

Marketing for Success: 4 Strategies for Online Businesses

By Angela Wu

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The success of any online business depends in large part on where and how it's marketed. After all, a website sitting all by its lonesome in cyberspace isn't going to do much good; people have to be able to find it first!

But that's only where it begins. Once your website is getting traffic, it's next job is to convert visitors into paying customers. From there, your job is to try to turn customers into repeat buyers or into a source of referrals. Here are four major types of marketing to incorporate into your marketing plan:

__1. TARGETED MARKETING

Who is your target audience, what do they want, and how do you reach them? Understanding your audience is the first step to a successful marketing campaign. There are many ways to reach your target audience on the Internet, including search engines, links, ezine advertising, joint ventures, and more.

Don't neglect to research your 'offline' market as well -- many people still prefer to be contacted in the 'real world', rather than through cyberspace! For more information on offline marketing methods, visit <http://onlinebusinessbasics.com/articles/checklist3.html>

__2. PERMISSION MARKETING

'Spam' -- unsolicited email -- can cause varied reactions from minor irritation to outright rage. You don't have to spam in order to get business; people acknowledge that there are products and services about which they're willing to receive information. The Internet has proved

this to be true: how many times have you willingly signed up to receive a newsletter?

Some methods of permission marketing include publishing a newsletter; offering product or service announcements or updates; and using an autoresponder to distribute reports, articles, stories, etc. Subscription forms can be placed on your site so that visitors can indicate their interest.

By getting a visitor's permission to contact them, you accomplish a couple of things:

- a) You're able to market to them regularly (unless they choose to unsubscribe). For various reasons, many people do not make immediate purchases. When you have permission to contact them regularly, you are more likely to catch them at a time that *they're* ready to buy.
- b) Subscribers have automatically 'qualified' themselves as interested prospects. You can focus your efforts on marketing to them, rather than to visitors who have no real interest in your products and services.

__3. RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Relationship marketing has to do with the way you treat your visitors, prospects, and customers. Unless you operate a site with a well-known brand, people aren't buying from a 'website' -- they're buying from other people. Treat them as people instead of 'just another customer number.'

A few ways to help accomplish your goal include offering an opt-in newsletter - over time, readers will come to know and trust you; answer email and phone calls promptly and courteously; or offer a little something extra, such as simple 'thank you' or Christmas cards by postal mail. A little extra effort can help your business to stand out from the rest.

__4. CONFIDENCE AND CREDIBILITY MARKETING

People have to trust you and have confidence in your business before they're comfortable making a purchase. So how do you inspire confidence with visitors who have no previous experience with you?

First, use some basic, old-fashioned common-sense when creating your site. For example, if you're selling

information about how you made a fortune in the stock market, don't host your site on a free domain that's packed with popups and popunders.

Other ways include posting testimonials from happy customers; writing articles, columns or interviews to establish recognition as an 'expert'; and asking customers to refer others to your business.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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 today -- and in moments you can have access to loads of instantly useable tips, specifically chosen for beginners!

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