

## Finding Yields New Angle On Rectangle, Reaps Far More User Time Than Leaderboards, Skyscrapers

by [Joe Mandese](#)

In a finding that might seem to refute some conventional wisdom about the effectiveness of online advertising formats, the lowly rectangle has been found to be far more engaging than other premium ad formats, including to-of-the-page leaderboards, and page-scraping skyscrapers. The finding, which is the result of an extensive "time spent" analysis of nearly 150 million ads served during 2009 by social media ad optimization firm Lotame, found that 300 x 250 "medium rectangle" ads averaged 13 seconds of "viewing" exposure per user served vs. only 5.4 seconds for leaderboards and 1.9 seconds for skyscrapers.

The finding is significant for several reasons, and has the potential to shake-up the online advertising marketplace where leaderboards and skyscrapers often command higher advertising rates than rectangles.

"It really depends on the sophistication of the publisher, and how they price them," says Scott Hoffman, CMO of Lotame, who added that while their ad rates often fluctuate, the three advertising formats often are seen as interchangeable in the online marketplace.

But they are not, he says, at least on the basis of the amount of time online users spend viewing each of the ads. While the Lotame analysis did not measure clickthroughs, actions, brand recall or awareness, Hoffman says time spent is a pretty good surrogate for overall ad effectiveness.

"We did this study, because people are clamoring for new metrics on how things perform, and how things work. And we had this tool for measuring time spent with online advertising," he explains, adding that the relative value of rectangles makes sense given their positioning on most Web pages, falling in the middle, where a lot of user time tends to gravitate.

"When you load a skyscraper, it probably doesn't load fully before a user scrolls down the page. And when users scroll down a page, leaderboards get partly obscured," Hoffman explains.

While the relative effectiveness of rectangles may seem intuitive, Hoffman says many industry insiders might be surprised by the magnitude of difference.

"I think everybody is looking at the relative values, but what as shocking to me, was how much more exposure rectangles get," he says.

In order to measure the impact of the time spent with an online ads, Lotame's "Exposure Tracker" technology counts the time users actually spends viewing an ad without counting time when the ad is obscured, minimized or scrolled out of view. Lotame claims the method represents a more accurate accounting for the impact of an online ad impression, and dispels the notion that all online ad impressions are equal.