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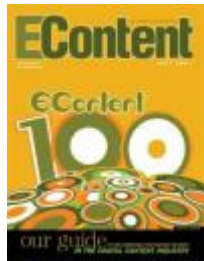


Making Media Pay; Has Kooaba Cracked The Code? PLUS Last Call For The Digital 100

Author: Peggy Anne Salz

In brief: The discussion of paid content comes to a head with Murdoch's decision to charge for content – no matter what. Is this prudent? What options are available to publishers? We take a look at some ideas and profile a path-breaking new concept from mobile visual search/recognition company Kooaba that may allow old media to leapfrog into new profits. Plus: an invitation to cool digital companies to contact me personally.

Regular readers will know that I work with a variety of organizations and publications, evaluating companies and candidates for awards ranging from the Meffys (awarded by the Mobile Entertainment Forum to recognize excellence and innovation in mobile entertainment and services) to the Smaato Mobile Advertising Awards (recognizing the best in mobile Web and in-app advertising) to the EContent 100 (a list of the 100 companies that matter most in the digital content industry).



I am proud that EContent named me to its panel of judges to evaluate the 100+ candidates across the categories: classification & taxonomy; collaboration; content commerce; content creation, production, & digital publishing; content delivery; content management; content security; fee-based info services; intranets & portals; mobile content; search engines & technologies; and social media. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the many mobile and Internet companies that have contacted me to be considered for inclusion in the list, and issue a final call for candidates.

Round 1 of the judging wraps up on September 1, so please reach out to me this week. (Please note that your contacting me does not compel me to put any company name on the final list of contenders and, of course, in no way guarantees that any company will be named to the list.)

This year my participation in the judging team has not only introduced me to a number of new mobile industry innovators (companies you'll see profiled on MSearchGroove in the coming weeks). It has also exposed me to new thinking about digital content creation and distribution.

The industry is at a critical crossroads. A milestone that speaks volumes: the storm brewing the media and digital industries after Rupert Murdoch's very public announcement (after posting record losses of \$203 million last quarter) that his News Corporation intends to charge for online newspaper content.

WILL WE PAY FOR CONTENT?

[Artesian Solutions](#), a company specialized Web-based market intelligence and surveillance software (automating the process of search through machine-based surveillance), has an interesting take.

Artesian CEO Andrew Yates issued a statement today arguing that Murdoch's brave strategy may just literally pay dividends.

As Andrew puts it: Murdoch's play is "based around 'quality' and this is tough call for a commodity that people are not currently prepared to pay for.... However he argues that one positive consequence of charging for content is that through targeted information and the learned behaviors of the subscribers, newspapers will be able to build a 24 hour, 7 days a week relationship (rather than once in the morning) with the subscriber and therefore tailor content to the demands of those paying for the service. The subscriber will get what they want, when they want it on whatever device they chose. Surely, this will be good for the consumer."

Intrigued by this view I caught up with Andrew to ask why he can be so sure that we – people that have grown up accustomed to free content, search and social networking services – will change our habits and pay for news, for example. A few minutes into the call we were passionately debating the pivotal importance of personalization, relevancy and context – and the value they bring to our content experiences across platforms and devices.

CONTEXT & RELEVANCE

Artesian, for example, has built a B2B business model on providing its clients content in tune with their profiles, preferences and strategic focus. Using a variety of tools and techniques (advanced algorithms, natural language search the order and frequency of keywords, for example) Artesian effectively filters out information that we don't want and gives us what we do.

In this scenario, the value of content is its quality – which is a function of context and relevance. Put another way, customers pay for genuinely useful content and they pay a premium for the choice of having what they need where and when they need it. With this in mind, the next deliverable on the Artesian roadmap is a service that delivers a daily dose of information to customers on their portable devices (PDA, smartphone, iPhone etc...).

My take: Artesian is one of a new breed of cool companies that makes its money by making choices for us to provide us choice content we appreciate. By spidering the indexes relevant to our interests and objectives (and not attempting to index or deliver the entire Web), companies such as Artesian are defining paid-content models that hold a great deal of promise for publishers everywhere (particularly in mobile). I would certainly pay for a daily dose of exactly what I want (gleaned from the sources I know and trust, as well the social media spaces, such as Twitter) delivered to my BlackBerry. All the more valuable if the technology employs explicit and implicit personalization (as Artesian does). Will we, as my close colleague Alan Moore suggested, pay for quality content? I vote 'yes.' As they say in Cologne, where I am based: What costs nothing, is nothing.