

Customers DO Exist Outside of Cyberspace!

By Angela Wu

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This one statement might not mean much -- if anything -- to you until you actually try promoting your business in the 'real world'. I know it didn't mean anything to me; for years I heard 'experts' repeatedly say that the one thing online marketers neglected was the offline market.

It wasn't until I opened up a new website where most of the audience preferred good old postal mail that I had my first taste of offline marketing. My worst campaign barely broke even; my best earned me back my costs by a margin of 7-to-1!

It's easy to become comfortable just marketing online; after all, it's relatively cheap, a big advantage for those just getting started. Still, it's by no means 'perfect'. Some of the problems include:

- * Email marketing, one of the most prevalent and popular ways to market online, is getting harder. With the vast amounts of spam (unsolicited email) we receive every day in our email boxes, legitimate email can easily be overlooked. Many people simply press the 'delete' key if the email isn't from someone they immediately recognize.
- * Anyone can put up a web page. There's no easy way to differentiate legitimate businesses from the 'scammers', and there seems to be an huge proliferation of scams online.
- * It's difficult to get the *right* people to see your website. With billions upon billions of web pages, how do you attract people to your little corner on the web? And once they're there, how do you keep them? Another website is just a 'click' away!

These problems make offline marketing much more attractive! Offline marketing has many advantages that cyberspace can't offer. Consider this:

- * You are not limited to a web page or online ad. For instance, you can use texture and taste (ie. product samples); or enclose stickers in your mailings to help engage the customer in your message.
- * It's something tangible that your prospect can hold in his hands... and with things like brochures, postcards, and business cards, although they might initially be tossed aside, the recipient can 'rediscover' them lying on a counter, on the fridge, etc -- or he may hand it to someone else he knows.
- * You can reach a whole new segment of the population that would never see your ads online. Some people don't use the Internet at all (or rarely)... while some of those who do, don't necessarily know how to search for specific information.
- * People can more easily focus on your message. For example, let's say you're stuck in traffic behind some guy with his URL on his car. There isn't much for you to do or to look at, so you read his decal. Similarly, a brightly colored postcard in someone's mailbox is more likely to stand out (and get read!) than an email that appears alongside dozens of others, most of which are spam.

Granted, offline marketing isn't always cheap when you consider the cost of paper, envelopes, ink, postage, and much more that can go into an offline campaign. But not all offline marketing has to be expensive; for instance, one of the easiest and most affordable methods I've used is a simple decal on my car (I got mine at Web Decals, <http://buildyourhomebiz.com/rd/webdecal.html>). The decal displays my tagline and URL, and everytime I drive, get stuck in traffic, or park at the mall, my business gets exposure. I keep a few brochures in my glove compartment to give out to people who ask about my site.

Online marketing is a wonderfully affordable way to reach an audience. However, a combination of online and offline marketing can help your business thrive! More ideas on how to market your business offline can be found in the article, 'A Beginner's Checklist to Promoting an Online Business': <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/articles/checklist3.html>

Angela is the editor of Online Business Basics, a practical guide to building an Internet business on a shoestring budget. If you're tired of hype and just want solid, down-to-earth information, then visit us now -- and in moments you can have access to loads of instantly useable tips, specifically chosen for beginners!

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