Best Practices
Using Digital Watermarks in Publishing
Introduction

Print publishers of all persuasions – magazine, book, catalog, direct mail, and more – are embracing Digimarc® Discover to provide their consumers with seamless print-to-mobile campaigns. In 2012, 41 different magazine titles and a handful of books and catalogs chose Digimarc to enhance reader engagement with editorial and advertisements. After reviewing the best performing campaigns, we have concluded each one possessed the following three key elements:

1. Concise and consistent reader education
2. Clear identification of watermarked content
3. Compelling post-scan experiences (aka The Payoffs)

This document compiles our best practice recommendations to help ensure every print-to-mobile campaign is a success.
Reader Education

Every time you include digital watermarks in your publication you will need to include instructions for downloading the Digimarc Discover app (or a custom branded app that includes the ability to scan digital watermarks). You will also need to provide your readers with directions on how they can scan digital watermarks and find mobile-optimized content within your publication. The instructions should be visible and remain in a consistent location where your readers can easily find this information.

For instance, avoid placing instructions for downloading the app in the front of the publication in one issue and in the back of the publication in the next issue. Successful implementations of Digimarc Discover have included educational material on or near the Table of Contents with watermarked articles highlighted in bold or a separate color. Additionally, many publications have provided a separate listing of their interactive content along with the corresponding page number they are on.

Digimarc recommends the reader education include the following:

- Instructions on downloading the mobile app
- Simple directions on how to scan watermarked content
- Clearly denote how watermarked content is identified in the publication
Identifying Watermarked Content

It will take time for readers to adapt and familiarize themselves with new technology in your publication. We recommend you make watermarks a consistent feature of your publication to increase your reader’s awareness of this technology. We have seen an increase in payoff interaction when readers are repeatedly exposed to watermarked content.

Payoff Description

We recommend including descriptive text next to watermarked images or text. Indicating what readers can expect from the payoff creates a sense of excitement. The text should be informative and inviting. For example, beneath a watermarked photo of a model it could say: “Point and focus to see exclusive, scintillating back-stage videos from Fashion Week.”

Visible Cues

Include a visual cue next to the watermarked image or icon to let readers know that there is interactive content they can access. Using the same symbol consistently creates an association for readers between visible cues and engaging content. Publishers have seen more readers interact with their watermarked content when the page number of the instructions is provided with the visual cue. For example, “Scan Photo. Save Recipe. See Page 6.” In this example, instructions for downloading and using the app are listed on Page 6.

The Post-Scan Experience (aka The Payoff)

A post-scan experience is enhanced content a consumer receives after scanning a watermark embedded within media. After scanning a watermark with a mobile device, a consumer is taken to a specific URL that corresponds with the watermarked image, icon or text. The mobile experience provides additional information, assistance, discounts and/or entertainment to the consumer.

Types of Payoffs

Payoffs allow brands, publishers and retailers to create engaging and interactive experiences from print such as:

- View related videos online that would normally be disconnected from the magazine.
- Download recipes, add ingredients to shopping lists, and learn preparation techniques from professionals.
- Share articles, photos or product information with your friends, or save them for later.
- Contribute to the news by voicing your comments and uploading photos to share.
- Purchase products or services directly from printed stories and advertisements.
- Receive discounts, coupons or giveaways by scanning watermarked advertisements.
The Importance of Creating Compelling Payoffs

It’s essential that the payoff consists of persuasive, interactive, and engaging content that will create a relationship with the user and delivers added value. Valuable payoffs increase brand loyalty, consumer engagement and gives users an incentive to use it again. Users won’t feel compelled to revisit the experience if they are directed to a static web page – especially one that is not mobile-optimized. Payoffs are a chance to provide exclusive, rich media content to a captivated audience. It should significantly augment and enhance the print media experience and allow the user to experience the content in a deeper, more meaningful way.

Create a Scan Incentive

Readers are more likely to scan a watermark if they receive something of value in return. We have seen an increase in scans when readers are offered discounts, coupons and/or exclusive content as the post-scan experience.

Most Popular Scan Incentives

- Shopping-related: 26%
- Video: 26%
- Sweepstakes: 25%
- Product Details: 14%


Ease of Use

Compelling payoffs should be engaging; however, they don’t need to be complex. Readers enjoy simple activities like watching a short video or participating in a quiz, poll, or trivia game.

Mobile-Optimized Experiences

Create payoffs which are mobile-optimized. A payoff that is difficult to view and interact with on a mobile device creates a poor user experience. Readers are less likely to revisit payoffs if they are not designed specifically for mobile devices.
Create a Memorable Experience for First-Time Users

Some of your readers have not had an opportunity to experience interactive content on their smartphones and tablets. Users will immediately be turned off if they have a disappointing initial experience interacting with a payoff. If a reader does not see the benefit of a payoff, they are more apt to not scan the rest of the digitally watermarked content in your publication.

Start Small

Start with a few payoffs and see how your readers respond. Then develop new payoffs based on which are most successful.

Test. Test. Test.

Before adding hundreds of digital watermarks to your publication, we suggest doing a silent test. A silent test allows you to incorporate digital watermarks into your publication without readers’ knowledge. It is important to test the technology in real-world conditions before implementing it into your workflow.

Most importantly, test each of your payoffs before you go to print. Make the sure the correct URL is assigned to your payoff and the payoff is mobile-optimized. Payoffs can look differently depending on the type of mobile device and operating system the reader is using. You should test payoffs on different devices and operating systems before your content is live.