

Why Should You Start an eZine?

By Craig Lilienthal

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The Internet marketplace is quite different from traditional modes of commerce in many ways. For example, there is typically no contact between the merchant and consumer during an eCommerce transaction. On the other hand, in the traditional marketplace the merchant and the consumer communicate verbally and nonverbally during commerce. The rapport established as a result of these communication events can be the deciding factor dictating whether or not the consumer chooses to make subsequent purchases at the merchant's establishment. Specifically, if the customer is treated rudely and without respect it is unlikely that the he or she will return and vice versa. Additionally, because of the vast reach of the Internet, merchants face much more competition on the Internet than they would encounter in their local, hometown marketplace. As a result of having little or no rapport with merchants and having a virtually infinite marketplace competing for their business, consumers are less likely to display loyalty to a particular Internet merchant.

Recently, increasing numbers of Internet merchants are realizing that there are a number of strategies they can use to circumvent the impersonal nature of eCommerce. These strategies allow them to communicate with their customers and increase customer loyalty with all of its associated benefits. For example, by offering websites loaded with free information, services etc. and by maintaining communication through newsletters (commonly referred to as eZines), merchants can gain valuable exposure, credibility with customers, increased traffic to their websites and substantial financial rewards.

Merchants who take the time to publish and distribute an eZine could gain a great deal of valuable exposure. As mentioned previously, the Internet marketplace is vast. Maintaining an eZine and offering access to associated information content through a website are very effective ways to attract potential customers and to reach out and bring customers "closer" to you, the merchant. The exposure that you get as a result of eZine publication and distribution should result in increased name recognition for the author and his or her website. Note: I will go into greater detail regarding how to "expose" yourself later in this series.

The ability to establish credibility is another benefit of maintaining an eZine. Provided that you treat your readers as you would like to be treated (e.g., don't send them to Internet get-rich-quick scams, give poorly researched advice, etc.) and provide useful content to your readers, it is likely that you will establish a positive rapport and gain the trust of your readers. It is well known that a positive rapport and trust between the merchant and consumer can lead to subsequent purchases and referrals from the consumer.

Increased website traffic is one more benefit of maintaining an eZine. The first and most obvious way that you receive increased traffic through your eZine is by prominently displaying your main link in a few places on the letter. Secondly, you can increase traffic to your affiliate websites by having a spot for recommended promotions in your eZine. (Note: It is very important that you thoroughly research and join each affiliate program before you recommend them to your readers. It is less likely that you will lose credibility recommending high quality programs that you, yourself take pride being a member of.) Third, you can distribute your articles to other eZine publishers and gain exposure through their mailing lists. Last, if you incorporate the information that you distribute in your eZine into your website, you are likely to receive more favorable rankings by some of the FREE major search engines.

The last benefit to maintaining an eZine that I will discuss in this article is the financial reward aspect. For some this is the most important benefit and that's alright because we're all in business to make money, right? Let's say that you have 10,000 people on your mailing list (this may take a little while if you do it right) and you send out your newsletter that mentions one promotion that you would receive \$60 for every purchase made. If ten people make a purchase, you make \$600 profit. Not bad! Keep in mind that this example does not consider factors such as residual income, multiple promotions and sponsored ads. So, it is easily seen how you could benefit financially from maintaining an eZine.

In summary, maintaining an eZine is a win-win situation for all involved. It is an effective way for merchants to establish and maintain a trusting relationship with their customers despite the cold, impersonal, long-distance nature of eCommerce.

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