

Tumblr Boasts Rapid Growth And New Advertising Opportunities

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Tumblr ads may provide a new, creative source of social media exposure for brands

In March, the number of blogs Tumblr hosted passed the 50-million mark. Last month, Google released search results forecasting that the search term “Tumblr” would overtake “blog” by the end of the year, meaning the platform could become the brand name stand-in for the generic web term.

Needless to say, Tumblr is experiencing a healthy growth spurt—and now brands may be able to capitalize on it.

Tumblr founder and CEO Dave Karp, who was once adamant about not leaning on advertising for monetization, announced at the Ad Age Digital conference on April 18, 2012, that the platform would introduce new ad units for sale on the site’s “Radar” post, which is where Tumblr highlights popular and selected content. The ads appeared on user dashboards beginning May 2. At the conference, Karp told the audience that the paid units may be new to the platform, but some brands have already been creatively partnering with Tumblr to promote events and products. Moreover, Karp underscored the creative opportunities that Tumblr provides brands.

Tumblr is heavy on consumer engagement. According to a February report from comScore, web users worldwide who visited Tumblr spent, on average, 89 minutes on the site during January 2012. This, of course, pales in comparison to Facebook’s whopping 405 minutes, yet when compared with Twitter’s 21 minutes, it’s evident that Tumblr users are actively engaged with the platform’s content.

comScore data from January 2012 showed that US unique visitors to Tumblr grew significantly from November 2010 to 2011. Over the course of a year, Tumblr garnered an additional 9 million unique visitors, reaching nearly 16 million unique visitors by November 2011.

Although some marketers may be clamoring to tap into Tumblr, others may have reservations about Tumblr as an advertising platform. A January 2012 survey by social marketing software company Awareness illustrated that in terms of social media priorities for marketers, Tumblr was fairly low on the list.

Marketers prioritized platforms such as YouTube, foursquare, SlideShare and Flickr above Tumblr—and to a significant degree. Only 30% of marketers said they had plans to increase usage of Tumblr.

Although Awareness surveyed marketers before Tumblr announced its new advertising opportunities, the results still demonstrate that marketers may be less familiar with Tumblr than other social media platforms. Brands that already use Tumblr for content-sharing might be more eager to advertise on the site than those that have yet to experiment there.

It’s still early to tell what kind of effect Tumblr’s paid advertising strategy will have, but it opens the door for more creative solutions on a social media platform that is growing quickly in popularity.

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