

# Qualifying Yourself as a Reliable Vendor

By Clay Mabbitt

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Marketing is a numbers game. This maxim is true, although it can be viewed from several angles. Proponents of bulk email advertising and traffic exchanges contend that if you expose your message to a vast number of people, only a small percentage of them need to become paying customers for your business to substantially grow... and they're right.

Conversely, however, if a high percentage of the people who see your message become paying customers, you only need expose your message to a small group of people to see the same increase in business. Both approaches are useful for certain products and certain marketing messages. The nearly unlimited audience of the Internet makes the volume advertising approach relatively easy to pursue. This article examines the second, comparatively subtle art of increasing your customer conversion rates.

The average computer user has become an old hand at deleting commercial emails with barely a passing glance and ignoring flashing banners as they surf the web. So you have a product that will increase their productivity, impress their friends, inspire their children, and improve their life beyond imagination; if only they knew about it. How do you tell them? Answer: don't.

You'll be much better off if they find out from an objective third party, or (better still) learn how great you are on their own. Sounds great, right? Only no objective third party knows (or cares) who you are and the only chance someone will find you on their own is if they type your URL into their browser to see if your domain name has already been taken. Every entrepreneur is in this position when starting out, and the ones who have gotten past it spent their marketing dollars developing a relationship of trust with their customers.

The practice of qualifying yourself as an expert in the field of your product, long before the audience even knows you have a product to sell, yields amazing marketing benefits. Instead of scaling the defensive walls of a wary customer whose looking for the catch, you're sharing expertise with an enthusiastic listener actively seeking information. Once your audience has discovered that you have valuable knowledge in an area, they'll want to know what products you recommend.

A classic example of this type of qualification is media coverage. You'll see a huge jump in traffic and your conversion ratio of visitors to customers if you're mentioned in an article that appears in a magazine, newspaper, or online news site with a large audience. Craft a newsworthy press release and distribute it to as many media outlets as you can. Professional distribution services can be expensive, often as high as several hundred dollars, but the potential payoff is enormous.

You can also make it easy for potential customers to learn about your products on their own by creating a newsletter with valuable content. The more times a potential customer sees your name, the stronger their confidence grows that you're not a fly by night operation that's going to take their money and run. If you consistently put out a readable newsletter, your subscribers will come to view you as a trusted voice in your field.

Articles such as this one are also a good means of establishing you understand your product and the needs of your target market. Imagine you're interested in buying a briefcase. You read an article explaining how a briefcase can protect important documents, create a professional image that gives people confidence in you, and turn any table at which you sit into a mobile office. All other things being equal, aren't you more likely to buy a briefcase from the link at the bottom of that article than the link on a page by itself that says "briefcases for sale"?

So before deciding to look for the advertising method that will give you the biggest head count at the lowest cost, consider methods that qualify you as a reliable vendor that helps your customer make informed purchases. It might be the best way to keep your customers coming back for more.

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