

# Turn on the Lights

By Bob Osgoodby

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We hear it said that in order to be in business, you must have a Business Plan, and this is true. Without one, you are like a person in a dark room trying to find something. Eventually, you may stumble across it, but how much time did you waste in the process? If you had turned on the lights, the odds are you would have found it a lot faster.

The Internet provides a great number of opportunities that allow someone to get into business quickly, but many folks who try, are like that person stumbling about a dark room. A good business plan requires that research is done on whether it will work prior to getting started. Once a product or service is settled on, the next major step is to develop a marketing plan.

At the risk of oversimplification, a good marketing plan must get information about your product or services to those who are able and willing to buy them. You will be competing with "droves" of others however, who are trying to accomplish the same goal, so the steps you take here will either make or break your business. Let's see if we can turn on a light or two.

The first part of your marketing plan should be to identify your potential market. Again, this sounds like a simple process. But it is amazing how many people don't. A campaign aimed directly at your target market, will produce results.

Don't believe the ads you read about how mass email is the road to success. Nothing could be further from the truth. If someone receives a lot of junk email (spam) about a particular product or opportunity, it leaves a bad taste in their mouth.

If you are into Network Marketing or represent an Affiliate, what better place to advertise yours, than where they are trying to market theirs? They have already made a decision about this being a viable field, and many are looking to diversify. So here we have identified a potential target market.

Are there ezines or newsletters that go out to these people, or others who might be considering this? If so, this is a must. How about web sites that accept ads which are similarly targeted? You should definitely have representation there.

What about cost? There are thousands of places (FFA) where you can place a free web ad. In

fact, there is software that will post your ad automatically to them. The majority of these however, only keep a limited number of ads up there. When new ads come in, the older ones get rolled off. Your ad there has a life, which is usually measured in seconds. Hardly worth your time, not to mention the expense of the software. The real agenda here is that the FFA sites don't care if anyone sees your ad.

Their business is collecting targeted email addresses that they then market. If you don't believe this, place an ad in one, and watch the spam that arrives daily in your mail multiply faster than you thought possible.

While we're on this, how about the ezines that allow free ads. This could be a further waste of time and effort. Yes, there is even software to place your free ad automatically to these, again by the thousands. Many of the people placing ads this way never even see the publication they submit to. Some require you to subscribe before accepting your free ad, and this helps build their subscriber base. There is however, little if any loyalty to the publication, and many times, the only reason they subscribe is to be able to place their ad. If they bother to read it, they might make a cursory scan to ensure their ad is there, and then delete it.

So what should you do? First, find a few ezines and web sites that accept paid ads, and most are relatively inexpensive. You can get your message out to thousands of potential customers this way. Don't think a "one time" ad however will work. It can take 5 - 7 or so exposures to your ad before you can expect results.

One other mistake you should avoid is to assume that the larger the subscriber base of the publication, the better the results will be. An ezine with only a few thousand targeted subscribers, many times will produce better results than some that have several hundred thousand that are not.

So, when planning a marketing campaign for your business, do a little research. Don't stumble around in the dark, hoping to find something that works.

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