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As Marketing Budgets Get Slashed, One CU Finds Facebook Ads Prove ROI

Credit Union Journal | Monday, March 23, 2009

By [Kevin Jepson](#), [Technology Correspondent](#)

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WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Any doubts about advertising on Facebook were erased for Truliant FCU here, as its campaigns racked up nearly 9 million views in seven months—all at a cost of less than \$5,000

In a bum economy, the "ridiculously low cost" of advertising at the reigning social networking site is a "great opportunity," Truliant Marketing Communications Supervisor [Ryan Shell](#) said. "Ad budgets are getting cut all across the country, so you might not be able to run the same TV flight that you normally do."

Facebook is stigmatized, he continued. "People think it's all for kids." But in fact, more than 80% of Facebook's 175-million users are between 18 and 55 years old, according to various reports.

"Step out and try something new," Shell suggested.

Truliant tried Facebook Ads for the first time last May, continued Shell. Since then, the \$1.2-billion CU has run six campaigns, including a certificate special and a fuel-efficient auto loan product, which performed particularly well in garnering impressions, he said.

Of those 9 million "impressions" via Facebook, Truliant ads have registered between 2,500 to 5,000 "clicks," said Shell. "While the number of clicks is a small percentage of the total impressions, Facebook is enabling us to expose the Truliant brand to individuals who may have never known about the credit union."

Facebook ads are not hit-or-miss advertising, he continued. "You can target by city, key word, age, gender, specific schools and businesses and political views. That's pretty hard to do in a TV ad."

Truliant can control the maximum it wants to spend on each ad per day, added Shell. "Once you hit that budget, the ad automatically stops running."

Given the choice between paying-per-view, which doesn't allow for any simple way to measure results, or paying-per-click, Truliant went with pay-per-click. "I can tell you exactly how many people clicked on my Facebook ad," he said.

Again, that beats freeway advertising, said Shell. "You can't tell me how many people read your billboard."

The Ads Manager feature at Facebook reports back to the credit union with the number of clicks each ad receives the average age of those who clicked; and how much each click cost. "It has great tracking features," he said.

Shell can upload an ad in less than two minutes, he said. Writing that ad takes a little more experimenting, however, in part because it's hard to know what kind of message Facebook users want to see, said Shell.

And Facebook ads are "extremely limited in the number of characters you can put into the title and body," he explained. Titles are limited to 20 characters and the body to 100. "It makes you a better writer."

The CU considered advertising on MySpace as well, but found out the minimum cost is \$50,000, Shell said. "MySpace isn't really an avenue I would want to take the credit union down anyway. The format is a little messier than Facebook."

Though Shell is a Facebook ad fan, Truliant hasn't given up on billboard, print, television and Google ads, he said. "They're all effective. These days it's about having a good mix in your arsenal. Your favorite IT person might say 'ewww' when it comes to social media, but if you can't find a way to compromise, you're missing the boat. The segment of individuals who use social media and do everything online is affluent."

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