

Forget Conventional Marketing - Embrace the Web!

By Lee Traupel

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Tactical marketing processes are once again undergoing fundamental shifts from traditional to web-based processes. Many traditional marketing firms/agencies are still touting the tried and true to their clients; i.e. Tradeshow attendance, Print, Traditional PR, TV and Radio. However, these conventional marketing processes work best for broad market awareness and/or branding, especially for a Fortune 1K company with significant resources to spend on demographic analysis, test marketing and more test marketing. It's much more difficult for a smaller company (startup to \$50M per annum) to leverage the economies of scale that are typically available for a larger company for the media buy and operational efficiencies.

It's obvious that lifestyle and business processes are shifting towards a much greater dependence on digital media - people are traveling less due to cost issues and the ever-increasing speed of business is underscoring the usage of the Internet for information and research. If you're a small to medium sized business the chances are that you've probably cut your marketing budget significantly - by eliminating or scaling back tradeshow attendance, trade magazine advertising and/or direct mail in favor of response driven marketing on the web that can be deployed faster and more cost-effectively than traditional marketing methods.

Capturing leads from a web site generated by opt-in e-mail, newsletter inserts, text link advertising and/or other forms of pay per click marketing is still the absolute best way to generate leads that are quantifiable as soon as they are generated. You have the ability to easily track where the lead came from and via what interactive advertising process; assuming this has been setup for you by your interactive ad agency or with the online publisher. And, there are typically no lead times like more traditional marketing processes - we've created and deployed campaigns (creative, media buy, testing, ROI analysis, etc.) for our clients in 3-5 working days in some cases.

There are some pitfalls to web-based lead generation and follow through that you need to be aware of as you deploy an interactive campaign. Here are five of the most important "gotchas" that you need to think about as you build an interactive lead generation program around your web site:

- 1) Don't make it difficult for people to contact your company - make sure your web site really communicates with your prospects - by "communicating" I mean by providing telephone contacts, e-mail address and/or a lead capture form that is short. Note: this form has to be supported by a published Privacy Policy ("we won't divulge your info to a third party under any circumstances") and it absolutely must be short; i.e. don't request any more than baseline information, name, phone, e-mail and address, augmented with a comment box.

2) Your marketing objectives have to be supported by your sales team - the sales team has to be incentivized to respond to inbound e-mails and requests for information via a contact form in a timely manner, within 24 hours or sooner. If you have a geographically dispersed sales team then make this clear on the web site by providing specific contact points for states, regions and countries.

3) Make sure your IT person/department attends your marketing planning meetings with your sales team - your web site will need some type of a lead capture setup that redistributes leads based on function and/or geographical responsibility. Your IT staff has to create a database solution that captures, stores and distributes leads - this does not need to be done in-house, products like Act (the market leader in contact management software) are now web-enabled, you can capture leads via a web server and share leads with others via a browser and very inexpensively.

4) We don't advocate popup advertising for most of our client's advertising campaigns. But, we have "crossed over to the other side" and we do (highly) recommend using popups on our clients' web sites to present opportunities that in turn capture leads. Studies have shown effective popup lead captures increase lead generation by 40-85% depending on the market segment. Popups can be set so they only launch on a frequency basis per session (visit to a web site) or a number of times for a specific visitor - they don't have to setup so they are intrusive and annoying.

5) Last but not least (drum roll) - make the customer's usability experience the most important aspect of your web site. Create a user interface ("experience") that is pleasant for your visitors; i.e. use standard universal (top of page and local page left) menus, utilize 2-3 sentence paragraphs with lots of white space, don't overload your pages with graphics that slow down load times and make sure your contact points (phone, e-mail) are readily available from every page.

So, to summarize; advertising is shifting from traditional to web-based or interactive if you will - so, to get on board this tsunami build a web site that communicates with your prospects/customers, provide contact points via telephone and e-mail via the site, involve your IT and Sales staff with the lead capture process so they are all stakeholders and utilize popups to accelerate your lead capturing.

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Lee Traupel has 20 plus years of marketing experience - he is the founder of Intellective Communications, Inc. <http://www.intelective.com>, a marketing services company which provides strategic and tactical marketing services exclusively to small to medium sized companies. Lee@intelective.com Reprinted with permission from Intellective Communications - this article may be reprinted freely, provided this attribution box remains intact. (c) 2001-2002 by Intellective Communications, Inc.

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