**TOPICA**

# Making Co-Registration Convert
# A Guide to Getting Started

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## Part 1: Is Co-Registration for You?

Online media is back and as businesses carve out a greater percentage of their advertising budget for online media, revenue is expected to grow to $11.5 billion by years end*.  This growth trend is projected to continue through 2008. Currently online media makes up 4.1% of the $278.5 billion dollar yearly advertising spend and this number is expected to reach 5.7% by 2008*.

The massive growth is largely being absorbed by performance-based advertising. The two most popular performance vehicles used to be paid search and affiliate marketing. Co-registration has recently begun gaining a lot of attention as a high-performance alternative to paid search and affiliate marketing. Why is it becoming so popular? We'll tell you, but first let's define co-registration.

Co-registration (also referred to as lead generation) builds your email subscriber base by posting an offer to join your newsletter (or to receive other email communications from your company) on hundreds of well-trafficked Web sites. When visitors go through the registration process of a site within the co-registration network, your offer is included among several other offers. If the visitor selects your offer, you receive their email address, and other information you may request. At this point they become a permanent part of your list, and you can market to them again and again, just as you do to your own customer database.

The major reasons for co-registration's popularity are:

- Pay-per-click advertising, such as paid search, is becoming costly as click prices rise. It is also inherently riskier than co-registration because visitors don't necessarily convert or join your email list. Co-registration delivers opt-in subscribers who want to hear from you and can be marketed to repeatedly.

- Email marketing is still an essential and profitable component of online marketing. Co-registration increases your pool of email recipients.

- Over 35% of email addresses grow stale each year. Co-registration offsets this attrition like a hedge fund protects against inflation.

- List growth with is swift. Co-registration can often generate thousands of new subscribers each day.

- Results are measurable. Co-registration response can be monitored as easily as your email program.

- Inexpensive and low barrier to entry. Co-registration costs remain low with leads generally costing well under a dollar per name, and initial campaigns can often be run for a few thousand dollars.

- Advertisers get exposure on high quality sites. Co-registration now allows marketers to advertise on sites formerly not available with a performance-based payment structure.

Sound good? It is, but before you start make sure you are really ready.

*eMarketer, November 2004

Consider co-registration only when you have proven online programs that are working in other mediums. Co-registration is not a testing ground for new offers, new copy or even new Web sites for that matter. Ask yourself these questions before you start:

- Do I have a customer base that responds to my online promotions and email campaigns?

- Have I tested various email offers and copy to determine a winner?

- Do I have a way to instantly follow up with new leads fast with autoresponders?

If you said yes to all these questions, then read on to learn how to set up a co-registration program that sets you up for success.

## Part 2: Getting Started

Co-registration success ultimately depends on these key factors, all of which are equally important to have in place before you launch your program:

**1.Straightforward and Compelling Offer**
When you initiate your program you will be asked for a graphic of your logo and about 35 characters describing your offer and program. Make sure your offer is clear, so subscribers know what they are signing up for. Otherwise, you risk acquiring an unresponsive audience. Provide an incentive, such as a discount, free gift or other valuable information to encourage them to join your list. Here's an example of a good offer. Simple, clear, and with a good incentive.
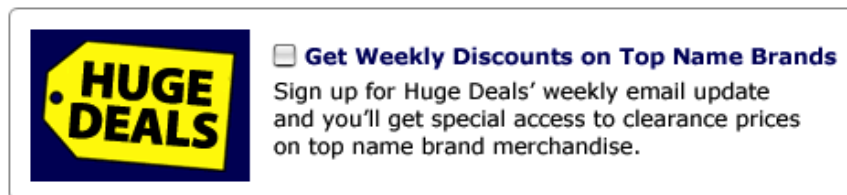


**2. Immediate Follow-Up**
You'll be collecting a large number of subscribers from a variety of sites, so you will need to be ready to communicate immediately upon their sign up. Set up a series of autoresponders that are instantly deployed and focus on building rapport and moving the prospective customer down the sales cycle to conversion.

**3. Welcome Message**
Your first email is extremely important as it is the subscribers' first impression of your business and your best opportunity to get your new subscriber to confirm his or her subscription. ISP's are increasingly requiring double opt-in confirmation to accept email deliveries, so make sure your welcome message includes a strong call to action requesting subscription confirmation in a prominent area of your welcome message. Also, instruct them to add your "from" address to their address book as this assures that your emails will not be filtered by ISP's who use content based filtering to weed out commercial email from unknown senders.

With this important housekeeping accomplished, make sure your welcome message greets the new subscriber and lets them know the benefits of joining your list. Think of it as the program you receive before seeing a play that lists time, date, scenes and actors. It should contain information about what to expect, and should tell them what articles, offers and other goodies they will receive from your emails and how often they will receive them. Here's a good example:



Stay away from copy or graphics that could be perceived as SPAM or you will invoke an instant opt-out reaction from your recipient. And remember, your subscriber may forget they signed up, so you will want your welcome message to clearly remind them where or what they signed up for.

An offer, or the fulfillment of the promise given in your co-registration ad, can be included in your welcome message, but remember the tone of your welcome message needs to build rapport not just generate sales, so go light on the sales copy.

## Part 3: Continue the Momentum with Strong Offers and Email Best Practices

Lead with your best offer and make sure you deliver everything you promised in the copy of the co-registration offer. Your offer is the most important element of a successful co-registration campaign. It should have been rigorously tested against other offers before starting your program. Other offers that did not perform quite as well or appeal to a smaller niche of your audience can be added to a series of follow-up emails at a frequency of one time per week or two times per month. Note: timing is everything, so consider increasing your frequency during the first two weeks after subscription.

**Use Consistent Branding in Your Email Messages**
To ensure that subscribers recognize your messages use the same colors, graphics, and branding with each message. Also, location is everything, and with a vast amount of subscribers using email clients with preview panes, you should make sure your logo and the most important info is placed in the top two inches of your email so it will be visible in the preview pane.

**Choose Your Subject Lines Carefully**
Test your subject lines to increase your campaign's performance. Determine a test audience, split it into two equal halves, and roll out the same email with two different subject lines. Measure results to determine a winner. Run head to head tests several times, until you are confident that you have a subject line that generates a strong response. Also, remember that many email clients truncate subject lines after 23 characters, so keep them short.

**Watch out for Red Flags that Could Trigger Content Filters**
ISPs use a variety of rules to scan incoming emails and determine whether they are commercial or junk messages. To avoid getting filtered, stay away from terms such as "Free", "Order Now" etc. (Topica clients can use our "Content Checker" feature to test their message against "Spam Assassin" rules which are widely applied in the industry. If the message scores too high, changes to the copy or HTML can be made and re-tested until the message reaches an acceptable score.)

**Don't Skimp On Quality Content**
Once you have defined what the subscriber should expect in upcoming emails, make sure you continually meet their expectations. Take the time to think about your audience and what information they would find valuable. Add this information to your program. Do not be afraid to dedicate mailings to purely non-promotional messages if you think your subscribers will find the information valuable. Send quality content and you will reap the rewards of a loyal and responsive subscriber base.

**Maintain Lasting Continuity**
Continue to brand your messages and make sure to keep a strong frequency of mailings. Continue a regularly frequency of at least two times a month or you risk being forgotten by your subscribers.

**Continue to Test**
A strong co-registration program hinges on continuous testing. Segment your list and test subject lines, offers, creative, and tone. Measure results and use your learning to further refine your messages.

**Get to Know Your Subscriber**
Embed forms into emails to gather self-reported demographic and preference information about your subscriber base. Use this data to segment your subscriber list and send targeted messages that will increase conversion. (Topica's solution offers customizable forms that can be placed on your Web site or within email messages.)

**Target Based on Demographics and Behavior**
Segment your audience based on self reported preference information and behavioral information, such as, opens, clicks and purchases. Behavioral segmentation is very powerful and can be used for extremely effective cross-sell and up-sell campaigns. (Topica's solution offers Conversion Tracking that collects valuable purchase history to help you gain insight into your customers' preferences.)

With these tips in mind, you are now ready to embark on a successful co-registration program. Co-registration is an excellent way to increase sales in the short term, but its importance goes beyond quick sales. It will protect your current email program from lost future revenues that are caused naturally by opt-outs and stale email addresses.

## Choose Topica

Over 4,000 businesses rely on Topica to reach their online marketing and sales goals. Visit our Web site today at www.topica.com to learn about our solution and, while you're there, visit our Best Practices section to learn more about guidelines for email marketing.

Ready to try co-registration?  Contact Mike Collins today at:  (415) 344-3819.