



By
Thomas
Shay

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Introduction

Marketing has always been an exciting profession. There is the challenge of coming up with new and creative ways to catch the attention of the public, hold that attention long enough to build up enthusiasm for a product line, and then motivate consumers to take that final step and purchase the good or service.

There is a lot of time and effort that goes into developing a solid marketing plan, and then even more resources required to actually get the plan rolling and producing results.

Internet Marketing Basics for Newbies

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Like most professions, marketing follows some basic guidelines, based on what has worked in the past. Unlike some professions, marketing is a fluid type of career. As technologies change and the tastes of a fickle public shift, there is an ever increasing need to be alert to new and exciting ways to get the point across to people who are looking for just what you have to sell them.

Over the last couple of decades, the concept of Internet marketing as taken on a new prominence in the scheme of promoting goods and services.

Originally seen as more or less an adjunct to traditional marketing methods, Internet marketing is now perceived as a legitimate and powerful form of marketing all its own. In many ways, Internet marketing has taken the old rules and rewritten them for a new age.

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One great thing about Internet marketing is that you do not have to study the concepts of marketing for a number of years or obtain a degree in the subject before being ready to step out and begin a marketing career. In fact, it is possible to learn the basics in your home and during your spare hours.

Here are some things you should know about Internet marketing, what you need in order to get started, and some tips on how to find the right types of places in the cyber-world to look for important clues as to what you can effectively market.

Developing the Right Mindset of a Successful Internet Marketer

While there are ways to self-teach yourself about how to be an effective Internet marketer, it is important to realize that you must get yourself in the right frame of mind if anything you learn is going to be of any help to your new career choice.

As is true with so many things in life, attitude can be the difference between a happy and successful Internet marketer and someone who adds one more example of failure to a long and growing list.

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To that end, one of the first things you should do is develop a mindset that is positive. You will want to apply this approach from the moment you choose to begin learning about the concept of marketing on the Internet.

Telling yourself that there is nothing that you can't learn to do and do well is the first step in creating the right approach. You will find this level of confidence to be tested from the very start of the process, so the sooner you develop this sort of "can-do" attitude, the better off you will be.

Unless you already have a marketing background, chances are that as you begin your studies, you will come across terminology that you are unfamiliar with.

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For people who already doubt their basic ability to learn new things, this can be the obstacle that derails them before they ever get started. However, if you simply remind yourself that there is nothing you can't learn, this will be nothing more than a small speed bump on your way to success.

Instead of despairing because you don't understand a word, stop for a moment and use your access to the Internet to look up the meaning. Many search engines allow you to enter a command of "define" followed by a keyword or key phrase.

This will allow you to find quick definitions for the word, and also provide you with links that go into more detail about the concepts and applications that are connected to that word.

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Remember that you are not engaged in a competitive race. If you need to spend an hour or so researching marketing terms, then take the time and do it.

Getting comfortable with the lingo will only make it that much easier for you to read and assimilate the information that you use as part of your self-training process. You will thank yourself as you resume your studies and find that technical terms are no longer slowing you down.

Along with learning about Internet marketing, it is a good idea to get acquainted with basic Internet tools as well. There is a world of electronic marketing tools that are available today.

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Some of them are free, while others cost very little. There are some basic things that any Internet marketer will need to know and learn about using these tools.

Learning before you go out and start assembling the tools will help you keep the right attitude for two reasons. First, you will be able to side step grabbing the first tools you see and holding on to them as if they were the Holy Grail of marketing.

While there are a lot of great support tools and software on the market today, there is also a lot of junk. Take a deep breath and step back for a moment.

Remind yourself that you are in an investigative mode. Make note of tools that pique your interest, but don't leap on them until you have learned more about Internet marketing and how to apply the tools.

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Then you will be in a better position to evaluate what value, if any, a particular tool has to your marketing model and plan.

Second, you do not set yourself up to fail before you even begin. Like the old saying goes, "too many cooks spoil the broth."

Engulfing yourself with a bunch of tools in a random fashion will only serve to confuse you and scatter your attention from your goals. Keep focused, keep moving forward. This will prevent you from getting bogged down in details that are not yet essential for you.

Above all, it is absolutely necessary that you meet every challenge with questions about how to turn the situation around and make it into an opportunity. Remember every challenge or problem is nothing more than an opportunity in disguise.

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There will always be challenges, but an individual who is dedicated to the concept of becoming a top notch Internet marketer will see these situations as stepping stones to success, rather than a brick wall that cannot be climbed.

One thing to realize is that no matter how positive you try to be, there will be days when it seems like nothing you study is making sense. Recognize that you will have those days, but also remind yourself that every successful person from the beginning of time has also had them.

When you feel the frustration level rising to the point that it threatens to undermine your positive mindset to your marketing studies, it is time to take a short break. Push back the chair, turn off the computer, and get out of the house.

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Go to a movie, take a walk, have coffee with friends. The point is to change your location, the view around you, and the focus of your attention for a short period of time.

Giving yourself this short break will do wonders for your cognitive abilities. Chances are very good that when you return to your computer and pull up your study documents, things will make a great deal more sense.

Remember that you can be whatever you want to be. All you have to do is take the time to equip yourself with the knowledge and skills you need to reach your goals.

This may not happen overnight, but if you keep your chin up, work hard, and assimilate what you need, your confidence in your ability will grow and you will get where you want to go.

Fundamental Tools All Internet Marketers Must Have

As your studies will reveal, there are some basic tools that will become essential components in the efforts of any successful Internet marketing plan.

Laying this solid foundation means you do not necessarily have to reinvent the wheel with each new campaign, although you should always be prepared to tweak things a bit to fit the needs of the product or service that you want to market.

Here are some things to put in place in order to do a great job with your marketing plans.

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First, you need to get a web site. Period. No discussions or prevarication allowed. The simple fact of the matter is that people trust entities that they perceive as being "real" businesses.

You may be creating your marketing empire from the garage or a spare bedroom, but if you have a real web site that people can visit, bookmark, and share with their friends and family, you will have the look and feel of an established business.

Freelance writers are an excellent example of this sort of thing.

While some well paying markets are always looking for new writers, they tend to gravitate toward writers that have a web site, complete with writing samples, contact information, and content that indicates that a true business is working there, not just a sideline or a hobby.

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The same is true with marketing. Sure, you can post ads all over the place, but if there is nothing that builds up confidence in the permanency of your business, all those efforts will yield little or no return.

The good news is that web sites are relatively inexpensive these days, and many vendors will even have online tools that will help you create a nice looking site. They supply the outlines, color schemes, and the basic layout.

You supply the content and the images and graphics. It is possible to have your web site up and running over a weekend, making it possible to you to use this as a basic part of your marketing plan.

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One of the first issues to address in creating a web site is your domain name. One of the most common mistakes people make is try to be quirky or cute with the name.

Forget quirky and cute, unless you can combine those qualities with a domain name that is short and easy to remember. Keep in mind that the longer your domain name happens to be, the harder it will be for people to remember it.

Sure, they can always bookmark your domain name in their Favorites, but what good does that do when they are casually talking with a friend about your site? Whether we like to admit it or not, the golden time for word of mouth to occur is during that personal encounter. If the domain name can be rattled off with ease, chances are much better that a new prospect will be directed to your site.

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The simple fact is that many people may promise to send a link to someone later, but it gets lost in the shuffle of daily life. Make things easier for you and for people interested in your site.

Employ the old Toastmasters counsel of KISS (keep it simple stupid). Life will be better for everyone involved.

Next, give the structure of your domain name a great deal of consideration. Are there ways to incorporate keywords in the domain name that will be easy to remember?

For example, if you plan on creating a web site that is devoted to the marketing of your own line of greeting cards, try to work in "greeting" or "cards" into the domain name. Keep in mind that the name of your company may or may not be the best choice for the domain name.

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While we all like to see our names pop up when we look around the Internet, your focus is on the products you have to market, not on the wonderful name you have chosen for your business.

If it seems that creating an easy to remember domain name that calls to attention to your products and services will mean forgoing the use of your company name in the URL, then bite the bullet and go ahead. Keep in mind you can put your company name in all sorts of places on the actual web site.

This helps accomplish two things. First, visitors will associate the URL with the types of products you are marketing. This is always a plus, as it makes it much easier for the consumer to remember and pass on your information to other people.

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Second, it helps to make it much easier for your target audience to find your web site during engine searches. The more pointed and focused your domain name happens to be, the more effective this particular marketing tool will become in your quest for success.

Another important aspect is making the best use of your title tag on the front page of your web site. One fatal mistake that is often made is using this space to do a welcome message for the site.

While it may fit in nicely with greeting people as they come into your home, it is completely unnecessary on your web site. The presumption is that anyone who visits the site is welcome, so there is no need to waste space stating the obvious.

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Instead, use that space as a means of spelling out in common terms that you have to offer. Keep in mind that we live in a society where people want instant gratification. That means you probably only have five to ten seconds to compel your visitor to stick around and read a little more.

Use that title tag to entice people to your site, and you will probably find that you show up higher on many search engines, as well as make better use of the space on your web pages.

While it is always nice when customers come to you, the fact is you will starve if you take the attitude that your wonderful web site is going to have people lining up to order whatever you are marketing.

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If the right people don't know your web site exists, it will take forever for you to build up a steady clientele. Among the tools that will help you be a success is finding out where to market to your potential customer base.

Over the years, a number of resources have been made available to Internet marketers for use in marketing campaigns. One of the most common is the email list. Approach this type of resource with a great deal of caution. The fact is that far too often, these ready to use lists are not qualified.

A qualified email list will only include email addresses that have opted to be a part of the listing, and want to receive emails that have to do with certain products and services.

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Far too often, lists are sold that include nothing more than a bunch of email addresses that were harvested off the World Wide Web. Using an unqualified list results in the creation of what is known as spam, or unsolicited emails. No responsible Internet marketer uses unqualified contact lists.

An unqualified list can hurt you in two ways. First, you have to pay good money for that list. If you purchase a list of ten thousand email addresses, and all but a hundred of them come back as undeliverable, you have effectively wasted resources that could have been used to better advantage.

An even more severe consequence of utilization of an unqualified email list is that your emails actually do get through to consumers, who get bent out of shape because they did not want the email in the first place.

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In a short time, you may find your company name or URL showing up on consumer driven spam reporting web sites, which will provide the type of publicity that you do not want to get.

If you must use email as part of your marketing scheme, then make sure the list is qualified. However, don't expect grand results. That same qualified email list that you just purchased was probably sold to five other people within three seconds of your purchase.

Direct email campaigns can be costly, and the promise of return is going to be small. Approach this tool with caution, and with an eye to whether or not it will really help your business.

Of course, over time you can build up your own qualified list of email subscribers who want to receive product notices, special offers, and other sorts of marketing information.

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Adding the ability to opt-in to an email listing that is maintained by you alone is a great way to build up a list that you can rely on.

Make sure people understand that you will not share or sell the list to any third party, and that they have the option of always opting out of the mailing list if they change their minds.

This type of courtesy will enhance your reputation as a professional, while also providing you with a targeted direct email audience that wants to see your advertising.

Other online resources are available to market your products and services. Research and find message boards, online yellow pages, business associations, want ads at chamber of commerce web sites, and other locations that will welcome the presence of your contact information and an ad about your business.

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Many of these are free, although some may have a modest fee. In some cases, you may be able to find a web site that has to do with an industry type that would benefit from your product or service and arrange for a permanent ad on the site.

One helpful tool is to get a firm idea of the type of customer that would be interested in what you are marketing. For years, traditional marketing has relied on a tool that is known as profiling.

Essentially, you want to create an image of your typical customer, including all sorts of details about their lives, likes and dislikes.

For example, would your product be more attractive to single people or persons in a committed relationship and/or married? Does your product appeal more to persons who are just starting out, perhaps in their twenties?

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Maybe your product has more of an appeal to people who are in the middle years of life, or to persons who are retired. Will people living in metropolitan areas tend to gravitate toward your offering, or will it have more appeal for persons who live in rural areas?

Asking yourself these important questions about what type of people are most likely to be interested in your product, and why they would be interested, will help you in a couple of ways.

First, you can seek out marketing methods that focus on effectively reaching people who fit the profile you developed.

This means you will spend more time getting your product and contact information in front of people who are highly likely to take the time to learn about what you have to offer.

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Second, this profile can form the basis for your marketing content. Why waste time talking about the big city when your services are geared toward people who live in a small town?

Profiling helps to give your campaign focus, because it opens you up to the possibility of talking points that will grab the attention of the right people.

There is one thing that you should remember about advertising online. What worked very well a few years ago has become commonplace and somewhat stale in some instances. Simply put, there are electronic advertising methods that are not all that effective anymore.

Still, some of these methods may be effective, depending on the customer you are trying to reach.

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The key thing to remember about online advertising is to not lock yourself into one particular method to the exclusion of all other methods. Investigate your options carefully and always have at least three or four strategies taking place at the same time.

If you can't identify at least three of these methods that will allow you to reach your target audience, something is wrong. Either you are being too narrow with your basic client profile, or you need to do some more research on available marketing options.

As a last tool in your arsenal, make yourself available. Businesses are not built on the basis of your web site and snappy advertising alone. Sometimes, people will want to talk with you about what you have to offer.

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This means you should always make sure you have contact information readily available to customers and prospects.

A branded email, rather than one of those free ones, sends a clear message of being a professional and makes you accessible. Including a phone number if possible is also a good approach.

However, make sure it is a business line, and not your home phone. Prospective clients are not likely to appreciate your three year old picking up the line. Put in a second phone line and make sure it is always answered with the name of your business.

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As a third option, set up a message board as part of your web presence. People can interact with you in that manner as well, plus it allows happy customers to share what they liked about your company, your service, and the products they purchased. Being accessible and responsive to queries by customers and prospects will do a lot to enhance your professional status with the general public.

How to Conduct Research and Uncover Profitable Online Niches

Unless you already have a great idea on the table, chances are you will need to spend some time looking into what types of products and services that you can successfully market.

In order to accomplish this, you will need to conduct some investigation into what is already being offered in the way of Internet marketing campaigns, and where you might be able to slip in and fill a niche somewhere in that great big business picture.

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Here are some tips on where to find information about niche markets that might be desirable for you, as well as how to find places to launch your marketing efforts.

If you are starting fresh and looking for your first idea for an effective marketing campaign, the first place to begin is with yourself.

What do you like? What types of products are important in maintaining your standard of living? What types of services or goods would make life a lot easier for you, if you had access to them? How much are you willing to pay for these goods or services?

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Spending some time searching your own wants and needs may yield some interesting concepts for niches that you can investigate online, and see just how much attention is given to those sorts of products.

Another method is to simply sit down with a piece of paper and make a list of ten subjects that come to mind without going into any really deep thought processes.

The list will probably be somewhat random, although thinking of one subject may immediately draw your mind to a related subject.

Don't fight the flow or spend any time second-guessing the subjects that come to mind. Write them down and don't waste time thinking they are silly or inappropriate. There will be plenty of time to evaluate the subjects later on.

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As a third source of inspiration, go out with friends, but take along a small note-book. As different subjects up in conversation and catch your ear, make a quick note.

A one or two word phrase should do the trick nicely. The idea here is to get some ideas for markets to explore, based on what types of issues come to mind among people you know.

While none of these methods are particularly scientific, they can yield some interesting topics to research. Don't reject any of the ideas out of hand, until you spend some time online and see where the subjects lead you.

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Concepts that may seem completely off the wall or worth absolutely nothing may turn out to be gold mines. If research indicates that the subject is a dead end, then at least you have eliminated one possibility and saved yourself the trouble of pursuing that option at a future date. On the other hand, you may be surprised with what you find.

Using these lists of words or subjects that you have compiled, take to the Internet and start doing some digging around. The first thing you want to ascertain is how much interest there is associated with that particular word or phrase.

One of the easiest ways to get a handle on this sort of thing is to use word tracking search engines online. There are several well-known ones that are very easy to use.

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All you basically do is type in your word or phrase and let the program search the entire web for results. What will happen is that the system will return a list that contains not only incidences of the word or phrase that you entered, but also expanded phrases that include that same word or phrase.

You also get an idea of how many sites around the Internet contain text with that word.

This can be a great way to qualify the subjects and see if there is a large amount of interest in a given subject and related topics or information. A lot of hits means that you may want to look further into that subject as a possible foundation for a marketing campaign that is related to that word or phrase.

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For example, if one of the subjects that came up on your lists happened to be "dog," and you find that the word returns close to a million hits on its own, and then you may have found a broad subject to explore.

Looking down the list, you may find that "dog house" and "dog training" returned a sizable number of hits, as did "dog treats." With just a little digging, you have uncovered three potential services or products to market.

Moving one step further, you can explore each of these marketing subjects a little deeper by clicking on the word or phrase and canvassing the actual returns. Here, you may begin to see a pattern among the hits that bubble to the surface of the search engines.

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This can help you to further refine your idea of what to market.

For example, if you notice there are a lot of these that have to do with making a particular product at home, you may begin to think in terms of marketing home assembly kits related to that subject.

Perhaps the home assembly requires the use of certain tools.

You may be able to set up a marketing campaign to sell those tools as a competitive price. Perhaps you happen to have some expertise with building those sorts of home projects. Put your knowledge to work, create some easy to follow plans, and market them to do it yourself types.

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Keep in mind that if you see a phrase with relatively few hits, that does not automatically eliminate it from the running. For example, if you notice that the return for "dog houses online" only yielded two hundred hits, take a moment and look at the actual title tags.

You may find that people are looking to buy kits for doghouses online, and that becomes the focus of your new marketing campaign.

One important thing to keep in mind is that you need to try this technique on multiple word tracking programs, since the search criteria used by each system may be a little different.

For example, some programs will return an average number of hits per day, while others will focus on the average hits per month. Also, the Internet is an ever growing monster.

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If you are not quite sure about the potential of a marketing idea, but do not feel comfortable abandoning it completely, stick it back for future reference. A year or two down the road, the results may be very different.

One thing to avoid is trying to repeat the same old tired process that is already being used by hundreds of thousands of other Internet entrepreneurs. Just as with brick and mortar businesses, competition can be fierce on the Internet.

What you want is to look for a market that still has some potential to grow, so you are not constantly engaged in exchanging a limited bank of customers with a thousand other marketers.

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Choosing to zero in on topics that appear to have some widespread interest on the Internet, but don't seem to have much in the way of marketing sites that actually address those topics specifically is a very good bet when it comes to establishing yourself in a niche market.

Of course, there are all sorts of E-books and software programs that are supposedly geared toward finding profitable niche markets. While some of them do contain a few good ideas, the fact is that free resources on the Internet can often yield the same ideas, and sometimes approaches that are just as good, if not better.

Before you spend any money on any type of products, check around various web sites for free ideas on finding niche markets, as well as visiting the free word tracking web sites.

Chances are you will find plenty of information that will keep you busy for quite some time, and will likely provide you with at least a half dozen solid leads on potential niche markets to launch your marketing efforts.

Conclusion

Keep in mind that there is no such thing as an idea that is too crazy to look into. You may find that going with something that is completely off the wall will lead to some interesting concepts of where you can fill a need and encounter a relatively small amount of competition at first.

Recommended Resources

Thanks for Reading,
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Check out my Internet Marketing Blog at
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