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A Sticky And Viral Cocktail

By David Gikandi

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Amazon.com. Napster. Ebay. Blue Mountain Arts. Hotmail. These companies made it big on the web, most with surprisingly low marketing budgets, reaching unexpected heights in short time spans. Why? Was it branding? Sure, they are all strong brands today, but that is not what made them what they are. To be fair, a variety of factors contributed to their success. But by far the most important ones were tools and strategies that were sticky and viral in nature. Nothing markets a site better, spreading it like a wild fire, than having a viral product, tools or processes. And nothing makes it more capable of generating revenues than being sticky, for people only part with their money after they are comfortable with a product, after they have seen it a few times and interacted with it somehow.

The great news is that your site can start becoming sticky and viral right away by employing a few simple tools. Before we start looking at these tools that you may add to your site, it is important to remember that this works best if you add them into all your pages, emails, and products, as much as is possible to do so. Here we go:

Email To A Friend

On every page on your site, you should make it easy for people to send that page to their friends. Did you know that most people would look at something their friends send them? The number one rule of making something viral is making it easy to spread. Make sure that each page has a clear link or icon that invites the user to send the page to their friend. When they click on it, they should be able to send simply by entering their name and their friend's email address – keep it simple. The only other bit of information you may want to ask them for is their friend's name for personalization purposes. To add such functionality to your site, you will need to download a free script. There are plenty to choose from. You can find one in the Webmasters Specials CGI Scripts category at www.aboutwebmasters.com.

Free tools and products that pass on

Offer a free version of your product, or something else free. Make sure that it is useful; otherwise no one will really care about it. Ensure also that it is very easy for users to pass on these free products to

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their friends. If you can integrate this passing on as part of product use, then you have it made because by using the product, the person will have to tell their friends about it. Something you can quickly make is a screensaver and wallpaper. Download a good product for making these (see www.download.com), get some good images and create a quality screensaver and wallpaper. You can add your site URL and description to some screens on the screensaver. Then submit the screensaver and wallpaper to popular download sites such as ZDNet.com and Download.com. Every time someone downloads and uses the screensaver, they get to know about your site.

Forums, Chat, Community and Office Tools

Provide ways through which your site visitors can add content to your site and communicate with each other. Have forums, chat, and possibly instant messaging. One way to easily add this to your site is

using www.everyone.net. Offer free office tools, too, such as calendars, file sharing, to-do lists, group tools, and more. You can do so easily and for free by signing up with www.myevents.com.

Postcards

People love sending postcards. Blue Mountain Arts made history when it was acquired for over 800 million dollars, yet all it did was allow people to send electronic postcards to each other. The magic here is that if someone sends a friend a card from your site, that friend will almost always want to pick it up, and to do so they would have to pick it up at your site! That is a great way to get new users. To start a free postcards service on your site, all you need is to buy a CGI script that will do all the work for you. It is very easy. You can find one in the Webmasters Specials CGI Scripts category at www.aboutwebmasters.com.

Shopping Choice

Amazon.com's success is in a large proportion due to the amount of choice they give their users. You can buy millions of products right there. Choice is convenience, hence sticky. So how do you add a store with millions of related products to your site without taking on the expense and hassle of running such a huge undertaking? Add a free Vstore. It's easy and free and you get brand name products in a wide variety of categories all set up for you in a few minutes. See <http://www.aboutwebmasters.com/specials/7.shtml> for details.

Newsletter

It is very important that you have a newsletter (or mailing list). Newsletters work wonders for sites that use them well. Give an incentive and a reason for someone to join your newsletter. People are not willing to just hand you over their email address with no idea what they will be getting for it. The newsletter should always carry relevant, useful content, not just advertising. As long as it is useful, people will love it and pass it on to several friends. Again, remember to actively ask them to pass it on – you get what you ask for. If you don't ask them to pass it on, even if they are willing to, they may just forget or not even think about it. To start one, all you need is a mailing list server. You can get a free one from www.listbot.com or www.egroups.com or use a commercial one you pay for such as

www.sparklist.com.

Free Email

Be another Hotmail. Give away free email accounts. Every time someone sends email from them, a small signature goes out to their recipient with your URL and short description in it, just like Hotmail does. And whenever they check their email they have to visit your site. You can quickly set up for free as a free email provider at www.everyone.net.

News And Articles

Your site should always have relevant and ever–new content. One way of achieving this instantly is to sign up free for iSyndicate's (www.isyndicate.com) or Moreover's (www.moreover.com) services that push related news and articles to your site. Give your visitors a reason to keep coming back to your site by providing fresh relevant content.

Link Away

Provide easy ways for other sites to link to you. Have a page that showcases a variety of different banners and other links that webmasters can place to your site. Give the ready–to–paste HTML for each of those links to make it easy for webmasters to copy and paste it to your site. Get an affiliate program so you can pay for performance. Do all you can do to make it easy, profitable and interesting for people to tell others about you.

Recommend This Site

Other than an email–this–page and an affiliate program, one more thing you can do to get people to tell others about you is to add a recommend–this–site button. Well, most people will never click on it unless there is something in it for them. So offer them something free in exchange or a chance to win a big prize. You can sign up free with Recommend–It (www.recommend–it.com) and they will give you a neat button that tells your users to recommend your site in exchange for a chance to win \$10,000 – and they supply the prize money!

These are some of the tools and principles that created and continue to create businesses that thrive in the new economy. you can implement all of them on your site in a day if you put your mind to it, and for very little if any, money. The benefits will be immense if you do it right. More than anything else, stickiness and a viral nature are the most important elements of marketing online businesses, arguably even more than branding and advertising. For if you spend millions on branding and advertising a site that is not sticky or viral, your eventual average customer acquisition costs will not only be too high to be profitable, but you will be losing all your visitors and hardly making a sale to them during the short period of time when they are on your site. So start now, making a sticky and viral cocktail for your site.

Decisions On Appetizers And Cocktail Hours

By "Amy K. Spade"

In order to have even more time to socialize or to give the married couple some time for pictures or quiet, the trend of cocktail hours has re-emerged. Of course, these aren't the only reasons that you may want to contemplate a little fun before the actual start of the reception.

For the wedding party

After the rush of pictures and the excitement of the ceremony, a lot of the wedding party can become disheveled and unkempt. By giving them a little time to get freshened up, all of the reception pictures can be just as lovely as the ceremony ones.

Of course, if the wedding party has to transport themselves to the reception hall, a cocktail hour can give them enough time to get there and get organized as well. They can put away anything that they brought with them to the hotel or to the ceremony, plus change into anything that they may have brought with them—more comfortable shoes, for example.

A cocktail hour is a great new way to have a receiving line. The wedding party can meet and greet the guests as they arrive at the reception hall, even show them to their seats if they'd like. This way, the only thing that anyone is waiting on is the bride and groom.

For out of town guests

If you just couldn't schedule the wedding and the reception back to back, then you may be in luck with having a cocktail hour. When your guests are from out of town, they don't necessarily want to go back to their hotels before heading over for the reception, so they can have the option of going for light appetizers and cocktails.

This also gives them the opportunity to mingle with everyone in a less intense setting. There won't be all the dancing and cake cutting, so it can be a lot calmer. Plus if the wedding was earlier, the guests are probably hungry, so you'll be feeding them as well. And drinks can help to liven up any bunch of people.

A cocktail hour is a great way to warm everyone up and get acquainted before the arrival of the couple and the start of the reception. And since you're feeding everyone a little something to begin with, you may also be able to have a less complicated dinner menu—if you're on a budget.

So if you're deciding on whether or not to have a cocktail hour, why not just do it? It's an inexpensive way to keep your guests from having grumbling stomachs.

Amy Spade is an expert on planning weddings, and she has written an amazing totally free minicourse on how to make sure that you have the day of your dreams, and avoid wedding day disaster! Get the free course "Your Special Day from Start to Finish" now at [at](#)



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