

ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA



ONLINE SPONSORSHIPS

Blending Branding and Direct Marketing

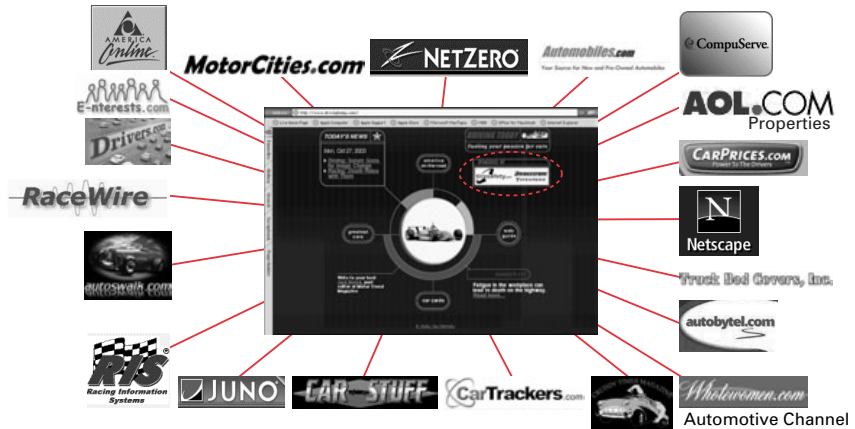


www.jupiterresearch.com
a division of Jupitermedia Corporation

Case Study

Bridgestone Sponsors Driving Today

Fig. 6 Studio One Delivers Sponsored Content for Bridgestone



Source: Jupiter Research (11/03)
 © 2003 Jupiter Research, a division of
 Jupitermedia Corporation

Bottom Line: The Driving Today sponsorship is ideal for Bridgestone because the company estimates that to produce, negotiate, and manage distribution of the content independently without Studio One would cost at least twice as much in terms of resources alone. Bridgestone wisely recognizes that these are not its core competencies, especially given that the marketer does not work with an online agency and has only one executive dedicated to all online planning, buying, and analysis.

While general awareness is the primary goal of the sponsorship, Bridgestone should also strive to understand the effective reach and frequency, and the demographic composition of its audience across all of the sites.

Participants: Studio One creates sponsored content and distributes it across a network of Web sites. Bridgestone Corporation is the world's largest tire and rubber company; brands include Bridgestone; Firestone; and Tiresafety.com, a public service Web site.

Goal: Because Bridgestone does not sell directly to consumers, the company's consumer-facing marketing goals focus primarily on generating brand awareness. In the third quarter of 2001, Bridgestone conducted a brief test sponsorship of Driving Today, a content segment created for Studio One by a former editor of *Motor Trend* and *Automotive Age* magazines. The sponsorship does not have specific objectives regarding demographics or reach and frequency; general awareness and brand favorability among automotive consumers is the only goal.

Execution: Following the test, Bridgestone entered into a long-term agreement to become the exclusive sponsor of Driving Today, which features news and information on the major trends, personalities, and products shaping the automotive industry. On behalf of Bridgestone, Studio One handles production and content maintenance, and manages relationships with 16 distribution partners that carry the sponsorship, including AOL, Autobytel, and Drivers.com, through a single point of contact. The sponsor also gains radio exposure through presentation of Driving Today on the companion radio show, *America on the Road*, which reaches 300 million people weekly on 300 stations via

CBS/Westwood One. Additionally, while there is no contractual agreement for television exposure of Driving Today, Jack Nerad—host and editor of the sponsored content—has mentioned it during various television appearances, creating an extended public relations halo effect for the sponsor. To assess performance, Bridgestone monitors impression delivery and exposure of the content monthly, biannually, and annually, along with resulting click-throughs to the company Web site.

Economics: While Bridgestone cannot disclose budgets as a matter of policy, the sponsor estimates that one-third of the annual online ad budget is devoted to the Driving Today sponsorship. Monthly distribution online is approximately 24 million unique visitors. Distribution partners, which receive the editorial content for free, consistently over-deliver against guaranteed impression levels.