

THE 5 W'S OF MARKETING ON THE WEB

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1. The 5 W'S of Marketing

Many companies and their marketing arms are starting to study ways to use this new and rapidly expanding technology. The 5 W's -- *what, why, who, where, and when* -- can guide you in the essentials for creating an effective marketing scheme for the Internet.

1. What is Web Marketing?

To understand Web marketing you must first understand the Web. Generally speaking, it is a fast-paced "networked" environment where citizens called Web surfers can view or download information of interest. These Web surfers tend to have short attention spans and even shorter thresholds of patience. But on a deeper level, the Web, for all intents and purposes, is a society unto itself with its own culture, people, and even its own language.

You'll find people in the Web from all over the world. Most are impatient and data-hungry. One reason the Web is so popular with these Internet users is that so many web sites feature pictures, sound, animation, and virtual 3-D worlds. Stunning visuals, compelling music, and sound effects transcend language barriers and capture the attention of fickle surfers.

To be noticed on the Web, incorporate eye-catching visuals and specialized effects in as many aspects of your message as possible. However, you will have to include more information than just marketing hype; detailed information is what Web surfers want.

2. Why Advertise On The World Wide Web?

Four imperatives drive the market development of every business today, large or small, local or global. They are:

Disintegration: Markets which yesterday were well-integrated wholes will tomorrow, if not yet today, become disintegrated parts.

Demand for substance by content consumers: Mass-delivered content, by its very nature, must appeal at best to average if not lower common denominators.

Speed and the teleconomies of scale: The interval between customer need on the one hand and satisfaction of that need on the other hand is growing smaller every day.

Informational goods and services. Any value added to all manner of goods and services in the next 20 years ahead of us must be expressed, for the most part, as information or knowledge value.

It doesn't matter what business you're in. I challenge you to cite a single market situation where your company or your client's company doesn't feel the pressures of fragmenting markets, under-informed customers, insufficient cycle time or the rapid commoditization of its goods and services.

Here are some few examples to stimulate your own strategic thinking:

- Obviously, any information technology product or service is a candidate for Web advertising.
- A marketing program driven by a quality movement, voice-of-the-customer bias can benefit richly from encouraging direct customer dialogue with the company and other customers.
- Any offering that targets an upscale demographic under 30 years of age.
- Any fast-changing offering or rapidly expanding product line.
- Any company that maintains a huge storage room of technical bulletins and product literature. Take it off the shelves and put it on line--not to save the trees, but to satisfy the customer's content demand more immediately.
- Any selling proposition that truly can't be done full justice in a traditional print ad. Some things just have lots of details and discerning consumers want to know. The Web is a perfect home for a deep-content presentation.

3. Who Should Advertise?

Everyone can find a place on the Web, including service industries, manufacturing firms, advertising agencies, professional groups, and nonprofit organizations. Whether your customer base is international or local, whether your company offers products or services, the Web has something to offer everyone. The key is to construct an effective marketing plan that caters to the on-line audience and properly communicates your message.

4. Where Do I Go?

The simple answer to this question is that you may not have to go anywhere to create your Web marketing program. Creating Web pages is not the most technically difficult project in the world, but understanding the technology and how to utilize it in an effective manner is a little more tricky.

Hundreds of thousands of firms and individuals are attempting to capitalize on the Web by publicizing themselves as "web presence developers." This title can mislead many because, although these developers can create Web pages, this is far from creating an on-line "presence."

Establishing a marketing program for the Web takes a firm that has a full understanding of this technology and this community. You should also deal with a firm that can handle every aspect of this program, from creating the marketing plan to handling the most complicated on-line technology.

5. When Do I Go On-Line?

To answer this question, do a little check of yourself and your organization. The first thing to ask is, "Have I researched this environment enough?" Before you spend money and time on developing a Web marketing plan, you should spend some energy surfing the Web. Spend time viewing what other companies and organizations are doing on the Web.

You don't necessarily have to reinvent the wheel to establish a working on-line scheme. Borrow ideas and concepts from other on-line sites and manipulate them to fit your individual situation. You can then take a conglomeration of these concepts and make a new and inventive program for your organization.

The research shows that more than one-third of manufacturing professionals use the Internet. Within the next 18 months, use of the Internet is expected to increase to 62%. Seven out of ten currently use it for product information and evaluation. And in addition, the research shows them spending over an hour per week using it. That time commitment and the increasing acceptance of the medium suggests marketers need to consider the Internet as a part of a comprehensive marketing program.

2. Why Your Banner Ads Don't Work

- Use Dynamic Creativity in Your E-Marketing Campaign. Use voice, music, movies, animation, and sound effects to enhance the impact of your message. If you have a banner ad, add sound to it. If you have an icon, make it work effectively for you by converting the icon into a QuickTime movie.
- Be Consistent With Your Message Throughout Your Entire Campaign. Your message should be consistent in both your digital marketing campaign and in your campaign across traditional media channels. A consistent message broadcast throughout the digital marketing campaign reinforces the same message along traditional advertising channels.
- Reinforce the Traditional Branding With a Consistent E-Branding. Whatever branding you are doing must be consistent in image and tone to the branding throughout your entire campaign.
- Follow Through With Consistent and Timely Back-up E-Campaigns. In the digital world, we're moving 7 times faster than everybody else. You must have a follow-up planned before you launch the first foray. Launch your first foray in e-marketing and be prepared with your second and third attack. Your second campaign has to be smart. It must reinforce what the first one said.
- Use Innovative Techniques in Your E-Marketing. Try a cool idea like a Virtual Post Card. The post card could be a screen capture of your home page or a more target-specific page on your web site. E-mail that post card to your customer, or prospect, to link the user directly to a particular page on your site. Virtual post cards are a brand new campaign idea, where you ensure that the message—a specific page link—gets to your user through an email message. It reinforces the visual message.
- Enhance Your Database So Your Message Reaches Your Target Audience. Ensure that you capture the data to fortify your database. The Number One problem e-marketers face is maintaining their database so that it's constantly up-to-date and properly categorized.
- Integrate Back-End Database Access Into Your E-Marketing. A fully integrated e-marketing program is just that—fully integrated. There is no one pushing paper behind the scenes to ensure follow-through. If you are a recruiter and advertising for people to apply online, invite them to apply inside a banner ad.
- Reinforce Your E-Campaign With Your Existing Customer Service Program. Follow up with voice mail after a customer purchases from you. If you're a true Web person, things that work for you will work with your audience.
- Reinforce Your E-Marketing Message Across Your Delivery Channels. Successful e-marketing means that you would have had contact through your Web site with your customer.
- Think Award-Winning Creative When Designing Your E-Marketing Campaign. As with all New Media, one can err in assuming that because it's digital, you can lower your creativity standards. Award-winning means the creative communicates effectively and meets the needs of the client or prospect.

3. Business to Everyone: Expanding B2B Boundaries

The Internet is reshaping many things, including the handling of customer relationships. Different market segments demand different treatments. B2B selling models are typically more complicated, involving buyers with unique business requirements and multiple buyers from the same company.

Expanding sales channels in a cost-effective manner is key. The fast-moving convergence of B2C and B2B business models has created a new "Business-to-Everyone" or B2E paradigm in which providing customers with a unique and personalized experience with quick and easy access to the right products and services is the rule, not the exception.

In the B2E world of e-commerce, selfservice options need to enable potential buyers to quickly and easily find, configure and purchase the right products and services at the right price while being easily searchable and intuitive. This process must be dynamically transactional: capturing, distributing and fulfilling orders promptly and accurately while providing status and details on demand throughout the fulfillment process.

B2E initiatives also must integrate with traditional selling processes.

If channel partners, distributors and resellers are part of the sales model, the automated sales experience must also synchronize with them.

For companies with multiple products and services, having a flexible platform that enables them to offer multidivisional products/solutions is essential. As such, the platform also must be able to integrate into multiple back-end systems.

It is clear that B2B companies now need to provide their customers with product and service catalogs, standardized pricing, promotions, order management, fulfillment and service. A B2E e-Business solution must support all these capabilities.

Companies that understand the Internet's impact has on consumer expectations and are actually able to provide an experience that meets each of their customers' unique preferences, whether they are B2C or B2B, will be the ones that find success.

4. What comes after the Web?

The number of new websites that go up daily and the increasing number of dollars generated in Web commerce should convince anyone that the face of business-to-business marketing is changing.

For starters, there is the process of creating the Internet presence; determining content, selecting vendors, tackling the need for ongoing maintenance and the like. In a sense, all that is just a question of engineering.

You begin with a plan. An analysis of the situation, an assessment of the opportunities and the development of measurable objectives and actionable strategies. Next, you integrate your "electronic" plan into the overall sales and marketing plan for the company.

Marketing's role in the organization has become more and more important. Proper market strategy, intelligent product definition and execution of without mistakes will separate winners from losers in a market economy with very little opportunities for error.

The role of marketing in this brave new world is to gather, manage and disseminate the information required by sales and customer service, and to manage the electronic marketplace. The first function is fulfilled by developing electronic presences and processes that capture inbound customer data, analyze it, categorize it, enhance it and pass it along.

The second role, managing the electronic marketplace, is a bit dicier. This is where we're breaking new ground. Interactive technologies don't just provide a new medium, they provide a new channel for customer interaction. Not only must we create a presence, but we have to make it easy to find, simple and effective.

Using interactive technologies to establish and enhance customer relationships is not an option. It is a must. Marketers must take the lead in capitalizing on this electronically-enabled ability to identify, acquire and interact with customers.

Being a winner in a technology-enabled world requires new ways of thinking about a company's organization and the traditional roles of the various structural components. Changing established structure is never an easy thing to do.

With some reflection on the implications of electronic technologies, very few would disagree that change is necessary to keep competitors from passing us by.

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