

The problem here, for Denton — and the reason why he got an editorial guy to run this new project — is the old one: how to persuade his websites' readers to read the sponsored posts and to engage in their comments sections. Wert's stated ambition — and you can hold him to this — is for his sponsored posts to be so well written and newsworthy and generally high quality that the editors of Gawker's websites will love to be able to feature them on their home pages. There have been very high-quality sponsored posts in the [past](#), but Wert is going to have to work very hard, I think, to turn boring PR announcements into something of Gawker-level juiciness.

What's more, this move of Denton's is to a large degree a reversal of his stated aim back at the end of 2010, when he did his big network-wide redesign. Back then, I [explained](#) the departure of sales chief Chris Batty, now at Quartz, as being a function of the fact that Batty was a huge fan of the sponsored post, while Denton's redesign "essentially sacrifices the idea of having a sponsored post on the home page—something Batty was almost religious about—and replaces it with interstitial videos which aren't nearly as sharable, aren't extensible, and quite possibly won't even have permalinks." This move of Denton's, then, is a step backwards, in many ways, towards the Batty vision which he rejected two years ago.

Still, I do like the fact that Denton's constantly trying new things, constantly trying to reinvent what an online media company can and should be. Really ambitious brands, indeed, won't need Wert's help at all: they'll have the ability to dive straight into existing non-sponsored editorial posts and respond to commenters directly, much as they're already responding to people who talk about them on Twitter. But I suspect that the brands which do that will actually be more receptive, rather than less receptive, to Wert's sales pitch — they will already understand the power of conversation.

And in general, I like Denton's bigger idea of building a comments system designed more for the majority of readers who don't comment than it is for the minority of commenters themselves. I

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