

Real-time advertising can catapult newspapers to greater revenues

By [Vaughan Patterson](#)

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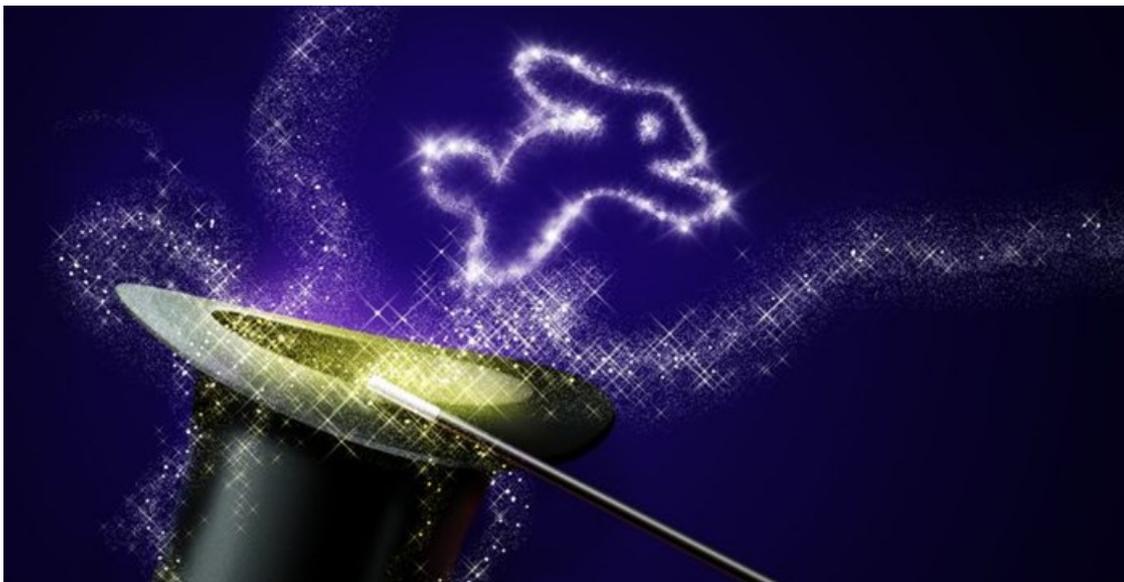
Publications can improve advertising revenues if they take advantage of real-time print adverts and that will help not only their ailing fortunes but the ailing fortunes of publishing printers, too.

Their fortunes certainly are ailing too, except, for *Drum*. In South Africa, ABC figures show that Q3 2015 to Q3 2016 overall newspaper circulation shrank from 1,4 million to 1,2 million. Look at the 10 years from 2004 to 2014 and ABC figures show massive declines for print titles. *Rapport* declined over 51%, magazine *Finweek* was down nearly 70%, *Men's Health* dropped over 52%, *Cosmopolitan* was down nearly 49%, and *The Star* dropped by a hair over 44%. Yet *Drum* circulation bucked the trend and actually increased 68%.

Publishing is the outcast in the general recovery story of the print industry following the global financial hit of 2008 and the subsequent economic whammy for the print industry resulting from the rise of digital media. Packaging print is the shining star while commercial print is a mixed bag of recovering fortunes.

Perhaps the silver lining is that publishing isn't dead, rolled into the hole, with dirt kicked over its rotting corpse. The decline may be widespread but arguably desperate measures such as making publishing roles redundant to redistribute advertising personnel across entire swathes of publications instead of single titles have buoyed flagging coffers. Perhaps to the chagrin of merger and acquisition (M&A) professionals who buy a black book but instead get a haemorrhaging red blotter.

Cynics aside, print publications can still boast a plethora success stories. Some advertising agencies have seized the notion that print offers an irreplaceable and irrepressible value in its tangible substance of quality substrate that slippery and ephemeral digital media overburdened by easy fakery simply cannot master.



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These agencies apparently pull economic rabbits from creative hats because their inventive teams took time to understand the physical materials at their disposal. A creative team made a print ad for DHL using a see-through page in a magazine that, when flipped, shows a DHL man first collecting a parcel from a customer then immediately delivering it – demonstrating DHL's rapid service. It's clever and simple and made possible because publisher printers could print the image of the DHL man on a see-through sheet and bind that into the magazine. And the advertising people knew it was

even possible.

So there's a lot of possibility and one of the big tricks to impact revenues in the next few years will increasingly be real-time print adverts. Real-time adverts were one of the primary reasons to use online advertising. Advertisers could immediately take advantage of events as they unfolded in the real world to make clever adverts and post them online where customers would be impressed by their cleverness or immediacy and spend their money as a result.

Month-long magazine print lead times and days for newspapers didn't convey the same immediacy. But the ability to print more rapidly, more personalised, and using a greater variety of options of inks and substrates makes it eminently more possible today. It requires a slight shift in the model newspapers employ but could use to catapult a march on the competition if they work together with their printers.

ABOUT VAUGHAN PATTERSON

- Vaughan Patterson is the head of Commercial and Industrial Print at Ricoh SA.
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