

Trading Post



THE MARKET

The Trading Post is a specialised classified advertising publication with a national market. Since 1968 the company's swift response to a real consumer need for such a specialised publication has seen the stable increase from one publication in Sydney to 17 located Australia-wide.

This superbrand is a leader in its field and a true Aussie icon. From Perth to the Gold Coast, Darwin to Hobart, Australians look first to the Trading Post when buying or selling.

Aided by declining readership of daily newspapers, a company policy to provide value for money, and a highly successful and innovative commercial Internet site, the Trading Post continues to enjoy a rapidly expanding share of the classified market, and more recently the display advertising market.

The Trading Post's major competitors - the daily metropolitan and regional newspapers - are weakened by a life expectancy of less than a day. The Trading Post's 17 weekly and fortnightly publications benefit from longer exposure to a targeted market and a high profile as the medium for bringing buyers and sellers together.

ACHIEVEMENTS

If achievement can be measured by suitors asking to buy the business, then certainly the Trading Post has been successful. If success is measured by profit then the Trading Post is a huge success story. If success is measured by one family's ability to continually improve its business with innovation that rivals that of its large, international, multi-media competitors, then the Trading Post is the epitome of success. Innovation in electronic publishing is the key to the Trading Post Group's success in gaining the competitive edge. With an ethos to always develop its own tailor-made production and publishing technology, the company prevailed at the forefront in database publishing throughout its history and is currently in the enviable position of being able to conduct full business through call centres and set up new publications without an office presence.

The fully automated and customised pagination process sees a 160-page tabloid publication typeset in less than 60 seconds. The company creates over 400 pages of paginated output in less than four hours with a permanent part-time staff of six. The output is sent on the digital data network to be printed locally in Canberra, Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Brisbane and Launceston. All Trading Posts, except the Tasmanian publication, have been transferred to direct-to-film processing which bypasses the output of traditional camera ready artwork.

The technology, developed and continually fine-tuned by the company, ensures a cost effective and thus very competitively priced product. It also ensures that the introduction of more Trading Post publications - as is certainly the company's goal - is simple and easily achieved.

Internet publishing is a highly successful addition to The Trading Post's technological mastery.

Early planning and purchasing of the right equipment enabled fundamental network flexibility and smooth integration of Internet publishing in June 1996 with the launch of Trading Post Online. Again, the technology is owned and run by the company, allowing security of information and, most importantly, the capability to retain intellectual property and remain in control.

Trading Post Online furthers the company's mission to provide the best possible customer service, by allowing the customer to transact in multiple ways, and the best value for money, by both replicating on the Web site all ads placed in the printed Trading Post free of charge and allowing ads to be entered online.

The Internet site was created to complement the existing Trading Post printed publications Australia-wide. Remote, regional and interstate sellers can reach potential buyers anywhere in Australia, with a worldwide audience a natural extension.

Combining utility, ease of use and existing infrastructure has allowed the Trading Post to create one of Australia's top Internet Web Sites. It was designed to allow buyers to find the product as quickly and simply as possible, using the same key categories as the printed publication.

Users can browse by region, section or category with keyword searching. Membership is available and allows benefits of suburb search, placing ads online, more refined search capabilities and a unique quick view function. Membership is free and all details are strictly confidential.

A highly successful section of Trading Post publications is its Automotive pages. The strength of this section is reflected in independent research figures, which reveal that 21% of used car buyers in NSW source their vehicle from the Trading Post. Of the remainder, 16% use all other newspapers including major metropolitan papers and 67% source from means other than newspapers.

HISTORY

From humble beginnings in a tiny residential flat in the Sydney suburb of Clovelly to its current national headquarters in Parramatta, its office in North Sydney and 13 offices located in regional centres and major cities, the Trading Post has a proud rags-to-riches history.

In 1968, Lieutenant John McAllery retired from the Royal Australian Navy to sail uncharted waters in the domain of publishing. With no previous experience and supported only by a firm vision that a specialist classifieds publication would succeed, McAllery started the Metropolitan Trading Post for Sydney that same year. The name changed to the Weekly Trading Post in 1971.

After four long hard years, the first profit was recorded in June 1972 and the unremitting labour of John McAllery, his wife, two sons and daughter paid increasing dividends each year thereafter.

In 1978 the family commenced expansion and acquired the Adelaide Private Trader. By 1991, six more Trading Posts were established - three more in NSW, another in South Australia, and one in Perth, Western Australia. Just four years later there were four more, located in capital cities and major centres in Tasmania, the ACT, the Northern Territory and South Australia. In October 1996 and July 1997 Queensland gained Trading Posts at Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

By 1998 the company's own communications technology, which allowed new publications to be set up without an office presence, expedited growth. The Trading Post group increased by five with three more publications in NSW, one circulating in northern Victoria and Central West NSW and another in the Pilbara Kimberley region of Western Australia.

This phenomenal growth is attributed to the McAllery family's pursuit of excellence in all aspects of the business, from its custom built technology to its competitive strategies. Foremost, the business is proudly built on quality customer relationship management. It is also built on integrity with a view to obtaining and retaining respect in the market, evidenced in part by the refusal to accept advertisements of a questionable nature.

While offers to purchase this superbrand have come from their main competitors, including multinational companies, the McAllery family remains sole shareholders of the company. As John McAllery says: "How do you sell your soul?"

THE PRODUCT

The highly recognisable tabloid-size Trading Post publications, with their original wood-grain mastheads, were developed with customer satisfaction and value for money as priorities.

Over the years market research conducted for the Trading Post dictated changes to reflect customer preferences. This resulted in category specification directed by the market to enhance accessibility. Full process colour printing was introduced to follow the trend in metropolitan newspaper printing. Display advertising, automotive and lifestyle editorial and promotional features were added to further increase service to customers.

As well as enabling refinement of the product, market research was used to refine the core values of the product, develop communication and growth strategies and assist in promotion, particularly in new geographical areas.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Trading Post believes that the Internet will become a major vehicle by which its product is presented to the community. Extensive research has been carried out to ensure that The Trading Post is well placed to meet the challenge.

Development of the Web Site since Trading Post Online was established has been evolutionary. The most recent addition to the Web Site is Trading Post Automotive (TPA), a multi-media product which allows dealers to show photographs of cars.

Specifically designed for car dealers, vendors and those in the motor vehicle industry, TPA is unique in that it is backed by the printed Trading Post, taking the benefit to the dealer in two media.

In an impressive first for Internet classified advertising, Trading Post Automotive recently linked with Volvo Car Australia to provide a customised service to Volvo's dealers. This agreement was the first between an international car manufacturer and an Internet media house.

Looking to the future, exciting in-house work is currently underway that will see Trading Post Online continue to streak ahead as a superior Internet product.

PROMOTION

Awareness of the product, particularly in Sydney and Adelaide, is extremely high and continues to grow strongly in all areas.

Television and radio advertising campaigns, coupled with high profile point of sale promotion in newsagencies, are used nation-wide with greater emphasis in regional locations. The Weekly Trading Post in Sydney is supported by radio advertising to communicate a reminder to customers to place their ads before deadline day.

Word of mouth is perhaps the Trading Post's best promotion. This valued Aussie icon virtually

sells itself.

BRAND VALUES

The Trading Post has gained wide acceptance, particularly in Sydney and Adelaide, as the preferred classified advertising medium for private advertisers and small business. It is strongly associated with success when selling or buying.

With a reputation as the most successful way to buy or sell, the Trading Post enjoys a high volume of repeat business and high levels of product loyalty.

Anecdotal evidence abounds on the success of Trading Post advertising. Just about everyone in Sydney has their own Trading Post success story to tell - the publication has become part of the folklore and culture of the city.

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT TRADING POST

- Approximately 1.9 million classifieds appear in combined Trading Post publications annually.
- Trading Post Online is one of Australia's largest and most successful advertising related web sites. External audit figures for January 1999 show Trading Post Online with over 3.2 million page exposures and around 212,000 user sessions a month. The average user viewing time is 20 minutes.