

Is Your Marketing Plan Working?

By Jason Conley

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E-Market Ideas <http://emarketideas.info>

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Unless you have unlimited funds to spend on marketing, you need to know what aspects of your marketing plan are producing results. For the purposes of this newsletter, we will define "working" to mean hits to your web site. If you are including a signature on all of your e-mails, advertising in a few Ezines and perhaps doing some off-line marketing as well, how can you tell which of these is working, and which are just eating into your, already limited, marketing budget?

One of the simplest ways is to use different web addresses for each ad. For instance, I sell domain names and I'm currently focusing on the .name domains. I have several different web pages with the same information. (<http://databuilders.net/name>, <http://databuilders.net/myname>, <http://databuilders.net/dotname>) By creating separate pages, I can track which ones are getting hits, and therefore which marketing methods are working. I can check the hits by looking at the logs on my web server.

Each time someone visits your site, he leaves information in the web logs. You can use that information to see how many visitors you are getting, and which pages they visit. Most logs also show where visitors entered your site. (In my case that would be one of the above addresses.) They can also show you where the visitor was when he left your site, which can help you determine if you are doing something to scare customers off, perhaps making checkout to difficult. If I check my logs and see that I got a lot of hits to <http://databuilders.net/name>, but very few to <http://databuilders.net/dotname>, then I would carefully consider allocating more money to the a specific ezine and reconsider or redesign my flyers.

Another way to test effectiveness is to use the same ad, with the same method, but instead of sending prospects to identical pages, use slightly different designs. This can be seen with my Empowerism campaign. The target address, <http://databuilders.net/marketing> is more suited for an ad in a small business magazine. But <http://databuilders.net/empower> may appeal to readers of a newsgroup. Again, I can test the effectiveness by checking my web logs.

I can't emphasize enough how important testing is. Without it, you will spend more time and money than you can afford. Jay Conrad Levinson, the author of the amazing book, Guerrilla Marketing, put it this way, "Once you've launched your guerrilla marketing plan, keep track of which weapons are hitting your target and which are missing. Merely knowing can double the effectiveness of your marketing budget." Tracking ads is a simple way to be more effective and add money to your bottom line.

If you don't know how to access your web logs, you should contact your hosting company. Unfortunately, if you are using a free hosting company, you probably won't have access to your logs. There are many reasons to consider using a low-cost web host that allows you to use your own domain. Access to the logs is one of them.

I've covered two ways you can track your marketing campaign. These are easy to do and are free. There are higher tech ways such as cgi scripts and web-based tracking services. If you want to learn about them, Harvey Segal has written an outstanding e-book on the subject. It is available at <http://emarketideas.info/ebooks>.

Now that you know the importance of testing, and have seen how easy it is to do, start tracking your ads. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll see what works and what you need to drop. Running a small business is hard enough. You should go into it with all of the information you can.

Regards,

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