

# SWAPS AND EXCHANGES

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Publisher of *THIS* magazine, 2006

House ads, exchange and contra ads provide economical promotion and revenue generation opportunities, as well as a way to get services and products on the cheap. Here are 10 tips for making the most of the opportunities presented by swaps.

FOR MANY SMALL CIRCULATION MAGAZINES, house ads, exchange ads with other magazines and contra ads provide economical promotion and revenue generation opportunities, as well as a way to get services and products on the cheap. All good things, right? Here are 10 tips for making the most of these opportunities.

1. Break the habit of thinking of house ads as simply “space filler.” Make the most of these opportunities by ensuring your ads are creative, eye-catching and, most of all, current. Running the same tired ad again and again simply trains readers to ignore it.
2. Don't just use house ads and exchange ads to sell subscriptions. Advertise your back issues, tell readers about an upcoming event, drive traffic to your website, thank your donors, promote your internship program or drum up entries for your literary contest. At *THIS* we've found that one of the best and cheapest ways to promote our annual literary contest is with exchange ads in other literary magazines.

**Most magazines are happy to swap ads...you just have to ask.**

3. Think outside your magazine: if your magazine has a website, think about swapping banner ads with other magazines.
4. Make sure your ads feature covers of your magazine. Show people what your magazine looks like so that when they're shopping at the newsstand they'll recognize it and maybe even buy a copy.
5. If you're running more than one house ad in an issue make sure the ads are staggered throughout the issue. Don't clump them all together in the front or back of the book. Nothing says, “we can't get any paid advertising” more than page after page of house ads. If you find you're running too many house ads, seek out exchange ads with other publications to help achieve a balance.

6. Remember that exchange ads give you free exposure to potential readers and advertisers—so make the most of it. Ensure the ad effectively expresses your magazine's mission. Every magazine claims to publish “the best new Canadian writing”...think

about what sets you apart. Focus on this. Coming up with copy for exchange ads and house ads can help you really fine-tune your mission statement and figure out just what makes your publication unique.

7. When it comes to exchange ads, do your research. Look for other magazines that are similar to yours in content or audience and make a connection. Most magazines are happy to swap ads...you just have to ask. Always be on the lookout for new swap opportunities. Having good relationships with other magazines and exchange ads on file can help when you have a hole to fill at the last minute or an ad falls through and you need something quick.

8. If your exchange or house ad promotes subscriptions and offers a mail-in coupon or other reply device, make sure there's a tracking code on it. This will help when you're evaluating your various circulation sources.

9. Contra ads are a great way to get products you need or services you regularly use for cheap. Be creative. See if you can get your printer to take an ad in exchange for discounted printing of your fundraising letters. What about prizes for your next fundraiser? Or dinner for the volunteers at your next envelope stuffing party? *In These Times*, an American magazine, once traded ad space for eco-friendly office supplies and toilet paper.
10. Most importantly, if you're doing an ad swap for services or products make sure you get all the details in writing so that the parties involved are clear on what's going on. Leave a paper trail so those that come after you have all the details.
11. Bonus tip: Record the assumed dollar value of all contra and swap ads in your budgets, including those you submit to your funders. Ads accepted on an exchange basis should be considered as actual (in-kind) revenue.

The Hotsheet Series provides tips and advice to small magazines from people working in the field. The series is produced by Magazines Canada and is funded by the Canada Council and the Canada Magazine Fund of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

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