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Putting your site where everyone can see...



# Planning Your On-Line Success

## Marketing

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## Sell, sell, sell

“Everyone lives by selling something” – Robert Louis Stevenson

**T**he main purpose of the internet nowadays is to sell. Whether you are selling products or services, or even if you are providing information or education for free, you still have to sell the website to your audience. Marketing is an area that both excites and terrifies people. Billions of pounds are spent on promotion every year, and to be honest the majority of that money is wasted. The different ways to market are extensive and expensive. From cold calling which has a very low percentage success rate, to advertising via the media.

Does internet marketing work? The simple answer is yes if it is done properly. One of the main differences between the internet and many other marketing techniques is that it is far easier to measure the results of internet marketing. You can calculate how many people have seen your marketing, how many people have reacted to your marketing, and more importantly how many people have taken the desired actions.

So how can you market via the internet? Well there are many different ways, and we will look at a few in detail.

## Viral Marketing

Viral Marketing sounds like something illegal, but it is actually a very powerful means of marketing. It relates to the spreading of information about your website via unbiased third parties, sometimes referred to as 'word of mouse'. In other words it is visitors passing your website address or newsletters to their friends and colleagues, because there is something they believe will be of interest to the other party. This is the kind of referral people dream of, and yet with the internet it is far easier to achieve.

By creating the stickiness we referred to in the previous section, we are well on the way to viral marketing. The next stage is to tell the visitor to spread the word. This might sound like an obvious statement, but it is amazing how often people will do as they are told.

So why not include a 'Tell a friend' button. Let them spread the news about your vouchers or your excellent tip of the day. When including a 'Tell a friend' button, always make your privacy policy clear, so that the visitor does not worry about giving a friends email address.

Also, include the idea in your newsletters. Ask them to forward the newsletter to others, and also instruct people to register within the newsletter, so that they can be included in future mailings. Consider giving members the option to view old newsletters via the website.

If you have created a white paper or e-book, then make sure anyone who downloads it can pass it on to someone else and the recipient can easily find your website from the downloaded item.

Other downloadable items that can cause viral marketing are games, videos, jokes, check lists, articles, e-cards and screensavers. Create a topic of conversation!

## Permission Based Marketing



Spam! It was only ten years ago that the word spam meant a tin of meat, but now everyone associates the word with emails. So, what is spam? Spam is unsolicited commercial e-mail. No one is completely safe from spam, and it has become a hotbed of controversy. Anti-spam legislation is now in place, but it will take a while before we begin to see whether it will be effective.

My advice is do not Spam potential clients, as it is very likely they will not take kindly to it. In order to include someone on your emailing lists you need their permission. That is why I have kept reiterating that you should make your privacy policy very clear. Make sure the visitor knows any information they provide will not be passed on, that they are in charge of whether or not they receive information, and that they can unsubscribe at any time. Also try to make sure that they can select the kind of information they want to receive, this has the added benefit of helping you be more specific with your mailings and allows you to build up a database of clients who fit different demographics.

Do NOT send anything that a visitor has not ASKED to receive.

So what type of information should you send via email? I would certainly consider sending regular newsletters (be it weekly, monthly or quarterly), product updates, vouchers, special offers and/or event information. Whatever information you send, try to ensure it is personalised. If you are sending an email rather than a newsletter then include a signature on your email that has a link to your website.

So how do you get the visitors permission to send them information? The obvious answer is to give them a reason. Offer an incentive, offer free advice or include vouchers. Make sure they know that it is the quickest way to find out when something of interest will be available. It is proven that incentive based mailings will receive more response. Also ensure that they don't feel obliged to give too much personal information in order to receive the mails. You can always obtain that information later as they become members, as they become customers or as they communicate with you.

So in summary, make sure you sell the benefits of your permission based marketing and make sure you give the recipient the quality of content they expect. And don't forget about viral marketing - you want them to pass the information on, and you want their recipients to come back to your website. Make sure every message you send out, has a route back to the relevant areas of your website.

## Search Engines

The most common way a website is found is via a search engine, with Google and Yahoo being the most popular of the search engines. If you want your website to be found, you must understand the basics of how a search engine works and how the design of your website can influence its position within the search engines indexing.

Firstly a quick explanation about the differences between a search engine and a directory. A search engine uses a program called a 'spider' to analyse your website and to determine how your site should be indexed. Whilst a directory requires human input to determine the category and positioning of a website. Due to the human administration of a directory you can usually expect a much longer wait before your site will appear on a directory, unless you are willing to pay to speed up the review process. Even if you pay there is no guarantee that your site will be accepted, it is the administrator who will decide whether your site will be accepted based on the content, ease of use and visual appeal. Some of the better known directories are Yahoo & Looksmart, whilst the better known search engines are Lycos & Google.

Regardless of how compelling the content of your website, it cannot be effective without proactively driving traffic to it. The single most overlooked aspect of website development today is the development of a strategy for being found by your target audience. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a critical requirement for ensuring that your website is well placed in search engine listings.

Search engines now account for over 85% of all new visitors to a website (GVU Users Survey). Though these statistics may not be too shocking, what many people do not realise is that only 7% of Internet users will look beyond the first 20 listings of a search engine. What is even more shocking is that a recent study revealed that over 87% of search engine users would rather switch to a different search engine than browse beyond the first 20 positions (NEC Research Institute).

These statistics highlight that search engines are the most effective tools for increasing traffic to your website. A top 20 position in one of the major search engines guarantees a higher number of visitors. More importantly visitors via this route are highly targeted and will include a high number actively seeking the services/products in the sector advertised.

The first step is to determine the top traffic-pulling phrases appropriate for your specific business. You will have identified most of these when looking at your competition. It is at this point that you may want to use a specialist, though there are websites and products available on the internet to help with the next steps (e.g. [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com)). Be creative when considering your keywords; try to use descriptive terms as well as nouns. For example, if your site sells hats, then some of your keywords may be hats, bowlers, caps and so on. But you can also add some keywords that describe the reasons for purchasing hats, such as weddings, ascot and so forth. Notice how

I have suggested using the plurals, if you used hat and someone searched for hats your site will not be found, but it will be found if you have included hats and they search for hat.

Once you have your list of keywords and phrases research them in real time to determine what your audience is actually using online. You may find that people are looking for a misspelling almost as often as the correct spelling, or you may find that you have severely limited your potential audience by being too specific. Search engines are continually being updated, and there will soon be no need to try and mention the physical location in your keywords as the results returned will reflect the location of the searcher.

Now we have reached the point where I would advise handing over to the experts. It is possible to optimise your own site, but to maintain a high position takes a lot of time and effort. Just because your site is positioned on page one this month, does not mean it will be there next month. As other sites are optimised and the search engine algorithms are updated a site that is not maintained will gradually work its way down the search engines index.

Be careful not to try and cheat the system! There are definite no-nos when optimising a website. As with anything in life, people will always try to cheat the system, and search engines are no exception to the norm. Experts have found several ways of fooling the search engine spiders so that sites are ranked highly, but as each of these techniques are uncovered, sites utilising the technique are removed from the search engines altogether. Some examples of these techniques are repeating the keywords again and again, hiding text, by using small fonts or by making the text the same colour as the background and by optimising a dummy page that the visitor never sees. I would always recommend caution if someone guarantees you the top spot on a search engine.

So what does a search engine look at when considering how high to rank your website?

The main thing the search engine will consider is the text content displayed on your site. This is why it is important to have pages dedicated to specific keywords and business areas. When researching search engine optimisation you may hear mention of meta-tags, these hold the keywords and phrases for a website. However, meta-tags now hold very little relevance too many of the search engines. Content is king!

The other main consideration is relevant links. If a page on your site has links to other websites, then the search engine will consider how relevant these other sites are to your target audience. If the site is relevant and there is a return link to your site then this will have a positive effect on your ranking.

When submitting your website to a search engine or directory, I would strongly recommend doing so by hand. Take your time and make sure you categorise your website correctly. There are websites that offer to automatically submit you to a high number of search engines and directories, but it is best to register with the important search engines by hand so that you know you are registered correctly.

In summary the SEO process is:

- Conduct initial research
- Perform website optimisation
- Precise manual search engine submission
- Build your site popularity
- Monitor ongoing trends and periodically adjust the optimisation parameters to maintain or improve positioning

## Pay-Per-Click

The most popular complimentary Internet marketing program is a service called Pay-Per-Click. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) services have been around for several years, but they started to become popular during 2001. There are several reasons for this increase in popularity. The biggest reason is the fact that most large search engines and directories now include PPC advertisement in their search results. You will notice them along the top and down the right hand side of the page whenever you perform a search via Google (see image).



I refer to PPC as 'advertisement' because the listings require you to bid a certain amount for your position or ranking in the search engines and directories. The good news is that you only pay when someone clicks on your listing. This type of promotion is far more economical than traditional advertising, which requires you to pay a certain amount just to be viewed by a particular audience, whether anyone acts on your ad or not.

PPC derives its name from the fact that you bid for your listing position. Then, each time someone clicks through to your Web site from one of your PPC listings, you are charged the amount that you agreed to pay for each click.

As with search engine optimisation you need to determine the top search phrases appropriate to your website. You also need to determine the correct web page to direct traffic for the chosen keyword.

If you are unsure about how to utilise this type of marketing then use an expert, but before doing so determine what your monthly spend limit is for the campaign. Make sure you or your expert continuously monitor prices, to ensure you are paying the lowest possible price, and where possible look at alternative keywords and phrases to ensure that you are aiming at the most effective target audience possible for your money.

## Affiliate Programs

There are two major benefits to creating affiliations with other websites. The first is it gives another route for potential customers to reach your website, and the other is that the number and quality of links to and from your website is becoming increasingly critical, in achieving high search rankings for websites that have been optimised for search engines.

Most of the major search engines now factor link popularity into their relevancy algorithms. The most glaring example of this is Google, which impacts the search engine results for Google, AOL, Yahoo and others. These top three search engines and directories account for 76.9% of all search engine traffic or 246 million searches a day. Google's Page Rank is a score of a website's relevancy according to the number and quality of incoming links to a website. Additionally, 19 of the top 20 search engines and directories today use link popularity to help determine your positioning. As a result, increasing the number of links to your site can actually improve your search engine rankings. There is still no one "secret trick" to getting good rankings, but boosting your site's popularity may give it the edge it needs.

A banner is the standard way of exchanging links, but is not the only way. The problem with a banner is it's often overlooked as an advert. If possible try to be included as a reference, a recommended service or a business associate. Or better still, try to be included as part of a testimonial to your business.

It is possible to pay companies to find you appropriate affiliates, and sometimes if search engine ranking is the reason, this is a useful service. However, the best place to start is with your existing customers, suppliers and associates. Offer to return the favour and include their site on yours as well, that way both parties are benefiting.

If you are selling a service or product, you may even want to extend your affiliate program to allow others to sell your products or services for a commission. If you are offering this, make sure you can monitor the results.

## Banner/Button Advertising

As mentioned in the affiliate programs, sometimes a banner advertisement can drive traffic to your website. Pop-ups and banner advertising does receive a lot of bad press, but it also works. This option does not have to involve a reciprocal link. Many sites will allow you to advertise for a set period, for a number of impressions or for a number of clicks. This is also a good income generator for your own website if you are receiving a reasonable amount of traffic.

Statistics show that 79% of consumers “occasionally to frequently” click on banner advertisements. The cost of an impression based banner advert tends to be priced as a number of pounds per thousand impressions. If you are considering this kind of marketing, make sure you research the website before placing an advert. You need to be sure that your target audience will see your advert.

## Off-Line Marketing

After you have created your website, don't forget to promote it off-line as well as on-line. Most people include their website address on their business cards, but there are many other opportunities as well:

- Letterheads
- Envelopes
- Corporate Brochures
- Cheques
- Coasters, mouse mats
- Post-it notes
- Office and vehicle signage
- Clothing etc etc

## Statistics

Even if you have followed all of the advice in this document, you will only know if your site is useful if you can monitor the results. As mentioned at the very end of the introduction to this document, a good hosting company can provide you with an amazing amount of information regarding your websites performance.

Ask your hosting company or website developer to put this information into an understandable format, and monitor it on a regular basis. What do you want to know?

- How many visitors has the site had
- Which pages did they visit
- How long are people spending on the site
- Which pages are they leaving from
- Where are they entering the site from
- If they have come from a search engine, which keywords did they use to find the site
- Which country are visitors coming from (you may find your site appeals to a foreign country as a phrase means something else to them).
- What documents or files did visitors download

This sort of information should allow you to determine whether your website is effective or not. It can also help identify areas that require improvement. If visitors are all leaving your site from the same page, then look at that page and determine why. If your site has been built with content editors, then it won't cost you a penny to improve the page. But remember, when you change a page, never lose site of your objectives or whether a page is search engine optimised.

## Asking For Help

“A ship in port is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for.” –  
Grace Murray Hooper

**I**F you would like us to help you access the full potential of the internet, or you would like us to advice you on what to do next, then feel free to contact us. We are great believers in education, rather than using the technical myths surrounding the internet to generate business.

intheopen are a UK based internet marketing company, who are dedicated to helping small to medium-sized business succeed via the internet.

## Contact Us

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## Our Mission Statement

### Service

We will always remember that we are a service company. Each and every customer is valued as a part of who we are today, and who we'll be tomorrow.

We will work hard to earn our customers' trust and loyalty. And more than simply responding to customer needs, we will work to anticipate and exceed them.

With unquestionable honesty, fairness and respect.

### Technology & Innovation

Our products are grounded in technology and innovation. We believe that research, development, quality and performance are key to our future. We have earned, and will continually strive to retain, our leadership in this industry.

Our dedication to technology and innovation is motivated by the desire to provide services and products which contribute to the growth of our customers.

And we share in the responsibility of providing the world with new advancements.

### Success

We will work for the success of our customers, our company and each other.

We understand and respect the value, the contributions, and the achievements of each colleague. We will support personal growth through education, training, and new opportunities. We will never be content with who we are, or what we have accomplished.

We are inspired by what is yet to come.

intheopen	Project Considerations		
	Task	Required	In House Task
Determine Objectives	✓	✓	
Target Audience Analysis			
Competitor Analysis			
Site Storyboarding			
Site Graphics			
Site Content			
Site development			
Viral Marketing Strategy			
Permission Based Marketing Strategy			
Off-Line Marketing Strategy			
Site optimisation – Keyword analysis			
Site optimisation – Development			
Site optimisation – Affiliate Program			
Site optimisation – Pay-Per-Click Campaign			
Communication & Staff Training			
Site Launch Process Definitions			
Newsletter Design			

