



## "What's Up With TruckSide"

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***“TruckSide advertising represents a huge market opportunity for sign and graphics companies, and the surface has barely been scratched.”***

TruckSide advertising has been around for years, but a new twist aims to take advantage of the potentially hundreds of thousands of blank TruckSides roaming the roads of America.

The old twist was simply an extension of a company's on-premise advertising...Furniture trucks hauling chairs and tables across town with a photo of their goods emblazoned on the side, or the local television station cruising for photo ops with their logo plastered on the side.

Of course truckers have always had a hankering for highly stylized and personal graphics on the doors of their cabs, usually lettered by a unique breed of extremely talented artists.

That's old school. There's nothing wrong with old school, but the new school envisions big bucks selling graphics on the sides of trucks that don't have direct affiliation with the companies who advertise on the side of them.

These days, XYZ Trucking Co. hauling lobsters, or whatever the catch of the day might be, from Cape Cod to Boston, could advertise been.

"People see TruckSide advertising as an additional revenue source, especially when freight hauling is down because the economy is down overall", says Doug Scott, news production editor of Transport Topics. A trucking publication that recently ran an article about TruckSide advertising. "It is growing in importance, you will see a lot more of the owner/operators, - the small guys or small fleets - doing it".

The parties that benefit from TruckSide advertising include the trucking companies, advertising agencies, media companies that rent the sides of the trucks, the advertiser and , last but not least, sign and graphic companies.





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"One tractor-trailer company could have 30,000 vehicles - you add that up and the amount of square footage across the country is phenomenal." Says Jack Berry, founder of PrintCom, a grand format digital printer based in Raleigh, N.C. "If they qualify it, quantify it and get some leaders to adopt it, I will retire soon."

### **MEASURING TRUCKSIDES**

Qualifications and quantification of the effectiveness of TruckSide advertising is showing hopeful early results. The Traffic Audit Bureau (TAB), which audits and authenticates the circulation, or number of impressions, for out-of-home advertising, like billboards, has devised a system known as MARG for tracking TruckSide advertising effectiveness.

The MARG System basically marries information from a Global Positioning System (GPS) that tracks a truck's movements every 2 minutes with traffic data from the federal government's Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) to audit the circulation of a particular moving ad.

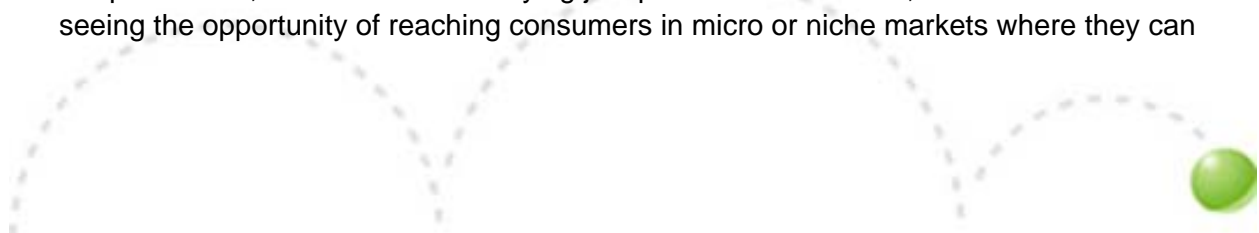
"The system was in development for over 2 years and we introduced it in December of 1999, so the system is out there right now and people are in the process of getting the GPS leads in," says Larry Hennessy Vice President and General Manager of the TAB.

Hennessy, says that initial test results from Chicago showed about 40,000-50,000 impressions per day for a McDonald's ad that ran for 12 weeks on 3 trucks, either on the interstate near the city or closer to the center of town, which averaged more impressions.

"I don't know if it is a direct comparison (to billboards) because the media is very different, says Hennessy,. "It is real easy to count how many people see a billboard. With trucks in motion it's much more complicated, but the numbers generated in Chicago are relatively equivalent what outdoor advertising is doing there".

Tests in other major metropolitan markets, like Atlanta and San Francisco, have shown similar results. Things are definitely looking up for the inner metro markets, where delivery trucks and such make their rounds within the city limits.

"One of the phenomena we've seen in the last couple of years is outdoor media mixes, or optimization, where instead of buying just posters and bulletins, advertisers are seeing the opportunity of reaching consumers in micro or niche markets where they can





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reach consumers during part of their daily life cycle," says Steven Freitas, Chief Marketing Officer of the Outdoor Advertising Assoc. of America (OAAA), "They're seeing opportunities to reach them in various places, and one of the products they're definitely considering and using is TruckSide advertising".

Freitas adds that the OAAA hopes to start compiling national circulation figures, with numbers of the top 25 metro markets within a year.

This niche marketing is not restricted to urban areas - the Texas Lottery has had success on the open road, but so far, excluding the Texas Lottery, it's the only tracked example of TruckSide advertising.

"We do it a little differently for the Texas Lottery program - we lease the trailers ourselves and sublease them to the company so that we can control the vehicle", says George Gearer, Chairman/CEO of Minneapolis -based Fleet Advertising Media Group (FAMG), which sells TruckSide media packages to advertisers. Gearer is also first chairman of the TruckSide Advertising Council (TACA), an advocacy group for TruckSide advertising.

"All of the trucks have LED digits on the sides of them that display the current jackpot of the Texas Lottery. We can access those trailers from the Internet and change the digits using GPS", says Gearer.

Initial results from the Texas Lottery campaign have also been positive. Though the trucks aren't blazing the coveted inner urban trails (however, they travel within 50 miles of the central business district), they're traveling to and stopping at the places people buy lottery tickets.

This speaks to the targeted niche marketing that the advertising industry has been moving toward for some time with alternative media forms, like TruckSide advertising.

"About a year ago, Tide wanted to reach people when they might be spilling food on their clothes, so they put Tide ads on paper napkins in diners and restaurants. It didn't matter what the CPM was, what mattered was that they wanted to reach diners eating. In many regards, TruckSide is the same way, " says OAAA's Freitas.





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## **TRUCKSIDE HURDLES**

TruckSide advertising is not without its roadblocks as a number of factors need to be overcome in order to fully explain the possibilities. As mentioned earlier, quantification and qualification of the numbers is one, while the specter of regulation is another.

"There are not a lot of regulations pertaining to TruckSide advertising, per se, but because it is becoming more prevalent very quickly, a lot of cities are starting to take a look at TruckSide advertising. There are some cities - specifically New York, San Francisco and Boston - which have taken that step and are aggressively looking at regulatory controls. There is some litigation in those cities, because there are aspects within the city laws where they are questioning whether it's legal to carry signs on trucks. They're talking about a significant reduction or elimination with those cities, so some of the companies involved in those cities are already in court dealing with those types of legal issues and free speech."

However, regulation thus far applies mostly to mobile billboards, trucks that are designed to be moving billboards - particularly for special events like conventions - and they usually don't carry deliveries.

"Any time that the government sees an opportunity to get involved in business, they do. However, we have been very careful not to violate any of the federal or state department of transportation regulations. The trucking company knows what the rules and regulations are, and we rely on the", says Gearner.

There already has been a precedent of sorts set by the fact that metro busses have been carrying ads on them for years. It would be difficult to override that precedent and not allow trucking companies to sell ads on the sides of their vehicles.

For the time being and for the most part, regulation is a non-issue and the time is ripe for sign and graphics companies to put together advertising packages for trucking companies.

