



Model of Excellence

MacRAE's Blue Book

Company:	Business Model:
Owen Media Partners Toronto, Ontario www.macraesbluebook.com	Advertising & Transaction Supported: Free Listings with Paid Enhancements

Business Model

The **Advertising and Transaction Supported: Free Listings with Paid Enhancements** business model represents the traditional buying guides/yellow pages model executed online. The value of the free basic listing is it allows the database to be comprehensive in coverage, which builds usage that in turn drives demand for listing enhancements from listed companies and professionals seeking increased visibility.

Overview

MacRAE's Blue Book, the nation's oldest industry buying guide publication, founded in 1893, was left for dead as a print product in 1999, then re-launched as an online-only product in 2003 to tremendous success. In addition to this unusual heritage, MacRAE's provides a wonderful example that the classic buying guide model can and does work extremely well online, and that online success doesn't depend on bleeding edge technology innovation.

There are two keys to the success of the online MacRAE's product: simple searching and good quality data. Users can search either by keyword or from a fixed list of drill-down categories, and keyword searches can be limited to either companies and products names or categories.

Search results pages are uncomplicated. MacRAE's advertisers appear first, followed by contextually relevant Google ads, followed by free listings. Advertisers can have display ads appear in their company profiles, have access to online request-for-information forms, a back-end sales lead program and more.

What's also impressive about MacRAE's – and we think important to its success – is that even non-advertiser listings have a reasonable amount of depth. Coupled with the breadth of the database – over 1,000,000 companies – users have a good chance of successfully finding a vendor to meet their specific needs.

Put it all together and the cleverness becomes apparent: build a strong product database, obtain the rights to a well-established brand name, and aggressively leverage cross-promotional relationships to quickly build large volumes of traffic. This creates a solid story against which to sell advertising, and offers proof that as long as you can bring buyers and sellers together, the manner in which you do it is far less important.