



# The Web Page

► by Angie Stump Denton, director of Web marketing

## Get your feet wet

*On a weekly basis, I talk to producers who are interested in online marketing, but they are not sure how much money to invest or which option would be best for them. There are many ways other than building a Web site to reap the benefits of Internet advertising and the potential of reaching thousands of new customers.*

### Several options

Internet advertising began in 1994, when the first banner ads were sold and the first commercially available Web browser — Netscape® Navigator 1.0 — was released.

In a recent study by Morgan Stanley that closely examined the adoption rate of the Internet and contrasted it to the three other major “new media” invented this century — radio, network television and cable television — researchers found the growth of the Internet to be nothing short of remarkable.

The project examined the number of years it took or will take each media to reach 50 million U.S. users. The company estimates the Internet will capture 50 million users in just five years. It took television 13 years and radio 38 years to reach that milestone.

If you want to get your feet wet and try advertising online, a few options to consider are banner ads, microsites and online classifieds.

### Banner ads

Whether you love them or hate them, banner ads are one of the dominant forms of advertising online. There are lots of Web sites that offer banner-advertising options, including several agricultural and beef industry sites.

Banner ads are designed to catch users’ attention and to entice them to react. There are approximately six standard banner-ad sizes. Some banner ads are just logos, while some are big enough to include other basic information. Another option is animated ads. Animated banners allow you to provide more information in a small space.

Some banner ads can serve as links to more information. For example, the ad could link to a pop-up e-mail window so the user could request more information. It could link to an online sale book, or you

could have it linked to a portable document format (PDF) file of your recent print ad.

Banner-ad costs depend on the site. Some sites sell space based on the number of “hits,” or the number of different users who see the banner. Others sell based on a daily, monthly or yearly rate.

In the late 1990s, advertisers began requesting to pay only for click-throughs (the number of people who actually clicked on the banner in order to visit the advertiser’s site). However, this is not a common practice because just seeing the banner has value.

Although click-through rates have decreased, the same can be said of banner-ad prices. It is still possible to achieve a click-through rate many times higher than the industry average by combining good placement and design. Combining below-average ad rates and above-average response rates can lead to an acceptable return on investment, just as in any other advertising medium.

### Microsites

Microsites enable advertisers to communicate deeper product benefits and collect customer information without the cost of a full-blown Web site. Microsites are “superlinks” that deliver interesting, useful and timely content. When visitors click on a microsite, a small window pops up in the browser. They see the microsite, but they don’t leave the original page.

Microsites are designed to help a marketer reach a targeted consumer, then turn that person into a loyal customer.

A microsite is designed to last for a finite amount of time — anywhere from a few

weeks to several months. Its purpose is to promote a single product or event. Though content may be added during the promotion cycle, the site itself never changes its narrow focus. Yahoo.com, for example, currently has a microsite promoting that it is powered by Compaq.

A microsite could be the foundation for your online marketing. It provides an office, or storefront, on the Internet for your business. In many instances, a banner ad is used to direct browsers to your microsite.

A microsite would be a great way for you as a cattle producer to promote your upcoming sale or a private-treaty offering. In

the text of your microsite, you can provide a link for the browser to request a sale book or more information, or you can provide a link to your online sale book.

The benefits of a microsite over a Web site design include gaining the immediate credibility of the hosting site and its status as a major media outlet, while additionally gaining increased search-engine exposure. You gain the attention of a new audience who may not be the same people

who typically would find your print advertising or know of your operation.

### Online classifieds

A low-cost way to experiment with advertising on the Internet is purchasing online classifieds. Many print publications have developed online versions on which they offer classified ads to complement their print classifieds.

Online classifieds are an excellent way to promote a bull or group of females you have for sale, straws of semen, or items other than cattle that you are trying to market. That advertising option can improve recognition of your farm or ranch, reach new customers and provide them with contact information, including a direct e-mail link.

When budgeting your online-marketing dollars, remember to focus on where you can reach the most potential customers. Just as with your print advertising, you want to get the most bang for your buck when advertising online.

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