Techniques for Online Marketing

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Introduction

If you have a business, and want online marketing results that are successful, you need to be a creative thinker and think outside of the box. The Internet is the perfect place for small businesses to establish their marketing campaign. Using the Internet for advertising is extremely cost-effective because it is so measurable and targeted towards the people you want to reach. Internet marketing allows you to compete with the competition and come out ahead.

This book will show you what you need to do to turn your online website into a resource that your customers can trust. You'll also learn how to get more customers to visit your website. The main goal of this book is to teach you which online marketing techniques are the most effective for your business. Some of the things that you'll learn include:

- How to design your website to that you attract the customers you want.
- How to reach your customers through e-mail marketing.
- Why co-branding is important.
- How to choose online partners that are right for you.
- How to create customized content for you website so that your customers visit frequently.
- How to establish yourself as an expert in your specific industry.
- How to use your marketing budget without overspending.

This book will give you the latest information in marketing trends so that you make the most of your marketing budget.

Chapter One: The Benefits of Marketing Online

Marketing rules are the same no matter how big or small your business is: (1) brand your product, (2) determine who your target audience is, (3) get the sales, and (4) establish repeat customers. Online marketing is very effective in managing all four of these rules.

Online Marketing Defined

The definition of online marketing is: Placing your business or product on the Internet for millions of users to access so that you can turn your website into a strong tool to maximize your sales and business potential.

But online marketing is much more than putting your advertising online. Marketing online includes such areas as communicating with your customers, promoting your business or product online, and making sure that your website content is useful and up to date. The great thing about online marketing is that you don't need to have a huge budget to put together a marketing campaign that is effective. There are tools that you can use to make your marketing techniques easy and profitable such website templates, shopping cart templates, and online marketing templates.

What You Need for Online Marketing to be Successful

There are some important points to consider before you get into the strategies and intricacies of online marketing:

- Communication. An important part of online marketing is how you respond to your customer's e-mail. You don't want to lose potential customers after you've made the effort to have them visit your website and then contact you for more information. E-mail is

a very effective and cost efficient way for you to generate more sales. The key to this effectiveness is "consistency". You need to be consistent in your response to your customers. You'll also want to make sure that the tone of your e-mail corresponds with the tone you've set in your website content.

- Human Resources. If you're going to succeed online you need to have enough people working with you. Efficient websites incorporate a personal touch with a fast response time to customers. Your goal is to turn the visitors to your website into customers. The standard time for a return e-mail is from 48 to 72 hours. If you wait any longer to e-mail back you risk losing the customer. This means that if you don't have the man power to return e-mail in two to three days you need to take another look at your marketing strategy.

- Products people want to buy online. Before you start marketing online you need to be sure that you have a product or service that people want to buy. Customers need to find a value in what you're selling. There are two motivating factors when it comes to selling online: cost and convenience. Ask yourself if customers will find it easier to buy online than finding a local store. Is it cheaper for them to buy this from you online?

Online Goals

Once you've established that there is a need for your service or product you'll be ready to determine your business goal and whether or not you can meet this goal online. If your main goal is to sell a product online you should decide how you want to make those sales. For example, do you want customers to buy from you online or do you want them to come to you to close the sale? You'll need to decide what action is needed for

the sale to be finalized. Small businesses need marketing efforts that are targeted and precise.

Chapter Two: Reaching Your Target Audience

A big factor to successful online marketing is *knowing* who your target audience is and how to reach them. To determine what types of customers you are trying to reach you should be asking yourself the following questions:

- What age group are you trying to sell to?
- Are you selling to a specific ethnic group or gender?
- Will most of your customers be married or single?
- How fast will most Internet connections be?
- Will you target customers who have children?
- What level of education will most of your customers have?
- Where will most of your customers live?
- Will your customers have any specific hobbies?

The more you know about your customers the easier it will be to come up with a marketing plan. You'll also be able to design a website that is the most appealing to these customers. The biggest advantage of marketing on the Internet is that it allows you to become very targeted towards your desired customers.

Targeting Different Types of Customers

Marketing online is the same as marketing anywhere else. There are certain products, colors, themes, and lingo that will appeal more to some customers than to others. When you know what type of customers you're targeting you can meet their needs so that you grab their attention. When you use certain features that pull customers to your website you have the ability to gain their attention, loyalty, and trust. For example, studies show that most female shoppers like to save money and time. Over 80% of purchases in the home are influenced in some way by women. As well, these same studies show that women like to able to compare costs fast and easily without getting any kind of sales pressure. If you're trying to target women customers some things that you should keep in mind include (1) giving them a feeling of comfort and community, (2) let your website deal with everyday problems, and (3) focus on education, health, and family.

Get the Word Out

Doing something innovative and creative online, as well as using the latest technology, will always get attention. For example, adding animation, flash, or a photo can create a buzz about the product or service that you're selling. Just as e-mail, which contains jokes and strange pictures, gets forwarded all around the planet so too can your marketing message make the rounds. Come up with a marketing message and then forward it to family, friends, and anyone else you know.

Any time that you can get someone else to forward your e-mail to others you get the information out there about your website and the product or service you're selling. One key to great online marketing is remembering that quality, not quantity, counts. Avoid buying e-mail lists and focus instead on building your own with people who are actually

interested in what you're selling. Today online marketing isn't about how many people you get to your website or how many people are on your e-mail list. Today online marketing is all about how people react to your website and what it is that you're selling.

Personalizing Your Website

Even if you're not selling a product or service that is for a specific target audience you need to have a website that is personalized. For example, even though Amazon sells products that appeal to all target audiences they have still managed to create a personalized website that fits every customer. This is the goal of *personalization technology.*

Try to limit the number of products or services that you're offering to your customers. "Information overload" is one of the biggest problems on the Internet. If you give your customers too many choices they'll have a hard time making a decision. The key to avoiding information overload is organization as well as making sure that products and services are directed towards your customers.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that online marketing stop when you generate a sale. Your current customers are the ideal way for you to reach new customers. You want to get leads from your customers by using marketing concepts such as "tell a friend" e-mails.

One mistake that many small online businesses make is to focus only on self-promotion. The bottom line is that customers don't care about you. They only care about what it is that you're selling and what you can do for them. When someone visits your website you have about ten seconds to get their attention before they move on to the next website. That

means that you have ten seconds to tell this person why it is that they need you. The home page of your website should tell people why your service or product is just right for them. Your home page should include information about your company and/or have a personal bio about who you are.

If you're not sure about whether your website is reaching the right people, ask them. If you provide something of value to people who visit your website they'll give you information. Things of value include contests, coupons, and free products. Make sure that you let them know they can trust you by including a privacy policy on your website that states you won't share any personal information they provide with anyone else. Stick to your policy and never sell the information your customers provide you with. Otherwise you'll lose and abuse their trust.

Once you know the demographics of your customers you'll know how to spend your marketing budget. You can focus your online promotions using targeted marketing strategy. Even though you may end up with fewer people visiting your website, targeted online marketing is the way to go.

Using Banner Ads

One mistake that many online businesses make is using banner ads to reach the greatest amount of people. Your focus when it comes to banner ads is to reach the *right* type of people for the product or service that you're selling. One thing to keep in mind is that, if you have a limited budget, you should avoid buying banner ads altogether. If you have a big budget, banner ads can be great for branding your company. You'll be able to negotiate contracts that are long term with affiliated websites in

your area of business. However, the results of click-through marketing are usually low and this makes banner ads the least cost effective of all online marketing techniques.

If you decide that you want to purchase banner ads you should focus on buying them on web pages that are very targeted. Ads are cheaper the more targeted a web page is. And the cheaper the ad the more cost effective your banner ads will be.

Another way that you can target the placement of your banner ads is to embed them in web page content. Before you purchase a banner ad find out what content the website administrators will be including on their web page that may be related to your online business. If the website uses a keyword search tool ask that your banner ads appear when key words that are linked to your product or service are typed into the search engine by visitors to the website.

Try to place your banner ads on a web page that is as deep into the website as possible. This way you'll be reaching people who are truly looking for information that relates to your business. This is a great strategy to use if you want to get the most value for your online budget. Again, if your budget for marketing is quite high, you'll want to buy banner ads on the home pages of websites so that your brand reaches a lot of people.

Keywords

One of the most cost effective ways to use your online marketing budget is to buy keywords. You can find out the price of keywords that are specific to your industry at www.Overture.com. You want your keywords to be as targeted and specific as possible. Always remember the goal of your business and buy keywords that encourage people to visit your website. Keywords that are general will cost you more and at the same time will attract fewer customers to your website. Before you start buying keywords you need to look at the content of your website. You want to buy keywords that are effective for your business content and that keep people coming back to your website.

Chapter Three: Create Content that is Effective

The Internet is designed to be changing and dynamic. People who visit your website want to see content that is new and filled with ideas and business promotions. If people visit your website and don't see new content on a frequent basis they'll think that your site is stagnant and has been abandoned without any customer service there for them to rely on. The home page of your website is one of the most important aspects of your online marketing strategy. It's the content of your home page that gives your business a brand. The more useful and professional the information on your home page is the more credit you bring to your product or service.

The Internet is one of the best places for consumers to find out about new products and services. This places the net above television, radio, magazines, and newspapers. When you use the Internet to promote your product or service you have the opportunity to reach a multitude of potential customers anywhere at any time. The web is one of the most

powerful mediums for reaching and influencing people and the decisions they make about business.

Components of Good Content

One of the key ingredients to success on the Internet is creating website content that Internet users want to read. When you have content that is (1) interesting, (2) factual, and (3) well written, you have some of the main tools that you need to get the desired traffic to your online website.

<u>Writing Decisions</u>: When you first start writing content for your website you'll find yourself facing many decisions before you even sit down at the keyboard or pick up a pen. As you begin to develop the content on your website pages you'll find that you're often changing many of your first instinct decisions. This is all part of the process of writing. But how can you most efficiently sort out all you need to think about so that you develop website content that users want to read?

It's important that you find out what it is that Internet users are looking for on the Internet so that you can focus your website content on these issues. Take some time to study at the top hits in the search engines for products or services that are similar to what you're selling. Even though these top ranked websites are most likely using Search Engine Optimization techniques you can still read what it is that they're using to draw in the crowd. Take some of these concepts and include them in the flow of your web content….but ONLY if these concepts enhance what you're writing and are entirely relevant to the products or services that you're selling. Keep in mind that although one website may be at the top of the search engine rankings today, it won't take them long to fall back into the ranks of "mediocre websites". Websites that rely on SEO

techniques don't give people the information that they're looking for to keep them coming back. How many times have you yourself searched a topic in a search engine only to find that the top hit is filled with articles and web content that has nothing to do with what the website is all about?

People who use the Internet are looking for one or more of the following components:

- Entertainment
- Information
- Community issues

If your website provides at least one of these components you're on your way to attracting potential customers and repeat customers. Websites that contain valuable content not only bring credit to your business but also position your company as an expert in your business industry. Keeping your website fresh with new content doesn't have to be an overwhelming task. There are cost-efficient and time-saving techniques you can take advantage of to keep your website up to date at all times… without having to hire hundreds of people to help you!

Dynamic Home Page: One way that you can have an ever changing home page is to design five to ten unique pages and then rotate them every month. Take a couple of weeks to design different ideas for your home page. Create random page promotions that include a message that is timeless or that have seasonal images with announcements such as "Holiday Specials". When you design different features for you home page all at one time you're forced to look at your marketing strategy for at least one year. This will save you a lot of time since you then won't

have to think about your home page content for about 12 months. A web developer can put your home pages on a rotating script or use an automatic timer. You can then rotate your home pages to highlight a new tip every month or to promote a featured product. The home page of your website is much like the front cover of a magazine. People want to see a home page that has different photos and content at least every month. You won't want all of the content of your website to be featured on the home page as this will overwhelm your website visitors. Choosing one or two features to highlight each month is much more effective. The rest of your website content should be well organized within the rest of the pages of your site. When you're ready to update your home page all you have to do is grab content from other web pages. This way you're not always having to create new content but are reorganizing your current content so that people think it's new.

Changing your Home Page Too Often: Even though you want your website to be new and dynamic you also don't want to change it too often. People who surf the Internet take comfort from their favorite websites and want them to be familiar. If you change your home page too often you may confuse people who come to your website on a frequent basis. You also run the risk of compromising your positioning in search engines if you don't maintain some type of consistency on your home page. When you're updating the content on your home page you want to make sure that you don't confuse people. When you make changes to graphics or content it shouldn't change the way your website looks and feels. Regular visitors to your website should be able to find the same information that they've always found on your home page. In short, the headers and navigation tools on your home page shouldn't ever change. Change content and images with other content and images while maintaining the sites original functionality. Home pages that are

consistent lend a feeling of comfort to users. If your customers learn to expect consistency they'll also learn to rely on your quality customer service. If you're a small online business, gaining your customer's trust is synonymous to dependability.

Search Engine Positioning: Search engine positioning can be affected by the changes you make to your home page. There are some search engines that "spider" websites anywhere from three weeks to three months. These search engines take a look at all aspects of your website from the home page content to the tags you have for your graphics. Your website will be ranked higher the longer your keywords remain consistent. You need to find a balance between keeping things on your home page new and exciting while at the same time keeping things familiar and similar. The best way for you to achieve this is to keep most of your home page the way it is and change only a portion of it. This allows visitors to your website to see new content and you won't have to worry about your website disappearing from search engine rankings.

Benefits of a Flexible Home Page: Once you've mastered the technique of updating your home page, while at the same time keeping the core content the same, you'll be well on your way to recognizing the benefits of a flexible home page. A flexible home page lets you test your offline marketing efforts. Before you spend money on a magazine or newspaper ad you can test it out on your website. You'll be able to see how people react to the ad. Your home page will let you determine which featured products attract the most interest. You can also determine which graphics generate the most attraction. You'll need web tracking software to get this type of information. Tracking software lets you obtain marketing data that is detailed and precise. You'll be able to see which

graphics people have clicked on as well as what web page they were on just before they left your website.

Content if You Don't Write: If you don't write, or know how to take photographs, there are still some things that you can do to generate content for your website:

- Buy content: You can buy images and photographs that are of high quality without spending a lot of money. Spending a few hundred dollars on some great images will go a long way in giving your website a professional look. There are many websites on the Internet where you can find images and photographs that relate to your business. It's not recommended that you buy written content for the simple reason that it's not cost effective. Many of the services on the Internet that supply written content are geared towards large online companies that have a big marketing budget. The goal of content on your website is to make your company and product appear credible. You can accomplish this by having a few well placed articles on your web pages.

- Let customers create content: You can have your customers generate content for your website. One way to do this is by creating a section entitled "Frequently Asked Questions". Here your customers can ask you questions about your product or service and you can list your answers. You can rotate this type of information and feature a different question every week. Another way to create content is by holding a contest by asking customers to send you stories about how they enjoy your product or how it has helped them in some way. You can offer a special prize such as a coupon for free product. You can take the best written stories

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