



Creating Online Banner Ads

Banner ads are an indispensable part of cyberspace marketing efforts. It is therefore worth studying the technical and psychological aspects of creating and publishing them on webpages.

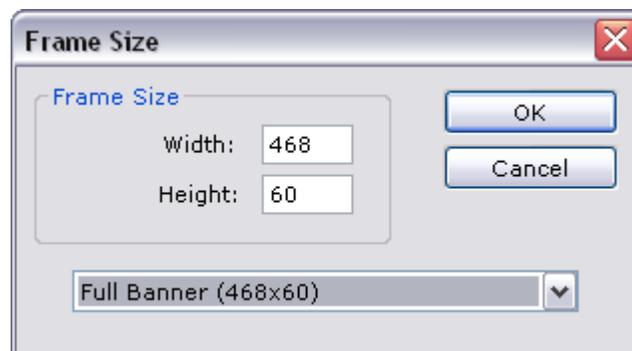
Advertising campaigns are generally divided into two categories: introductory campaigns and support campaigns. As their name suggests, introductory campaigns introduce a product or service to the market. Therefore, their main aim is to inform the customer about the benefits and advantages of a product, and ultimately obtain new customers. Meanwhile, support campaigns serve to maintain customer interest at a constant level after a given product has achieved market saturation.

However, let's start from the technical ins-and-outs of creating banner ads. Flash technology (the currently dominant standard) allows a single file to contain more graphics and information than was possible with the previously popular GIF format. However, we need to use appropriate software to create banner ads, like Alligator Flash Designer.

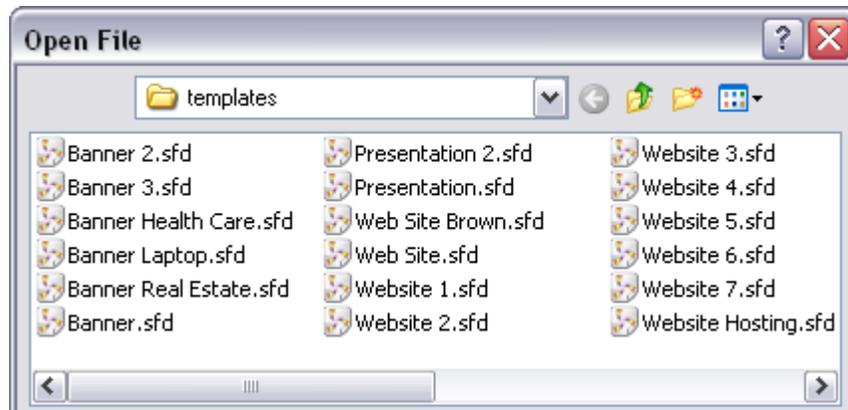
A free trial version of Alligator Flash Designer can be downloaded online from the website www.flashdesignerzone.com

Before getting started, you will need to find out the technical parameters regarding your banner ad, and especially its dimensions in pixels as well as maximum file size in kilobytes. We'll suppose that the available advertising space is the so-called "standard banner" space of 468 x 60 pixels, and that the maximum allowable size of the SWF file is 15 kb.

After starting the program, choose **Frame > Frame size** and set the size of the document to the appropriate dimensions. We can also choose one of the standard online ad dimensions recommended by IAC from the list.



There are also several free banner templates available, open them by choosing **File > Templates**



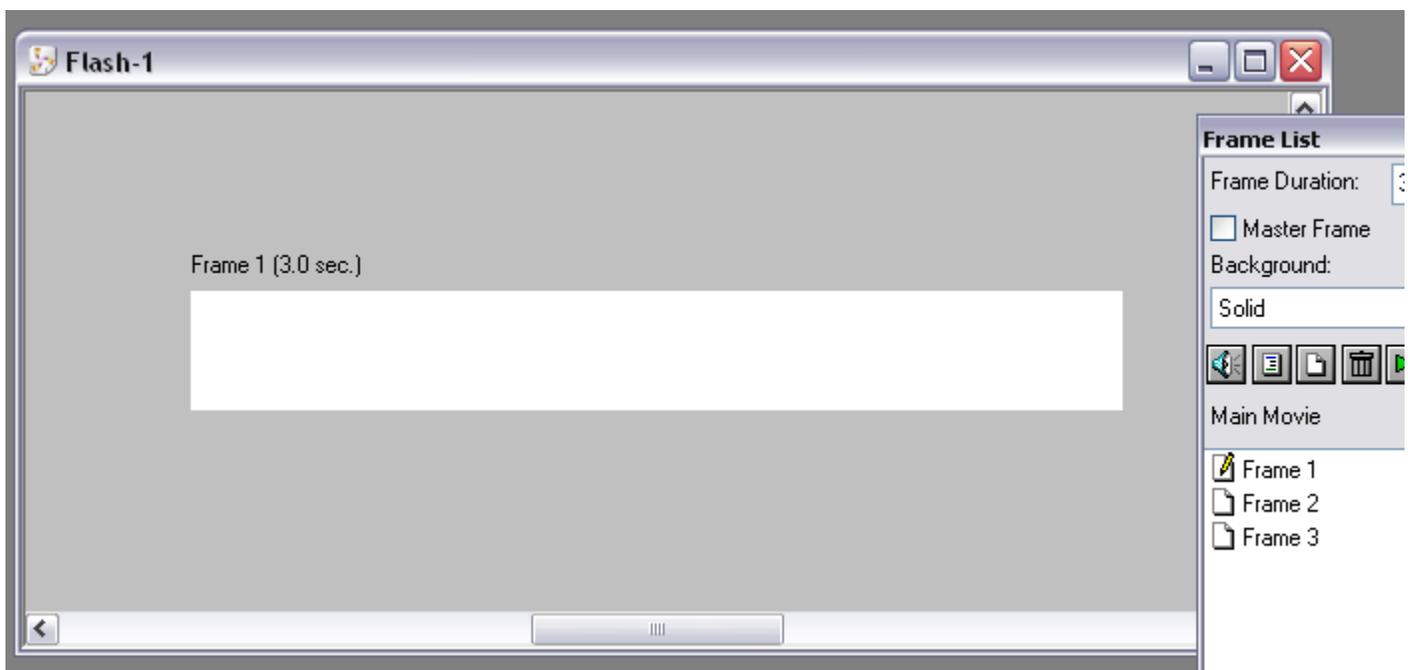
Introductory Banners

As mentioned above, introductory campaigns inform about a new product or service. Their task is to interest potential customers and get them to visit our website in order to familiarize themselves with the product, and potentially be persuaded to buy it in the future.

An introductory banner consists of 3 parts, each of which will fulfill the following functions:

- **attracting the eye**
- **informing**
- **call to action**

Banners must usually be designed in three corresponding frames. To add frames to your document, choose **Frame > Insert** so that the list of frames shows 3 elements, named Frame 1, Frame 2, and Frame 3



Usually, but depending on the subject of the ad, the first step is to put advertising slogans in each

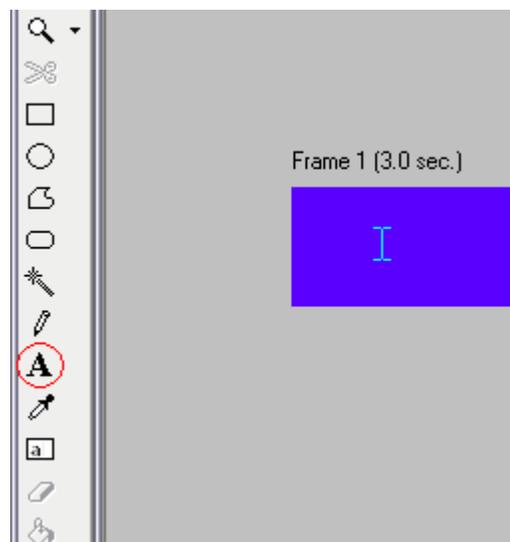
of the frames. In the example below, we are advertising a mortgage bank and its great mortgage deals.

Attracting the Eye

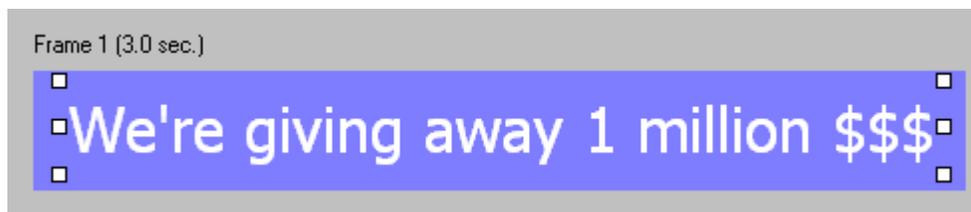
The first (and often only) glance at the banner ad must be fully taken advantage of in order to interest the customer in the next part of the advertisement, and thus hold their gaze for the next few seconds.

Meanwhile, the most important thing is to get the banner ad to be looked at in the first place. Because we have barely a fraction of a second to catch the eye, the first frame will have to really stand out from the surrounding webpage. To that end, we can employ contrasting colors and large letters, as well as words which naturally attract the eye - for example, the word "free" and various kinds of animation effects, like flashing text, dramatic color changes, etc. The purpose of this frame is to preliminarily match the needs of the potential customer to the advertised product.

We select the text tool and enter appropriate words into the first frame



In this case, we want to interest everyone with insufficient financial means. So, we use people's natural interest in money, as well as some of the most powerful words in marketing, "giving away".



Informing

Over the next couple of seconds, we will be developing the advertising message and informing the customer about the referenced service and the benefits it brings. According to the old adage, a large font rarely does any harm. We could put more information in there, but we'd lose the interest of the viewer if the message were too long or too complicated.

Frame 2 (3.0 sec.)

No-Interest Mortgages*
for the first year only, maximum loan of \$1,000,000

At this stage, the viewer is already acquainted with the message. If the message is in line with their current needs (e.g. if they want to move out from their parent's house or buy a bigger place), then they'll probably watch the banner ad through to the end. If they are not interested, then they are not in the advertiser's target group anyway, and therefore also not in our circle of interest.

Call to Action

After communicating the main message, we show a call to action. Its task is to make use of spontaneous interest in the advertisement and as a result get the customer to visit the advertiser's webpage, where an action will be completed - the customer calls, completes a form, registers for a service, reads about a service, or performs another action resulting in the service provider or producer establishing contact with a customer and being able to close the sale.

Frame 3

Bank of America 

Only until the end of this month!

[Click to learn more](#)



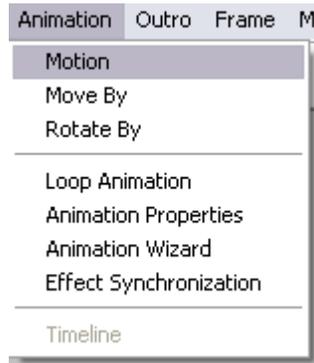
Simply communicating the action that the viewer must perform is very important. We can make use of the following vocabulary: click, try, test, check etc. This must be a non-binding action - a good analogy is walking into a store, but not necessarily making a purchase. One should not use obliging words like "buy now".

We'll also add the line "Only until the end of this month" in order to motivate the viewer with a sense of urgency and the danger of letting an opportunity pass by.

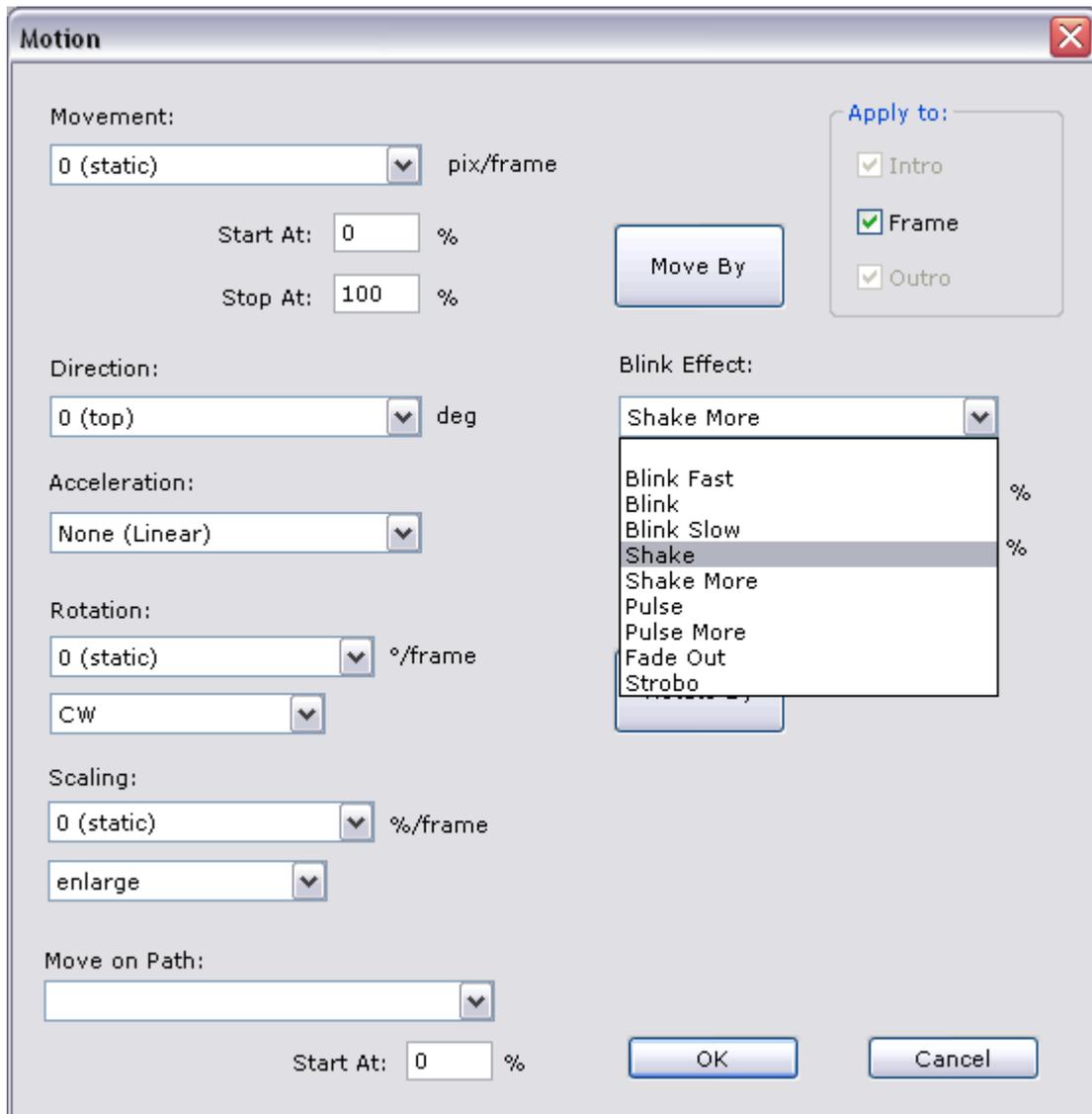
After deciding upon the initial frame design and contents, we can proceed to making the banner ad more attractive using animation.

The first frame should stand out from its surroundings. Because the advertiser is paying for the ad space with his own and often hard-earned money, we needn't lose sleep if our banner ad dominates the webpage on which it is placed. We should not hesitate to use contrasting colors and quick movements, things that the human eye is very sensitive to.

We select the text in Frame 1 and choose **Animation > Motion**.



We choose the Shake effect, leaving all of the other options unchanged. We can also experiment with other settings at this time, it's important that the animation is dynamic and catches the eye.



Meanwhile, the next frame should be rather static, and the text easy to read in a relaxed manner. We select the text in the frame and once again choose **Animation > Motion**. You can add slight horizontal movement or delicate enlargement of the letters.

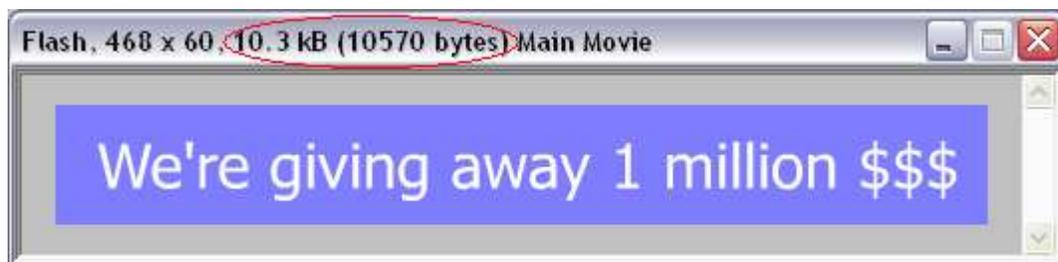
The last of the frames should encourage the user to click. Because large letters appear important to the user, clear text and a relatively large font (e.g. Arial Black) should be used. In order to emphasize that the banner is clickable, we can add a graphical element associated with something that can be clicked, for example one of the buttons available in the clipart catalog.

Optimizing a Banner Ad

After developing the banner ad from the graphics end, it needs to be optimized in terms of file size. File size is displayed at the top of the preview window. The button to display the preview window is located on the navigation bar.



We can see the file size on the title bar of the preview window



If the banner ad exceeds the permissible size, we may activate Flash file compression. We choose **Movie > Export Options** and select the **Compressed SWF** option.



Next, we once again check the file size in the preview window. If the size is still too large, we can consider the following options:

- Decreasing the frame rate. Choose **Movie > Export Options** and test different rates. It should be kept in mind that too low a frame rate may degrade animation fluidity and ad reception.

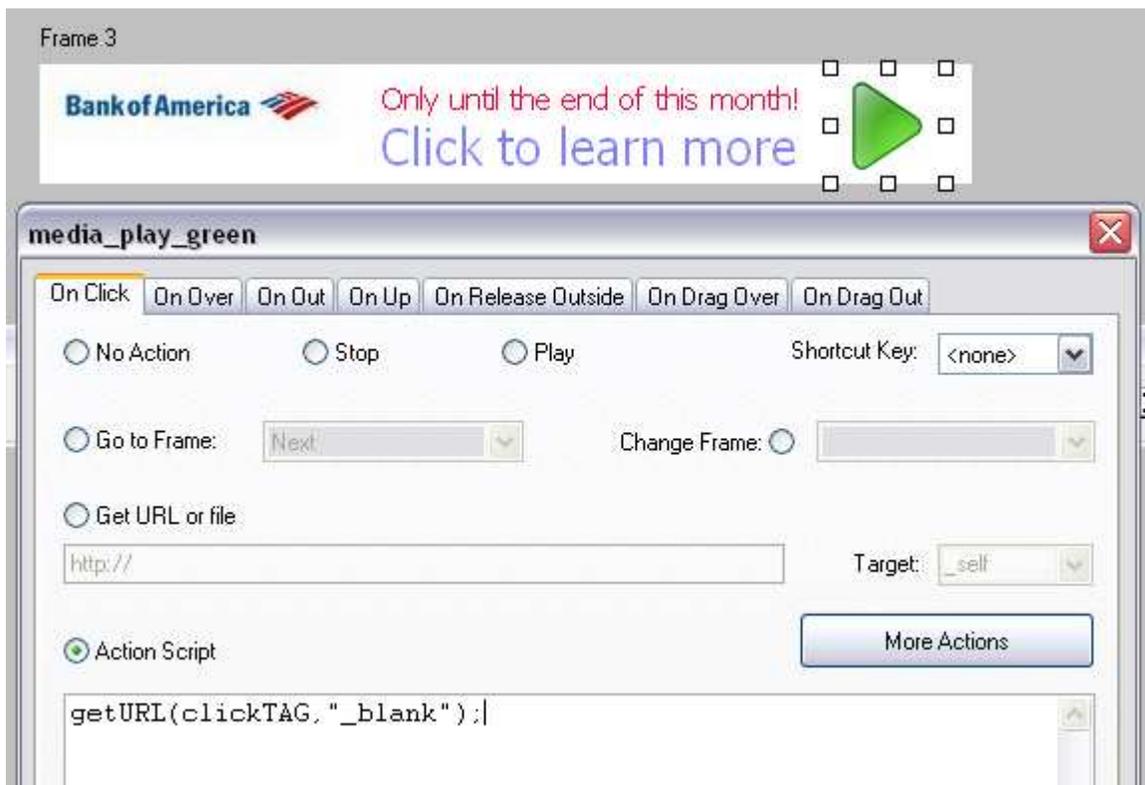


- Removing part of the animations. Each animation takes up valuable space - if the text may be static, then static text should be used.
- Avoiding bitmap images and replacing them with vector graphics

Adding ClickTAG

A clickTAG is a piece of code added to a banner ad that contains the link that will be opened upon clicking the banner. As a rule, the link points to a campaign tracking system, which then redirects to the target page in a way that is imperceptible to the viewer.

To add a clickTAG to an object such as a button, select the object and then choose **Action > On Click** and insert the code below:



The code to be entered may be listed in the the ad's technical specifications.

Exporting the Output File

To upload a banner for publication, export it as an SWF file by choosing **File > Export Flash SWF File**. The saved file may then be sent for publication on a webpage.



After publishing the banner online, all that we have left to do is sit back and take pleasure in the number of visits to our webpage.

Simplicity vs. Complexity

In closing, we have a few pointers regarding simplicity. People have less and less time these days, and if our banner ad is too complicated, long, or overloaded with graphic elements, then our advertising message will get lost in the information overload. After all, people do not surf the internet in order to watch banner ads. This means that we have only a fraction of a second in which to interest the customer. A banner ad's task is to divert the viewer's attention away from the contents of a webpage. If our banner suffers from form overwhelming content, then money spent on the advertising campaign simply goes down the drain. So we need to avoid overloading ads with information or stuffing them with graphics or tedious sequences.

Support Banner Ads

In contrast to introductory banner ads, support campaigns aim to maintain both interest in a product and brand loyalty, as well as increase its prestige and create a fashion for the product. The customer is already familiar with the brand, and knows what it offers. Meanwhile, since there is no need to acquire a new customer, a different set of "marketing devices" is employed.

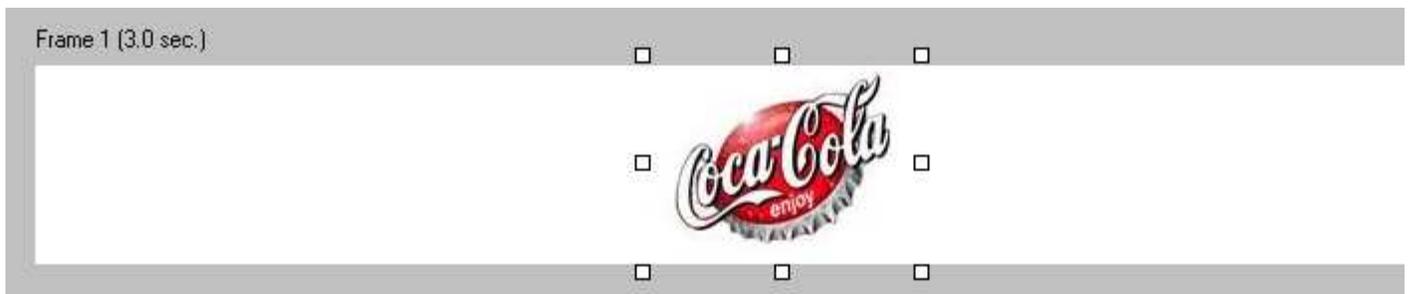
In this case, the advertiser's logo is of increased importance and should be displayed more prominently. It is also important for the color schemes and graphical presentation (e.g. company font) to be in line in with those specified by the trademark owner (also referred as its "corporate identity").

In the following example, we will create a banner ad for a well-known soft-drink company. Primary elements of the brand include its association not only with fizzy beverages, but also with having a good time and youthful energy.

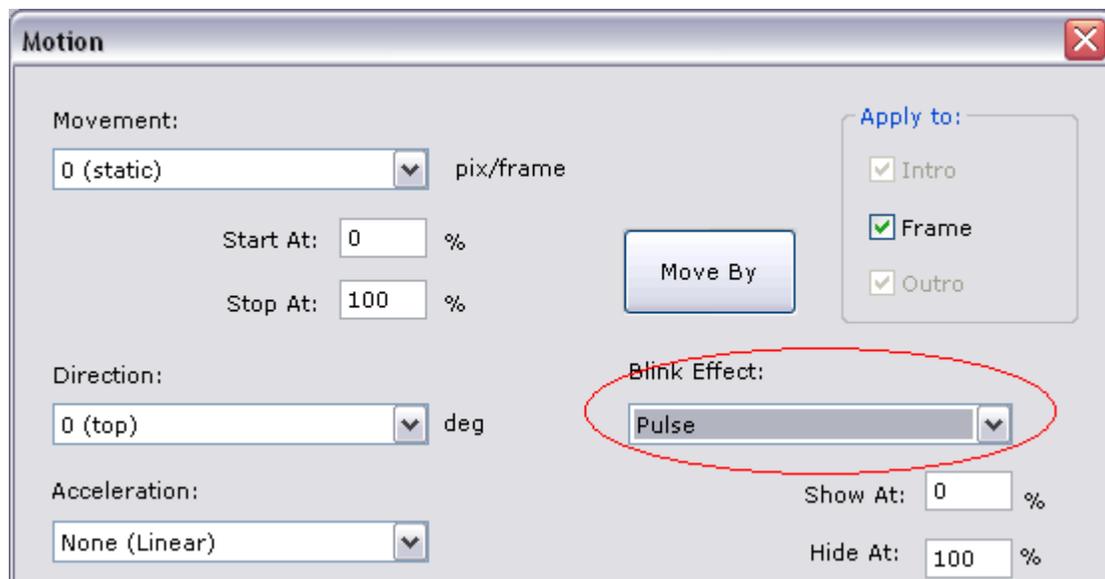
Once again, we will be creating a 3-frame banner. We create a new document by choosing **File > New** and set the flash banner frame size to 750 x 100 pixels.



We will be drawing upon materials supplied by the advertiser for the first frame.



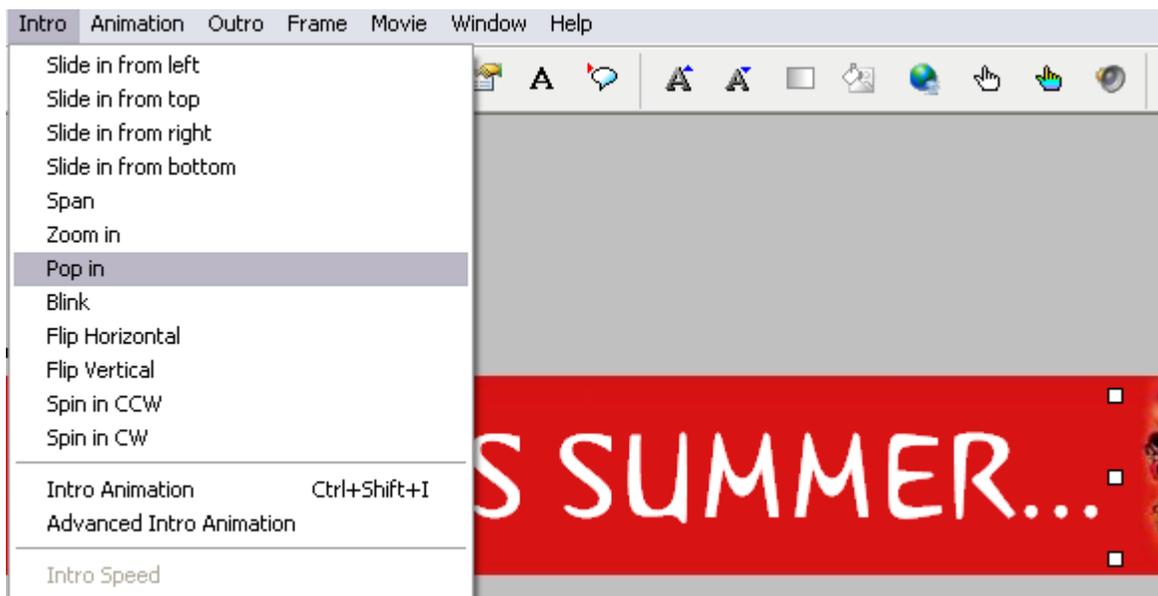
Since the brand is well known and well coded, we will use its company logo to attract the attention of websurfers. We strengthen its effect by pulsating the graphic elements in a way similar to a pulsating or throbbing speaker. Select the object, and then run **Animation > Motion**. Select the Pulse option.



We will use the next frame to deliver more information. Here too, we will use elements provided by the advertiser. We will also add text ensuring that the viewer's attention is held for a few seconds. Select the text tool and add the caption in the middle of the frame.



The caption "this summer" should be intriguing and attract the viewer's attention. In addition to the ellipsis (...) promising a continuation of the banner display, we are also going to use another round of animation. Choose the **Intro** menu and configure how the text is to appear on the screen. In this example, we are going to use the Pop in animation.



We will also configure how the caption should disappear from the screen. We choose the **Outro > Span** command.

The final frame delivers the main message of the ad. The message is short, but the end goal is accomplished. The viewer will remember that if they want to have a good time, they should go to the Coke festival in Miami this summer



As opposed to introductory banners, support banner ads aim to

- maintain long-term demand for a product

- build positive associations for the brand
- present the brand in a positive light

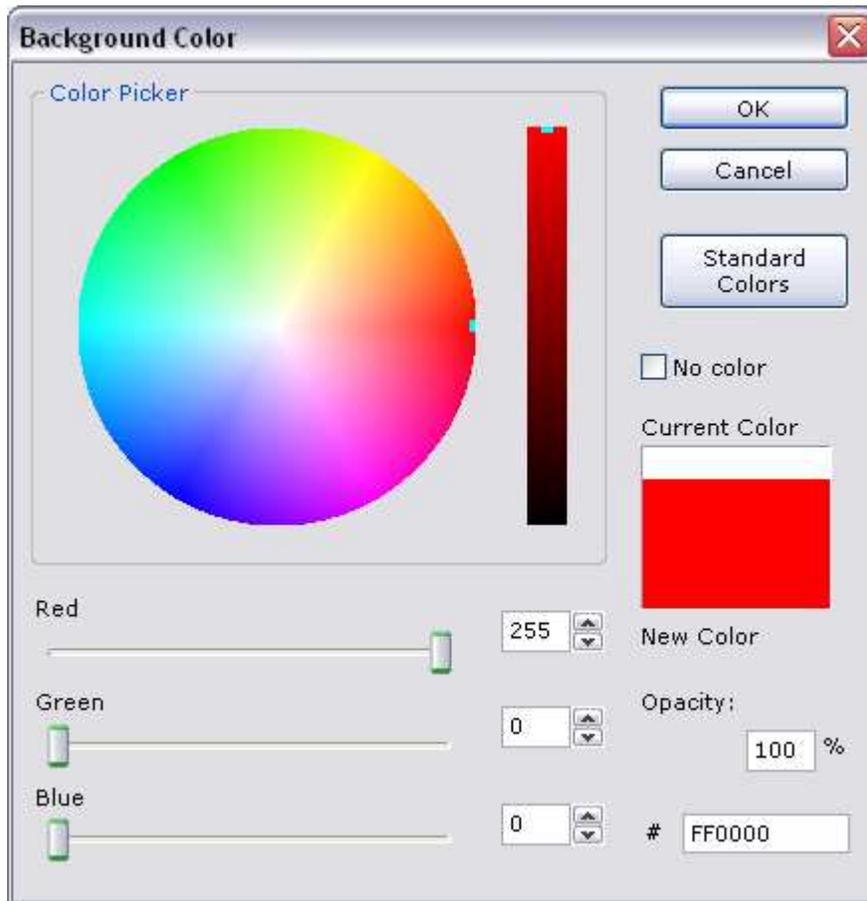
In this case, the most important thing is the number of banner impressions that translate into viewers having watched the advertisement. Meanwhile, less important here are the direct results of the ad (e.g. banner clicks). Remember that the effectiveness of the banner ad lies in reinforcing the logo and its positive image in the consumer's memory. As a result, when we make our next visit to the store and see bottles of Coca-Cola, we will spontaneously put one in our shopping cart.

Teaser Banners

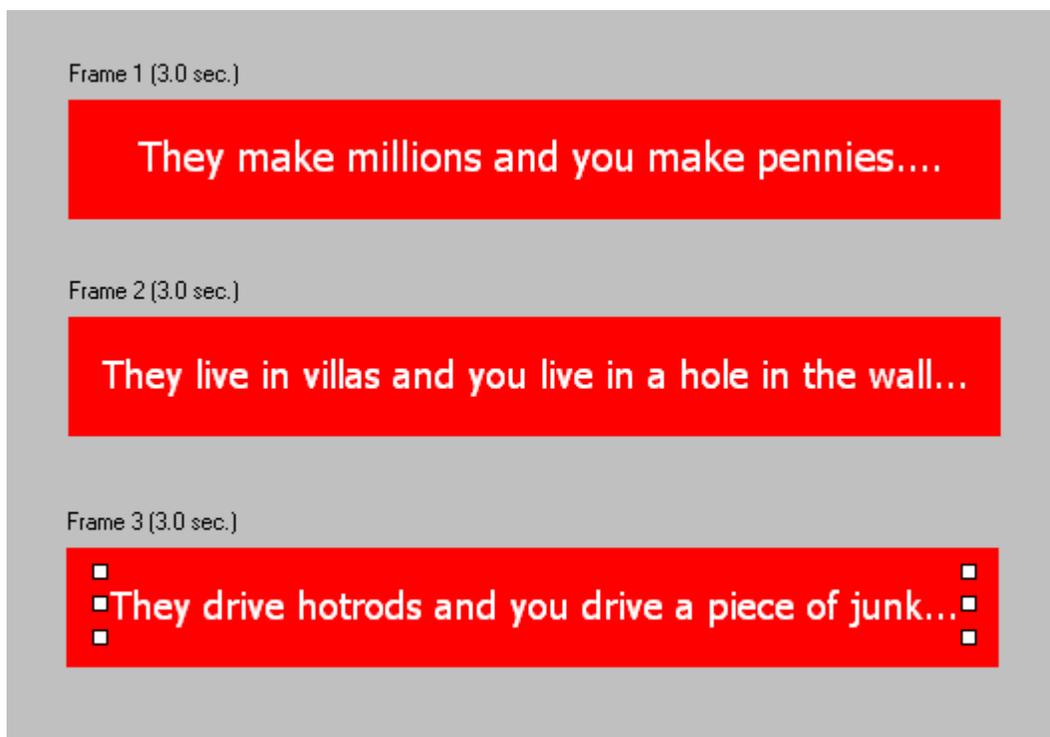
Teaser banners are designed to maximize the amount of banner clicks. It is important here to keep the subject of the campaign a mystery, and meanwhile make the beginning of the message intriguing.

Teasers were first used in printed media, and then on television. They usually told a story that was intriguing and compelling but left without an ending. The reader would then suspensefully await subsequent advertisements in hopes of an explanation of the mystery ad. Or at least so was the intention of the advertisers. However, nowadays people do not have time to watch commercials on TV or go out of their way to buy the next day's newspaper. Another problem was the need to purchase the advertising space twice: once for the teaser, and a second time for its target advertisement. Teasers therefore moved to cyberspace, where there are no such restrictions – now, the explanation of an ad is only a click away.

Let's create a sample banner ad. We'll set the background to the color that the human eye is the most sensitive to.



Next, using the Text tool, we will add a series of words that aim to have the customer come in and join the fun. We will be playing on the most primitive of human emotions - jealousy.



To top it all off, we will add a call-to-action frame in which we inverse the colors and insert an icon representing the option of clicking on the banner:



We intentionally leave out part of the information campaign in order to force the viewer to click on the banner, often out of sheer curiosity.

This campaign was commissioned by an investment fund. Interest in the ad surpassed all expectations.

We have covered the basics of creating banner ads. It's a subject no less extensive or complicated than human psychology. We wish you great success in creating banner ads of your own.

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