

## Data Driven Digital by Eric Kammerzelt, CEO, Parameter1 LLC

### President's Note

Recently, Eric Kammerzelt, CEO of Parameter1, a leading technology and scalable platform provider for media businesses, spoke with the Elliott Co. sales force about common misconceptions many marketers have about their websites. All of his comments were helpful and some were shocking. As the former CTO of Endeavor Business Media, SouthComm, and Cygnus, he knows what is important to publishers. We are very pleased that Eric agreed to share this information with our readers. I'll keep my comments brief so you can hear more from Eric.



Jim Elliott

We see a wide disconnect between how publishers think their audience consumes content, and what the data says about behavior.

Our team has been privileged to review data for hundreds of websites, most of them in the niche B2B magazine space. Below are common behaviors we see that are often in direct contradiction to existing strategy or held belief about behaviors. This matters because it has a large influence on ad inventory and how a publisher may command digital revenue.

### 90% of your audience has never seen your homepage

This is a conservative number; in many cases the percentage is much higher. The reason for this data is simple when you think about it. The majority of traffic for B2B websites comes from Google and email. The behavior is to search for something in Google, and click on the result, likely an article. The audience consumes that content and then goes back to search Google. Email traffic similarly drives to content.

This is not to say that the homepage isn't relevant. In fact, the homepage is perhaps the single most important page

for marketing. But not when it comes to ad inventory. Ad inventory is driven by the design of article pages. Changes to ad positions there have a far greater impact than the home page.

### Mobile accounts for the majority of your traffic

Often, we think of design in terms of a desktop view. But a mobile first approach may better serve your audience. Mobile is where most of your traffic comes from. Many B2B sites are still under the 50% mark, but mobile is still the fastest growing segment in most cases. If they are not 50% yet, they will be soon.

Mobile requires a different way of looking at inventory. This single column view doesn't afford real estate for ads "above the fold" or the volume of impressions that desktop provides. Mobile also places higher demand on performance.

When designing a website, consider how it would look in a single column first — then expand to a wider desktop view. We also recommend an ad strategy that combines impressions across mobile and desktop. You would be surprised at how many impressions may be left on the table because mobile wasn't considered.

### Your content may be structured around a behavior that does not exist

Traditional approach suggests that the audience comes to a landing page, navigates to a section, and clicks on content from there — ideally clicking into related content on their journey through the website. This accounts for less than 1% of traffic on average.

As we demonstrated above, the article is the landing page and the majority never click past it. This behavior shows a very small percentage (less than 5%) of your audience use navigation or site search. Often, we see that the only people that use website search are the editors and publishers themselves.

Most of the effort we see goes into these components that ultimately have no impact on digital revenue.

At worst, they take away opportunities to maximize revenue. Website structure can be applied in another important way. Organizing content for search engines is a major focus for us. Content can also be organized around ad inventory and how the site is marketed. Often publishers are not able to segment properly because they don't have the inventory — largely because of how a site was structured. Making ad inventory the focus of a site structure can ensure inventory availability for advertisers seeking those segments. This can be a game changer for publishers.

Consider that site navigation is more important for marketing and sales, than it is for your audience.

### **The leaderboard is not the best performing ad position**

Emphasis is often placed on the ad at the top of the page. Or the 300x250 in the top right corner of the site. Data drove those decisions years ago, but things have changed. Those positions are no longer “best.”

Ad impressions have become more qualified. “In view” or active view impressions are now important to advertisers. Considering behavior, the first thing a consumer does is scroll down to the content. Ads within the content where the eyeballs are, perform best. Those ads at the top are often not seen long enough to count, if they are seen at all. We encourage an ad strategy that puts the publisher in the driver's seat when it comes to placements. A performance-based strategy can provide quality inventory at a volume the advertiser is looking for, without the advertiser compensating by asking for specific placements they believe may be “best.” Let the data decide what works best.

### **Page views are arbitrary and no longer coupled to ad inventory**

A website page was once loaded all at once, and the ads on that page were



included with it. Some of those ads were “below the fold.” Either way the impression was served, whether the ad was seen or not. The page view was a metric that became well understood and promoted largely because of the 1:1 relationship to ad impressions.

Today, content and ads are dynamic. Ads may fire on scroll or when other conditions are met. Content may load dynamically such as with “infinite scroll.”

How do you define a page?

The page is different for mobile, a tablet, or desktop. The event that is sent to Google Analytics, is on the whim of a website developer and not a fixed standard.

While changes over time are still important, page views can no longer be used to predict ad inventory.

### **Scroll beats click**

Clicking means waiting for the next page to load. It's annoying, especially when that page has ads flooding the view. The result is that consumers rarely click anything on purpose. The behavior we see success with most — is scrolling. As content and ads can be dynamically loaded using behaviors such as scroll, this is often a much more successful strategy for capturing deeper engagement in a site. Enticing engagement should be put into a scroll event rather than waiting for a click.

### **Less is more**

This sounds a bit cliché, but often we see good intentions for design take

away from practical success. Most often, this starts with the top of the page where it is desired to cram navigational elements, site search, advertising, marketing, and every other important element. But pages also get cluttered. All of these elements slow the page down, which hurts engagement and search. Performance is a major impact for SEO. Your site should be loading in under 2 seconds.

Google has also announced “Better Ad Standards” that enforce sites to follow best practices.

Many sites are unable to meet those guidelines and as a result, suffer for it. This is another reason to focus on a mobile first design approach. You are forced to think about what is really most important in a single column view. The rest is likely only slowing you down. We recognize that impression volume is important to B2B publishers and sites can be optimized for that, but increasingly, we see advertisers demanding quality which may require sacrifice of quantity.

### **Summary**

In summary, maximizing digital revenue starts with understanding behavioral data. Our experience shows that optimizing for SEO, user experience, mobile, and page load speed are critical components for all websites. We see this as a future proof investment. Today, display ads are still a mainstay and optimizing around that revenue is important — but even as the industry moves beyond traditional banner ads, these behaviors will still be a focus.

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