

# Five Tips for Internet Marketing Success

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Do you view your website as an expense or as an investment? Surprisingly, many companies seem to view their website as a necessary cost of doing business, not an opportunity to attract an audience and gain new customers. The following five tips can help transform a non-performing website into an effective sales and marketing tool.

1. Make sure potential customers can find you on the search engines.

Most businesses don't take advantage of search engine optimization, but few things on the Internet can be as beneficial. A recent Forrester Research report showed that 80% of web surfers discover the new sites that they visit through search engines. According to iProspect, 85% of web users use search engines to find solutions and vendors. A properly executed search engine optimization campaign can drive numerous, highly targeted visitors to your site, typically at a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising. Without high search engine rankings, you will only get visitors that find your web address through word of mouth, regular advertising, or other limited means.

2. Use content to get repeat visitors to your site, not flashiness.

Rich media, such as flashy graphics and audio, may impress your visitors the first time they see your site, but they are unlikely to come back for it (or recommend your site to others because of it). If repeat visitors (meaning potential customers) are your goal, you are much more likely to get them to return if your site offers content that they find valuable (and with any luck, indispensable). This helps to establish your company as an expert in your field while building a level of trust with your visitors.

3. Develop regular e-newsletters and announcements to inform and keep up to date with current and potential customers (but only those who ask for them).

A properly executed newsletter campaign can help your business retain existing customers and attract new ones.

Routinely sending out informational content that your newsletter subscribers find valuable is another excellent way to build a level of trust with them while continually establishing yourself as an expert in your product or service area. Over time, your recipients will be increasingly likely to recommend your products or services to others. A newsletter can also be used to announce special promotions and sales. A recent Doubleclick survey of more than 1,000 Internet users found that more than 82 percent of them had made a purchase online during the past year as a result of some sort of advertisement they received through email. The study revealed, however, that people were much more receptive to email from companies with whom they already had a relationship.

4. Make sure your existing marketing materials promote your online presence.

Make sure that all of your print advertising; business cards, letterhead, etc. display your web address. In addition, you should mention your website address on your phone message, in the signature of the emails of everyone in your company, and in any radio or television advertising.

This simple step can drive a good deal of highly qualified prospects to your site for relatively little cost, but many companies are still using the same marketing materials that they used before they had a website (and missing out on a great opportunity to build traffic).

5. Make sure your website content is focused on your customer's needs and interests, not your company.

A common mistake that companies make on the Internet is focusing their Internet marketing text too much upon themselves. Visitors are more interested in learning about how your products or services can benefit them than about hearing about how wonderful you are or learning about the history of your company. Unlike other media, on the Internet you have very little time to communicate your company's unique selling proposition (USP). The most effective websites are those that quickly answer the question "Why do I need this product/service?" Here's a quick test- does your Internet marketing copy use words like "we", "us", and "our" more often than words like "you" and "your"? If so, your copy may be too self-centric. A change in focus would likely help you to better connect with your visitors.

Scott Buresh is co-founder and principal of Medium Blue Internet Marketing. For more helpful tips and a free site analysis, please visit <http://www.mediumblue.com>

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