



CIRCULATIONS
AUDIT BOARD

CASE STUDY

NETT MAGAZINE

ABA AdLift

Advertiser Communications Project

Company Profile

He Said She Said Communications (HS3) is a unique business that specialises in branded content. Where the traditional form of custom publishing ends, HS3 has emerged to offer businesses and brands a completely integrated marketing approach to communicating with customers, partners and the market.

One of HS3's most innovative and progressive customers is NetRegistry, a domain name and online services specialist. The company wanted a way to help its SME business customers better understand, leverage and commercialise an online presence, so NetRegistry commissioned HS3 to produce a bespoke communications programme that includes a tailored print magazine, *NETT*.

NETT magazine has just celebrated its two year anniversary and has been a CAB audited title since inception. Current circulation figures are audited at 41,824 meaning *NETT* easily leads the SME Business magazine category.

Background

Although the Small to Medium Business (SMB) sector makes up the vast majority of the Australian economy, contributing over 70% of GDP, there are only four locally produced national magazines that cover the strategic issues, opportunities and challenges managed by small business owners. Of these, only two are audited.

For the publishers of *NETT* magazine, this posed a real concern. Media agencies conduct rigorous due diligence on the circulation claims of the mainstream newspapers and business publications. It is a key requisite considering there are hundreds of millions of dollars invested in advertising across print publications every year. The publishers of *NETT*

wanted to understand why the market was not demanding the same transparency and accountability from the SME Business Magazine category.

The value and importance of being an audited title became even more apparent when it was found that some media agencies were being quoted obsolete circulation figures for other titles in the SME Business Magazine category, seemingly unaware that audits had not been undertaken for many years.

Keen to ensure that media buyers were able to compare magazines accurately when planning campaign expenditure, HS3 and *NETT* worked in collaboration with the Circulations Audit Board (CAB) to initiate an education programme with their advertiser contact base.

“Conducting basic due diligence on circulation claims should be the starting point for any advertiser or agency.”

The Letter of the Law

“It is not a legal requirement for magazine publishers to substantiate their circulation and readership claims, but perhaps it should be,” says Andy Corlett, Commercial Director for *NETT* Magazine “After all, media agencies will make buying decisions based on those figures. Being misled



“Exposing the lack of transparency elsewhere in the market will hopefully encourage advertisers to ask some tough questions and challenge all SME Business Magazines to raise their standards.”

Shane Mitchell, Managing Director of HS3

with false or inaccurate information has its parallels with other business activity that would be deemed illegal under the Trade Practices Act.”

Given that a CAB Audit only costs \$450, to the minds of HS3 and their client, NetRegistry, there seemed little reason for any publication to not undergo an audit. There also seemed little reason to not take the time and invest the energy into publicising the benefits of being a CAB audited title.

HS3 and *NETT* opted to participate in the CAB’s *AdLift* initiative. Working with the CAB, a letter was developed and sent to advertisers and agencies. It aimed to impart the fact that *NETT* was one of only two SME Business Magazines that can make statements regarding circulation that are backed up by a legitimate, transparent audit process.

“By working with audited titles, agencies and their advertisers are better protected from risk.”

ABA’s *AdLift* is a free service available to members of the both the CAB and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC). HS3 simply provided the ABA with a database of contacts and a small fee of \$1 per contact to cover stationery, postage and production costs.

“The letter made some strong points about the governance of campaign spending. By working with audited titles, agencies and their advertisers are better protected from risk and are able to hold publishers to greater account for results,” explains Andy. “Conducting basic due diligence on circulation claims should be the starting point for any advertiser or agency. It is very important that advertising decision makers, media planners and buyers know they are working with accurate, up-to-date figures. We are proud to be part of the publishing industry that is upholding this standard on behalf of our advertising partners.”

A Quality Outcome

Since issuing the letter, *NETT* Magazine publishers have received favourable feedback from the market. Taking a proactive role in educating the market about CAB auditing and the importance of working with audited titles has helped to raise awareness levels amongst decision makers, and has further strengthened *NETT* Magazine’s position as a credible, transparent title of quality for SME’s.

HS3’s Managing Director Shane Mitchell says the ABA’s *AdLift* initiative produced valuable results to them as a member but more work needs to be done to encourage media agencies to dig deeper into publisher’s claims. “This exercise was valuable because it highlights that *NETT*’s relationships with advertisers are built on honesty, integrity and trust,” says Shane. “Exposing the lack of transparency elsewhere in the market will hopefully encourage advertisers to ask some tough questions and challenge all SME Business Magazines to raise their standards.”

Find out more about CAB at
www.auditbureau.org.au
Call us on +61 2 9954 9800 or email to
marketing@auditbureau.org.au

