

Viral Marketing Unleashed



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Why And How Viral Marketing Works

You may wonder what a virus has to do with marketing?

Well, viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence.

Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands and then to millions.

Viral Marketing sounds like something bad but it is actually something very good.

It is a powerful way to generate lots of traffic to your website or sales page.

Think about how a virus spreads from one person to another. One person gets sick and just by sneezing they can give the virus to many more people...

... those people get sick and share their germs with everyone they know and the next thing anybody knows is that there is an epidemic.

That is the very concept of viral marketing. The idea is to get everyone to spread your marketing message around because they want to.

Public health nurses offer sage advice at flu season: stay away from people who cough, wash your hands often, and don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Viruses only spread when they're easy to transmit.

Viral e-mail marketing works great on the Internet because instant communication has become so easy and inexpensive.

Digital format make copying simple. From a marketing standpoint, you must simplify your marketing message so it can be transmitted easily and without degradation.

Short is better.

Remember the K.I.S.S. standard....Keep it Simple Stupid.

The shorter and easier to remember is always better than long and complicated.

Clever viral marketing plans take advantage of common human motivations. The desire to be cool and greed drives people. So does the hunger to be popular, loved, and understood.

The resulting urge to communicate produces millions of websites and billions of e-mail messages. Most people are social. Nerdy, basement-dwelling computer science grad students are the exception.

Social scientists tell us that each person has a network of 8 to 12 people in their close network of friends, family, and associates. People on the Internet develop networks of relationships, too.

They collect e-mail addresses and favorite website URLs. Affiliate programs exploit such networks, as do permission e-mail lists. Learn to place your message into existing communications between people, and you rapidly multiply its dispersion.

If you can design a marketing strategy that builds on common motivations and behaviors for its transmission, you have a winner.

What Works & What Doesn't

Stop with the enforced e-mail forwards already!

Trying to force or bribe people to forward your info to a friends or family in order to be rewarded or win looks skanky in today's ultra-permission-based world. Especially when you tell visitors nothing about their friend's or family's privacy in the space directly next to the e-mail form.

A true viral campaign gets forwarded because consumers are compelled to do so by the glory of the content, not because you bribed them with points or something else.

What absolutely will not work:

Suggesting that e-mail recipients forward your message to their friends and family will not work. Adding a line at the bottom of your e-mail that reads "Please feel free to forward this message to a friend" is more likely to get it deleted than forwarded.

What absolutely will work:

Offering something worthy of sharing like a valuable discount, vital information or offering an incentive for sharing like additional entries into a sweepstakes or an added discount or premium service will work.

Relevant or timely information, research, or studies that are included in your e-mail might encourage the recipients to share with their family and friends.

Interactive content like a quiz or test, especially if it's fun, will inspire forwarding.

Jokes and cartoons are almost always forwarded to everybody the recipient knows.

Why?

Because they are entertaining and entertainment is meant to be shared. A really cool multimedia experience is always going to achieve a lot of pass-along.

Rich media is new and the novelty and tech factors alone are often enough to make the e-mail recipient eager to share it.

Oops! Almost forgot one really important thing....

You can craft a brilliant e-mail following all the rules, but if a consumer visits your site and has an experience less than what was promised, you are going to achieve viral marketing, alright...the bad kind.

So be certain that your product or service is ready and is as advertised.

The Many Facets of Viral Marketing

In the beginning, e-mail was the one way that viral marketing was started.

Since that long ago day, viral marketing has gone from a marketing strategy to an art form and there are many ways to accomplish the objective of creating a successful viral marketing campaign. Seven of those ways are:

1. E-mail: It was first but it is still around and still used. It is, however, getting a little harder to use as more and more government restrictions are placed on it. Still... it does work.
2. Newsletters: This is an extension of e-mail but it a very effective tool. If you include enough timely and valuable information, a good newsletter can drive up the number of visits to your website.
3. Blogging: Providing the tools on your website to enable bloggers to interact with one another is a terrific way to get the message about your product or service out there and being talked about. Bloggers have their ears to the ground for new products and services.
4. Chat Rooms: A chat room on your website can and does encourage interaction among your customers and that can't be a bad thing. Also, you can use the chat room to schedule special events like having an expert available to answer questions on a given day at a given time.

5. Tell-a-friend Script: If you add this with a statement saying that e-mail addresses supplied will never be shared with third parties, you can increase your potential customer list greatly.
6. Video Clips: Including cool video clips on your website will keep the interest up and increase traffic.
7. Flash Games: Although they are a little costly to start, they are an extremely effective tool to get your viral marketing campaign going. Once they are launched, they require nothing more from you.

Your Ebook is your Viral Salesman

Ebooks are the future and the future is now.

The printed word on paper and bound into books used to be the only way information was given and received.

They were great, you could take them with you and put them on shelves and they do still exist and will continue to for the foreseeable future but the time of the Ebook has arrived.

A marketing Ebook is a slightly different animal from just an Ebook.

Marketing Ebooks contain text, images, links to web pages and navigation controls. The marketing Ebook has become a very important part of marketing on the Internet.

With a marketing Ebook you can present your story in an effective way and include links to your web sales pages. Your Ebook can become your best salesman.

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Obvious errors will reflect badly on you and will not be of much value to you, it could even be damaging.

Post your Ebook to some of the Ebook directories. Many let you post it for free, or will let you post a link on their site to your Ebook.

What An Ebook Can Do For You

An Ebook that includes your marketing message and a link to your website is a proven technique in viral marketing.

This method uses the multiplication effect to “explode” the distribution of your message by willing participants.

This is the basic principle that was used by Hotmail to get established.

When the two founders set up their free email system, all the messages that were sent by subscribers had a text message at the bottom which identified Hotmail as the origin.

People who sent emails to their friends advertised the free email site. Using viral Ebooks as a marketing method is cheap.

It doesn't take long to set up and it's even quicker if you use rebrandable Ebooks that have been written by others. Just use your favorite search engine and do a web search.

You will find many rebrandable Ebooks that are available on whatever subject you are interested in and that apply to your e-business.

One method of distributing the Ebook is to offer it to visitors in exchange for subscribing to your newsletter. If they pass it on to their friends and family it will promote your business for you.

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