

Damn, that's a fine looking ad!

For years I've been preaching the power of print as an exceptional marketing tool. How strange, then, that I've only just begun to appreciate exactly what that means.

My perspective all along has been that of an editor shilling the superiority of her product. I was right – to a point. We set our sights on winning awards, and subsequently achieved regional, national and international recognition for our content and design. We swore to maintain the highest quality print standards, and refused to consider anything less than recycled paper and ink. As a result, by-request readership grew 37 per cent in the past year alone (on top of a 600 per cent increase in the previous two years), and our audited circulation swelled to more than 40 per cent larger than our closest regional competitor. But no matter the effort, no matter the awards, no matter the readership – I've come to realize we will never reach our full magazine potential without advertisers.

Before you get the wrong idea, stop. This isn't about increasing revenue: It's about a yearning for beautiful, intelligent, award-winning print advertising. The type of ad page that stops you in mid-turn and demands your attention. The sort of focused, creative effort that is as valuable to the reader as the editorial space that frames it. Great advertising can make you laugh, or cry, or even cringe. And, according to the latest research findings from Magazines Canada, you can't become a top echelon publication without it: "Magazine readers welcome advertising as part of their magazine reading experience. They read magazine advertising in much the same way as they read a magazine's editorial. Magazine advertising is seen to be an essential part of the magazine package." Indeed, multiple sources show that consumers are more receptive to magazine advertising than ads on radio, television, newspapers or the Internet.

Yet, despite their proven worth as a promotional setting, and in spite of their demonstrated ability to drive new media traffic, magazines haven't been feeling the love of late. Between recessionary cutbacks and the tantalizing attraction of "new media", print has been cast in the role of jilted suitor – an uncomfortable, ignored and unwanted intruder. Until now.

A chance conversation with Sean Charters, vice president and managing partner of Colour-NL, revealed a shared lamentation for the forgotten beauty of print – and sparked a mutual determination to turn things around. The resulting plan, fully developed in less than 60 minutes, is a testament to Charters' hyper-creative mind, and my own lesser talents as a prolific note taker.

Starting now, and continuing until the end of February, regular *Atlantic Business Magazine* clients (having booked a minimum of three ads between 2009 and 2010) will be invited to expound on the question: "Why I believe in magazine advertising." The advertiser who provides the most compelling answer will be chosen to receive the dedicated creative attention of six Atlantic Canadian advertising agencies (Colour-NL being one of them). Each of those agencies, who will be identified in our March issue, will prepare a complementary magazine/online ad campaign for the winning client. The respective campaigns will then be judged by a panel comprised of the campaign's intended target audience. The campaign chosen by the judges will be featured in three issues of *Atlantic Business Magazine* (one page in each of our May, July & September issues), with the web campaign running concurrently on our website (abmonline.ca). To close the circle, we'll end the contest by measuring and publishing the results of the campaign.

The catch behind this approximately \$165,000 prize? For clients, it means having the courage to expose your brand and your product to creative interpretation. For *Atlantic Business Magazine* and the agencies involved, it's about putting our reputations on the line and proving that creative print advertising, in the right publication, can and will deliver results.

I'm not much of a gambler, but this is a chance I'm eager to take. How about you? 🎲

Publisher's Note: *Atlantic Business Magazine* apologizes to Grant Thornton for an unfortunate error in our November issue that obscured their marketing message. Though this was the first such error we've had in 21 years of publishing, we would like to reassure our advertising partners that we have reviewed and amended our quality control processes to ensure this mistake will never happen again. We thank you for your continued support, and look forward to working with you again in the future.



Dawn Chafe

THE CLIENT WHO PROVIDES THE MOST COMPELLING ANSWER WILL RECEIVE THE DEDICATED CREATIVE ATTENTION OF SIX ADVERTISING AGENCIES.