

# Your Online Ad Is Boring

By Virginia “Ginger” Bisek

Unless you have been asleep for the past 20 years like some modern-day Rip Van Winkle, you are well aware that the Internet has changed the way we shop for goods and services. This digital explosion has changed our lives.

Companies, including law firms, realize that to increase awareness of their products and services with today’s fickle and demanding public, they must advertise online. Nobody uses the phone book anymore. Newspapers are online, magazines are expensive, and most small businesses can’t afford to run a local TV ad or radio spot.

A recent report from PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts that print advertising sales will remain flat through 2015 due to our mass gravitation toward digital media, competition from companies who give things away for “free,” a weak economy, and a decline in store visits.



## Don't Try to Save Money

Why do we continue to see print-based ads on the Internet? A print-based ad is an advertisement that's meant to be in print-based material: a brochure, a magazine, the Yellow Pages, etc. Reading a print-based ad is an entirely different user experience than reading a web-based ad.

You've heard it before. People read differently on the Internet and have entirely different expectations than with a magazine or a newspaper. With a magazine, people start at the cover and read left to right. They put their feet up, relax, and dive in — unfettered with bright lights, animation, and distracting links. Online? Roughly 80 percent of users scan web pages and read only 25 percent of the words on every page. Online readers have things to do, their time is important, and you'd better not waste it.

So why do many online ads continue to be uninspiring and contain no immediate value for users? In short, these ads are generated by companies that display very little knowledge about their client base or about how people shop on the Internet. Such unenlightened companies will usually pull text from old brochures printed long ago, tweak it for size, add more brochure copy verbatim to cover all their services, and then throw it up on the Internet.

## Do You Know Your Clients?

Companies that post boring print-based ads online often cast too wide a net to catch the attention of today's users. Readers scan the copy, get overwhelmed or confused about what is offered, and then don't click.

Your clients want a story. And they want a story about them. They'll read an ad if they immediately recognize themselves in it. Incorporate your clients' needs into your headlines — you have about one second to catch their attention.

If you're not a good copywriter or graphic designer, you should hire both. Your online ads are a measure of your success. This is your brand, and that is a serious thing. It's not that expensive to create a good ad that you can use repeatedly and on different websites.

If you need ideas that will attract new clients and make them click on your ad, ask your existing clients. Or better yet, ask your staff. Both groups can help you generate creative ad copy — your clients can tell you what draws them to certain advertisements and your staff has the pulse of your clients because they interact with them daily. If you do your research and provide a copywriter and designer with a solid draft of ideas, it could help in reducing development fees.

## The Top Power Words in Advertising

According to several studies, these are some of the most powerful words in advertising: you, discover, save, easy, new, love, health, and safety. One could argue that "you" is the most powerful of them all. "Free" is not on this list as its panache is yesterday. The public does not trust "free." If something is truly free and easy to get, then use the word. But don't put "free" in a headline and definitely don't give it a special font treatment.

## Better Results with a Landing Page

If your online ad is successful and speaks to your clients, you'll get clicks. But, unless you follow through by linking your ad to your website landing page that continues the story and conversation, you are wasting your money. Don't force them to a page that doesn't have a clear connection with your advertisement and expect them to explore.

Again, speak to your clients' needs and keep it simple. Don't waste their time. For example, if you offer a free white paper that is of benefit to them, let them download it quickly and easily. It's okay to ask for something back when you are offering information. Ask for email addresses so you can send alerts about special offers. Many companies begin building great relationships with potential clients by creating excellent ads, offering relevant information, and then impressing the clients enough so that they provide their email addresses. And that is a perfect measure of success.

If you offer a discount, don't make potential clients jump through hoops to get it. If you are simply highlighting a new service and want to get the word out, do so with wit and get them to that new information as quickly and as clearly as possible. With the website analytic tools that are available, you'll be able to track conversion rates. If you're not doing this, then again, you are missing a great opportunity. Google Analytics is completely free and the tracking code is easy to insert on your landing page.

What's the bottom line? Your customers are fickle in today's digital world. They want to be impressed and they have very little time to spare. So impress them, don't bore them. ☘



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Please note: Attorney advertising needs to comply with Part VII, TDRPC, and may need to be filed with the State Bar Advertising Review Committee. For more information on the rules and the application to submit your ad, visit [texasbar.com/adreview](http://texasbar.com/adreview). For more information, contact the State Bar Advertising Review Committee at (800) 566-4616 or Ad Review Director Gene Major at [gmajor@texasbar.com](mailto:gmajor@texasbar.com).

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