

Published: May 21, 2007  
The Digital Media Mission for Tier 2



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## **Jumpstart Automotive Media's VP of regional dealer advertising discusses how digital marketing partners can help Tier 2 to build stronger communication programs.**

At the recent Driving Interactive '07 summit in Newport, Calif., I was pleasantly surprised to hear the biggest buzz was surrounding Tier 2 (regional dealer associations), that digital ad spending there is increasing and that agencies, publishers and manufacturers are all very excited. For the past decade, the primary outlets for Tier 2 marketers have been traditional media. But thanks to their current targeting capabilities, interactive media are becoming must-buys for regional dealer groups.

As David Harris, e-business & CRM manager for American Suzuki Motor Corporation, said, "Interactive is moving from the kid's table to the adult table." Although Tier 2 spends \$9 billion in advertising, its estimated that it only allocates 1-3 percent to digital. Yet, the segment is projecting growth to around 10-20 percent in 2008, demonstrating that regional spending online is exploding. Let's take a quick look at how the digital media industry can be more aligned with Tier 2's priorities .

### **Start with the basics: communication**

To create a partnership and serve the auto industry's needs, we must have a good understanding of campaign goals and the specific needs of the Tier 2 group. It can be complicated to work with a committee of area dealers, the manufacturer representatives and an agency that are collectively trying to determine strategy. As a true partner, our job includes facilitating communications among these groups and giving them access to the latest technologies and ideas that can help them cooperate and succeed at their core mission: selling cars.

### **Education**

As thought leaders in digital marketing, we not only need to educate our Tier 2 clients about our own products, but we should be a resource about other products in the market that could help Tier 2 clients take advantage of all digital marketing opportunities. As a digital community, we live, breathe and eat digital, and what may be second nature to us may be new to Tier 2 marketers.

Our ability to explain the advantages of how interactive media can help achieve their goals is critical. Make sure you clearly explain what services and capabilities you are offering. True digital partners have a responsibility not only to sell a product but to make sure that Tier 2 clients know what to expect, what not to expect and what the possibilities and advantages are when working with digital media.

### **Delivery**

Finally, it is important to help the Tier 2 marketers to give consumers what they want. As a member of the automotive industry, we know that only 2 to 3 percent of the population is in market for a vehicle at any one time, that those consumers are in market, on average, for 8 to 12 weeks and that afterwards they are gone for 3 to 5 years. Not only is finding this consumer a needle in the haystack, the window to influence this car buyer is open a very short time.

We have found that Tier 2 targets mid- to lower-funnel auto shoppers, so if a digital media specialist can offer a variety of products (for example, contextual targeting, behavioral targeting, search and new car leads) with a large reach into that in-market audience, the combination can enable Tier 2 to address these buyers more directly.

Tier 2 is still evolving in the digital landscape, and with the increased ad dollars moving into this category, the next year should be very exciting! If you can create a foundation with good communication, education, and providing what the client wants, you will be on your way to making Tier 2 a very important part of your business.

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