

# ONLINE CIRCULATION PROMOTIONS

By Jon Spencer,  
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THE INTERNET IS A VALUABLE tool in promoting a magazine’s circulation because it offers immediacy, interactivity and archival searching that a printed version of a magazine cannot. In order to successfully achieve circulation promotion online, small publishers should think carefully about how their website (and others) could complement their magazine. Here are some different methods you can use to promote circulation of your magazine online.

## Subscriptions and Your Website

Your website should provide customers with an easy way to subscribe. Every magazine’s approach to this is different. The ideal is a full-fledged e-commerce system with a secure server and credit card processing capabilities. But not all small publishers can afford this approach. At a minimum, most small magazines should be able to put together an online form, with fields for the customer’s name and address, a choice of subscribing for a one-, two- or three-year term, a payment option, and a “submit” button that sends the information to the publisher via email. The bare bones alternative of printing out a form and sending it in by mail should be avoided. Don’t make credit card payment an option if the information is being sent unencrypted. Allow subscribers a “Bill Me” option instead, in which they are sent an invoice through the mail requesting payment.

Actively promote subscriptions on your website. The “Subscriptions” link in the menu bar is just a starting point. You can try placing a small but noticeable banner advertisement on your home page that uses the imperative verb “Subscribe!” and offers a hook, such as “Save X%.” Include a link to the Subscriptions page at the bottom of each online article, making it clear that the online content is only a sample of what they will find in each issue of your magazine.

## Reader Relationships and Customer Service

Your website can give readers a way to find out more about your publication, as well as links to other sources of information. A good magazine website helps to build a community of readers through blogs and forums to encourage comments that can develop into

in-depth discussions. Include a comments section after each online article to allow readers to voice their thoughts and opinions.

Update online content regularly to give readers a reason to visit often. Fill in the gaps between issues, and conduct surveys to stay informed about what your readers are thinking.

Providing customer service online is helpful to subscribers. Give them ways to manage their account online, such as a change of address, subscription renewal and payment information. Common subscriber questions can be addressed online in a Subscriber Service FAQ page.

It is also important to publish your privacy policy on your website, including information on how subscribers can opt out of any list trades or rentals. Make sure to provide options for

how to contact you including mailing address, telephone and fax numbers and email address.

## Marketing Your Publication and Website Online

As a start, submit your site to Google and other major search engines. Investigate “search engine optimization” techniques to help bring your site closer to the top of most relevant searches. Also develop a variety of small images and banners featuring the magazine’s logo and/or cover shots, and encourage website readers (and like-minded magazines) to include these on their websites, with a link to yours, and offer to do the same. When you post a comment on another website’s blog, include a link to some related content on your website. If you develop a printed subscription promotion piece, be sure to include your URL on it and, if possible, include a special offer code to track response to that piece.

Also decide how much content you want to offer online for free. Some publishers offer little, others make the entire issue available as soon as it is printed, and others delay online publishing until each issue goes off-sale on the newsstands. Bonus “web only” content is common, as is restricted access to content reserved for paid subscribers of the print magazine. Digital editions of printed magazines are also being made available online.

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