

“I Read the Ads First!”...What?

WAIT, WHAT? We work our tails off to seek out interesting stories, select beautiful photos, fuss over the design of each page...then subscribers tell us *they read the ads first*.

Yep, we hear it often—and our advertisers rave. In truth, we find these reader comments gratifying, because they tell us folks are having *fun* with our unique magazine.

Why do they read the ads first? Our popular “Lucky I” Contest encourages readers to scan the ads closely. In every issue, we hide a tiny letter “I” (a small version of the I in our logo) in just three ads. Readers have to find *all three* I’s to enter the drawing for that issue’s prizes. We’re not kidding either when we say we hide these I’s. We want it to be a challenge to find them, which adds to the fun for our readers and increases the amount of time they spend studying your ad to find them.

What are the prizes?

They’re products or services offered by advertisers who choose to participate in this first-of-its kind contest. We deduct \$100 off the price of their ad and in exchange they provide a reader-prize valued at \$100. Many of the prizes don’t cost advertisers \$100 out of pocket, so their ad cost is reduced.

For example, a chamber of commerce gave \$100 in “Chamber Bucks” as a prize and a bed-and-breakfast offered a free night’s stay. Winners can hardly wait to spend their winnings—and their own money too—when they travel to *your town* to shop and dine.

With this novel approach, subscribers have come to appreciate our advertisers...the more ads, the more prizes. No wonder we’re giving away thousands of dollars in prizes each issue! It’s like paying subscribers to read your ads!

Advertisers triple their exposure when they participate. First, there’s the ad itself, then editorial mention on another page that describes the prize...and then *again in the following issue* when we announce the winners and the prizes



they’ve won. That’s three “hits” for the price of one ad—no wonder advertisers love this contest!

Readers love it, too. In fact, we receive over 6,000 entries in the Lucky I Contest every issue. And note that they can’t enter by email—they need

to take the time to write the page numbers where they found the I’s, address a postcard or envelope, affix first-class postage and then mail their entry by the deadline. Who does that anymore?

We actually turn down ads! Another incentive to advertise in *Our Iowa*: Our pledge to limit advertising to no more than 25% of each issue (most magazines are 60% ads). When we hit our 25% limit, we turn down “late comers”. So reserve your space early.

Our goal is to support this magazine primarily through subscriptions...with advertising playing an important, but decidedly ancillary, role. This allows us to accept fewer ads and offer subscribers more stories. For marketers, it means your ads aren’t buried among hundreds of others. So, your message stands out even more!

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Larry Wiebel, Editor

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