY INDUSTRY

For Retailers, Manufacturers & Distributors

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By

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About the Author

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Kranitz serves on the Board of Directors of ET Financial Services Corporation, which provides computer-based loan origination and servicing functions for community banks nationwide. He also sits on the Board of Business Advisors of DrivenXChange, Inc., a vehicle remarketing service for large banks and lessors.



In 1996, Kranitz created LeaseWizard® Software for Windows®, LeaseSource.com and CarWizard.com, which each serve the auto buying and financing public today. He is the author of two books and consumer auto leasing software, which has been recommended by Motor Trend Magazine and others. Kranitz was co-founder, President and director of DriveOff.com, Inc., an Internet auto purchasing and financing channel developed by Navitec, Inc. (NASDAQ: NVDC) and Wells Fargo Bank (NYSE: WFC) that was eventually sold to a joint venture of Microsoft (NASDAQ: MSFT) and Ford (NYSE:F). Prior to that, Kranitz served as Vice President of Strategic Development and a director of Navitec.

Kranitz practiced corporate reorganization and bankruptcy law in Dallas, Chicago and Columbus, Ohio from 1985 through 1996, leaving the practice as a partner of Ohio-based Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff.

Kranitz performs the database design and programming for all of RCUniverse.com's non-forum site sections. He has been involved in radio control hobbies since 1974 and continues his passion today.

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Introduction

Get on. Get Smart.

If you do not currently market, sell or otherwise promote your products online, you are now among the minority of (successful) businesses in the United States. If, however, you do actively market online, the big question is whether you are effectively leveraging your time, technology and dollars in pursuit of better margins and greater volumes.

Regardless of how successful your online marketing program has been to date, this paper will provide you with a strategic and tactical roadmap to better returns on the Web.

We will explore three aspects of marketing your products on the Web, whether you manufacture, distribute or sell products to consumers at retail or discount prices. Although the general marketing concepts we cover are not new, many of the methods we offer to implement them are new and industry leading.

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Resist the urge to gloss over the text. There are nuggets of gold that will present themselves to those who are willing to invest the time it takes to elevate their business to the next level. Nothing we offer is inherently difficult to understand or implement, but it does require one to approach the issue of online marketing with an open mind and a general understanding that the future of Web marketing is *right now*. Those who choose to ignore the tide ultimately will fall victim to it.

Three Angles of Attack

Any successful online marketing strategy should consist of at least three different components:

- Methods to funnel consumer traffic to a point of sale (be it online or not)
- Methods to generate direct online product sales when traffic does flow in
- Methods to create consumer awareness and familiarity with your brands

Surprisingly few players in the industry utilize all three methods to enhance product sales. In the coming pages, we will explore creative, innovative and absolutely effective ways to accomplish each of the three necessary online components – all at a reasonable cost.

Specific details on how to access each of the programs described in this paper are provided at the end of the document.

Funneling Traffic

Strong Partnerships Will Bring Better, Cheaper Traffic to Your Site

Most businesses try to bring traffic to their sites through search engines like Google. Businesses can certainly drive *some* traffic this way at no cost, provided they understand how to manipulate keyword tags and other aspects of their Web pages in order to become highly ranked in search results. For the most part, however, it is very difficult to gain prominent, free placement on Google or any other search engine because doing so usually requires that your site *already be*

A far better method to gaining cost-effective, targeted traffic is to partner with an industry player who will do the heavy labor needed to bring low-cost traffic to your door – *a targeted traffic aggregator.*

popular! Search engines rank the relevance of a Website based on scores of criteria, including how many other sites are currently linked to the one in question and how much of the site's indexed content matches the seeker's criteria. Unless you purchase traffic from search engines (usually at relatively high rates), you will likely be relegated to low ranking positions in most search results. Besides, how many companies can be listed on the first page?

If individuals do find you via a search engine, a high percentage of them will quickly click back to the search engine either because they are not part of your target market or because they did not see exactly what they wanted on the first page or so of your site. If you are paying for clicks like

these, you are overpaying, regardless of the price. A far better method to gaining cost-effective, targeted traffic is to partner with an industry player who will do the heavy labor needed to bring low-cost, targeted traffic to your door – *a targeted traffic aggregator.*

Traffic aggregators are almost universally **not** in a business that competes directly with yours. Effective aggregators are usually media companies that draw targeted customers to their sites with independent, high quality content and services. It is this element of their business that makes them so effective. Individuals tend to more highly trust referrals from an independent site than from a site with a stake in the outcome or generic search engines which have no industry knowledge. Users who click through from a trusted, industry-savvy site will also tend to invest more time on your site seeking what they need.

RCUniverse.com is the Web's largest targeted traffic aggregator in the radio control hobby industry. With audited *unique* monthly visitors averaging 302,000¹, RCUniverse.com provides retailers, manufacturers and distributors an instantaneous and motivated audience from which they can draw targeted leads and customers. *The tools provided by RCUniverse.com are so far and away the best in the industry that I did not hesitate to make them the centerpiece of this text.* Some of the solutions provided by RCUniverse.com are free of charge and others are creatively designed so that businesses pay nothing unless they see results. The following programs offered by RCUniverse.com address the traffic funnel issues differently and more effectively than search engines and run-of-the-mill hobby Websites.

¹ In addition to 302,000 *unique* visitors per month, the site receives 200 new *registered* members each day based upon audited stats for the 30 days beginning September 15, 2004.

Contextual Keywords Unlock Opportunity

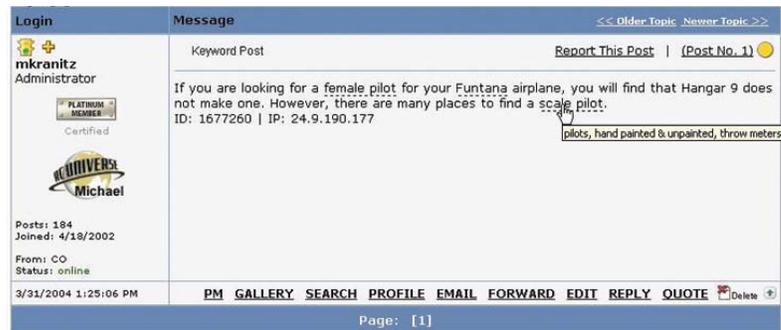
One of the most innovative ways to drive traffic to your site is through a contextual keyword campaign on RCUniverse. You may have seen expensive and cut-throat keyword campaigns on Google. These programs tend to be less effective and more expensive than the RCU keyword program because they operate strictly on user-driven keyword searches and target a much broader audience than the hobby enthusiasts that frequent RCU.

To understand the advantages of the RCU contextual keyword program, it is helpful to understand how it works:

1. You pick out keywords and short phrases that you think will draw the right people to your products (e.g. “brushless motor”, “monster truck” or “ball link”). If you don’t see a keyword in the RCU dictionary, you may suggest it.
2. Next, using the small form provided online (see graphic below), link the phrase to a specific page on your site that sells the product described by the keyword and provide a little promotional text (more on that in step 4).

Keyword:	blind nut
Title:	<input type="text" value="Best prices!"/>
Link:	<input type="text" value="http://www.blindnutsareus.com"/>
Mouseover Message:	<input type="text" value="We have the best prices on blind nuts and other accessories!"/> (This is the message that will appear when a user mouses over you keyword in the forum)

3. Finally, submit a bid of how much you would be willing to pay for each click through to the selected page on your site (e.g. typically, bids begin at 5 cents per click).
4. Once approved, your keyword is live! As long as you are the top bidder, whenever that keyword or phrase shows up in any of the 2.4 million forum posts on RCU (regardless of when the post was created), your keyword or phrase appears with a dashed underline. When a user passes his mouse over the keyword or phrase, a “fly up” box appears with your promo text. If the user clicks the keyword, he goes to the linked page on your site.



Someone casually reading a post can be instantly introduced to your products right in context with what they are reading.

The contextual keyword method of driving users to your site is extremely effective because the words appear within the context of forum posts which the user is already reading and in which the user presumably has a high level of interest. At 5 cents per customer, the acquisition cost is negligible for this caliber of targeted customer. Advertisers pay nothing unless a user clicks through.

In addition to appearing contextually in the forum section of the site, keywords also appear on every search results page generated by the master RCUiverse.com search engine (see adjacent example). Perhaps most importantly, the keywords operate within a community of radio control enthusiasts, lending the essential elements of reliability and trust to the user in search of information or products. For the business that wants additional ways to drive highly targeted traffic at flexible prices and intervals, keywords are incredibly effective.

The RCUiverse.com keyword program allows advertisers to administer the timing, cost and nature of their keywords 24/7, giving them flexible control over traffic flow. No other hobby-related site on the Internet offers this service to our industry.

Links to begin a keyword program may be found at the end of this document.

Sponsored Links

BALL LINK

Get the industry's best ball links, click here now.

<http://www.shopatron.com/i>

BALL LINK

If you want clicks to your Website, you can have your promo shown here and it will appear whenever your selected keywords appear either in the search engine or in any forum post on RCU!

[Click to learn more](#)

Your keyword also gets picked up in our site wide search engine results!

Product-Specific Promotional Links Send Hot Leads

RCUiverse.com hosts the Web's largest (and only) radio control product guide that gives users the ability to; (1) research, rate and review products, (2) suggest tips and compatible equipment for products, (2) compare products side-by-side, (4) research used market values, and (5) find retailers for the more than 4,900 mainline radio control items included in the guide.

The screenshot displays several key features of the RCUiverse.com website:

- Radio Product of the Week:** A featured product, a motor, with a 'BUY IT!' button.
- Radio Research Tools:** A 'RATE IT' section for user reviews and a 'Vehicle Guide: Comparison' table.
- Top 5 Rated Servos:** A list of top-rated servos based on user ratings.

Compa Pick th	Traxxas 4-Door RTR	DuralTrac Thunder Quake RTR	MP Racing Savage 25 Truck RTR
Rating: 5.5 / 5	Rating: 5.5 / 5	Rating: 4.5 / 5	
Type: Monster Truck	Type: Off-Road	Type: Monster Truck	
Power: Electric	Power: NiMH (1-18)	Power: NiMH (1-18)	
Body: Truck-Monster	Body: Truck-Monster	Body: Truck-Monster	
Scale: 1/10	Scale: 1/10	Scale: 1/10	
Build: RTR	Build: RTR	Build: RTR	
Drive: 4 WD	Drive: 4 WD	Drive: 4 WD	
Driver: Beginner	Driver: Beginner	Driver: Intermediate	
Dimensional Specs:	Dimensional Specs:	Dimensional Specs:	
Wheelbase: 11.00 in. (280 mm)	Wheelbase: 14.12 in. (358 mm)	Wheelbase: 11.00 in. (280 mm)	
Weight: 8.50 lbs. (3748 g)	Weight: 11.20 lbs. (5080 g)	Weight: 11.00 lbs. (5000 g)	
Chassis Length: 13.50 in. (343 mm)	Chassis Length: 12.75 in. (324 mm)	Chassis Length: 12.75 in. (324 mm)	
Chassis Width: 10.00 in. (254 mm)	Chassis Width: 12.75 in. (324 mm)	Chassis Width: 12.75 in. (324 mm)	
Body Length: 18.25 in. (463 mm)	Body Length: 22.00 in. (559 mm)	Body Length: 22.00 in. (559 mm)	
Body Width: 6.25 in. (159 mm)	Body Width: 10.00 in. (254 mm)	Body Width: 10.00 in. (254 mm)	
Body Height: 5.25 in. (133 mm)	Body Height: 6.12 in. (156 mm)	Body Height: 6.12 in. (156 mm)	
Ground Clear: 4.00 in. (102 mm)	Ground Clear: 4.00 in. (102 mm)	Ground Clear: 4.00 in. (102 mm)	

The product guide is divided into airplanes, helicopters, cars & trucks, boats, engines & electric motors, and transmitters, servos and receivers. Each product in the guide has its own tabbed mini-guide, which allows users to gather facts and user opinions about the product, all from a central location. Within each product mini-guide there is a tab, along with numerous links to a "Buy It" page. **The "Buy It" page displays retailers who sell the product along with a link to the retailers' sites and other contact information.**

Retailers can create and administer their own link presence on any product in the guide for exactly **\$1.00 per month per product**. At these rates, even the smallest of retailers can generate product-specific traffic at an extraordinarily low customer acquisition cost. The beauty of the program lies in the targeted nature of the traffic it drives. Those individuals who click through to a listed retailer's Website after having researched the product in the guide are among the most motivated buyers the retailer will see from the Internet.

The example above shows the "Buy It" page of an Associate TC-3 Nitro

Display Ads Bring Buyers

If somebody tells you that display advertising does not work, chances are they are stuck in an early 21st century time warp. Graphical banners are not only alive and well in 2004, but they are setting records. The reason is simple. More people are using the Internet more often than ever before and there are no signs that the trend is wavering. More importantly, the profile of the typical Internet user has shifted to the mainstream. According to CNN;

The findings of the first World Internet Project report present an image of the average Netizen that contrasts with the stereotype of the loner "geek" who spends hours of his free time on the Internet and rarely engages with the real world. Instead, the typical Internet user is an avid reader of books and spends more time engaged in social activities than the non-user, it says. And, television viewing is down among some Internet users by as much as five hours per week compared with Net abstainers, the study added.

Most Fortune 500 companies advertise on the Web. Small and medium-sized businesses would also do well to examine the effectiveness of Internet ads, especially when compared to print. Amazingly, businesses will pay several thousand dollars to place a full page display ad in a magazine with a circulation of 30,000 – 95,000². Even if those magazines are read twice per month, the advertiser can expect to receive an average of 140,000 impressions at best. In most cases, however, the number is roughly half that because magazines won't be read cover-to-cover twice and because circulation statistics may be overstated. Contrast that with RCUiverse, which delivers more than **20 million ad impressions each month** at roughly 15% of magazine rates. The individuals viewing the Web are no less worthy as consumers than those who view ads in a magazine. In fact, those on the Web are far more enabled to take an immediate action step in response to the ad than those reading a magazine.

The bottom line is that businesses should not dismiss the display as an effective means of gathering traffic and enhancing brand awareness. The branding section of this paper (below) highlights specific ways to effectively leverage the use of display ads.

² Equally amazing is the fact that virtually none of the magazines in the radio control hobby space provide audited circulation statistics. None of the Websites (other than RCUiverse) provide audit traffic numbers.

Free Hobby Shop Listings with Promotional Punch

The problem with most retail business lists on the Web is that they are, well, **just lists!** RCUniverse.com provides retailers with a free promotional service that not only allows users to search for retailers by location and name, but also by product category. The service also “kicks it up a notch” by permitting retailers to run special promotions and periodic discounts.

In the “RC Community” section of RCUniverse.com, retailers can;

- List their businesses, along with the methods by which consumers can reach them for a sale (e.g. phone, Web or store);
- Create special promotions on specific products or general merchandise and services using a “specials” creation tool. Users can then search for specials according to the type of product or service being offered. Specials expire automatically (when you designate) so there is no need to monitor them over time.
- Display their specials on their own Website (as well as on RCUniverse.com) using a free display tool.

The service is unrivaled on the Internet and is free to any hobby retailer, distributor or manufacturer that sells directly to consumers.

Product Category: Cars (and related products)
 Location: U.S.A.
 CO
 Name Begins With: Any Letter

Dealer Profile: M.R.S.Hobby Shop

Who We Are
 20 yrs helping hobbies have fun. Are hours are 10am to 7pm monday-saturday closed sunday . ON-LINE SHOPPING 24/7

Contact Information and RCU Standard Discount Program

Dealer Information M.R.S.Hobby Shop Douglas Clements 9445 S Union Square Sandy, UT 84070 US 801-572-6082 doug@mrshobby.com www.mrshobby.com	Selling Modes R/C Merchandise Airplanes Airplanes (electric) Boats Cars Helicopters Trains	Standard Discount Program* No year around program currently. Promos Only (see below)
Company Type Hobby Store		

Special Offers
 M.R.S.Hobby Shop has the following active promotions:

Promo Code	Promo Type	Start Date	End Date	Promo Name
CARreward	Cars - Offroad	27-Apr-04	30-Sep-04	REWARD with mrshobby.com
AIRreward	Airplanes - Park Flyers	27-Apr-04	30-Sep-04	E-sky hone bee helicopter + cam + trainings gear
MRSREWARD	General - Discount Offer	27-Apr-04	30-Sep-04	

E-sky hone bee helicopter + cam + trainings gear

You must be an RCUniverse Member to redeem this offer.

Offer Code: ESKY-ESKY - Use this when ordering

Offer Sponsor: #1 in Hobby Shop E-Shop 20

Offer Category: Helicopters - Electric

Offer Title: E-sky hone bee helicopter + cam + trainings gear

Offer Details: buy this E-sky and get a wireless cam and a trainings gear

Start Date: 08/24/2004

End Date: 02/20/2005

Limitation: Offer good while supplies last.

Description: what we have here is the E-sky honey bee including wireless cam and trainings kit we also have spare parts for the honey bee but miss you have any question please contact us at eshop20@rcuniverse.com

Where to Buy:

Offer Terms: To redeem this offer, you must be an RCUniverse member. Contact #1 in Hobby Shop E-Shop 20 either by phone, web or in person (see the available methods of purchasing above).

Reference ID: #CU-185

Direct Sales

It's Midnight. He Wants to Order Now. Can You Sell?

In an age where instantaneous gratification rules the behavior of most consumers, having some way to accept online orders is essential to successful retailing. Retailers and direct sellers that choose to sell exclusively through brick and mortar stores will find their market share and revenue noticeably dwindling over the next 5-10 years relative to retailers who do sell online. Customers demand convenience and accessibility 24 hours a day. The question for sellers is not *whether* they should accommodate that demand, but *how* they can do it most efficiently and cost effectively.

Some retailers swear by eBay, while others loath the idea of tossing products into the unbridled, low-ball garage sale from hell.

If you want to engage in direct ecommerce as a retailer, you have a few choices over how extensively to participate and in what manner. To accomplish online sales, you can execute combinations of the following tactics:

1. Program your own ecommerce Web site (or hire someone to do it);
2. Use an existing service like "Hobby Shop Now" which covers everything from order to shipment but at the cost of lower margins;
3. Set up a store using a service like Yahoo, which gives you a decent amount of flexibility for the cost; and
4. Sell through online auctions and classified marketplaces.

Without question, having a base "store" online is a worthwhile strategy. However, some companies do not have the human resources or capital to make this happen. For those who choose an "instant" solution like Hobby Shop Now, there are still business considerations that make the case for creating a store that can offer higher margin sales and a selection broader than that provided by a single (albeit large) distributor.³ We could write an entire paper on ecommerce solutions, alone. So, for purposes of this document we will focus on the fourth option above: *selling through online auctions and classified marketplaces.*

An Intelligent and Pro-Industry Alternative to eBay

The industry is filled with opinions about selling products over eBay. Some retailers swear by eBay, while others loath the idea of tossing products into the unbridled low-ball garage sale from hell. We watched eBay's hobby sector closely before embarking on one of the most ambitious online development projects the hobby industry has seen. Over the course of a year, RCUniverse.com has developed a networked marketplace that allows individuals and businesses to rapidly auction, sell or trade items through a sophisticated, organized and secure interface that

³ We don't include "Shop-A-Tron" and here because it is directed to manufacturers who wish to downstream business to their dealer networks using a bid process.

rivals eBay in functionality while costing users less than half of what they would pay to sell on eBay. *Whether you like or dislike eBay, the RCU market network can enhance your online sales.*

The RCUiverse networked market currently consists of more than 20 participating sites, each of which has a privately branded version of the RCUiverse.com market integrated into its Website.⁴ Whenever an advertisement is posted on *any* of the sites in the network, it gets seen on *all* of the sites in the network. More importantly, the marketplace is a dedicated R/C market that is integrated into the entire RCUiverse site. This allows users who post sale listings to get stock photos, stock specs, search-by-manufacturer tools and other cross-selling features that are not available at eBay or other selling venues.

The screenshot displays the RCUiverse marketplace interface. At the top, it shows 'Showing Listings No. 41-80 of 484 (Featured listings always shown first)'. Below this are navigation links for 'PREVIOUS', '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', '6', '7', '8', '9', '10', 'NEXT', and '>>'. There are tabs for 'ALL ADS', 'AUCTIONS', 'CLASSIFIEDS', 'CLASSIFIEDS - WILL TRADE', and 'WANTED'. The current category is 'Browse Category: Cars & Trucks' with a 'Standard View' and '40/Page' options. A table lists several listings:

Thumbs	Description	Views	Current Price	Ad Detail
	NEW! UPDATED! - Big T-Maxx Parts Lot - MORE STUFF THEN IN PICTURE (KIT) Grayson, GA (1,221 miles)	39	\$95.00 Will Trade	Classified Ad 08/25/2004 SuqqaShane
	NEW! HPI Racing RS4 Super Nitro (RTR) Dallas, TX (653 miles)			
	NEW! Pro-Line Road Rage T (RTR) Andover, MA (1,761 miles)			
	NEW! Associated RC10GT (RTR) richmond, VA (1,476 miles)			
	NEW! savage 26 picco all all hop ups show truck (RTR) Boston, MA			
	NEW! Traxxas Rustler RTR (RTR) Mercer, PA (1,302 miles)			
	NEW! Associated RC10 GT PI (RTR) (RTR) NY (1,650 miles)			

An expanded view of the 'HPI Racing RS4 Super Nitro (RTR)' listing is shown, featuring a 'Stock Photo' of a person with a RC plane. The listing details include:

- Item Number:** 46294
- Quantity:** 1
- Asking Price:** \$725.00
- Location:** Mansville OH USA
- Placed Date:** 08/25/2004 11:19:56 AM
- Shipping Destination:** US Only
- Shipping Terms:** Buyer pays actual shipping costs to be determined at closing.
- Payment Terms Accepted:** Money Order - Cashier Check - Personal Check
- Payment Terms:** USE SHOPPER'S TOOLS
- Condition:** Used Excellent
- Why Selling:** Moving up to 35%

The RCUiverse marketplace provides users with the option to post standard auctions, Dutch auctions, "Instant buy" auctions, classified sale ads, classified trade ads and wanted ads. Keeping in mind that many individuals in the radio control hobby dislike the formality and rigidity of a standard auction, RCUiverse.com's 30-day sale or trade classified ads for single or multiple items gives sellers much more flexibility than eBay. RCU provides tools for accepting and rejecting offers, and making counter offers, all within a controlled environment.

If an ad offers a product that we have in our product database, the ad listing in the market automatically gets linked to our forum, product guide and

magazine area so that individuals NOT shopping in the market can be apprised of the ad when they are researching the product elsewhere on the site. eBay cannot provide this type of "out-of-market" cross-selling functionality because they are not a radio control content service. The market provides a long list of additional features that are beyond the scope of this document.

When retailers post ads on any site in the network, they are not only providing for the sale of their own products, but they are also helping to strengthen and centralize the industry's venue of choice for radio control sales. By supporting a hobby-centric service like the RCU marketplace, sellers of all types are helping to ensure the future of their own online sales. eBay will never be a gathering place for radio control hobbyists. Nor does it have the industry's best interests at heart. The hobby industry is merely another vertical market in its business. Our efforts have been aimed squarely at building a venue that allows the industry to trade in an environment that it helped create.

⁴ Partners include, the AMA, IMAC, RC Car Magazine, eHobbies, Wildhobbies.com and others.

Branding Strategies

Magazine vs. Web?

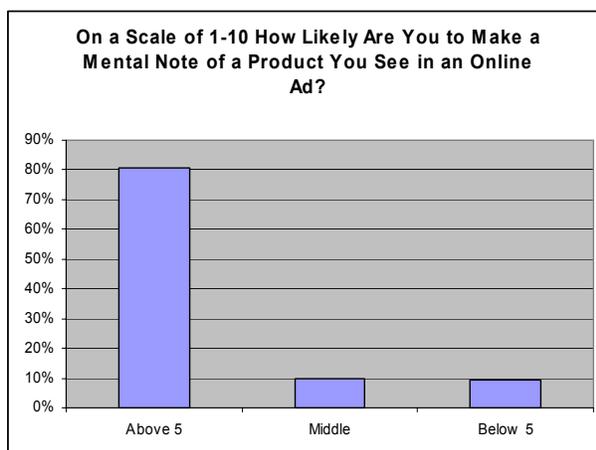
Every potential advertiser has a limited ad budget and an ongoing dilemma over how to allocate those dollars over different media. It is easy to dismiss the Internet outright in favor of older media, like magazines; but that would be a mistake. A careful examination of the largest publishers reveals that even at their highest circulation estimates, RCUniverse.com delivers more impressions to more people at a cost (per impression) that is easily 100 times less than the most popular magazines charge.

With audited page views exceeding 12 million per month and ad impressions exceeding 20 million per month, no magazine currently in print in the hobby sector can provide advertisers with comparable reach. Moreover, hobbyists on RCUniverse have emphatically indicated that they want to see advertisements. Members of RCU have the option to upgrade their memberships and remove all banner ads from the site during their visits. Only 71 of 123,000 registered members have opted out of banner ads. In many ways, this should not be surprising considering that members of the hobby have a passion for the hobby and its products. All advertisers should seriously rethink their allocation of money between print and Web.

A careful examination of the largest publishers reveals that even at their highest circulation estimates, RCU delivers more impressions to more people at a cost (per impression) that is easily 100 times less than the most popular magazines charge.

Banner ads accomplish two goals; (1) they visually attract users and create lasting impressions, and (2) they give potential purchasers a direct path to the product advertised.

At the very least, ads placed on popular Websites will enhance the advertiser's name and brand recognition among potential purchasers. According to Nielsen//NetRatings, 34% of all Internet ads are for branding purposes. When targets of branding ads are ready to make a purchase decision, the brand will have been set in their minds, making it a familiar choice. As the graph on the left illustrates, branding is quite effective on the Internet.



When asked how likely they were to make a mental note of a product after seeing it in an online ad, the vast majority responded with a higher than 50% likelihood. Although most advertisers would like every ad to result in a sale, there is a clear place for branding in every advertiser's strategy because most individuals are not ready to purchase right at the time they see an ad. Advertisers that combine good branding with specific product promotion can achieve both goals for the price of one.

Exactly Where on the Web Should One Advertise?

If you are trying to determine where on the Web to advertise, we offer the following advice:

- **Demand 3rd party audited statistics.** Beware of inflated claims by sites claiming to get “a million hits” along with astronomical, but unsubstantiated, growth rates. “Hits” mean nothing. An Internet “hit” simply a single file, graphic or other digital element being transferred to the user’s computer. A single Web page could contain 1 or 100 “hits”. Accordingly, hits are an unreliable and misleading indicator of performance. Audited statistics will help you assess things that matter, such as unique visitors, page views, repeat visitors and pages spent per visitor.
- **Visits are not as important as unique visitors.** Virtually none of the Websites in the hobby sector has software sophisticated enough to parse unique visitors from the gross visits its site receives. It is critical to differentiate between repeat visitors and new visitors in order to follow the site’s growth as well as the loyalty of its existing user base.
- **Avoid postage stamp ad collections.** Sites that bunch numerous little ads all on a single page are doing their advertisers a gross disservice. How can an advertiser effectively differentiate itself when surrounded by competitors? More importantly, how will users differentiate advertisers when the ads are too small to provide meaningful information?

Design Ads that Pull Users in and Send Them Directly to the Advertised Item

Advertisers should invest in a relatively competent designer so that their ads do not suffer from amateur appearance. Consumers want to trust in the advertiser’s products. A poorly illustrated ad does nothing to enhance trust. Advertisers should also develop a stock of ads to permit frequent rotation. Individuals bore easily and showing them the same ad for extended periods causes the ad to become invisible to them.

Are your ads effective? Do they call the user to action? Were they created by a professional? To draw people to a Website, the advertiser must:

- Create visually appealing ads that call for immediate action on a single item or single category of items. Focus the ad unless you are trying to simply achieve branding goals.
- Link ads directly to products rather than to a home page. The more clicks a user must take to get to what he wants after reaching your site, the more likely it is that he will abandon his efforts.
- Purchase ad space on sites that are heavily trafficked by potential customers. Fish where the fish are!

- Request that hosts target your ads as specifically as possible. For example, RCUniverse.com allows users to indicate their preferred areas of radio control (e.g. boats, helicopters, cars etc.). Based on those preferences, RCUniverse serves ads targeted to those categories. This type of targeting makes each impression more valuable to the advertiser.

Product Reviews and Introductions

Although the gist of this section is directed toward manufacturers and exclusive distributors, retailers can ultimately benefit by well-written product reviews that appear on the Web. More than 70% of the respondents to our user survey indicated that independent product reviews and product-oriented ads materially influence their ultimate purchase decisions.

RCUniverse.com has the most extensive library of full-featured product reviews on the Web. Most distributors and manufacturers report sales spikes following a review online. One might expect this given that Web reviews do not suffer from the space limitations of a printed publication. Moreover, Web reviews can provide far more pictures and video to provide potential purchasers with the best preview possible of the model they are considering.

The screenshot shows a web page for the Tamiya King Hauler. At the top, there's a large red 'KING HAULER' title. Below it, a navigation menu lists various links: Introduction, Specifications, Instruction Manual, What's Included/What's Needed, Painting the Body, Assembly, Building Tips, Details & Decals, Big Rig Pictorial, Building the Tanker, Tanker Pictorial, and Driving the King Hauler. To the right, the 'INTRODUCTION' section begins with the text: 'Whether you like cars, airplanes, helicopters or boats, I'm betting heavily on the fact that you would delight in building the King Hauler, one of the finest radio control scale trucks on the planet. I have been building models of all types for more than 35 years and I can say unequivocally that the King Hauler was the most satisfying modeling experience I have ever had. I was thrilled with the detail and design of the King Hauler (and tanker trailer). Every bolt, gear, clip, metal part and plastic part fit exactly as it was intended and, believe me, there were plenty of parts! I also took great satisfaction in constructing things like a gear differential, a 3-speed gear box, leaf springs, and other elements of this scale behemoth. I can best describe my experience building the King Hauler as a cross between building a static car and a radio control helicopter. Painting the King Hauler requires...' followed by a photo of the red truck. The Tamiya logo is visible in the top right and bottom center.

Sample review on RCUniverse

One of the less obvious benefits of an online review is its longevity and accessibility. Without having to store old magazines or lose track of which issue contains a specific review, the RCUniverse.com Magazine provides a permanent, searchable repository of reviews accessible 24 hours a day from any computer in the world. In addition, every product reviewed is linked to user opinions, pricing information and other data contained in the RCUniverse Product Guide. It is impossible for a magazine to provide this level of content, regardless of the magazine's quality or reach.

RCUniverse Programs

By utilizing the programs below, you can enhance your traffic, online sales and branding.

Keyword Program

- To access the keyword program, visit <http://www.rcuniverse.com> and click the “Advertise” link. Or, mouse over the “RCU Sponsors” button in the main navigation bar and select the Keyword option.
- You can see your keywords in the site wide search engine (click “Search” atop any page) and in the forum.

RCUniverse Auction & Classifieds Market

- Register with RCUniverse.com (free).
- Click the “Marketplace” button to access the market area. Click the “Post Ad” button in the market button bar to list one or more items.
- On any page, you can click the “Help” button in the market button bar or on the first page of the “Post Ad” sequence you can also click a link to see the rates that will apply to your ads.

Product Guide “Buy It” Listings

- To enter your retail hobby shop or Website on the “Buy It” page of any product in the guide, visit <http://www.rcuniverse.com> and click the “Advertise” link. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the “Sign Up Now” link. Your login here is different from your membership login. You can also reach this page by mousing over the RCU Sponsors button in the main navigation bar and selecting the “Buy It’ Listings link.
- If you are interested in creating listings on more than 50 products, we can make special arrangements to assist you.

Free Retail Listing

- To enter your retail hobby shop or Website in the shop locator and specials engine, visit <http://www.rcuniverse.com> and click the “RC Community” button. Choose the “Find Hobby Shop” link.
- Once in the Hobby Shop area, click the “Dealer Login” link to sign up.
- You can create special offers once you are in the system.

Track, Marina and Flying Field Locator

- Visit the “RC Community” area of the site.
- List your track, flying field or boating venue at no charge.

Join the Marketplace Network of Sites

If you would like to have a branded version of our marketplace on your site, please contact Michael@RCUniverse.com. We host, maintain and set up the site at no charge to you.

Banner Ads

Click the “Advertise” link atop any page on the site and read the Banner Ad options. Click the “RCU Sponsors” button on the main navigation bar to see a current list of advertisers.

Manufacturer & Distributor Performance Ratings

To use RCUniverse site for data collection, just place a link on your site to our rating tool. The rating tool is located on RCUniverse.com in the RC Community area.