

# Tasty newspaper ads might cut red ink

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A Carlstadt ink manufacturer believes reaching reader taste buds could be one way to alleviate the woes of the newspaper industry.

US Ink, which sells ink to newspapers, is encouraging customers to stick flavored strips — which allow consumers to taste the product advertised — on the paper to get readers to sample new products.

The tactic, says US Ink Marketing Manager Todd Wheeler, could boost newspaper advertising revenue by providing a unique way to put a new product sample before consumers.

"You're really bringing taste marketing to mass media," said Wheeler.

At present, the most common way of encouraging consumers to taste a new food, beverage or candy is through in-store product handouts, which reach only 200 to 300 consumers a day, he said. A flavored newspaper note strip could reach tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands, of consumers, he said. Each note costs about 30 cents, compared with a dollar or more for each in-store sample handed out, he said.

The patented product, called Taste 'n Save™ Sticky Note, was introduced two weeks ago. It's manufactured by Bala Cynwyd, Pa.-based First Flavor, which makes products in which a flavored strip — similar to Listerine's breath freshening strips — is sealed inside a pouch to keep it fresh and hygienic until the package is broken open and tasted.



US Ink, which does not make the strips, is promoting the idea as a way to help newspapers, on which the company relies for the bulk of its sales. Newspapers are cutting staffs, reducing the size of the paper and looking for new sources of revenue as the dire economy, declining circulation and alternative advertising methods — mainly the Internet — have shrunk revenue.

Wheeler said Taste 'n Save™ Sticky Note take advantage of a key attribute of the newspaper business model that digital communications can't match.

"The physical delivery of the newspaper is awesome," he said, noting that the [taste experience] can't be replicated on the Internet. "And in some senses, it hasn't been exploited."

He cited a First Flavor study of consumer response to a peel-and-taste strip placed on a two-page advertisement in People magazine by Welch's Foods to promote grape juice to young children and mothers.

The company says 1.5 million people tasted the pouch, and 59 percent were more likely to buy the product after tasting it.

Mort Goldstrom, vice president of advertising for the Newspaper Association of America, an Arlington, Va.-based trade group, said the tasty strip idea is interesting, but unproven as yet.

"It's really clever. It's really cool," he said. "What you want to see is will it convert into sales."

One problem is, the newspaper readership is much broader than an advertiser would usually use for sampling, and so many sample recipients won't be interested in the product.

"In the grocery store, you have people who are already predisposed to be interested," he said.

Tamar Silberberg, a First Flavor spokeswoman, said the idea was conceived by a college student, Adnan Aziz.

He saw the movie "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory" and was struck by a scene in which one of the characters licks flavored wallpaper.

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"He said to himself, 'Why can't we taste everything?' " she said. Aziz pitched the idea to a pair of entrepreneurs, and in 2005 the threesome founded the company, which Aziz has since left.

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