

A New Twist on The Future of Internet Marketing

By Rebekah Nahai

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As we look forward into the new year, there is a level of uncertainty about whether our marketing lives will remain similar to how they are now -- or do a complete 180 and run in the opposite direction.

How can we predict what direction marketing will take in 2003? It's beyond my humble disposition to make a sure claim about the future of Internet marketing. However, with a mixture of my personal recent discoveries and those that I've found elsewhere, I believe I have a fairly predictable idea.

It's not what you expect.

Are you ready?

I believe that the future of marketing is in tangible items.

What?! How dare I make such a claim? Everything is supposed to be automated! The man in the eBook told me I can spend three weeks in the Bahamas, never lift a finger the entire time, and come home to millions in my bank account!

I know, it's a grueling concept. But hear me out. Just when you may think you know what I'm getting at, I'll be sure to throw another twist at you.

There are two reasons why tangible items will be the next big boom. First, they decrease the refund rate. With an automated system, it can't be easier for a customer to order your product, download it, then drop you an e-mail saying.

"Please give me a refund for XYZ. Thanks."

Goodness knows I've done it if the product didn't deliver as promised.

After pouring your sweat and blood into the wonderful eBook you created, how rewarding will you find it to keep up with the ever-increasing return rate?

On the other hand, if you ship a tangible product, what percentage of customers want to go stand in line at their local post office, and on top of that, pay for shipping costs to return the item?

Second, they increase customer loyalty. I don't know about you, but getting a tangible product in the

mail always excites me. Lately I've found several websites that offered to send a free tape or CD with no shipping costs.

I've received a Robert Allen tape and CD, as well as a Dan Kennedy tape on Magnetic Marketing.

That was it. I immediately had a considerably stronger attachment to the websites that sent me a tangible product with real, human hands, than those websites that offer a free eBook download or similar.

The website that sent the Dan Kennedy tape also sent a letter along with it. The site owner made sure I knew that if I ever wanted discounted Dan Kennedy products, I should visit www.xyz.com.

Any ideas on the first place I'll turn to when I want a discounted Dan Kennedy product?

You got it.

Here's the twist.

Instant gratification prevails on the Internet. People want food -- fast, so they get fast food. They want a movie -- now, so they order one on Pay-Per-View from their living room couch. Your customers want what your sales letter promised -- instantly.

Is that a problem that conflicts with the concept of tangibility? Quite the opposite. Your job is to come up with a way to split your product in half. One half can be an eBook, for example, which satisfies the desire for instant gratification. Your customer has material to keep him or her busy until your second half arrives in the mail.

This could be in the form of an audio tape, a CD, a manual, a video, or any other tangible item your creative mind might possibly dig up. Is everyone going to start using this strategy? Half tangible, half digital?

It's doubtful.

But if YOU want to be heads and tails over your competitors -- while gaining priceless customer loyalty, and a significant decrease in the refund rates your digital-focused competition is stressing over -- why not forget about jumping on the bandwagon with the rest of 'em, and take the wheel instead?

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