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**How and Where to Advertise Your Small Business Online**

**By Jim Daniels**

How and Where to Advertise Your Small Business Online by Jim Daniels

OK, I'll admit it, I'm a bit of a cheapskate when it comes to marketing. I let my free ebooks, articles and newsletter do most of my marketing work.

But I also realize that in order to succeed in business, you must spend SOME money advertising. And I've been relearning this lesson recently.

Today I'd like to share with you some of my own recent results, so you'll know exactly how and where you should get started advertising online.

For starters, keep your wallet securely in your pocket. There are three things you must do BEFORE spending ad bucks online. And here they are...

1. Get a handle on how well your site does its selling.

Figuring out how good a job your site does selling is simple. Just look at your stats and do a little math. You are after just one number... how much a website visitor is worth to you. Or more simply, how much you should PAY for a visitor.

To figure this out you need to first find out how many visitors it takes you to get a sale. If you get 1000 visitors a week and 10 sales in that same week, then your visitor to sales ratio is 100-1. If you average 20 sales from those 1000 visitors, you are closing one sale for every

50 visitors. Once you know your own number, you will be able to determine approximately how much a visitor is worth to you. You simply take it one step further...

Let's say you close 1 sale in every 50 visitors and your average sale is \$50. Simple math tells you that you could pay up to a dollar per visitor and break even. So a good goal would be to pay LESS THAN a buck per visitor. Any ad buy that averages out to less than a dollar per visitor should be profitable, provided the traffic is targeted. If you aim to spend fifty cents per visitor you can double your investment every time you advertise.

Of course there are lots of variables. Things like opt-in email members you may receive from an ad buy and the repeat visitors that your list generates. But you get the idea. Until you know the above numbers for your site, you cannot spend money wisely on advertising.

Once you have a handle on how much a visitor is worth to you, the next step you must take before your first ad buy is...

### 2. Set up your email address capture strategy.

If your site is closing one sale for every 50 visitors, you may be satisfied. But if you are not offering a way for the other 49 visitors to "stay in the loop" you are making a huge mistake.

And it is simple to keep them from getting away. Just offer them something of value in exchange for their contact information. An example of one way to do this is offering a free gift at your site and getting their name and email address when they request it. Your gift can be a free ebook, an email course or anything else your visitors would want.

You can get as many as 20% of your visitors to leave their contact info if you do it right. That's a lot of email addresses when you start advertising and getting lots of traffic.

But what do you do with the addresses?

You treat them like gold.

Regularly publish an email newsletter to your growing list of addresses. Contact them and offer your expertise. Give them more free, valuable information related to what they requested originally. Make them feel special and grow a community. This is how long-term profits are made online.

Once you have tackled the two items above, there is one last step before you actually spend money on advertising...

3. Make sure you have a way to measure your results once your advertising starts.

I do this simply by copying my main entry page and using the new URL in the ad. When I check the stats my web host emails me I can easily see how many visitors came through that URL. This is just ONE way to track traffic. There are TONS more.

But you get the idea. You need some way to measure the results of your advertising or you are wasting your money.

OK, once you have tackled the three items above, you're all set up to do some ad buys.

I have tried many strategies online and here's the straight scoop on what works and what doesn't. I've ranked nine online advertising strategies as follows...

Poor: Don't waste your time.

Fair: Worth a try at least once or twice.

Good: A solid way to spend ad dollars.

Excellent: Should be a regular staple in any online marketing budget.

OK, here they are...

1. FFA submissions (Free for all links pages)

You know, those interfaces that say "submit to 50,000 websites for a few bucks. Well, save your few bucks. FFA's had their time in the sun. They worked great when they were first introduced. Now they are not worth a dime. Heck, even if you can do a free submission it's probably not worth your time. The last three tests I ran submitted my URL to nearly a half a million sites. I got four visitors. 'Nuf said.

Rating: Poor

## 2. Bulk email

Sure, you CAN get website traffic using bulk email. You can do it yourself or hire a company to hide behind. But the fact is, you risk your business reputation and you'll anger a ton of folks. Your domain will end up blocked by many ISPs and could even get sued. Unsolicited bulk email is not worth the trouble.

Rating: Poor

## 3. Safe lists

This is a twist on opt-in email marketing where you pay for the privilege of being able to send email to a list of other marketers who have done the same. While I have not tried this personally I can comment on it simply because lots of my subscribers have tried it. And I have not heard one good thing about it other than from people reselling it. The

folks that have used it have found that while safe list "members" have agreed to be on the safe lists, most never actually read messages or buy anything.

Rating: Poor

## 4. Banner Advertising

This is an "old school" advertising strategy that I have been testing again now that prices are lower. And early indications are that there is a solid reason for the still-declining prices of banner advertising. My own click-through rates been less than 1% so far, with a few exceptions. But I do have some decent size banner ad runs planned for the coming months at some busy, targeted sites. Time will tell if I'll continue with this strategy. If you DO want to try banner advertising, ask the site you plan to advertise at what the average click-through rates are and what banners perform best. That may get you up to two or three percent. If that will take you into profit, give it a whirl. But most small and home businesses may be better served using one of the five advertising methods remaining.

Rating: Fair

#### 5. Opt-in list rental

There are plenty of companies that will rent you email addresses that have opted in to receive commercial email. And if the recipients are not being paid to read the messages, that is they are genuinely interested in the offers they signed up to receive, this strategy can be profitable. The problem is you'll pay from ten to twenty cents per address and mailing to a list large enough to get results from can be quite expensive. But if your budget can handle it, you can generate some great targeted traffic.

Rating: Good

#### 6. Paid Search Engines Submissions

While I highly suggest submitting to all the major search engines that are still free (AltaVista, Lycos, Google, HotBot, DMOZ and Direct Hit) this article is about "paying" for advertising. And there are two paid search engine services I have had very good luck with...

a. Inktomi's Search/Submit at \$30 a year, which gets your URL into AOL, iWon, MSN and the Looksmart directory within

48 hours.

b. Yahoo! Business Express and sponsored site listings. The business express service costs \$199 for non-adult sites, and gets you Yahoo! consideration. While \$199 is a little pricey for some small business owners, a good listing at Yahoo! brings quite a bit of extra traffic. Once you are listed, consider taking advantage of the "sponsored site" offering for an additional monthly fee. I am sampling this currently and it paid for itself within the first few weeks. My results may decline as more sites are added into the sponsored sites area but I'll keep an eye on things.

Rating: Good

#### 7. Pay per click search engines

This advertising model offers a way for you to bid on search terms and pay only when someone clicks through to your site. I've been advertising with [www.goto.com](http://www.goto.com) and [findwhat.com](http://findwhat.com) using this method and have had decent results. It's easy to control costs and your visitors are targeted precisely.

If you are not in a super-competitive keyword arena you can do well with pay per click engines. For example, if you sell web hosting, good luck getting traffic for less than a few bucks a click. But if you have a smaller niche, this strategy represents a great opportunity and is worth trying.

And if you DO find that this model works well for you, more than 75 additional "Pay per Click" search engines can be found at Alan Gardyne's super-duper directory...  
<http://www.payperclicksearchengines.com>

Rating: Good

### 8. Personalized Email Series

Here's one that many marketers don't talk about much. It's actually a secret weapon among many of the big name marketers. You offer a freebie at your site and when your visitors claim it you are not only added to your opt-in list they are added to a series of personalized follow-up messages that you pre-program. If you write a powerful and effective series this marketing strategy can be one of your top sales producers.

Rating: Excellent

### 9. Ezine Advertising

Still the one. Some people think I recommend ezine advertising because I have an ezine and I'm trying to sell my own ad space. On the contrary, I've been trying NOT to sell my ad space for the last few years. That's why my own rates are so high! I can run my own offers or affiliate offers and make much more than I can selling the ad space. Many other ezine editors are finding the same thing. While this has resulted in rising ezine ad costs over the last few years, one fact remains... ezine advertising is still one of the most effective ways to get targeted traffic — cheap. Just visit an ezine directory and search for ezines in your

niche market. Subscribe to a bunch and start reading them. Look for larger circulation ezines that have a good following. If you like the content then the thousands of other readers probably do too. Place an ad and you'll make a profit, nearly every time. Top sponsorships work best if you can swing it.

Rating: Excellent

Article by Jim Daniels of <http://www.bizweb2000.com> If you're interested in starting or growing a business on the Internet, Jim's sites will help you save time and money. He's been making a living online since 1996 and knows the ropes. Visit Jim and get your free help!

### **Your Online Business...Just Like Any Other Business...Almost!**

**By John Evans**

### **Your Online Business...Just Like Any Other Business...Almost! by John Evans**

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Can you compare your online business with the store down the street, or around the corner? Yes, you can!

The basic difference, of course, is that you do your selling on the Internet, and the local stores sell from – well, stores. Kind of obvious, isn't it?

They have merchandise. You have merchandise They sell to customers that come into their stores, and you sell to customers that come to your web site.

Which proves...? That you BOTH need customers.

But, they do have a very distinct advantage over those of us on the Internet, although a small one. They have a store building that sits out in the open for all passersby to see. We, however, need to advertise in order to bring customers in, because we do not have a 'store front' for all to see.

Either way we do business, we all need to advertise!

Our advantage is of being able to advertise for FREE,

using ezines, sig files, etc., and reach masses of people easily, and quickly.

Do they have competition like we do? Of course. They sell bread, and the store around the corner sells bread.

Take the grocery stores, for instance. How many are in your neighborhood, all selling much of the same food goods? That's called 'competition', and we all have to face it, one way or another, at some time. Right?

Does one stop selling bread', just because the guy around the corner also sells bread? NO!

Do we stop selling a particular item online, just

because others are also selling it online?

NO, WE DON'T...!

Businesses are built on competition, and our online businesses are no different.

If a certain piece of merchandise you sell is not moving well, maybe it is time to replace it. But NOT just because others also sell it.

If others are trying to sell for \$3.95 what others, and you, are selling for \$19.95, THAT is not competition, that is called "cutthroat" business.

Whatever the competition is, we need to face it, and deal with it as best we can.

So, don't be afraid of competition ... we all have it.

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