



PUT A
HALO
AROUND YOUR BRAND

You need to connect with consumers and elevate your brand.
Could a premium publisher be the answer?





Today, there's no such thing as a captive audience sitting passively in front of a TV. In a world of restless internet travelers, if your messages, such as sponsored content, emails or ads, don't make an immediate connection, your could-be customers will click right on past. And that assumes they see your message in the first place.

But there is one highly effective way to make sure you don't get lost in the digital shuffle. Even in these days when trust in media has been sorely tested—perhaps especially now—most consumers still have go-to sources that they turn to for news, information and entertainment. Partnering with “premium publishers” that have credibility with the audience you hope to reach can boost the chance your communications will be heard and appreciated. Your brand may bask in reflected glory—almost as if your company, too, fell under the premium publisher's “halo” of trust.

A Long History...

That “halo effect,” in which your brand benefits from the company it keeps, has a long history. In a study published in 1920, psychologist Edward Thorndike coined the phrase to explain a tendency he had observed in the way military officers evaluated the rank and file. If an officer's first impression of a soldier was positive, he tended to bestow on that man a whole range of good qualities—from competence and intelligence to trustworthiness. By the same token, an unfavorable view of someone also would likely extend across the board.¹

It didn't take long for businesses to find ways to take advantage of this human tendency. It's why advertisers hire well-known actors and larger-than-life personalities to speak favorably of a company's wares. Celebrities' fame, good looks and popularity reliably rub off on the products and services they endorse.

With Special Relevance Today...

But Thorndike's early 20th-century notion may be particularly relevant in our 21st-century world of multimedia saturation. You know all too well how easy it is for your messages to prospective customers not to be heard among the noise of everything else they're reading, watching and listening to. And that may be true even if you do everything the experts recommend. Suppose you sell mountain bikes and you write a thoughtful blog post about responsible use of wilderness trails. That's just the kind of helpful, non-promotional content that can demonstrate that you speak your customers' language. Yet even if this is a burning issue for the people you're trying to reach, if you just put your post on your website, chances are they won't find it. “So many small and midsize businesses create content that reaches no one,” says Joe Pulizzi, founder of the Content Marketing Institute.

Enter: the halo effect. Suppose that, instead of simply putting that post on your site, you also channel it through a premium publisher with a large and loyal audience.

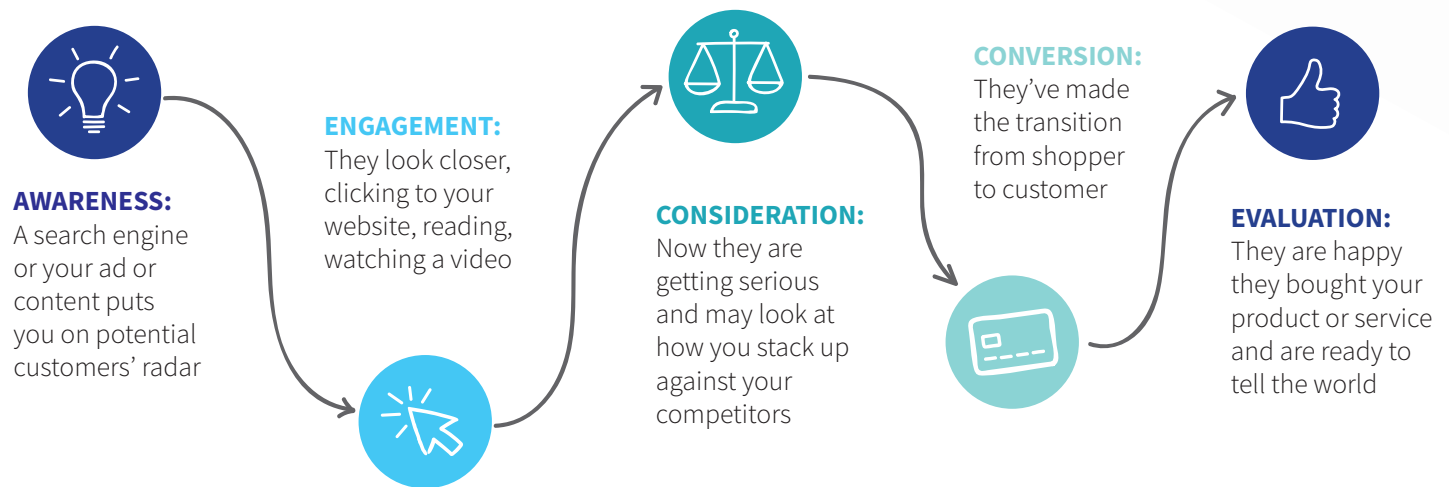
Now you have the opportunity to connect with motivated readers who will appreciate what you have to say. Just like that, associating your company with the publisher's trusted brand has elevated the effectiveness and reach of your marketing and communications. (More later on exactly what makes a publisher “premium” and how to find one.)

How a Premium Publishing Partner Provides 'Brand Lift'

How exactly can a premium publisher's halo effect help your company? The primary benefit is something called "brand lift." The basic idea is that brand lift increases your interaction with would-be customers in a positive way.² Sometimes brand lift is depicted as an inverted pyramid or a funnel that points toward your ultimate goal: to influence a purchase and create new, loyal customers who will share their enthusiasm with others.

Brand lift can also be thought of as leading customers along the "path to purchase."

The Path to Purchase



The halo effect of a premium publisher can help at every step along this path.

+67%

In an influential 2016 study,³ comScore found that display ads on websites of a range of premium publishers covering news, sports, health, finance, lifestyle and entertainment averaged **67% higher brand lift than those on non-premium publishers' sites.**

+32%

In the study, premium publishers delivered everywhere along customers' path to purchase, performing **32% better than other publishers in the early stages of brand lift,** according to metrics for awareness, recall and message association.

+9%

Near the end of the path, ads on premium publishers' sites performed **9% better on measurements of purchase intent** and sharing consumer choices.

3X

But it was in the middle of the journey—the crucial consideration phase—that the halo effect of premium publishers showed its greatest advantage, proving **three times more effective** than other sites.

What Makes a Publisher "Premium"?

"Premium publisher" doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. But industry experts surveyed recently by content agency Digiday pointed to several key qualities.⁴



Premium publishers are actively sought out by their viewers or readers, who tend to have a loyal, meaningful, committed relationship with them.



Consumers go to premium publishers because of what they have to offer—sports, news, entertainment or other popular content, or a unique perspective or voice.



Premium publishers may gain additional stature by requesting something in return from their audience for the content they provide. That could be subscribers' fees, but it also might be personal information provided when asked to register for access.



Finally, premium publishers understand their audience and know how to connect to it. In a world in which four out of five brands don't really know their customers,⁵ leveraging a publisher's deep knowledge of its audience can be invaluable.

Five Questions to Ask a Premium Publisher

Which publishers can bring all or most of those benefits to your brand? Whose halo effect will shine most brightly on your efforts to reach and influence customers? To choose among all of the print and online publishers vying to run your display ads and put your sponsored content on their websites, ask them to demonstrate how they measure up:

- 1 Are they trusted?** According to a recent survey about trust in the media, respondents were most likely to trust local and national news organizations (rather than friends, family or social media)—and trust in those sources was higher in 2017 than it was a year earlier.⁶ "One great thing about an established media company is that you know it's real—and so do your customers," says Liz Buffa, vice president of content at Headline Studio, Advance Local's custom publishing unit.
- 2 Do they have a loyal following?** Your ideal publisher partner brings you the benefit of strong, committed readers or viewers in the market you want to tap—and has the metrics to show you just how loyal its audience is. Venerable media companies that have engaged local readers for generations have an obvious advantage.
- 3 Can they connect with audiences locally and nationally?** The internet knows no geographical boundaries, and even if you're focused on your home turf now, your growth strategy may take you beyond your local roots. The right publisher for you not only knows the local market inside and out but can also serve as your community's portal to the wider world. A deep knowledge of readers and markets, locally and nationally, can help you tap and build your essential customer base.
- 4 How do they define—and reach—the right audiences?** Is a publisher reaching the customers and potential customers who mean the most to your business? Can it provide a revealing statistical portrait of its audience's demographics, habits and likes and dislikes? You should get clear answers to your questions about everything from reader age and income to education levels and mobile device usage.
- 5 Do they have the tech skills and resources to deliver on their promises?** A publisher may talk a good game, but can it back up its claims with solid strategies and the digital chops to deliver? The world is full of metrics these days, and as essential as they are for measuring the reach, engagement and effectiveness of your communications, making sense of bounce rates, time on site and other measurements requires a partner that can not only give you access to the best tools and explain what's important but can also help you fine-tune your approach.

Making the Most of Your Partnership

When you work with a premium publisher, there's no need to choose just one way to communicate with your customers. A coordinated campaign across several channels can put the halo effect to work for you in many smart ways that expand and reinforce your message.



Targeted online display advertising can increase brand awareness, announce a special event or educate your customers. “We often recommend that display ads drive people to your content, not just your products,” says Buffa.



Social media strategy and advertising take your brand and content to where your customers are—and where they share content, compare notes and tout their loyalty. According to Jay Baer, content strategist and president of Convince & Convert, 53% of Americans ages 12 and up who follow brands on social media are more loyal to those brands.



Search engine marketing in campaigns that are planned, executed and monitored by experts helps make sure you're there when a potential customer needs help. “People don't go to Google to search for a company name; they go to have a question answered or a problem solved,” says Buffa.



Native advertising (sponsored content) on a premium publisher's site, side by side with news or entertainment, puts the halo effect to great use, reinforcing your expertise and value in an unobtrusive way. And if it's done well, it can help you answer those questions consumers type into Google. “To succeed in search, you have to create content that people really like,” says Baer.



Video sponsorship—or tapping the expertise of your publisher partner to create your own—uses a format your customers enjoy to elevate your brand. Some 85% of internet users watch videos, and an even larger proportion of marketers now make video part of their strategy.⁷



Targeted email and display re-messaging let you reach out once again to your customers on their favorite devices. Nearly 80% of smartphone users, for example, cite checking email as a top priority.⁸



Off-line matters, too! Event sponsorship, inserts and print advertising provide additional opportunities for using your publisher partner's reach and reputation to your advantage.



Measuring your effectiveness—why metrics matter. The best premium publishers have the technology and analytic savvy to tell you just how well you're doing across all of these channels, and that can help you influence and keep the consumers who find you. According to the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, loyal customers, on average, are worth up to 10 times as much as their first purchase.⁹

“Any marketing approach needs a distribution strategy, especially if you haven't yet built up an audience of your own. Working with publishers that have the audience you are targeting can be essential to making your plan work.”

– Joe Pulizzi

Working with the right premium publishing partner can help your business in all of these ways and more, giving you the benefit of its reach, expertise and reputation in concrete, quantifiable ways that can help you succeed in making connections with customers in today's loud, overcrowded media landscape.



Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to download this white paper. A NJ Advance Media representative can show you the many ways we can help you leverage our deep connections to readers in making sure your messages are heard.

Learn more by contacting your NJ Advance Media Marketing Solutions Specialist at (800) 501-2100 or email marketing@njadvancemedia.com.



ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.verywell.com/what-is-the-halo-effect-2795906>
- 2 <https://www.viget.com/articles/measuring-brand-lift>
- 3 <https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Presentations-and-Whitepapers/2016/The-Halo-Effect-How-Advertising-on-Premium-Publishers-Drives-Higher-Ad-Effectiveness>
- 4 <https://digiday.com/media/premium-publisher-mean-anyway/>
- 5 <http://www.yeslifecyclemarketing.com/who-we-are/news-and-events/news/yesmail-and-gleanster-study-80-percent-brands-don%27t-know-their>
- 6 http://www.journalism.org/2017/05/10/americans-attitudes-about-the-news-media-deeply-divided-along-partisan-lines/pj_2017-05-10_media-attitudes_a-05/
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