

Going Fishing

By Bob Osgoodby

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Every year about this time, we make our annual pilgrimage to the waters of the Atlantic to go striped bass fishing. Loading the boat with all the essentials, such as something cool to quaff and piles of sandwiches, we grab our rods and reels and sally forth. But wait - did we forget something? Sure did - we need to have bait. What are they biting on this time of year?

Fortunately there is a bait shop on the way out, so we tie up to the dock and go inside. There we talk with the owner who tells us they are biting on several different kinds, so taking his advice we buy several. At first we each use a different kind, and if they seem to favor one bait over the other, we all start using the one that is attracting the fish.

Hmm - sounds familiar doesn't it. We do the same thing when trying to lure customers into our online offers. Like in fishing, you need the essentials in your business. Our web site and email programs can be compared to the fishing equipment, but we have to have the proper bait. This is where your advertising comes in. Your ads are your bait, and you will need to use different ads to attract different customers.

Writing ads is a skill you must master if you wish your online business to prosper. There has been a lot written about writing effective ads. Sometimes what might be considered a bad ad by the pros is one that actually works. Why you might ask? Different styles appeal to different people, and you have to realize, that while the web might provide a level playing field for entrepreneurs, the likes and dislikes of potential customers are vary widely.

While "Glitz", and exaggerated earnings claims might appeal to some, to others it is a turn off. Wild claims about earnings potential might gather some prospects, but will be an automatic "click away" for others who prefer a low key approach. You must experiment with different ad copy, and keep records of what is drawing.

There are many ways to do this, and some suggest that you have multiple web sites geared towards ads that are running. In your ads, you point your visitors to different sites and by keeping statistics, you can see which ads are working.

But here is the dilemma. Depending on any number of factors, visitors could be coming from places other than your ads, and the results might be misleading. If, for example, a search engine picks up one site and not the other, you will obviously have more visitors to the site that has been indexed.

Bluntly, hits to your web site don't really count - sales do. Your first job however, is to get visitors to your site. This is done through a variety of methods, including advertising, the use of search engines and email. Once you get them there, you must then sell them on your product.

On our web sites, we have an "after sale" questionnaire and we simply ask them how they found us. Now these people have decided to do business with us, and their answers will most likely be truthful. We then log this information, which helps us determine what advertising is working.

Ads that don't appear to be pulling, we modify until we start seeing positive results. One of the best places to test your ads is in ezine publications that are highly targeted toward your potential customers. I don't recommend ads in publications that are not targeted to your prospects. Unless you have a very generalized product, the return you get in these will most likely be minimal. More importantly, you won't get sufficient information to determine if the actual copy is working.

Many people have been advertising in the same ezines for years. Remember that there is some "thrashing" that occurs, and some people drop off the subscription list for the publication, but others are added. This gives you a constant new group of people who will read your ad every time it is published.

Experienced online entrepreneurs will even keep the same copy year after year if it is pulling. It usually takes 5 to 7 exposures anyway until they receive "brand identification". When someone is willing to "bite", if they have the proper ad, they will remember them. To land your customers, like in fishing, you must have the proper bait.

Did you know that subscribers to Bob Osgoodby's Free Ezine the "Tip of the Day" get a Free Ad for their Business at his Web Site? Great Business and Computer Tips - Monday thru Friday. Instructions on how to place your ad are in the Newsletter. Subscribe at: <mailto:tipofday-subscribe@topica.com>

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