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## Content Licensing: Making It Work for You

Publishers on creating an additional revenue stream, managing pricing and more.

BY STEFANIE BOTELHO

The term “content licensing” is an ambiguous one, especially among publishers. Some consider reprints and e-prints to be a full-fledged content licensing operation; while others leasing out logos and awards for third-party use count it as their content licensing service. Still others have moved custom publishing under the umbrella term of “content licensing”, with syndication often finding itself in this category as well.

**Brian Kolb, vice president of Wright’s Media (which works with publishers like Forbes, LAPTOP Magazine and FOLIO: on content licensing deals) says, “We started doing this five years ago, which was the paradigm shift where many of the advertisers were gaining the content they wanted to use for free, like accolades, pull quotes, etc. In order to make up for the lost revenue from e-prints and reprints, we had publishers understand that shift and monetize the access they were giving away for free.”**

For publishers who choose to monetize their property beyond advertising and subscriptions, vetting appropriate partners, managing the business and monitoring client contracts can equate to a full-time job. For what can seem like an overwhelming task, deciding which content to barter with may be the first step for companies considering a move into the content licensing business.

### Offering the Best, Partnering with the Best

At Northstar Travel Media (NTM), VP of business development and licensing Sheila Rice says the publisher’s wealth of data drives its content licensing business. NTM’s central database includes 70,000 geographic places, 160,000 hotels, 54,000 hotel ratings, 900 convention centers, 30 million news alerts sent annually and a plethora of additional data (including visitor bureaus, cruise lines, ships and more).

“With the raw hotel data, I license it for public view and public use on large travel sites or OTA’s. My partners have the ability to choose the look and feel of how they present their data on their website because they have it in a raw format,” says Rice.

Scott Haven, VP of digital strategy of operations with the Atlantic Media Group, says its content licensing business is varied. “We certainly do reprints, although I will say it’s a pretty small part of our business. We license the content of each of our brands a little bit differently because of the different business models, but in general we license content out to subscription services like LexisNexis, Westlaw or PR clipping services,” says Haven. “We also have deals with Yahoo! and AOL/Huffington Post. We provide content in exchange for branding, exposing and trafficking [purposes].”

Rice relies on detailed agreements to maintain NTM’s standard of quality with partnerships. “My concern in the partnerships is understanding fully intended use, they are very tightly held to a contractual agreement and content has no third-party distribution,” says Rice. “But what the content partner does with the data is so clearly specified in the contract that I can license to anyone. I wouldn’t license to a company if I felt they were not ethical; and what I mean by that is that they would not tag the data, so that if they did not renew a contract, the data could be extracted from their database, meaning they would not incorporate and ingest our data into their data.”

Haven says Atlantic Media Group chooses content partners on a case-by-case basis. “We want to make sure we are putting our stuff out in places that are reputable,” he says.

### Establishing Fair (And Profitable) Pricing

“In the beginning, I really didn’t know how to price the data because it’s not like you can call a competitor and ask,” says Rice. She began to differentiate pricing by classifying data as basic or premium.

“Then I looked at the distribution. Of course, a company that would have a very broad scope will pay at a higher level, percentage-wise, than a small start-up would,” says Rice. Since licensing packages vary greatly with each client, an oft-requested rate card is not possible. Unit pricing and timing also influences pricing for clients.