Internet Marketing and Other Techniques
for taking advantage of the World Wide Web

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Information on Web marketing as well as practical tips on Internet uses that workshops can take advantage of throughout their organization.

Overview

Qualify expertise and content—nobody is an expert, certainly not me. These are my opinions and observations after almost 10 years of observing MASWM and its efforts to get online, plus 30 years of experience in communications.

The Internet

What is it and how to Exploit It?

Marketing

It's sales

It's communications

It's sales

Some Basics You might Overlook

E-mail

Domain names

I. The Internet: What is it really?

Networked Computers…Including Yours

Most of this is obvious, but there are some gems in the assumptions that we have about the Internet:

• 24-7 Connection to Communicate Your Message

• Relatively Ease to Look Good:

> • "Free" 4-Color

> • "Unlimited Content"

• Easy To Target Multiple Audiences/Multiple Messages

• World-Wide Reach

What's Bad About It

• Everybody knows about it!

> It's free, unless you need to compete.

• It's open ended

> The standards are still being set

• And all the stuff no one talks about

> It's confusing

> You need a plug-in! (special and changing requirements)

> Spam

So Should You Ignore It?

Only if you want to go out of business…

It's a new telephone—would you pass on your directory listing?

It's replacing brochures and other materials—for smart businesses

It's even serving as a "store counter" and business tools

One recent report indicated that 34 percent of the households now have a Web connection. That's more than 1/3 and it's climbing every day. More importantly, an even higher percentage of businesses are now online.

What Can A Workshop Do?

First, Focus on What Works—Not What *Might* Be Possible

Establish a Web presence—GET A DOMAIN NAME. Today.

Build a Web site with pages to emphasize your key goals

You may need multiple sites or at least separate, categorized pages for business & "services"

Drive Traffic to Your Site(s)

Yes, search engines do matter

But build the site right first

Metatags

Keywords in content

Content content content! (Not smoke and mirrors!)

Submit to directories and search engines

Submit to local/regional/topical directories—including "pay" directories

Exchange links and submit to related sites

E-mail: not bulk e-mail spam but your present contacts. Start building an e-mail list TODAY.

Incentives and contests

But Most of All—use that URL on EVERYTHING you send out…and dream up new excuses to send it out again!

Letterhead, brochures, news releases, yellow pages, advertisements

What Do We Put On It?

It depends…. but here's some thoughts

List of Services

Testimonials

Case Histories

History

Who we Are

Virtual Tour

"More Information Request" form

News releases

Ask your customers what they need to know!

Some Common Misconceptions

Search engines are free

Well, sort of…

Automatic "submissions" eliminate submission "by hand"

Well, sort of…

Everyone will find you on a search engine

Well, sort of…

Directories are more useful—directories and other links, such as your local chamber, economic development group, business associations, etc. Identify these and market to them—including your Web site.

Measuring Success

Counters

Traffic Analysis

Phone Calls!

Sales!

What are we forgetting?

Your follow-up! The best Web site in the world must a dynamic part of your organizations. Someone should have responsibility for following up with contacts, leads, etc.

E-mail Ditto! Check and respond, daily or several times a day.

Updates Ditto! Update monthly or twice monthly if possible.

II. Let's Expand Some of these Ideas

Your Web Site's Key Goals: Your Web site's main purpose is to help market your workshop, its services and products.

Web Marketing Ideas

• Chris Maher in "The Ordinary Marketer," offers four experience-based rules for carrying out effective marketing: (1) choose measurable marketing methods, (2) target the relevant audience directly, (3) talk to customers to find out how you're doing, (4) make marketing an everyday component of business.

Other thoughts:

• Jay Conrad Levinson, author of "Guerilla Marketing," writes in "Guerrilla Marketing Online" that marketing online is not just having a Web site, and Web marketing is not conducted in a vacuum. In other words, put that URL EVERYWHERE and tie the Web effort to your other marketing efforts.

• Focus on targeting your audience and talking to customers—in person, through mail (e-mail and direct mail) and through the Web.

• Don't try to be all things to all people. Promote your strengths. If you are extremely strong in packaging hit that in talks, in flyers and on the Web.

What does this mean, really?

> Marketing is first of all communication: Letting people know what you have, how that benefits them and how they can get it. The Web can help do this very well.

>> Don't underestimate the value of simple bullet lists of services and products

>> But don't forget the opportunity for interactive online or downloadable order forms, "clickable" maps and other devices unique to the Internet.

> Marketing needs to be focused and audience-based.

>> You may need to consider whether it's practical to attempt a Web site that tries to communicate to consumers, parents and guardians, AND the public AND business customers.

>> If you have no choice—and you may not—be prepared to plan carefully. At least be aware that you are attempting to do several things with one tool and that some compromise will result.

>> If your sales and consumer services are on one site, be absolutely certain that there is a clear, easy-to-navigate path to your business services or products. And it might be wise to add separate sub-pages for areas such as mail services.

Marketing—as we're discussing it here—should be sales oriented.

Everything else is great, but sales are what you are after.

Examine and re-examine whether you are targeting what you need to sell. Do you need additional tools, features or elements to succeed (How are you contacting customers and promoting your products and services? Are there techniques to expand or support your effort?)

Make certain the Web site is connected to every part of your operation and visa versa—use the Web address EVERYWHERE and make sure the site has something of value for those visitors.

Budget for marketing

Marketing is something that requires time every day. Some days that may only be updating a mail or e-mail list of customers, but don't put it off…then wonder why sales are down.

Don't forget the soft sell, either.

Make your site interesting

Provide reasons for people to visit

Provide some interactive features, even if it's just a request for information mail form.

So how does this translate onto your Web site?

First, think of your Web site as an online brochure

Start with the information you would put in a brochure—services, products, quality and price information

Now realize that you can update this "brochure" much more easily than if it were printed with the latest prices, services or more

For example, after a postal hike, consider "avoid the latest postal increase by using our mail sorting services….."

Second, consider "traditional" marketing tie-ins that piggyback onto your Web site.

• Yellow Pages: "…For complete details see…"

• Newspaper or association advertisement: Outline a new program then, "For details about our new packaging program…"

• Direct mail and e-mail: Don't overlook "junk" mail and e-mail "spam."

Post cards to existing customers announcing a new service is not junk mail

Opt-in e-mail lists or targeted Web advertising is not spam.

They do take some homework but they can pay off. Consider building your own lists!

Third, move your customers to action.

> • Use online forms to make purchases/orders easy.

> • Offer "easy print" or downloadable information to make their work/purchase easier.

> • Backup your Web effort with staff.

>> • E-mail and other inquiries should be answered within 24 hours or sooner

>> • Organize the material needed for most responses

>> • Schedule follow-up

III **More Specifics + Tips & Tricks**

Design for the Web

> The Web is not just a letter or brochure published on the Internet.

> The unique medium requires several unique techniques to avoid pitfalls and make the most of your investment.

> **Low tech is good.** High tech is bad (more than you would think!)

>> **Frames** are bad for search engines. While most browsers today deal with them, they can ruin your search engine results and don't really add anything that other, better design can accomplish.

>> **Animations** (such as Flash) are bad. Okay, I love them, but how many plug-ins have you downloaded today, hmm?

>> **Load time** will always be an issue, no matter how much broadband you have. Even if YOU have DSL, cable or ISDN at your job, that doesn't mean your customer does. Or consider whether the customer's CEO might try to view your Web site while traveling. Will he have broadband on his laptop in the motel room? Probably not…

>> **Instead, spend your energy on organizing content, visualizing navigation and clarifying your message.** What are you selling? How can you best present it to your customers online?

> **Make it bite-sized—your content, that is.**

>> People read differently on a computer screen than on paper.

>> Use short paragraphs separated by double spaces.

>> Use graphics, but don't get carried away.

>> Overall, go for clear and clean as opposed to complex and murky.

> **Web design is usually a compromise**

>> Interactive and dynamic versus user friendly and accessible

>> Comprehensive versus easy to navigate

Search engine optimization

First understand Search engines

Two types: spiders and directories

Both to some degree utilize Metatags AND Content

Of the two, content is actually more important.

Metatags:

The "invisible" code for spiders

Almost everything is fair game

But no repeats in the metatag

It's okay to repeat in content…in fact, that's good!

Usability/alternate tags

This is good for accessibility and some spiders/search engineers use this as a grading factor.

So, How do you get to the "top" of the search engine? You can't.

Why? Consider: How many companies in the United States provide packaging services? How many have Web sites? How many have bigger budgets than you?

Yahoo is now charging $300 for the honor.

But, by combining all of these factors AND re-doing the effort every 6-12 months, you can achieve relatively high positions.

Search engine submission:

Free listings/search submission services are okay, but the best results generally come from the painstaking effort of submitting your site by hand. Target the top ones: Google, Yahoo, the "Open Directory," Excite, etc.

Content: Who, what when where why

Don't be afraid to redesign

The lifespan of a Web site is measured in "dog years."
Like it or not, they get stale pretty quickly. Plan on redoing or at least modifying regularly. Update regularly.

Remember immediacy in the short term, too

People on the Internet are increasingly habituated to instant gratification. If you're selling a product, you should accept credit cards, either in real-time or offline ASAP.

Respond to inquiries quickly. Set up a schedule.

Other tips & tricks, in no particular order:

Register a domain today. In fact, register several.

If nothing else, owning a domain will allow you to avoid EVER CHANGING YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS AGAIN!

Instead of joe@hotspot.com (which you'll change in a year to joe@hotdot.com) you will be joe@workshop.com. You'll own that. Even if you change providers, you carry that address with you for as long as you own it.

As more of your business involves e-mail, this is going to become a major factor, if it has not already.

Businesses are starting to conduct business by e-mail as much as by fax and phone. If your address is a "moving target" you are very apt to lose business.

Owning a domain costs $35 a year and will soon be as fundamental as your phone number in the yellow pages. Consider one for consumer services, workshop services and/or products, even if you don't operate complete Web sites for each address.

Gain control of your e-mail

E-mail and especially spam are a pain, but they're not the big deal many make them out to be. Do the following:

1) Budget 15 minutes each morning and in the afternoon to sort e-mail.

2) Run through all new e-mail and immediately trash obvious junk mail. You KNOW what that is!

3) Create some organization as allowed by your e-mail program. Create separate "mailboxes" or folders for separate customers, that kind of thing. You might even be able to create "filters" that automate some of this process

4) If you "don't have time for this," consider whether you have time to spend 10-20 minutes on the phone in place of EACH of those e-mail messages.

Companies and individuals are using the e-mail instead of the phone and instead of the fax, more every day.

Budget for marketing

Not just money, but time.

Not just the Web, but all forms of marketing.

To often, the "dirty work" is allowed to slip. But this usually means a lost of product and service promotion on one end, and follow-up on the other. And these are the two things that often result in new sales.