

## Vertical ad networks empower marketers

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The trend toward vertical ad networks continues because they allow marketers to appeal to a highly concentrated audience on a vast scale. With vertical networks, marketers are assured their contextual placements will be surrounded by compatible content. They are also beginning to offer advance targeting and units, such as behavioral and online video and roadblocking.

The networks control the inventory on an exclusive basis and can offer marketing programs from takeover and roadblocks to weeklong sponsorships. They also avoid the "Where is my ad?" inventory arbitrage that non-vertical ad networks produce.

"The inventory crunch is pretty severe for next year," said Mitch Lowe, CEO of Jumpstart Automotive Media, a network of auto-related sites. "Manufacturers, regional dealer associations and local dealers are all feverishly locking up '08 inventory. People are actually starting to talk about 2009 budgets."

The biggest development in the travel category will mean new opportunities for travel marketers to reach early stage "in market" buyers as CGM-centric Web sites.

"Increasingly travel planners want more than the price quotes OTAs offer, they want advice," said Cree Lawson, founder/CEO of TAN. "They want to hear from real people like themselves who have been to the places they are exploring and can give 'from the trenches' commentary."

Many have been disappointed after relying on the exaggerated language and photos that most travel properties use.

Vertical networks are suited for branding and business-to-business initiatives because of their high audience composition, inventory control and strong ties with their publishers.

"Horizontal ad networks are about any and all eyeballs while vertical networks connect with very specific target audiences that have a demonstrable affinity for the kind of messages they will get, which is effective for advertisers at both the consumer and the BTB levels," said Peyman Nilforoush, co-CEO and head of agency relations at NetShelter. "By representing a variety of content-specific sites, verticals, at least in the technology space, we can reach higher level IT executives as well as tech early adaptors and enthusiasts."

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