

Breaking New Battleground

By Eric Franchi Monday, October 27, 2008



Eric Franchi is the Senior Vice President of Business Development for Undertone Networks. In this role, Eric works toward forging strategic relationships and developing new revenue generation programs, while working closely with the executive team on critical endeavors. Since joining the company in 2001, Eric has held various executive-level positions such as Senior Vice President of Media and Senior Vice President of Sales.

WITH ONLY A WEEK LEFT in the 2008 election season, we can begin to take a look at the role online marketing played in the candidates' overall strategies. While the total amount spent online will likely disappoint those in the industry who thought this would be an absolute breakout year from a spending allocation perspective, on balance both candidates have taken advantage of the latest online has to offer.

We have seen good examples of using standard display space and e-mail to drive fundraising, awareness and support. We have also seen surprisingly good use of newer Web 2.0 tools such as Twitter and Facebook to further engage potential voters. But, this being the Video Insider, we have to review the candidates' utilization of our favorite medium: online video. Aside from creating good YouTube channels, there hasn't been much done outside the box from either candidate.

That is, until the week before last. That's when billboard ads started popping up across popular online versions of "Madden NFL 2009" and "Guitar Hero," informing gamers that "Early Voting Has Begun" and showing Barack Obama's face and Web site URL. That's right; Obama is reaching the coveted gamer group, directly on their games. I have been interested in the potential for online video game advertising since Microsoft's Xbox announced its online play option several years ago. Talk about an incredible audience; you don't get much more engaged than a hardcore gamer. We are now starting to see the potential of this format come to life, as we have reached critical mass in broadband adoption, and the newest versions of popular consoles allow gamers to play each other online and download regular updates.

The online play option, combined with ad-serving technology not unlike what is used for display and video, affords advertisers the ability to reach users in a unique way. Billboards on a "NBA Live 2008" basketball court or roadside on "Burnout Paradise" are as addressable as banner space on a Web page. Someone in Obama's camp has been paying attention, as the campaign

seems to have been executed as well as any media plan. They selected 18 relevant and popular titles to reach a targeted demo (males, 18-34) and in key battleground states only by leveraging geo-targeting.

Who knows what else the candidates have planned in the last week. However, this campaign may go down as one of the most memorable of 2008 spanning any category. Most relevant for the Insider, it brings another interesting opportunity in online video advertising to the forefront.