

Conversation Marketing: Outline & Worksheet

If I say 'internet marketing', what do you immediately think of? Spam? Snake oil? The last person who promised to double traffic to your site but didn't deliver?

Internet Marketing is Broken...

...Because it too often Focuses on Accumulation

Why is that? Because most internet marketing is just plain broken. It focuses on accumulation of every potential customer, rather than selection and care of the best customers.

The Cure: Select, Don't Accumulate

Say it twice: Select, don't accumulate. The internet is a direct marketing medium. You work with every customer one-on-one, even if you never meet him or her.

The Focus of This Presentation

I'm not here to teach you internet marketing. This worksheet and the next 2 hours aren't going to turn you into an internet marketing professional. What it will do, though, is provide you with a framework for planning your internet strategy, evaluating the work that others are doing for you, and measuring results.

The Rules: Conversation Marketing

You can't succeed in a vacuum. There are lots of sites that are very pretty, but never found. There are lots of sites that are easily found, but impossible to use. There are lots of sites where the owners don't know whether their investment is working or not. And there are sites that fail on all fronts.

In order to select the right customers, you have to take a complete view of internet marketing: A view that ties together your web site's look and feel, the gadgets that power it (like e-commerce), advertising and measurement. You need a strategy for approaching your internet marketing campaign.

My strategy is what I call Conversation Marketing.

Know Your Goals

Why are you at the party?

What does a visitor have to do on your site to make their visit a 'success' for you? Examples might be 'buy product', 'contact us' or just 'read more than 3 pages'. I call these **goals**. Every time a customer reaches one, you're happier.

What to do: Write down two desired actions you'd like visitors to take:

1. _____
2. _____

Know The Room

Who do you want to talk to, and why?

Who are those visitors? It's important to develop a list of the questions visitors will have on their mind when they come to your site. If you know these questions, you can be best prepared to answer them. Nothing continues a conversation like providing a good piece of information at the start.

What to do: Write down five questions your visitors will have when they visit your site:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Dress Appropriately

Don't wear a tux to a beach party

Your site has to look appropriate. Not cool. Appropriate. Review the questions you wrote down for Know the Room. What is the quickest, easiest way to deliver the answer?

What not to do: Don't design your site to make **you** happy! And don't include stuff for the sake of including it. If it doesn't help your visitors answer their key questions, drop it.

Sound Smart

Have something to say, and no food stuck in your teeth.

Keep it simple. Learn from Dressing Appropriately. Don't try to do anything fancy. Write short, simple text for your site. And make sure that whoever's building it uses CSS 2.0 and solid contingency design & usability.

What to do: Don't freak out! I just threw some terms at you that you don't recognize, I'll bet. Here's all you have to do:

1. CSS: Type your web site address into the tester at validator.w3.org. If it returns with a message of 'Congratulations!', then you're fine. If it doesn't, talk to the person(s) who built your site. (note, this isn't a perfect test, but it keeps everyone honest).
2. Contingency Design & Usability: Get some friends to use your site or site mockup. Ask them to visit it and complete one goal. Do they have trouble? If not, or if only a little, you're fine. If they have a lot of problems, again, take this feedback to your site designer.

Make a Connection

Hand over your business card.

You've wowed them your good taste, and educated them with your witty repartee. But not every conversation ends with the goals you defined. Some folks need to go away and think. Some aren't sure they need what you're providing. Some need to get other opinions. Regardless, make sure they have a way to do that.

What to do: Have an e-mail newsletter. Ask folks to opt in. Don't cheat, sneak or otherwise try to trick people into opting in (see Brag Modestly, next). If you really want to get fancy, do a Podcast or a blog. Give visitors a reason to come back.

Brag Modestly

Don't Wheedle

No one likes a lousy salesman. You know the type: Hanging on your arm, pushing and pulling you towards a deal, smiling all the way. Instead, get other people to brag for you: Work at a high ranking on the search engines. Purchase pay per click advertising. Sponsor a newsletter. Suggest (don't pester!) that a few blog editors write about or review you. Write your own blog. Send out a press release on PRLEAP or PRWEB. Brag, but brag modestly.

What to do: Don't ignore search engines! At least 75% of all people who use the internet to find something start at a search engine. And when they find you, they're highly qualified. Would you ignore 75% of your best potential customers? Talk to a pro about this. Trust me. It's worth it.

Observe & Adjust

Be Self-Aware

'Conversation' means a two-way interaction. You need to observe how folks use your site, what may be stopping them, and which messages and content grab their attention. You can do this anonymously, without violating anyone's privacy, using a range of tools from Google Analytics (free) to Omniture (absolutely not free).

What to do: Don't take no for an answer! Never, ever let a hosting provider or your designer/developer tell you that you can't have statistics for your site. You **must**, at a minimum, always know:

1. How many people come to your site.
2. How many pages they look at.
3. Which pages they look at the most.
4. Where they come from.
5. What search phrases bring you visitors?
6. Return on investment.

Rinse and Repeat

This is a process! It never stops. Schedule site reviews in your calendar.