

How Gawker wants to monetize comments

By Felix Salmon | MAY 22, 2012

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Back in November, I [grappled](#) with the fact that online display ads in general, and banner ads in particular, are clearly not working very well; my suggested alternative was for brand advertisers to embrace the power of the external link. That was one suggestion; there are [many, many more](#). But what they all have in common is that they're attempts to go beyond the ad, and to leverage the interactive power of the internet.

Over at Tumblr, [David Karp](#) is being characteristically vague about what he's offering to potential advertisers: all we know for the time being is that he "wants brands and marketers to use Tumblr as a way to tell stories that they can't otherwise tell on other social networks". Which sounds great, but doesn't even come close to answering the obvious first question, which is "how?". I understand that the idea is to sell space on the right hand side of the screen, and that clicking on one of those units will take Tumblr users to the advertiser's tumblog. But this seems uncomfortably close to the idea that advertisers buy a banner ad and that clicking on that banner ad will take users to the advertiser's website. The tumblog itself might well tell a story — but then again, so might the advertiser's website. The difficult thing is getting users to click on things, especially when those things look like — and are clearly labeled as — ads.

Similarly, Facebook's revenue problems are based on much the same underlying issue: Facebook itself is highly interactive and immersive, but the ads you find there are not. And while there are one or two companies I will follow on Facebook, they're invariably companies which are




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