

Opportunities Are Shouting - Are You Listening?

By Amin Khan

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One of my cousin sister is a student of archaeology. She's got a passion for it. A couple of days back she invaded our house and dragged me to one of her friend's beautiful house backyard where I had some weird but useful discussion with her friend.

Her friend turned out to be a direct marketer. As you may expect, we started discussing everything related to marketing and the Web. After about more than an hour of friendly discussion, we had an argument over global marketing strategies.

Monty (my cousin's friend) had a view that when you make a direct response website selling your products (such as ezine publishing, or search engine resources) you don't necessarily need to take in consideration the geographical aspect of market. He believes these sort of products are for everyone working on the Web regardless of local or global market.

I, on the other hand, and a firm believer of small niches insisted that no matter what the product is, it has a small niche market IF you're a small guy. If that is not true than why experts have formulated global marketing strategies that deals with micro markets? What's the point of collecting demographic data? Etc...etc.

I further reiterated, and to make a valid statement using a real world example talked about the Search Engines move towards multi-lingual support. I said today everybody talks about keywords, key phrases, power and generic words, keyword densities and carefully crafted sentences. Almost all of the major SE placement resources found on the Web are in English. Emphasis is given on the way you make a systematic arrangement of specific words within your web page to achieve a higher ranking.

On the other hand, major Japanese search engines, such as CyberSpace Japan at: <http://www.csj.co.jp/> Japanese Yellow

Pages, such as Dragon's Joy at: <http://joyjoy.com/JOY.html> and Biglobe at: <http://search.biglobe.ne.jp/> are all relying heavily on Japanese related keywords and key-phrases.

Now do you think if someone has to make a website in Japanese language with Japanese related keywords, key phrases etc., can make an "effective" use of the English SE placement resource? By all means, not at all. Why? Because every language has it's own grammar, or set of rules, style and vocabulary.

A Japanese website designer or webmaster would definitely find it difficult to make effective use of the English language SE placement resource. He would definitely be looking for some good Japanese SE placement resource that can provide the needed knowledge or services to him in his own mother language.

Now, don't you think if somebody could come up with a Japanese SE placement resource in this case would make a killing? You betcha.

How about adding some unique features or benefits to it? Man! You're getting into the right game.

Although, English is currently the most widely used language on the Net, a great need exists for non-English product(s) or resource(s) like I mentioned above as in Search Engine's case. And countless other areas too. Because most of the Web resources comes in the English language.

So, if your mother language is Japanese but you can understand good English, you can always convert your newly acquired knowledge into useful Japanese version of the product. Doing this, you'll have lesser competition, and you will target the right market. Making money then becomes piece of cake :-)

I would bet that the guys who started up Yahoo! never imagined that they would have a complete Japanese version that works much like the English version does. Check out the Japanese Yahoo at: <http://www.yahoo.co.jp/>

Even in the case of major large corporations, companies are finding ways to get more flexible, customer-centric and transparent to sustain and augment their presence in the international markets. Already, plenty of major American companies with huge marketing budgets have blown it overseas, simply because they didn't do their homework in their proposed markets.

Going global requires many considerations. These includes customs, values, culture, money, language, economic health, lifestyle etc...etc. Here I have only tried to highlight the language aspect. More social and legal issues exist than I could possibly cover here, and they all vary from country to country

and from region to region. The one place I suggest that you check is a directory called International Business Resources located at: <http://globaledge.msu.edu/ibrd/ibrd.asp/>

From the corporate perspective as well, I cited Monty some other funny but true examples...

Braniff Airlines came up with a catchy slogan to promote it's new upholstery: "Fly in Leather," The Spanish translation was, unfortunately, "Fly naked.". Sex may sell, but it didn't help Braniff.

Neither Pepsi nor Coke had much luck the first time they tested the Chinese market. The Pepsi slogan "Pepsi brings you back to life" translates to "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave." Yikes!

Coke used a different tactic. It tried to come up with Chinese letters that would be pronounced "Coca-Cola." What it actually spelled in Chinese was "Bite the wax tadpole." (Sounds like something a surfer might say.)

So the point I'm trying to make is... it's getting increasingly important to customize your product(s) for specific markets and learn as much as possible before hitting those markets, because competition is building up rapidly. In my humble opinion, that's the ONLY way to get success at a rapid pace and the right way.

People with generic products will keep on spending their time and dollars in a close loop endlessly. If they really want to make their products sell, they must identify the right market and customize their wares according to the preferences of the market they choose to serve.

Over the period, I have learned that personalization and customization are the two important areas every entrepreneur should explore seriously, if they are to make their business successful online.

Okay, but what happened to our discussion?

Monty and I constantly talked about more than 2 hours. His vision was realistic, but some of his ideas didn't make any sense to me. So I thought I should share this experience with you. Would you like to know what were the ending remarks of Monty when I finally rolled up the discussion?...

"Amin, you're a hard nut to crack. I'm convinced. It's for the first time somebody really bogged me down."

So the moral of the story is no matter what product or service

you offer, you must understand the implications of offering it to the market you want it to sell to. The more you understand the market, the more you can sell to it. Every other thing then becomes secondary.

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