

Story

# Google Fast Flip Relies On Behavior To Serve Content, Ads

Laurie Sullivan, Sep 15, 2009 02:20 PM



Google Labs released Google Fast Flip this week in hopes of speeding the way readers read online, but some advertising executives believe it could offer incentives to bring in more advertising revenue, too. Similar to a print magazine, the "experiment" lets people browse sequentially through bundles of recent news, headlines and popular topics, as well as feeds from individual top publishers.

The tools can also personalize the experience by taking behavioral cues from selections the reader makes, serving up more content from sources, topics and journalists that the person seems to like. In short, the reader gets "fast

browsing, natural magazine-style navigation, recommendations from friends and other members of the community" and a selection of "serendipitous and personalized" content, Krishna Bharat, distinguished researcher, Google News, explains on the official Google blog.

The Fast Flip format should reinforce brand value and consumer behavior based on most measures that the online ad industry typically relies on, but there's no guarantee. "You're dealing with an entire online generation that's more visually literate than any in the past," says Robert Passikoff, founder of Brand Keys, a media and marketing modeling firm, who believes familiarity, in part, attracts people to use products.

While tapping into reader behavior to serve up content could reinforce use, familiarity typically spurs repetition, luring consumers back to purchase or use the product again and again. Fast Flip offers that experience. It has a mobile application "slideshow feel," similar to how people scroll through text and images on Apple's iPhone, according to Mark Simon, vice president of industry relations at Didit.

Showing full-scale screenshots, rather than text links, lets publishers keep a steady stream of eyeballs in front of display ads that are typically tucked close to news articles, Simon says. Text-only news results don't allow this, which is one major sore point between Google and news publishers. Fast Flip appears to solve this problem, he adds.

Simon thinks Fast Flip will allow Google to gain revenue from Google News in a new way. "Google and its Fast Flip news partners split Google's advertising revenue," he says. "This is clearly an olive branch that Google is offering news publishers, and I'd expect more partnerships to emerge as Fast Flip increases in users."

And publishers just might take that Google olive branch and hang on tight. Google has already partnered with *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, *Salon*, *Fast Company*, *ProPublica* and *Newsweek* to build the application. These partners will share the revenue earned from contextually relevant ads.

David Gould, president at Resolution Media, believes by "giving publishers the ability to opt-in and share in the ad revenue," Google is responding to "backlash" and criticism from publishers who believe the Mountain View, Calif. company profits from content on their sites served up on Google News.

"From an advertiser's point of view, we're eager to learn how these units will be targeted, but in general we're always in favor of testing new distribution channels," Gould says. "Advertisers, however, running display ads directly with the publishers may lose out on the exposure if users don't click through on the screenshots."

While some believe it could create new ad placements and formats to shake up the online ad industry just a tad bit more, Larry Bak, principal and executive creative director at Elevate Studios, says Fast Flip brings back the familiar feel of scanning the magazine rack at a bookstore.

Not only will Fast Flip become a "really powerful" tool for people to scan content and zero in on what they find interesting, but "it will make publishers more responsible for what they put on their front page, to entice visitors to click through," Bak says.