

Internet Marketing

The Internet Marketing Academy



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Preface

Introduction To Internet Marketing

Internet Marketing can look a little daunting with all of its many components. SEO, PPC, Social Media, Blogs, plus much more! – it can all be quite overwhelming.

In this textbook you will cover the essential topics that make up Internet Marketing as an activity.

It covers where the internet has been and where it is today and it describes what all of the main marketing activities are online.

Sean McPheat, a serial entrepreneur and internet marketing authority is the author of this publication. Sean owns many successful online businesses ranging from an International Training business through to dozens of mini sites selling different products and services online. Sean is the founder of the Internet Marketing Academy which aims to improve the standards of internet marketing around the globe. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He's been featured in over 250 different publications.

Sean is a high in demand consultant and speaker on topics related to internet marketing and making money online and estimates show that he has created over £20,000,000 of leads and £6,000,000 of sales all through the internet. That does not include all of the millions that he has helped his clients to make!



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1 Introduction

The Internet has drastically changed the way that companies design their marketing strategies. Whereas marketing may have once been limited to a specific geographical area, the Internet has meant that marketing strategies and targeted demographics can be greatly widened since the web knows no true geographic boundaries. At the same time, the easy access of the web also means that your competition has changed as well. Before you might have had one or two major competitors in town; now you're competing against everyone who has a website.

Still, that's not all bad news. Particularly if the competition doesn't fully understand how the rules of Internet marketing are different from the rules of traditional marketing. With this ebook, you'll learn the basics of Internet marketing and how you can use that information to stand out from the competition. But first, let's start with a basic review of what we mean by marketing and its related activities.

Marketing is the full range of activities that you undertake - both on and off the web - in order to make certain that you are meeting your customers' needs and that you are receiving enough in return for doing so.

1.1 What is Marketing?

When you think about what marketing entails, are you clear on exactly what is included? A good definition of marketing is that it is the full range of activities that you undertake - both on and off the web - in order to make certain that you are meeting your customers' needs and that you are receiving enough value in return for doing so. Note that we said 'enough' value; you need to be receiving enough in return that it is worth the time and investment that you are taking to provide the service or product that you offer.

Marketing is related to advertising, promotion, PR, and sales, but is actually a distinct activity that helps prepare you and your organization to perform the related activities thoroughly and well. You could actually think of advertising, promotion, PR, and sales as being influenced by your Internet marketing strategy, such as in Figure 1 below.

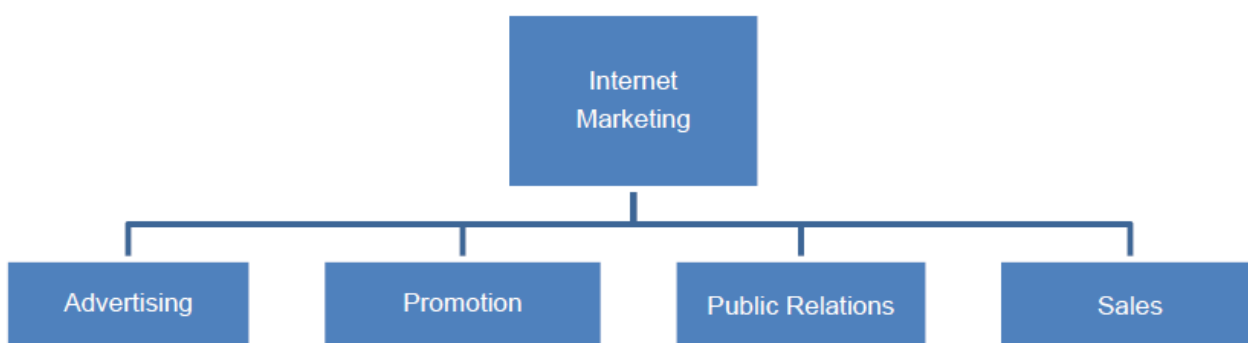


Figure 1: Internet Marketing Influences Other Related Activities

Internet marketing, like marketing off-site (off of your website), requires that you know enough about your customers and markets that you know how best to price, sell, and distribute your product or service. Doing so requires a level of marketing research and the development of a marketing plan. But before we discuss marketing research and planning, let's look further at how Internet marketing is related to other activities by defining each one and how they are performed in the online environment.

1.1.1 Advertising

Advertising is the process of bringing your product or service to the attention of your prospects and customers. For Internet marketing, this means finding new ways to drive traffic, or visitors, to your website. Online advertising can take many forms: banner ads, pay-per-click (PPC) ads, links placed on other websites and more. Usually advertising is focused on one product at a time or one segment of your target market at a time. So, your Internet marketing plan might require several different advertising campaigns in order to help generate the number of customers and sales that you need. Advertising can and should also occur off-line, through direct mail, commercials, personal representation, or other collateral, always including your website address so that customers can learn more about you online. Advertising may also involve ways of letting your customers know about special offers or pricing that is limited in time or scope.

1.1.2 Promotion

Promotion can be thought of as the way to keep your company, product, or service in front of your customer. It can help to generate more demand for the product as well. Whereas it might include advertising as part of your promotional strategy, it also includes publicity, public relations, and sales. Some of this promotion can be done online through sales efforts, press releases, offering a free information product, or writing targeted email campaigns, but some will also be done off-line. Any effort that you make to improve or enhance the image of your organization, sell more products, or get the name of your organization into the thoughts of your customers and potential customers is part of promotion.

1.1.3 Public Relations

Public relations, or PR, involves developing your company's image and brand so that it is perceived by the public in the way you want it to be perceived. For example, you might want your company to be seen as the leader of the pack in your field, or you might focus on showcasing the community service that your company provides in the areas where they operate. When you are speaking about an online form of public relations, you need to consider first and foremost what your website looks like and how it operates. Is it young and trendy because that's who your target audience is? Or is it more traditional and less focused on social media because your products appeal to an older demographic? Your website can be thought of as the "front line" of your public relations strategy.

PR also involves representing your organization to the media. You should have someone designated to speak to the press who is able to represent your organization's interests and strengthen the image you want to portray – as well as answering any questions about your products or services. Your PR department or representative would send press releases announcing new products or services, answer complaints that the press might have picked up on, and generally be 'the face' of your company to the public. This might require adopting some form of technology on your website so that the press and customers can both communicate with you.

1.1.4 Sales

This activity is the easiest to understand. It's the act of locating, informing, and agreeing on terms of the purchase with your customers. Before the Internet, this would have happened by attempting to drive customers into your store or onto your phone lines. Today, many people will first look for you online. So in online sales, you need to help your customers find you. However, the Internet is full of other websites clamoring for the attention of the same customers. You will need to actively market your company, your services, and your products to reach these customers. There are a number of strategies that we will discuss that will help you do just that.

You need to be familiar with the “new rules” of marketing if you are going to develop an effective Internet marketing plan.

1.2 Old vs. New Rules of Marketing

Before addressing specific steps towards Internet marketing, let's look at how marketing has changed in regards to the “digital age.” Due to the fact that so much of a company's presence is now dependent on multiple streams of media, the way that marketing activities are implemented has changed. You need to be familiar with the “new rules” of marketing if you are going to develop an effective marketing plan.

1.2.1 The Old Rules

The old paradigm of marketing was focused on delivering a one-way message from the organization to the potential customer. The idea was that the more creative the message and marketing campaign, the more likely the customer would be to respond by purchasing the product or service. Other characteristics of the old marketing rules include:

- Advertising was key
- Advertisements were meant to appeal to the general public
- Advertising campaigns ran for a specific period of time
- Awards were pursued for advertising campaigns
- Audience may have felt interrupted by advertising messages
- PR was a separate function from advertising

PR had its own set of rules that companies would follow. The main goal of the public relations department was to generate a press release that would grab the attention of members of the press and then use that attention to show that the audience was getting the message. Some other aspects of the old public relations format:

- All effort was focused on getting the message out to the public
- The press release was the most important tool
- The PR department was at the mercy of the press for success
- Successful PR required creative 'spin'

1.2.2 The New Rules

Since the advent of the Internet, information is everywhere and available to everyone. Instead of getting the attention of the press in order to be successful, marketing and public relations now require that a company get the attention of the individuals surfing the Internet. The most successful marketing and PR campaigns are the ones that get the organization 'found' on the Internet. Some of the new rules include:

- People are well informed and expect the truth rather than 'spin'
- Interruptions won't be well tolerated in the age of DVRs and email filters for SPAM
- People demand value for their time and money and will use the Internet to get it
- Marketing and PR are designed to appeal to niche audiences
- Marketing and PR employ multiple techniques to reach those audiences
- Content stays online permanently so there is no end to a campaign

Marketing and PR can now also take advantage of the new tools available. Media is no longer limited to just articles, direct mail, TV, radio, newspapers, telephone, and press releases – it is multifaceted and requires multiple methods of approaching the customer in order to be effective. The new marketing paradigm requires that the company deliver quality content via a number of the tools available today such as:

- Web sites and pages
- Blogs
- Social media sites
- Articles in directories
- Videos and video blogs
- Podcasts

With all of these tools available, companies have to be able to adapt their marketing and PR tactics in order to reach their customers in the ways that they are now available to be reached. You have to be where the customers are if you want them to hear the message or messages that you are trying to deliver. How you will do so is what you will determine with your Internet marketing plan.

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2 The Five Ps of Internet Marketing

One popular definition of marketing is known as the Five P's of marketing. The five P's refer to the type of decisions that you will have to make when you effectively market your product. These decision categories still apply in Internet marketing, though the decisions you make around them may differ when you are dealing with an online environment vs. a "brick and mortar" store or location.

The traditional Five Ps of marketing: Product, People, Price, Promotion and Place still apply in Internet Marketing.

These decision categories are:

- **Product** – The physical product or the service that you are offering to the customer. You will decide what to sell or offer, how it should appear, what customer service support will come with it, and any warranty or additional aspects of the product that will be included. You may be offering the same product or service as dozens, hundreds, or thousands of other websites, so you'll need to somehow distinguish yourself from the pack if the customer is to choose your offering over all the others.
- **People** – The people decisions that you will make are those that refer to how you want your customer service representatives to interact with your customers. How will they be instructed to work with the customer? How will you make sure they have the information they need to help the customer? How will you incorporate your current customer service strategies into your Internet strategies? Will you offer live support even to online customers?
- **Price** – Pricing decisions are made based on profit margins, pricing that competitors use, and the demand in the market. You will also have to make decisions regarding when to offer price discounts and whether or not you'll allow financing or other payment arrangements. With the Internet market, you'll need to compete on price but also on shipping charges and any other fees that might change what the customer pays for the product or service.
- **Promotion** – As described earlier, promotion decisions will need to be made regarding how you will communicate and sell to your potential customers. You'll have to decide what you can afford to spend on promotions as well based on the expected return on investment (ROI). If not done carefully, you could easily spend thousands of dollars on promotion activities that do not provide any significant return on investment. Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is one example; if it's not delivering you buying customers, you will spend a lot of money for little to no results.

- **Place** – Also sometimes called Placement, these decisions regard how you will distribute your product or service to the customer. Will you have a store front shop in addition to your website? Will you deliver the items yourself or will you simply resell someone else's products for them (called being an affiliate)? Will you offer immediate delivery of electronic information products or just use your website as a tool to drive customers to a live location?

Let's look at each of the P's in more detail.

2.2 Product

As mentioned above, each P in Internet marketing refers to a series of decisions that you are going to need to make. For the Product aspect of Internet marketing, you need to make decisions regarding the following:

- **Functionality** – what does the product do? What does it not do? This is a list of some of the features of the product. These are the basis for the benefits that help a customer determine which product(s) they will purchase. In an online environment, remember that your website itself is part of your product offering. If it is difficult to navigate, confusing, or it's hard to find what the customer is looking for, you will lose them. If a customer can't find what they need on your website, they are more likely to click over to your competition's site than to call you and ask for assistance.
- **Appearance** – will you make the product look modern? Vintage? Rock and roll? Sleek and sophisticated? You have to appeal to the person that you hope will purchase your product or service, and the appearance of the product and even the appearance of its packaging is important in conveying the message that you want to send to the public. Again, the appearance of your website is crucial here as well. It should match what your product or service is and it should convey an image of your company that you want it to convey.
- **Quality** – the quality of your product or service needs to match the message you are sending to the customers in your marketing. If you promise luxury and deliver poor quality, your reputation is going to suffer greatly. Your quality should at least meet and hopefully exceed what you promise to the customer. Additionally, your website, order fulfillment, follow-up emails, electronic information or any other online interaction with the customer should convey that same sense of quality.
- **Packaging** - What does the packaging communicate to your customers? Is it consistent with the message that you've been sending in your marketing? It should communicate the same level of quality and functionality you promised. It should match with the 'vibe' of your marketing – youthful, funky, upscale, high tech – whatever you've been promising. The packaging should always complement the product. The copy should highlight the major benefits of the product for those who haven't decided to purchase it yet. What features and benefits are the true sellers? Be sure to reference them on your packaging - and of course, on your website.

- Brand – Is this a new brand? Is it a new version of an existing brand? How are you making the connection between the new and the old? Or how are you being sure the new brand is distinct enough from the old brand that people will recognize there has been a change? Is there a new name, a new color, a new style? New features? If your branding isn't clear to you, it won't be clear to the customers. Your website and any Internet marketing you do should strengthen and complement your brand - customers should recognize your company whether they see it online or live.
- Warranty – The warranty has multiple affects on your product. First, of course, there is the financial implication of a warranty that needs to be considered. Second, there is the practical side of implementing a warranty – how will it work? How long will it be? What will it cover and what will it not?

But from a marketing perspective, you need to consider the message that your warranty delivers to your customers. A short warranty communicates that the quality might be low. A long warranty communicates a standard of quality that the customer can depend on. How you design the warranty depends on what message you want your customers to get. In an age where so much business is done online, an effective guarantee might drive a customer to choose your product or service over the competition's site where there is no warranty given.

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- Service/Support – It's inevitable that a customer will eventually have a problem with your product or service. Customers know this – they have experience with similar products or services that have told them that. So when you are marketing your product, you need to consider what level of service or support you want to communicate to your customers. What can they expect from you if there ever is a problem? How will they receive help? Will it be easy or difficult? Are there multiple options for getting help or only one number that constantly rings busy or places them on hold for a long time?

When you are marketing your product or service, you need to consider what level of service or support you want to provide to your customers. Remember that some customers may expect you to offer some kind of "live" support, particularly when doing business with you for the first time.

It's been said that one satisfied customer will perhaps tell someone about their experience with your company. But a dissatisfied customer will tell at least seven people about their negative experience with you. The level of service or support you offer could mean the difference between whether or not a customer is satisfied. This is even more true in the Internet age, where forums, blogs, videos and other forms of customer feedback can find a wide audience. At the same time, positive reviews of your products on your website can help communicate a lot about your company to new potential customers.

2.3 People

When you are marketing a product or service, you are also marketing the people that provide that customer or service. In an Internet era, that often means that you need to establish yourself in a niche by building a reputation (or brand) for your expertise or the service that your people offer. You want to consider how you will do that, particularly considering the following:

- Knowledge - If you have spent any time online, there are probably a few sites that you visit regularly because they offer you the level or type of information or product that you want. You have come to expect that same level of information or that same type of product or experience from them. You may view them as a reputable source of information or a reliable expert who has demonstrated their knowledge to you. Now if that person or website recommends a new product, you are more likely to purchase something from them than if you saw it on a website that you were not already familiar with. For this reason, part of your Internet marketing strategy may be to establish yourself or your company as a source of reliable, valuable information. There are a number of ways to do this that we will discuss in a future chapter.
- Service – Do you know what your customers expect from your salespeople, your customer service people, and your technical support people? Are you ready to provide that level of service, even in an online environment? Have you planned to train your people so that they can provide that level of service? How will your need for providing service impact the way that you hire your staff? How will you make sure that you communicate the importance of service to your customers? How will you monitor an online environment to ensure your customers are getting the service they want?

- Attitude – Although you might not think about this one initially, the attitude your people carry - even through online transactions, emails, or other forms of communication - will also communicate a message to your customers. Are they responsive and helpful, answering emails, texts, or the phone quickly and with the desired information? What do you want the impression to be of your people when your customers leave their online interaction with them? Think about how you will encourage the right attitude from your people, even in an online environment.

2.4 Price

Pricing is one of the most challenging areas of your Internet marketing strategy to address. There are websites and web-based services designed to search through the Internet and return with the best prices available on a certain product or service. In this kind of price-centric environment, how do you decide what price to set for your product or service?

In one survey of 1,000 adults, 43% responded that price was the most important factor when choosing to make a purchase online, with an additional 18% saying that free shipping was most important.

You need to price your products and services competitively, but at the same time set them high enough that you cover your costs and provide yourself and any other workers with a salary. But there is more to pricing than just covering your costs and overhead. The strategy that you use to price your products and services depends on the type of industry you are in, the quality and position of the competition you have, the activity in the market itself, and several other factors.

2.4.1 How Important is Price?

In the Internet marketplace, pricing is vital. In one survey of 1,000 adults, 43% responded that price was the most important factor when choosing to make a purchase online, with an additional 18% saying that free shipping was most important. The next highest rated category was special promotions or coupons at 8%, followed by 7% claiming recommendations and product reviews as most important.

When you have to compete in such an environment, how you set your pricing could be the difference between success and failure. Plus, you may need to be much more responsive to pricing changes in the market than you would have to be in a “brick and mortar” environment. For example, if your competitor drops his price, you may need to drop yours as well. Whereas in a live environment, there are barriers to comparison shopping like driving to and from multiple stores, those barriers don’t exist in an online environment. Clicking through several sites or searching for the lowest price is a matter of a few seconds.

If you cannot compete on price due to your costs, you will need to work harder at positioning yourself in the marketplace as an expert, or by offering other benefits to the customer that your competition will not. That might be excellent customer service, an extended warranty, customized features, faster delivery, or any number of other offerings that could make you stand out as the clear choice despite price.

2.4.2 Demand for the Product or Service

Do you have an understanding of how your price will affect demand for your product or service? If you do any market research that involves identifying your potential customers, what are they likely to be willing to pay for your product or service over the competition's? If you raise your price 10%, what percentage of customers will you lose? If the answer is none, then raise the price. If the answer is 50%, you will want to rethink that pricing strategy. You can determine a lot by studying your competitors' pricing, but you also might want to hire a market research firm for more detailed information.

The phenomenon of Internet shopping can also drive prices much higher when demand is high. With websites like eBay.com, auctions can drive the price of a highly desired item much higher than the normal pricing for that same object. This is not what you see in regular "brick and mortar" stores - for example, at Christmas time, local stores don't hike up the price of a popular toy by a hundred percent simply because it is in high demand. But you will find that kind of pricing on certain websites. Of course, customers have a long memory, so hiking up pricing when demand is high simply for the sake of making additional profit may damage your business in the long-run. But this is an example of a pricing decision you might face in Internet marketing that you wouldn't have to consider otherwise.


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2.4.3 Your Environment

In some cases, your pricing will be influenced by factors in your environment that are entirely out of your control. For example, there may be government or other legal restrictions on what you are allowed to charge. In e-commerce (electronic commerce or Internet selling), you may need to charge sales tax to customers who you are shipping the product to who live in the state where you are licensed to do business. Check with your Secretary of State's Office to find out what your responsibilities are for charging and reporting sales tax.

Also consider whether or not you have an online and offline sales environment. For example, if you have a “brick and mortar” shop where you sell the same items as you do online, will your pricing be the same in both locations? There are arguments for and against making your pricing the same. First, it communicates a consistent face to the customer, whether they come into the shop or go home and shop online. Remember that some customers might come into the store or onto the website first but then make the purchase through the opposite channel, so having different price points for the different channels might communicate a poor image to a customer. However, at the same time, if it costs you less to provide your product or service online and you are doing your best to compete, you may feel that reducing the online price will broaden your appeal to customers who will never enter your live store due to their location. You will need to make your decision based on what you believe your customers need and want from you.

2.4.5 Pricing Strategies

There are several other pricing strategies for you to consider. A few popular ones include:

- **Maximize the quantity sold.** If you can get a good reduction on the costs of production by maximizing the number produced (known as economy of scale), then you might want to just sell as many products as you can even if it means a smaller return on each individual item. This can be a powerful strategy for penetrating new markets as well and may also drive traffic to your website that otherwise wouldn't visit it.
- **Target return pricing.** In this scenario you determine your price by first deciding what you want your Return on Investment (ROI) to be. This can be important if you have investors to whom you have promised a specific return on their investment, or if you have invested your own money in your company and you need to recover that investment in a specific amount of time. If this requires that you price yourself above the competition, you need to make sure that you offer enough value in other ways so that Internet-savvy shoppers will still be willing to pay your price.
- **Value-based pricing.** Using this strategy, you determine what the value is that the customer places on the product or service and charge accordingly. For example, if you produce something that will cut a customer's costs or increase their revenues, you may be able to charge a higher rate, even if it only cost you 10% of that price to produce it. In many cases, this can be the most profitable way to price products and services because it is dependent on what people are willing to pay rather than what you had to spend to produce or deliver your offering. Remember too that your perceived value will increase if you can establish the niche expertise that we discussed earlier.

- **Popular price points** – These are prices which people are conditioned to paying or are conditioned to perceiving as value for their money. Examples include 99 cent menus at fast-food restaurants, or prices like \$19.99 or \$49.99. Even if a popular price point is lower than where you would have otherwise set your price, you might make up for it by increasing the volume of sales that you receive. Since Internet shopping is a highly visual experience, setting a visually appealing popular price point is a very good idea.
- **Fair pricing** – In this strategy, you are charging a price that is within the range of what a customer considers to be a fair price for that product or service. Even if you are the only provider in your area, customers will resist you if they perceive your prices as ‘price gouging.’ If you choose this strategy, you should set your prices by doing market research to make sure that your potential customers will consider your pricing to be fair for what you are offering. With the ease of Internet shopping, you should always be aware of what your competitors are offering and what customers are saying about a company’s pricing.

It may take some time for you to identify the best pricing strategy for your business, but eventually you will learn what the market and your customers will accept as a price for your product or service and you will be able to make your decisions accordingly.

2.5 Place

Gone are the days when you could consider only your local geographic area as a possible place for selling your product or service. With the advent of the Internet, customers no longer stay just in their local neighborhood when they are looking for something. They could buy it from someone across the country – or even across the globe. So you need to think about several aspects about where you will sell your product or service and how it will affect your online - and offline - operations.

- **Channel Motivation** – each channel you sell through, you need to be able to motivate your customers to take action through that channel. For example, if you sell a specific product, you could sell it through your own website as well as through a major retailer like Amazon.com. Each sales channel may require different marketing, advertising, and promotional activities so that you can recoup the investment you’ve made in that marketing channel. You also need to monitor the effectiveness of each channel so that you are sure you are getting the kind of customer response that you need.
- **Market Coverage** – what range of the market are you going to attempt to cover with your marketing efforts? Which other websites will you advertise on, and how will you choose them? Of course, this requires some understanding of what you already have gained in terms of marketing coverage as well as knowing where your customers are already surfing. Will you start by attempting to maintain customers you already have from your “brick and mortar” business, or will you be aggressive and attempt to gain a certain new percentage of customers the first year you roll a new product out? You can drive many of your other Internet marketing decisions by this decision.

- Logistics – For each decision you make on where, to whom, and how you plan to sell your product or service, both online and offline, you have to be able to carry through on the operational, logistical side of the sales equation. For example, do you have the means to fulfill the orders from all the channels you use? If you use multiple websites to sell your product, can you comply with their fulfillment requirements? Will you have to maintain certain levels of stock ahead of time, or can you develop it as it is sold? Do you have delivery channels in place? What about support channels? All of the logistics need to be in place if you are going to be successful on the fulfillment end of the marketing process.
- Service levels – In this aspect of the Place decisions, you want to consider if you will offer the same level of service both online and offline. As we’ve mentioned, providing excellent customer service for online customers could be the key to keeping a customer from clicking over to the next website.

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2.6 Promotion

When it comes to online promotion, you have a myriad number of choices. Most companies will focus on one or two of them, but might not capitalize on all of them. For you to compete successfully, your Internet marketing strategy should take advantage of as many opportunities as possible to attract and keep visitors on your website.

- Advertising – What kind of advertising will you put in place for your product or service? How will you integrate any online advertising with offline advertising? One strategy is to use your offline advertising to drive your visitors to your website, where you can then advertise anything and everything you want. But knowing how to blend online and offline advertising requires that you know who your customers are, where they will be on the Internet or off it, and how they can best be reached.
- Personal selling – Will you still have personal selling, as in, will you be doing personal face-to-face marketing? Remember that if your website is the sales channel, there may still be salespeople behind it who need to close the sale - or fulfill the sale. Also, building relationships with your client base online is key if you want to become known as an expert and someone that your customers will buy from again in the future. You have a number of ways to still sell with a personal touch online, even if you are never face-to-face with the customer. We'll talk about these possible strategies more in later chapters.
- Public relations – A company's reputation is critical in sales. The PR efforts you undertake both online and offline can make the difference between a customer choosing your product vs. the competition's. For example, are you a community-oriented organization? Do you talk about that on your website or link to press coverage about it from your homepage? Is your product or service more earth-friendly than others? Again, do you tell customers that on your website? The image you communicate to the public – your potential customer base – is something to consider when you choose Internet marketing strategy.
- Message – Can you condense your marketing message down to a few words? Your elevator speech, so to speak? If you boiled down all of your promotional efforts to one phrase, this is the message – it is the basic information you want every customer to know about your product, service and organization. It could be the basis for all of your online and offline advertising and what you want the customer to walk away remembering about your offering.
- Media – what additional types of media will you use, and how will you integrate them with your online advertising and marketing? The answer to this depends on whether or not your customers would receive your messages in those other channels. Does your target customer listen to the radio? Which stations? Does your target customer read magazines or newspapers? Which ones?

Yes, you can market solely online, but consider what you will do if you have customers who want to “see something in writing.” Will you just ignore those potential customers? Many people will choose to focus on online advertising and marketing because of the low cost of entry; you don't have to pay for thousands of brochures or more for media time. But eventually, a well thought-out Internet and offsite marketing plan will involve all media channels where customers might be located.

- Budget – Finally, your promotional efforts are limited by the amount of money that you have to spend on them. Again, many internet-based marketing methods can be relatively inexpensive or even free - but then some can be very expensive. For example, you could pay tens of dollars per click on Pay-per Click advertising that lands you on the first page of Google’s ads for certain keywords or phrases (we’ll discuss this more in a later chapter). If each click results in a thousand dollars of sales, that rate of cost will be worth it. But most businesses will need to find a balance of Internet marketing methods that will drive traffic to their site and then experiment to see what methods prove to deliver the most sales.

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3 Website 101 – Your Front Line of Internet Marketing

3.1 Introduction

When you want to compete in the Internet market, everything you do is geared towards driving site traffic, or people surfing the net, to a desired website. That could be your website's sales page, your homepage, or even another provider's page if you are an affiliate of theirs (an affiliate is someone who sells another company's products in exchange for a commission on the sale). But if the website that the visitor is directed to is not optimal, you will not get the sales that you want.

When you want to compete in the Internet market, everything you do is geared towards driving site traffic to a desired web site.

Additionally, the website itself is a form of online marketing for your business. If it is designed correctly, search engines will recognize your website as having the results that your potential customers are looking for. In this chapter, we'll talk about how to optimize your website so that it both attracts and keeps customers.

3.2 Design Basics

Your website should be designed with your end goals in mind. For example, if you want to sell products on your website, you will need some e-commerce software and applications so that you can create a product catalog and complete a sale. But if your website is designed to be informational so that you can draw visitors and build a reputation for yourself, you won't necessarily need e-commerce applications. Here are some basic considerations for creating a website that will help you with your Internet marketing goals.

What do you want your web site to do? You can't design it until you know exactly what type of experience you want your customers to have and what actions you want them to take when visiting it.

3.2.1 Your Domain Name

The domain name, or address for your website, is an important step in effective Internet marketing. It needs to be easy to remember, easy to spell, and ideally, somehow related to your business name or idea. If you are already established offline, then a good domain name will be the same as your business name. If you are not yet established offline and are creating just an online business, then the domain name you choose is up to you. It should be catchy and it should contain your keywords. We'll talk more about keywords when we discuss search engine optimization (SEO) of your website, but they are the words that someone searching for you would enter into a search engine in order to find you.

For example, if you sell cell phones in Texas, a possible domain name would be `texascellphones.com`. However, some people argue that the shorter the domain name, the better. Shorter names tend to be easier to remember for the average customer. Whatever method you use for choosing a domain name, there are always exceptions to the rule. Think about `Amazon.com`, one of the largest sales channels on the Internet. Their name is now their brand, but it was one that had to be built from scratch.

The new Top Level Domain (TLD) `.co` is gaining some recognition as a global TLD, particularly with the conversion of companies like `Overstock.com` to `O.co`.

Also consider the Top Level Domain (TLD) - the ending or endings you will use for your domain name. They are designed to be used as follows:

- `.us`, `.uk` or other two letter country designations identify the country of the business
- `.biz` is for business use
- `.com` is for commercial websites
- `.net` was originally designed for networking technology companies but is now general use
- `.edu` is for educational organization websites
- `.gov` is for government websites
- `.org` is for nonprofit organization websites
- `.info` is for informational websites
- `.co` is a new domain that is global but not yet as recognized as `.com`

If you are concerned about competition using your domain name but with a different top level domain ending, you can always purchase more than one domain and set the second or third domains to “point” to your main website - or even to a specific page on your main website. This is helpful for another reason as well; you can have more than one domain name so that you can do some split testing in your marketing campaigns. For example, you could use one domain name in one campaign and another domain name in a separate campaign and see which one pulls in more customers (note that you don’t need to have a separate domain to run split tests - you can often get the information you need from the advertising platform’s software).

You can always choose to have more than one domain name with different TLDs and then have them “point” to your main homepage.

3.2.2 Your Contact Information

Although it should be obvious, make sure that your customers have easy access to a way to contact you about your business and your website - even if it is only an email address for a virtual business. Include a phone number, fax number, email address, and, if you have a “brick and mortar” location, include your physical address and ideally, a map application that allows the customer to find you and get directions.

Consider the fact that in a web-based interaction, customers may still want to speak to a live person - particularly when doing business with you for the first time.

Also, you may need to build a customer’s confidence in you and your site before they are willing to conduct business with you entirely online. Consider what hours you might be available by phone if someone wants to talk to a live person, and put that information up there. You can also hire companies that provide chat assistance to your customers, or that will answer a 1-800 number so that your organization appears larger than it is. Whatever you decide to provide as far as contact information, be sure that the customer will be able to get the information they need - preferably when they want or need it. If they can’t get that information, just realize that they might go on to the competition’s site instead.

3.2.3 Appearance

You get less than five seconds to make a first impression on a visitor to your website. If the appearance of the site is too busy, too “loud,” too full of blinking, flashing ads, or too devoid of immediate information, you are not going to keep that customer on your site. The design should be pleasing to look at and convey the brand image you want your customers to have about your business. Fonts should be easy to read and clearly understood. Graphics should focus the reader’s attention where it needs to be focused but not be overly done. Be sure to look at the website of multiple competitors to see how their sites appear. Next, you need to make sure that the site works.

You get less than five seconds to make a first impression on a visitor to your website.

3.2.4 Functionality and Maneuverability

The key question you need to answer when designing your website is this: what do you want it to do? Make a list of all the things you want your customers to experience on your website. Do you want them to see every product you make? Do you want them to be able to fill in a form that will result in a customized offer? Do you want them to only read the contact information plus a few facts that let them know who you are so they can call you on the phone or come in to your shop? Or do you want your site to be THE place that visitors come to when they have a question related to the product or service that you offer?

Beyond that, think about what you want automated on your website. In lead generations online, one major thing anyone should want their website to do is to somehow capture the email addresses of the people that visit the site. Why should they give you an email address? What are you offering in return? What will need to be automated so that the customer receives their offer right away? Plus, what data will you want to collect behind the scenes? What information do you want to know about your customers when they visit your site?

Make sure you also consider what you want the person to do when they are done at your site. How will you gauge whether their visit to your site has been a success? Will they have clicked through to someone else's site to make a purchase? Or will they have purchased something directly from your site? Will they sign up for your newsletter? Your e-zine? (We'll talk about these things in a later chapter in more detail).

Make sure you also consider what you want the person to do when they are done at your site. How will you gauge whether their visit to your site has been a success?

Your site needs to support the functions of everything that you have decided you want it to do. Of course, this may be expensive, so you may need to create the site in stages. Talk to your web designer about how you can stage the design so that customers will still be drawn to the site and will still take the action you want them to.

Also think about what information is "fixed" and what information will change over time - and be sure that your website design allows you to change this information easily when needed. For example, your homepage may not need to change much information from time to time. But if you have a calendar, a news page, or even a product page with prices on it, you will want to change that information from time to time. Be sure you know what will be involved if you can't make the changes yourself - including what time frame is required and what the costs will be.

Remember that some information on your website may be "fixed," and rarely, if ever, need to change. However, some information such as news, updates, prices, promotions, or more may need to change on a regular basis. You want to be sure you have the ability to change it when needed.

Finally, one of the most important things you can do is test the site to make sure it is user-friendly. Links should make sense and be organized well. For example, if I'm looking for pricing information, it should be under the tab where I would look for pricing information - be it in a catalog or in a rate sheet that you can update and change from time to time. If you aren't sure where information should go on your site, create a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) page and divide it into categories that make sense to the reader such as Ordering, Shipping, Warranty, Repairs, Returns, Technical Support, Free Quotes or whatever makes sense for your type of business.

Next, have someone else navigate the site and attempt to perform whatever functions your site is designed to perform. Do they get the right information? Does the site redirect them to the right page once they have made a purchase or signed up for something? Are all the links on the page that are internal to the site (leading to other pages on your website) and external to the site (leading to other websites on the Internet) working? You'll want to routinely check that the links leading to other pages are still working, otherwise it can make your site appear out of date. Be sure you have identified a webmaster for your site - whether it is you or the company that designed your site, so that you have a way for people to let you know when there are problems with the site.

4 Basic Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

4.1 Introduction

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has become a buzzword with Internet marketers. In fact, it is so important for drawing targeted traffic to your site that there are companies that exist only to help you optimize your site for the search engines. Therefore, this is an introduction to SEO and how you can use it to your advantage; however, it is not an exhaustive explanation. Plus, the rules that govern how search engines read your site and how they rank your site are always changing.

There are companies that exist only to help you and other website owners optimize sites for search engines.

However, there are some basic SEO rules that will help you with your Internet marketing by helping the search engines find your site when people are looking for information that you have on your web pages. After all, any marketing strategies you enact should be designed to drive traffic to your site in hopes that they will make a purchase or complete the action that you hope they will complete.

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4.2 Understanding Keywords

Keywords are the search terms that people might put into a search engine to find your website. For example, if you sell a weight loss supplement, a few of your keywords might be:

- weight loss
- lose weight
- weight loss supplements
- nutrition supplements
- diet pills
- diet supplements
- weight loss pills
- weight loss powder

The more likely someone is to use that keyword phrase, the more important that keyword will be to getting your site popped up in the results - however, the more challenging it will be to do so because so many other people will be trying to do the same thing. We will talk more about competing for keywords when it comes to paying for online advertising.

“Long tail keywords” are longer phrases that someone still might use to search for you product or service on a search engine.

However, there are also what are known as “long tail keywords,” which are longer phrases that someone might use to find what you offer, but fewer people would use them because they are so precise. For example, instead of “weight loss,” a long-tail keyword might be “weight loss supplements for diabetics.” Because it is so specific a search phrase, fewer people will enter it - but fewer sites will also be competing to be the results for a search for it. So, ideally, you should have a mix of short and long-tail keywords used naturally on your site. We’ll talk more about what is meant by natural keyword use later in this chapter.

You cannot have too many keywords, as long as they are relevant to the content on your website. If you simply stuff words into your site in the hopes that the search engines will rank your site higher, it will not work. Instead, you should focus on making each page on your website relevant to one or two different keywords, focusing on those and adding rich, useful content that readers will actually want to have access to.

4.3 Determining Your Keywords

Some of your keywords for your website will be common sense. For instance, if you sell pet food, your keywords might be:

- pet food
- dog food
- cat food
- bird food
- hamster food

Free tools are available online to help you generate lists of keywords related to your site.

But there are bound to be keywords that you won't think of off the top of your head, simply because not everyone searches for what they want in the same way. For example, additional keywords for your pet food site might be:

- diet dog food
- senior dog food
- healthy dog food
- gourmet dog food
- natural dog food
- puppy food

And those are just additional ones related to dogs. When you truly flesh out the keywords for your site, you may have dozens of keywords and keyword phrases.

There are several free resources on the Internet that will help you to choose keywords that you will want to use on your website. For example, Google AdWords has a free keyword tool, while other sites may charge a small fee. In these applications, you can use the tool to enter one keyword, such as “weight loss” and the system will generate a list of related keywords for you. It will also tell you more information about the keywords such as:

- The rate of competition for showing up in the results when someone searches with that keyword
- The number of global monthly searches that are made using that keyword
- The number of local monthly searches for that keyword

So, for example, if you put “weight loss” into the Google keyword tool, then sort it by the number of global searches per month, the top 10 keywords and the related number of searches as of this writing are estimated by Google to be:

1. weight loss - 7,480,000 searches
2. how to lose weight - 1,500,000
3. weight loss diets - 450,000
4. weight loss diet - 301,000
5. diet weight loss - 301,000
6. diet and weight loss - 301,000
7. diet for weight loss - 301,000
8. best weight loss - 246,000
9. weight loss pills - 201,000
10. weight loss tips - 165,000

It’s important to note that these estimates are the approximate monthly average according to Google that each phrase was used to search for something on the Internet . That’s why some of the phrases have the same statistic. Also, notice that even using a plural version of the word can change the results (diet vs. diets). When you consider your keyword list, you should create plural versions of singular words or phrases and singular versions of plural words or phrases when possible.

HTML is full of commands where you can place additional keywords which the search engine bots will pick up on.

However, if you enter the long-tail keyword we mentioned before, “weight loss supplements for diabetics,” as of this writing there were only 46 global monthly searches for that phrase. So if you offer dietary supplements for people with diabetes, using the keyword phrase “weight loss supplements for diabetics” is not likely to be a valuable keyword phrase for you.

Once you have determined your keywords, you need to place them in the most strategic positions on your website so that the search engines will pick them up. However, you want them to appear multiple times so that the search engines understand that your site is about content related to these keywords.

4.4 Keyword Placement

There are several places on your web pages and website where you should place your keywords so that the search engines will find your site when someone is looking for a site like yours. These are a type of easy-to-miss Internet marketing strategy that you can use to optimize your website for the search engines. Think of it as “behind the scenes” Internet marketing.

There are several important places on your web pages and website where you should place your keywords in order to impact how the search engines will rank your site.

4.4.1 META Tags

Web pages are built using Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML), which is full of different commands that execute what you see when you load the page in your web browser. When designing your webpage, you want to be sure that your keywords are used in your <META> tags. This tag on each page defines the date, purpose, author and name of a web page. The search engines read this information and use it to help “catalog” your site in comparison with other sites.

Note that the <META> tag is specific to each page of your website. So, the tag on each page should contain a different keyword that is still related to the site but is specific to that page. For example, your homepage might have “weight loss supplements” as the <META> tag keyword, but then you might also have a product page with the <META> tag “weight loss pill” and another with the <META> tag “vitamins for metabolism” or whatever the main topic on that page might be.

Think of the following keyword placement information as “behind the scenes” Internet marketing.

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Your <META> tag field can also include a description of your website. You should write a description that includes the main keywords for your site and that describes the context of your webpage. For example, for your weight loss supplement site, the homepage <META> tag description might read, “our weight loss experts have designed the best weight loss supplements for healthy weight loss and decreased appetite.”

4.4.2 ALT Tags

HTML for a site includes an <ALT> tag that is used by the browser to describe an image if the image cannot successfully be loaded. However, since it is more information about your website, it can be used strategically to give the search engines another dose of information regarding what your website is about. For example, if your weight loss supplement has a picture on the main page of a smiling, fit woman, you could use the <ALT> tag to describe it as “healthy weight” or, if it is a picture of pills, describe it as “weight loss pills.”

4.4.3 Page Name

Every web page has a file name that is used to identify that page, or file, on the web server. Although the ending of the file name has to be either .htm or .html, you can create the rest of the page name so that it includes your keywords as well. For example, if you have an order page, instead of calling it order.htm, call it order-weight-loss-supplements.htm. Or, if you have an order page specific to a product, name it by the product name such as “metabolism.supplement.order.htm.”

4.4.4 Page Title

Use the page title space to create a title for the page that includes the main keywords for the page. The search engines will notice and use this information as well. Do not leave this valuable space empty and do not fill it with vague information like “Welcome to Our Site,” or any other generic information.

4.4.5 Page Headings

Search engines will scan your web pages and will add weight to the headings on the page more than the words in the body. So, be sure that your headings on the page are also versions of your main keywords. Don't be afraid to be more specific to the product or content on the page with the page headings than you would be with the page title.

4.4.6 First Sentence

Your first sentence is important for both the live human and the search engine bot. Not all search engines will review your entire page of text before determining what your page is about, just like not all humans will read beyond the first sentence or paragraph before deciding whether or not your site has the information they need. Be sure that the first sentence of your page includes the keywords for that page and that it is a clear description or summary of what information can be found on that page.

Your first sentence on a page is important for both the live human and the search engine bot. Just like a human reader, the search engine may make a decision about your site in part based on the first sentence.
--

4.4.7 Text Inside Links

If you create any links on your site, whether to other locations on the site or to another site, the text that is “clickable” is another way to include your keywords for the search engines. Text links are highly weighted by the search bots, so be sure you use the tool appropriately.

4.4.8 Keyword Rich Content

If you have ever visited a product website and found that it is full of useful information that is related to that product, you’ve found someone who understands SEO. Yes, it may be a natural response to customers to develop content that provides them with information they want or need when buying your product, but it can also be a strategic decision. If you have quality, keyword rich content on your website, the search engines will give additional weight to your web site in its search engine rankings. There are two important keys here:

1. The content needs to be high-quality, relevant, and useful to your readers.
2. The content needs to use your keywords naturally.

To elaborate, you need to understand that search engines have gotten smarter over time. Do you remember seeing a site that had a list of keywords “stuffed” into the bottom of a web page? At one time, just having keywords on a site would help pull that site as a result when someone searched for one of those keywords. But now, the algorithms that determine search engine results are able to recognize “keyword stuffing.” So instead, to get into higher rankings on search engines, you need to create content that uses keywords naturally - in language and in contexts where people would normally use them.

Content must be high-quality, relevant, useful to your readers, and include your keywords in a natural context.

Some ways you can incorporate keyword rich, natural content on your website include:

- Writing articles that give the reader information about your products or services
- Creating a FAQ page that includes the keywords on your site in different ways that people might search for them
- Creating and offering a free informational product, such as an e-book or white paper that uses all of your keywords
- Writing a company newsletter or E-zine (electronic magazine) that includes relevant, keyword rich content
- Creating a blog where you use and discuss keywords and related topics and continually refresh or update the content

- Writing product descriptions or summaries that use the keywords
- Allowing visitors to the site to write their own summaries or comments, assuming that they will also use the keywords somewhat

Some of these options have additional benefits that we will discuss in more detail, but know that adding quality content to your site is a powerful way to draw search engine results.

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5 Additional SEO Techniques

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter talked about optimizing your search engine results with actions you take on your own website. In this chapter, the focus will be on another aspect of Internet marketing that can be even more important - driving traffic to your website through off-site SEO activities. Although the methods may vary, the main point of any additional SEO techniques discussed in this chapter is to drive additional traffic to your website by getting links to your website placed around the web. Many of these are free actions - they only cost you the time to take them. It is because of the time investment that many companies will choose to pay another organization to perform these activities for them. However, if you have the time, you can certainly do them on your own.

Driving traffic to your website through off-site Internet marketing activities can be just as important - and even more important - than the strategies you implement on your own website.

These activities include:

- Writing and submitting information to article directories
- Using blogs and forums
- Using social media sites
- Using video sites
- Writing press releases

We'll now look at each of these in more detail.

5.2 Article Marketing

Article marketing is a way for you to generate interest in your site by someone first reading an article that then guides them to your website. You can think of it as one way of building the reputation as an expert in your field. You generate (or pay someone else to generate) unique content for your articles that is rich with the same types of keywords as the ones you have used on your site. You can even write articles that are not directly related to your website, but that would be of interest to people who would find your website interesting as well.

Article writing is a way to motivate people who are interested in what you write about to visit your website.

At the bottom of the article, and throughout the article if it is allowed, you can include a link back to your website. Those links count as backlinks, which help build your ranking when search engines rank your site. That way, when someone reads your article, if they find it helpful or interesting, they will be motivated to click on a link and visit your site. Ideally, the link in an article will direct the customer to a page on your site that will contain exactly the information or product that they want.

So where do you put all these great articles that you are writing? You can submit them to dozens of article directories that exist around the internet and that accept submissions from anyone who meets their criteria. Normally, this will require that you allow the site (or other users of the site) to reproduce your articles in another location. However, since you want that article in as many places as possible, that shouldn't be a problem.

There are dozens of article directories where you can submit your unique, quality articles - and each one will provide a backlink to your website.

Be careful that you don't submit the same article to multiple directories. You want unique content associated with each article site in order to get the greatest boost in the search engine rankings. In fact, some of the top article directories will reject your submission if your content is not unique. You can use a software program to generate new articles from one existing article, but they are not automated; you will need to create multiple versions of each paragraph or even of each sentence and then the software will mix them together randomly to create a new version of the article.

New article directories are being created all the time, but some of the most common and popular ones include:

- eHow
- Ezine Articles
- Go Articles
- Amazines
- Article Dashboard
- Article Blast
- Article Alley
- Articles Base
- Associated Content
- Bukisa

- Buzzle
- Examiner
- Suite 101
- Technorati
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- The Free Library

You can also create articles on your own “page” on certain websites, where you submit your own articles on different topics and can even build your own following. Some of the sites will even share residual income that they get from advertisements that are placed on the pages you create.

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Some of the most popular sites for this type of article submission are:

- 43things.com
- Advogato.org
- Asmallworld.net
- Digg.com
- Gather.com
- Hubpages.com
- Ring.com
- Squidoo.com

5.3 Using Blogs and Forums

In a similar vein to writing articles, you can also create blogs or forum posts that will help build your reputation and can guide readers back to your website. “Blog” comes from the term “web log” and was once a type of online diary for individuals. But now, businesses use them to create an interactive environment with their readers, and to add an additional location in cyberspace where they can demonstrate expertise to readers who might want to know more about you, your company, or your products and services. You may also have a blog on your own site where you spend the majority of your time interacting with customers - but this strategy requires that you create additional blogs out on different sites.

“Blog” comes from “web log” and was once mainly a type of online diary for individuals. But now, businesses use them to create an interactive environment with their clients and customers.

Blogs can develop quite a following over time. Particularly if the information that is provided is topical and relevant to the type of person who would be reading your blog. For example, if you were a clothing designer, one blog post might cover the latest fashion trends seen on TV. You would then provide a link to similar products on your website at the end of the blog. Or, you could write about how the fashion industry has cut prices in response to the recession, and add a link to your sales page on your site.

Just like article directories, there are multiple popular blog sites where you can create your own blog page. Some of the most popular include:

- WordPress
- Tumblr
- Live Journal
- Blogger
- TypePad

Again, unique content is important on these sites; search engines are too smart to be fooled by cut and pasted content that you plug into multiple blog sites. The key to getting your best return on your time investment with blogs is to make sure you vary the content on a regular basis, and that you build a following of people who will believe you when you tell them that you have the best product or service in the category they are looking for.

One other way you can use blogs to your benefit is to offer to be a “guest blogger” on someone else’s website. Particularly if they already have a heavy following, offering to write a blog post could strengthen your own site’s search rankings. You would only do this, of course, if the site is willing to include a link back to your own site. You can even offer to have the owner of the blog come and do a guest posting on your website, where you will allow them to post a link back to their own site as well. This is one form of what is called “link swapping,” where you each help the other person by providing backlinks to each others’ sites.

Offer to be a “guest blogger” on someone else’s site. Particularly if they have a strong following, you can get a great boost in the search rankings from a backlink on another blog. You can offer to allow that blogger to be a guest poster on your site as well; this is one version of a practice known as “link swapping.”

When you create a blog, you will have the option to allow readers of the blog to post comments on what you have written. There are benefits and drawbacks to doing so. It can be an excellent way to engage your customers and potential customers. If you monitor the blog comments carefully, you can delete any negative comments or comments from anyone who seems to be just advertising on your blog.

However, if you allow anyone to say what they want, you can develop a reputation for having an honest, unbiased blog - something that could help you in the long run. It depends on what you are comfortable with and how much time you can dedicate to monitoring the activity on your blogs.

Forums are like digital question and answer boards. Someone posts a question or a comment and others respond. If you ran a clothing website, you might find forums on fashion and post comments for other readers, then include a link back to your site if they are interested in learning more.

Forums are like digital question and answer boards. In some cases you can actually “sign” your post with what amounts to a mini-advertisement for your site.

In some cases, you can actually post what amounts to a mini-advertisement at the bottom of your forum posting so that you don’t even have to be commenting on a related topic, but your link is still posted. You will need to be sure that you understand the rules of a forum before you begin posting. Otherwise you could end up being blocked from participating in the forum again.

5.4 Social Media Sites

Nothing has changed the way we interact in the 21st century as much as the proliferation of social media websites. These sites provide a virtual community for users, where they can communicate and share with each other about their interests, the events in their lives, and their relationships. Just like blogs, social media sites have been adopted by businesses as another way to interact with their clients, customers, and potential clients and customers. In some cases, following or communicating with a business through one of these sites is a way for businesses to offer a special deal in exchange for the person participating in that company’s social media site.

Nothing has changed the way we interact in the 21st century as much as the proliferation of social media websites.

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As for SEO, entire books have been written based on just how to best use social media. From the point of view of Internet marketing, social media sites are another way for you to draw traffic to your blog or to any other section of your website. In some ways, you can consider social media interactions as a form of “priming” the customer for a sale with you. After all, if they are already interacting with you online, following your news stories, reading your blog, or watching your videos, they are much more likely to take the next step and make a purchase.

Plus, you have a “captive audience” in terms of the network of people who follow you on a social media site. They have already given their permission to interact with you, so now your messages are more likely to get to them. This is one way in which social media has revolutionized Internet marketing; instead of sending email that might end up in a SPAM folder or a trash folder, you’re sending messages or posts or tweets to people who have already expressed an interest in you, your product or your service.

Social media sites help you create a “captive audience” who have already shown they are interested in your product or service. .

Some of the most popular social media sites include:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- MySpace
- Ning
- Tagged
- Orkut
- Hi5
- Flickr
- Digg
- Stumbleupon
- Scribd
- Reddit

- MyYearbook
- Meetup
- Badoo
- Bebo
- MyLife
- Friendster
- Multiply

You may already be participating on some of these sites on a personal basis, but consider creating a profile for your business itself as well, when appropriate. Just like with forums, be sure that you know what the rules are for each type of site before you begin using it so that you don't unwittingly violate a rule and end up getting banned from the site.

5.5 Video Sites

Some of the sites we've already mentioned allow you to post videos to share information with visitors. But there are also some sites that are designed specifically for posting videos. You can use these sites to your benefit in several ways.

Using a video site lets you get the benefits of videos about your company without having to provide the technical support for the videos on your own website.

First, these sites are designed with the software and tools that will play video for the majority of people. You don't have to worry about using a video player on your own website that some people might not be able to operate on their own computers.

Second, you don't have to store the video on your site. Video can take up a great deal of storage space on a server and you won't have to provide it on your own site if you use a video site to showcase your company's videos. Third, you don't have to have the bandwidth available on your site for streaming video for multiple viewers at a time. Again, this capacity is provided by the video hosting site.

So you recognize the benefits of using a video site, but you're not sure what kind of video you could create for your company. Why would someone want to watch a video about your product or service? Furthermore, what would you possibly make a video about? Here are some suggestions:

- Create a "how to" video that demonstrates technical aspects of your product, such as how to assemble it, repair it, or clean it
- Create videos that show how to use the product in creative or useful ways that the customer may not have thought of on their own
- Create testimonial videos from customers that have used your products or services and can share their experience in their own words
- Develop a video that gives customers an overview of your company so that they can learn more about what you do
- Share employee stories and experiences as part of a video aimed at recruiting new team members
- Give customers a "first look" at upcoming product releases or promotions
- Create presentations that teach your customers or others something about the industry, the product, or the service - another way of establishing yourself and your company as experts
- Show videos of your company's community service efforts and the results
- Showcase how your company is "going green"

These are just a few ideas of how you can put video sites to good use in your Internet marketing plan. You can develop videos for virtually any aspect of your business. Make certain that they are high-quality and deliver the image of your company in a professional way. Always keep in mind what your customers or potential customers might want to know about your company - and then offer it to them in as many formats as possible

Make certain any videos you create are high-quality and that they reflect the level of professionalism that you want associated with your company.

As we said, some social media sites already mentioned will allow you to include video clips. But some other popular sites include:

- YouTube
- DailyMotion
- Metacafe
- MegaVideo
- Y!Video
- Vimeo
- LiveLeak
- Break
- Videosift

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Of course, you need to always include information in your videos about your company and your website, and provide the same information on your membership or account page on each video service. That way, customers can still find their way to your website and complete the action that you intend for them to complete.

Remember to add the addresses to the relevant pages on your website to both the videos themselves and to the membership or account page on each video service you use.

5.6 Press Releases

Yes, press releases are still around, even in the age of Internet marketing. You should not underestimate this traditional means of drawing attention to your company and any news-worthy events or announcements that you might have. However, you will not just send them to the traditional press outlets that you would have before the Internet; you will also use them to splash backlinks to your website around the net.

Start by developing a well-written press release that includes all of the information that you would normally include:

- Your contact information (and website address, linking to the announcement or the area of interest on your website)
- A summary of the event, announcement, or news that you are sharing
- What this means for your customers - current and future
- Another link for more information, particularly if it is to a different page on your website than your contact information

As you write the press release, you should include the keywords that are related to the area of your business that you want the press release to draw attention to. Follow the same rules that you have for using keywords in an article; be sure to use them in the opening sentences, and make sure that any use of keywords and keyword phrases is natural and suited to the context.

Follow the same rules that you have for using keywords in an article; be sure to use them in the opening sentences and make sure that any use of keywords and keyword phrases is natural and suited to the context.

Once the press release is ready, you can submit it to a number of distribution sites on the Internet. Just like for any of these Internet marketing strategies, you can pay for services to do this for you. However, there are some free press release distribution sites you can use as well. Below is a list of the most common press release distribution sites, some of which may require a fee:

- PRweb.com
- Pr.com
- Marketwire.com
- Newswire.Ca (Canadian site)
- Earthtimes.org
- Prfire.co.uk (British site)
- 24-7PressRelease.com
- PrLeap.com
- TransWorldNews.com
- Vocus.com
- Businesswire.com
- OnlinePRMedia.com
- PRNewswire.com
- eReleases.com
- eworldwide.com
- InterfacePR.com

If you would like to see how effective your press release marketing campaign was, set up a specific page on your website that you design specifically for use in your press release campaign. Then use that link as the one that you guide people to on the press release. You will be able to track how many people land on that page, giving you an idea of how many people actually visited your site as a result of the press release.

6 Additional Internet Marketing Strategies

6.1 Introduction

Until this point, the Internet marketing strategies we have discussed have been low or no cost and are ones that you can implement on your own, without the need of any special programs or software. In this chapter, we will look at some additional Internet marketing strategies that will require either some financial investment or a more advanced level of knowledge (and software applications) to implement.

This chapter gives you an overview of Internet marketing strategies that require either some financial investment or a more advanced level of knowledge to implement.

Since each of these strategies is slightly more advanced, they will be reviewed briefly as part of this overview to Internet marketing. Once you have mastered and implemented the techniques already listed in this ebook, you can and should consider implementing any or all of these strategies as well, depending on the results you have already seen and the budget you have available for investing in your Internet marketing strategies.

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6.2 Email Marketing

To send email marketing messages, you first need to have access to a list of email addresses. You then need to figure out a way to avoid the SPAM bin. There are two main ways for you to generate an email list of customers that you can market to in the future: one is to create your own, opt-in list of customer email addresses, and the other is to purchase lists of customers from market research companies. Since purchasing an email list is expensive and likely outside of the budget of many people who are starting out with Internet marketing, you can instead focus on building your own list of customers that you can then contact with your marketing efforts.

There are two main ways for you to generate an email list of customers that you can market to in the future: one is to create your own opt-in list of customer email addresses and the other is to purchase lists of customer email addresses from market research companies.

These “opt-in” lists are so called because they require that a customer first choose to give you their email address, and even to choose which types of email that they would like to receive from you in the future. This greatly limits the chance that you mail will automatically be categorized as SPAM. Of course, this means that you have to give the customer a reason to opt-in to your list. You can do this on your website, provided that you have the application (via software or plug-ins) on your site that will capture and store customer email addresses. The easiest way to get a customer to give you his email address is to offer him something in return. Some suggestions include:

- A “free report” on something important to customers in your target market
- Coupons or other discounts
- A newsletter that is full of information related to your site or topic
- Access to “first to know” information about your company such as special sales or promotions
- Tips or trends on the industry
- A free quote for your services
- Access to special areas on your website
- Any other “freebie” you can offer to your customers in exchange for their email address

Once you have the customer's email address, you can use email management software that is specifically designed for running email campaigns. The software will let you do things like:

- Track which emails seem to “work” by the response you get
- Add and delete email addresses as needed
- Set up automated emails for things like sending a thank-you when a customer makes a purchase or registers for your newsletter, confirming an order, or responding when someone sends you an email.
- Send mass emails without getting flagged by your email server
- Allow customers to “opt-out” of email (a legal requirement)

This software is often available as part of a web hosting package, or as part of a customer management application. You can find some software that you purchase one-time and other services that you will pay for as you use them.

It may take time to build your own customer email database, but it will be a very valuable part of your marketing plan once you have it. Since the customer will have already had one form of interaction with you when they gave you their email address, they are much more likely to make a purchase from you in the future.

6.2 Internet Advertising

There are several different forms of Internet advertising. Since the goal of Internet marketing is to draw visitors to your site, this section will look at advertising of your site, not advertising on your site. However, you may want to look at adding advertising to your own site in the future, when you have enough traffic that others would be willing to pay for space on your site. This is one form of what is known as “monetizing” your site, and is outside the topic of this ebook.

6.2.1 Advertising on Other Websites

When you decide to purchase Internet advertising, there are two main forms of advertising you can invest in. The first is paying for advertising on other websites where you know your customers will already be. You have seen this kind of advertising on many websites that you have visited. The ad will be a “banner” at the top of a webpage or to the side of the webpage and will be designed to entice the viewer to leave the site they are on and visit your site.

Ads on another website can vary widely in price. Some of the factors that will affect what you pay include:

- The size of the ad you choose - the larger the ad, the more expensive it will be
- The location on the page where you want your ad displayed - ads at the top of the page will cost more than ads at the bottom
- The amount of traffic that the website receives - the more popular the website, so the more people that will see your ad, the more you will need to pay for that ad
- The competition for ad space on that site - the more people that want to have an ad on that site, the more you will need to pay for that ad
- The percentage of the time that you want your ad to appear - your ad won't necessarily appear every time that the site is loaded by a visitor. Instead, you can pay less if your ad "rotates" in display with other ads

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If you want to advertise on another website, start by looking for an “advertise with us” or “about us” page and contact information for the person you need to speak with. Be sure to ask questions about:

- The site’s traffic - what demographic information do they have on their visitors (you want it to match the demographics of your average customer)
- Where does the majority of their traffic come from when they arrive on that page?
- How many times your ad will be viewed?
- How long do visitors tend to stay on that page before leaving?
- How do they usually leave that page?
- Whether you will have to pay any additional fee each time the ad is clicked

Remember that in addition to the cost of the advertising itself, you will also need to invest in the creation of the banner ad. Unless you are familiar with graphic design software, you will need to hire a designer to help you develop the ad.

6.2.2 Pay Per Click (PPC) Advertising

When you want to only pay for Internet advertising that gets a response - a “click” - you want Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising. In this case, you are usually talking about text ads that appear to the right of search engine results or on websites that have monetized their sites by allowing advertisers to place ads on the site that the advertiser believes that site’s customers will be interested in. This is different from purchasing ad space directly from the website because instead you are allowing the advertiser to choose which site(s) your ad should be shown on.

The most commonly discussed form of PPC advertising is Google AdWords, though similar programs exist on all the major search engines. In these types of advertising, you are competing with other advertisers for keyword-based ads based on what you are willing to pay to have your ad shown first.

To explain this more clearly, let’s go back to the weight loss supplements example we used earlier in the ebook. Imagine that you want to write an ad on Google that will display to the right of the search results when someone searches for “weight loss supplements.”

In order for your ad to appear, you need to be willing to pay more per click for your ad than other advertisers who want their ads to be shown when that same keyword phrase is used. This sounds simple enough, but it can actually be a complicated science to determine how much to pay per click so that you get enough traffic to your site but so that you don’t end up paying thousands of dollars for clicks that you can’t afford.

In Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising, you are competing with other advertisers who want their own ads displayed when someone searches for the same keyword phrase you are using.

To help you determine what your ad might cost, you can use the same keyword tool that Google offers to help you find your keywords for your site. Instead of choosing “keyword tool,” you will use the “traffic estimator tool.” You simply enter the keyword phrase that you want to buy PPC ads for, then the maximum amount you are willing to pay per click (the “cost per click” or “CPC.”) To get an idea of what you would actually have to pay, put in a high value for your CPC, like \$10 or more.

At the time of writing, the results in the keyword estimator tool for “weight loss supplements” showed that there are an estimated 74,000 global searches for that keyword phrase each month. If my ad was to show up in the top position, it would cost me approximately \$3.75 each time that someone clicked on the ad. However, I need to know how many times someone is likely to click on my ad out of those 74,000 searches. Google estimates that 345 people would click on my ad per day. At a rate of \$3.75 per click, that results in a daily charge of approximately \$1,294.85 per day.

Now your job is to determine whether or not that level of cost is worth it in terms of return on investment. If I know that my site makes a sale for 2% of the visitors that come to my site and that each sale averages \$150, then 2% of 345 customers would mean approximately 7 people would buy from me at \$150 each. That is nowhere near enough return on my investment to even cover the cost of the ad. However, I might be willing to pay that cost if I know that my website tends to sell to 10% of the people who land on it, and that each one of those people tends to buy \$500 or more of product.

PPC advertising is only going to provide a good return on investment if, once the customer arrives at your website, they are actually motivated to make a purchase.

In other words, the true value of PPC advertising depends on the value and quality of your website. If you get all the traffic in the world to your site but it doesn't convert visitors to buying customers, then PPC advertising is never going to be a good investment for you. However, if your website converts people to customers at a high rate, then you want all the traffic you can get and PPC advertising may be worth the investment.

If you decide to try a PPC ad campaign, start slow. Be sure to set a daily limit on the amount that you are willing to spend, and monitor the traffic that the ads bring in. If you find out that you're not getting any good sales from the ads, it's time to rewrite the ads and/or reevaluate your website and see what needs to be tweaked in order for you to get a higher rate of conversion.

6.3 Affiliate Marketing

The final major category of Internet marketing is affiliate marketing. In affiliate marketing, you get other people to drive traffic to your site in return for a percentage of any sale that is made as a result of that visit to your site. In other words, you allow others to do part of your marketing for you. However, affiliate marketing is not suited for every product. In order for it to work, you need to have:

- A high enough profit margin that you can afford a commission for your affiliates
- An attractive product or service that other people will be motivated to promote because (a) you pay a good commission and (b) the product is relatively easy to sell
- You are able to support the demand in your product that affiliates could bring in
- You are able to support the additional customers that affiliates could bring in
- You are able to support the affiliates themselves with training, advertising, and other promotional materials
- You are willing to pay for a service (or software) to help you track your affiliate sales
- You have the time to monitor your affiliate's marketing efforts so that you know they are representing your company as you would want them to in their promotions

You can register with large affiliate “marketplaces” that help manage your affiliate programs for a fee. Some of the most popular include:

- ClickBank
- Commission Junction (CJ.com)
- PayDotCom
- AffiliateMarketplace
- Click2Sell
- PayGear

You will need to register with these sites and then people who want to be your affiliates will be able to find you. Of course, you can manage your own affiliate program, but when you are first experimenting with affiliate marketing it will probably be easier for you to use one or more of these services.

Resources

Affiliate Power Group. 30 Ways to Get FREE Website Traffic in 30 Minutes or Less.

<http://www.homebiz-direct.com/newsletter/AffiliatePowerGroupTraffic.pdf>

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