



[About us](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Submit news](#) | [Classifieds](#)

DIALING FOR DOLLARS AT KSWB SAN DIEGO

TVNEWSDAY, JAN. 1, 11:39 PM ET

Tribune's CW affiliate finds it can boost viewership and revenue by exploiting the younger generation's obsession with text messaging and taste for Jumbo Jacks and Big Macs.

By Arthur Greenwald

It's a little late for a year-in-review column, but prognostication is always timely, so here's my bold prediction for 2007 - TV stations will not merely learn to co-exist with new media technologies; they'll actually start to profit from them.

I confess that my crystal ball got a convenient jump-start from the fact that this trend has already begun. Case in point: Tribune's **KSWB, San Diego** where they're using cell phone text messaging to build viewership and sales. And this is no new gimmick. KSWB Creative Services Director Will Givens has been running Text2Win contests during programs for almost two years now. They're a new twist on viewer participation promotions and they generate real excitement, especially with younger CW viewers.

Having begun the experiment as a WB station back in March 2005, KSWB believes it was the first local TV station to turn text messaging into a promotional tool. Because there were few models, Givens and his team just dove right in. "Our goal was to increase viewers with the watch-to-win aspect of the contest and to deliver significant value-added to the sponsor, but also to keep tweaking the format to yield useful data about what works and what doesn't".

After testing various combinations of contest rules and prizes, KSWB concluded that simplicity rules. To enter, a viewer merely sends a one-word text message to the given phone number. There is no charge to play unlike, say, Fox's *American Idol*, which charges \$1.99 per viewer vote. Participants receive a near-instant reply in the form of a trivia question, followed by answer clues, if requested, plus up to four follow-up questions. Continued play boosts your chances of winning.

KSWB's Text2Win has achieved growing success when paired with CW's *The Starlet* and *America's Top Model* and the syndicated *According to Jim*. The promotion saw its best results last November during The CW's *Smallville*, [click on link below to view](#).

http://www.tvnewsday.com/media/kswb_texting_121806.mov

The added value for advertisers can be as much about buzz as it is about numbers, so Givens has put together a persuasive sales package. For \$60,000 a sponsor receives three weeks of on-air contest promos, plus logos in 24 episodic show promos. They also get their logo in contest banner ads before and during the show, four weeks of exposure on the station Web site, and, perhaps most enticing, the chance to transmit a text message offer directly to each cell phone participant. Givens adds proudly, "We pulled six figures out of Jack In The Box, which, along with McDonalds, has already signed on for more Text To Win in 2007.

"We're having fun with it. And each time we run it we learn how to do the contest a little better - for the viewers, for the sponsors and for the station". Now isn't that worth the occasional repetitive stress injury?