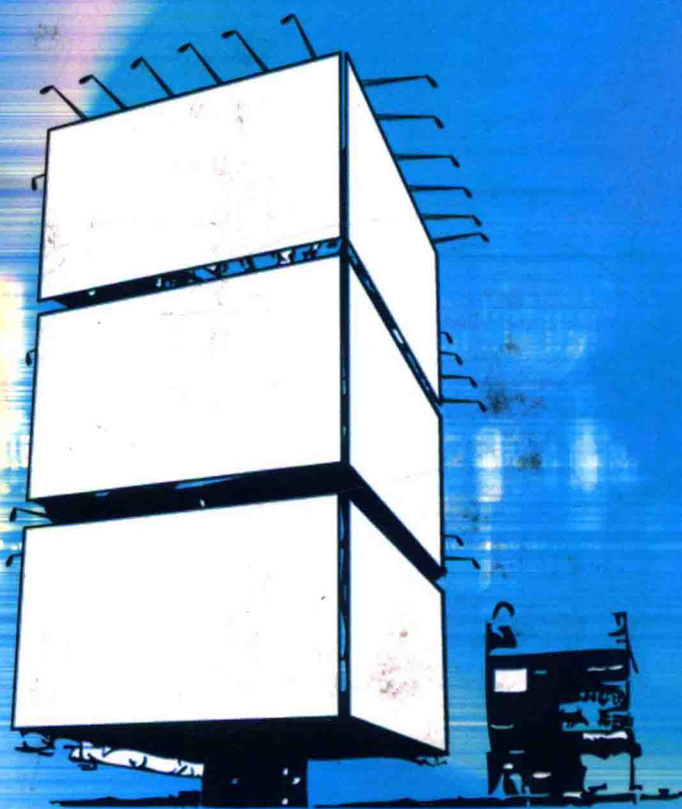


FLASH ADVERTISING

Flash Platform Development of Microsites, Advergames, and Branded Applications



Jason Fincanon



Flash Advertising

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of Microsites, Advergames,
and Branded Applications



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Flash Advertising

Dedication

To my wife and children. You give me focus, direction, passion, and joy in everything you do. I love you and thank you for making my life so wonderful and fun.

FOREWORD

You visit a Web site. An ad takes over your screen. This has happened before, but this time it actually looks like an ad for a legitimate product, not like the creepy ads you often see at the top of your favorite social networking site. Not only does this ad look legit, it has a huge red button that for some strange reason is beckoning; no, demanding that you press it. So, you do. This, my friends, is the power of Flash advertising. In reality, this magic probably only happens once for every thousand times an ad is seen. However, the beauty of the Internet is that this ad will be seen twenty million times.

Advertising is big business and it is no secret that advertising on the Internet is quickly becoming the mother lode. While you may not think this has much to do with you, Jason would disagree. Advertising on the Internet means jobs and this book will teach you everything you could possibly need to know to get started with Flash advertising. I know this for a fact. Jason was my mentor when I first got into the industry. The methods, concepts, and procedures that Jason details in this book are all things that he taught me during many an all-nighter at one of the largest interactive shops in the United States. His approach has been tested and streamlined in the most demanding of environments. It's been years since we have worked together, but I can now proudly say that my company uses Jason's experience to our advantage. Not only do we use his approach in our Flash media development, we actually hand out his book as training material for new Flash media developers. At the risk of sounding like an infomercial being seen in the middle of the night, this is the real deal.

This is the second edition of *Flash Advertising*. One of the main changes in the industry since the first edition is the adoption rate of the Adobe Flash Player. Now that most PC users have Flash Player version 9 or greater installed, ads developed with ActionScript 3 are being used with much greater frequency. This is a big deal to people developing cutting-edge Flash ads and microsites. This latest edition will show you how to make the step up to ActionScript 3 from ActionScript 2. If you are new to ActionScript in general, this edition will provide you with the building blocks you need to get off to a good start.

Jason is an enthusiast in his family life, in his hobbies, and in his work. He loves Flash and will show you how much fun it can be to work with Flash advertising. As an active contributor to the Flash community, Jason believes in the open exchange of ideas. It's

with this sense of community that he authors this book. Developing Flash advertising is a great way to make a living, and Jason shares this enjoyment in his writing. So, read this book and learn from one of the first and the best.

—Christopher Long, Partner, Ovrflo Media, Inc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With experience working with the Flash Platform since graduating from The Art Institute of Dallas in 1998, Jason has spent the majority of his career building Flash-based websites, games and applications while working for employers ranging from interactive advertising agencies to branded entertainment and advergaming companies. During his time in these industries, Jason has had the opportunity to work on projects for clients such as Patrón Tequila, GameStop, Hyundai, Fruit of the Loom, National Pork Board, Travelocity, Florida Department of Citrus, Nokia and many others. Outside of work, he also stays involved in the Flash Platform community by co-managing Flash Dallas, an official Adobe Flash User Group, and maintaining a Flash and Flex related blog that can be found at <http://www.jasonfinCanon.com>.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising online has come to have a not-so-favorable reputation with Internet users. Combine that reputation with the often uninformed opinion that Flash is for creating nothing more than exceptionally annoying banners or Web site intros and preloaders that are so bloated in file size they need their own preloaders and you've got a recipe for disaster. On the other hand, when done correctly, Flash can be (and is) used to create some of the most eye-catching, awe-inspiring, mind-blowing, award-winning work on the Web.

A major contributor to the unfortunate misconception of this combination is the fact that there *IS* work out there that fits directly within its own reputation. However, with a little forethought and planning, those same ads could be very quickly redesigned with the outcome of much better user reception and interaction. If the work that is causing the bad reputation for Flash advertising can be made better, then so can the reputation itself. Just as its predecessor, this book was written in hopes of doing exactly that. It was written to help educate and inform individuals, teams, departments, and even companies on the ins and outs of creating advertising with Flash.

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FLASH ADVERTISING OVERVIEW

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The use of the Flash Platform in advertising has been around for many years now, and it continues to thrive even in the face of the development of other “Flash killer” technologies. Its use is far from limited to the stereotypical banner ad that people tend to think of when the word “advertising” is used in the interactive realm. In fact, the Flash Platform is used for everything from banners to corporate Web sites, from personal portfolios to client specific online news channels, and in many cases, it may even be used for desktop applications that are designed to promote your client’s brand.

The Flash Platform has matured and grown into a powerful set of tools over the years, but there are still plenty of ads and sites out there that tend to leave some people with a bad impression, and it’s up to us to change their minds. So how do we change the minds of these people and wow them at the same time? We can start by following a few simple design rules, anticipating interaction and animation issues, targeting the correct audience, and steering away from the things we find annoying or wouldn’t want to see ourselves.

As the platform has grown, so has online advertising. There was a time when you had to choose between a static .jpg and an animated .gif for your banners, but that time has long since past. The option to use the Flash Platform has enabled interactive advertising agencies, as well as individual developers, to create much more engaging and entertaining advertising in many different forms. It has also opened up a channel for more interactivity and the ability to do things like gather user information from within an ad itself.

So with the lines between the computer desktop, the Internet, the television, and mobile devices blurring more and more every day, it has become increasingly important to give users better, more memorable, more interactive experiences in everything they do online, including viewing your clients’ brands by way of advertising. After all, if they remember the experience you provided, they’ll remember the brand and be more likely to buy from your client in the future. And after they buy from your client, your client will be happy and will most likely return to you for more projects (and, of course, more projects mean more income).

So let’s take a quick look at what we’ll be covering in this first chapter where I’ll first cover a little bit about the book itself and then why you should use the Flash Platform for advertising, as well as the options and considerations placed in front of you when doing so. The sections contained within this chapter are as follows:

- What This Book Is and Is Not
- Supporting Web site
- The Flash Platform
- Why Use the Flash Platform for Advertising
- Types of Ads
- Interactive Standards and the Interactive Advertising Bureau

- Advertising Templates In Flash
- Ad Specs
- Deadlines
- Microsites
- Quality Control
- Version Control

What This Book Is and Is Not

This book should be thought of and read as a sort of guide into the world of advertising with the Flash Platform. While its intention is to prepare you for the flow of projects as they come in your door and work their way to living online for millions of users to interact with, you should also understand that different places of employment will all have their own internal workings and processes to follow. With that said, there are also several constants and considerations that are absolutely unchanged from one advertising agency to the next; items like standard banner specs or file optimization.

On the flip side, this book should not be thought of as a strictly code-oriented book that developers might read to learn Flash itself. While it does contain ActionScript for the developers, it also contains a lot of information that is not specific to any single discipline. With that being the case, anyone from Flash Platform Developers to Media Directors to Account Managers can most likely find some sort of usable information within these pages.

Supporting Web site

The supporting Web site for this book can be found at <http://www.flashadbook.com>. On this Web site, you can find information about the chapters, share your thoughts and questions, and download many of the files from the book. Now before we dive in, let's briefly talk about the Flash Platform and some of the tools that will be used in this book.

The Flash Platform

Until recently, when you talked to someone about Flash design and/or development, you were most likely talking about Flash itself. Whether you were talking about building a Flash Web site, a Flash animation or any other "Flash" work, it's a good bet that the project in question was to be designed or developed using the Flash IDE. However, using the word Flash to describe a project may need a little more clarification now due to the emergence of what is now known as the Adobe Flash Platform (Fig. 1.1).