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**Marketing Techniques... What Works & What Doesn't for the PC Repair Business**

**By Jim Shutes**

I have been involved with computers for many years. I have a PC repair, troubleshooting, and

networking background. So, when I wanted to start my own PC Repair business, I thought, "How hard could it be? You just hang a shingle, design a website and post it, maybe place a newspaper ad, get a Yellow Pages ad, and hang a few signs around town. I would be SWIMMING in business! In fact, I need to start looking, right now, for help handling all of my new business!" Well, that wasn't the case. In fact, that was so far from the case that I almost starved to death trying to figure out what went wrong.

Following are techniques that I tried, how they failed or succeeded, what works and what doesn't and why. I show many different ways of advertising your new PC Repair Business, and what to avoid. I also show several unique types of advertising that get good results, which you may have never heard of before, but they work! There is a lot here to read, but you won't regret learning everything that I have to show you. Don't make the same mistake I did, with trial and error. Let me show you what works. Enjoy!

**NEWSPAPER ADS**

I knew quite a bit about graphic design (being a graphic designer for many years), so I would put an appetizing ad, no, in fact, a COUPON, in the local newspaper. People are always looking for a discount. And EVERYONE has computer problems. So I should just get swamped with business just off this one ad. NOPE! I got one phone call from my ad. I had placed the ad in the local newspaper (our city's main newspaper) which went to 33,000 homes, and I had it come out on the biggest readership day: Sunday. The ad I placed was a professionally-designed Computer Tune-up ad that I had done, giving them a discount from the regular price of \$69, to \$49. They were saving \$20! It was an incredible deal! But I only had one response. Why? What did I do wrong?

Unfortunately, I was forced to use a horrible, red border. It is HUGE! In order to get the deal I was getting for this ad, my ad had to be put in with a couple of other ads (not related to the computer business) and have an ice cream-looking coupon border around it.

The ad had all of the elements of a good coupon. It was a GREAT deal! They were saving \$20 off the regular price (this is the next best thing to FREE - a dollar value of savings). They had to act now (call

to action) because it was for a limited time and expired in two weeks. People are graphic in nature and the picture of the computer and the words, "Computer Help!" in the screen would identify with people having computer problems. The headline was bold and heavy, it stood out from the rest - so that it don't have a paragraph of information that people won't read, and it spoke directly to people having a slow computer (everyone has a slow computer). Then it went on to explain the headline in more detail with a subhead. Plus, there was a GUARANTEE of a speed increase. You CAN'T go wrong with an ad like this, can you? Well, I did. I don't believe that the ad was evil and won't work. I believe that I had the ad where people didn't look.

Whenever you get ready to do any type of advertisement, you should test-market it, first. Whether it is an ad, a website (or page), direct marketing (such as mailers, mailed brochures or ads), etc., you should test it on different types of people to see how they will respond, and record their responses. In the case of the ad, I should have passed this ad out to several people and got their responses of the

ad. I should have then placed this ad on a page with several other similar ads and got responses from different people looking at the entire page of ads, had them put down the page, and asked them to tell me what stood out. Could they remember any good deals? This would tell me if my ad would stand out in a newspaper, among other similar ads.

In my particular instance of only getting one response from my "great" ad, it was literally buried in with other ads that looked similar to mine. In fact, my ad was not even on a page with other services, but "hidden" on a series of pages that had nothing at all to do with what I was offering, or computers, or even a story about a computer... nothing! People who would be looking for my type of service were not going to look where my ad was, and that is the lesson: **PUT YOUR AD WHERE YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS WILL LOOK, NOT WHERE YOU GET A GOOD DEAL ON ADVERTISING ! and DO TEST MARKETING.**

After my ad came out, I gave my wife the newspaper and asked her to find my ad (test marketing after the advertising came out... too little, too late). It took her **TWO TIMES** of going through the newspaper, page-by-page (and this is a small city newspaper) to find my ad (and she knew what to look for and what the ad looked like). So how are potential customers going to find my ad if they don't even know that they need to look for it??? They won't!

Think of it like this... if you want to sell motorcycle parts, put your ad in a motorcycle magazine. You have to think like the customer. A customer wants motorcycle parts, so where should they go? They start looking at places that sell motorcycles and accessories, groups that are associated with motorcycles, magazines that cater to the motorcycle crowd, message boards and websites that are all about motorcycles. You may or may not go to the newspaper and look through every page and see if someone is selling motorcycle parts. In fact, it is probably safe to say that a person looking for motorcycle parts won't leaf through pages of articles in a newspaper, looking for motorcycle parts. They may look through the only place in the newspaper that they think might list places that sell motorcycle parts, and that would be the business section of the newspaper and/or the classifieds. So, if you were in the business of selling motorcycle parts, you would want to have an ad right where your potential customer expects to find an ad for motorcycle parts. Place the ad in those sections **ONLY**. Do not place it where I did (in the middle of a bunch of articles) because I got a good deal.

So, in case your eyes just rolled back in your head, here is the gist of what I just said... when placing an ad for PC Repair in your local newspaper, either place it in the Business Listing for Services in your area, or place it in the proper classified sections, where people will look for your type of service. Do a test: ask a few people you know where they would look in your local newspaper if they needed PC Repair Help. Let's say that their computer was running extremely slow and they needed help before they pulled out the rest of their hair, where in the newspaper would they look. Ask at least 10 people. And whatever the majority is, that is where you should place the ad (no matter how much it costs). If not, you are just wasting your money. Remember to always think like your customer.

### WORD OF MOUTH ADVERTISING

Once I started getting customers, because I always did a little extra for the customers, I received really good word-of-mouth advertising and referrals. Referrals are gold! When you can call or stop by and see someone about computer problems that you already know that are having (from their friend or relative) and you can drop a name of someone they know who sent you, you are as good as IN THE DOOR! If your service was good for their friend, it will be good for them. And when you have the name of their friend, it is like you are their friend as well.

One way to get referrals from your customers is before you are completely done with the job you are doing for them, and they can see a definite improvement, give them a piece of paper and a pencil and ask them to write down 3 friends or relatives of theirs who could benefit just like they did. Most of the time they will be happy to give you the names, if you have made them happy. If you do this at every job, your business will snowball! This is the best way to build a business: by doing a good job and having a good reputation, with a network of people who sent you to the next customers, stamped with their seal of approval. It doesn't get any better than that!

### YELLOW PAGES ADS

A Yellow Pages ad is a good thing, but you don't need to spend the big bucks and get the biggest, most colorful ad, with ALL of your possible services, mother's maiden name, the history of your business, etc. on it. You need something a little more than the listing (just to stand out from the other guys a little). Your ad should list your company name, address, phone, and some services. One thing that has helped me get business over my competition is that I offer FREE Computer Pickup. People either don't like to, or don't know how to, unhook the web of tangled cables to their computer, for fear that they will never get them hooked back up. I offer a FREE Computer Pickup, where I come by and work on their computer right there, or I unhook it for them and take it back to my shop to work on it. And when I return, I don't just drop it off at the front door, I go in and hook it all back up for them. This is not only a HUGE benefit of them going with me over my competition (who is standing behind a pretty glass case, waiting for business to come through the door), but also shows that I really did fix their computer and it now works and works better. It is a reassurance factor and builds credibility.

In a Yellow Pages Ad, you can get carried away by trying to do a long sales pitch, when, in fact, you can just list a few important things you do, and tell them to visit your website for the full details. This gets them to your website and there you can give them the full scoop and exactly how you can help them. Just don't spend \$100 or \$500 every month to tell a story that you can do for free on a website.

Here is my Yellow Pages Ad. I spend \$50 per month.

(my logo) · Computer Tune–Ups

- Small Business Networking
- Wireless Networking
- PC Troubleshooting & Repair
- Custom–Built Computers
- Computer Upgrades
- OnSite Support
- Microsoft–Certified Techs
- Website Design & Hosting
- FREE Computer Pickup

(website address)

(address)

(phone)

## BROCHURES & BUSINESS CARDS

Of course, you definitely need something to leave with potential and current customers. You absolutely **MUST** have a brochure and business card, and **NOT** the peel–off or perforated card stock you get from your local office supply store, and print them off on your ink jet printer! Your brochures and business cards are sometimes the only thing that a potential customer will see that represents your company. Now, you may work out of your home, but you don't want it to look like you do. You want to appear as if you are a **HUGE** computer company, capable of handling any of their computer needs. A basement business card job doesn't say that. If you want to gain good credibility, spend a little money and get commercially–printed brochures and business cards.

You will want a good image design (designed by a professional) with raised ink on the business cards and some kind of color (no black and white business cards or brochures). If you can afford it, get matching business cards and brochures, with the brochures on a white or ivory, gloss stock (like a 70# gloss text). You don't want it to look like you photocopied the brochures. And it is proven that by adding some color to your marketing pieces, your responses are **MUCH** higher, than with black and white.

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And by having matching business cards and brochures (the same color stock and printing), you show your potential customers that you have it together and this isn't some basement operation (although it might be). Appearance and perception is everything. And your marketing material represents how you appear to your customers. Don't skip corners here; you will regret it and it will cost you more money doing it the hard way. Trust me!

If you would like to have the rest of this article, in the form of a 15–page "Marketing Techniques... What Works and What Doesn't For a PC Repair Business", along with accounting forms for a PC Repair Business, a PC Repair Business Website FULL of Content, Step–by–Step How–to's and much, much more, visit

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I have worked in the IT field since 1989 and hold several Microsoft certifications. I am a network administrator and owner and operator of Lapeer Tech Group, located in Columbiaville, Michigan (just outside of Lapeer). During these years, I have supported both Macs and PCs, am an accomplished graphic and web designer, and have had the opportunity to support 2nd and 3rd level enterprise networks for GM, EDS, Delphi and Delco. If you would like to get in touch with me, you may do so at (810) 793–1093, or by email at

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### **Internet Marketing Made Simple**

**By Jason Tarasi**

Have you ever felt like you've gotten in way over your head? When you first embark on an internet marketing venture, it's perfectly normal to be overwhelmed. There is so much to learn, so many different things you can do to market a business online, and so many "experts" that claim they've got the "secret" to making money online. It can really be mind boggling at times.

So, what's the secret to internet marketing and making money online? Well, let me tell you, there is no

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secret. What there is though is information overload. There are tons of strategies for various types of internet marketing techniques and what works great for one business, might not work at all for another.

So, rather than trying to "master the art" of internet marketing, it is best to get a quick overview of internet marketing techniques, decide which one (or two) you want to try first, gain the knowledge and skill you need to pull off the technique, and see how it works. Of course you need to do some research to identify your target market and create a marketing plan, but your internet marketing plan doesn't have to be extensive and doesn't have to be set in stone from day one. You can review your stats, see what is working and what isn't, and tweak your internet marketing campaign as you go along to strengthen it and make it more effective.

When you get started in internet marketing, it is good to have an understanding of various types of internet marketing techniques, but the primary ones to concentrate on in the beginning are search engine marketing and pay-per-click search engine marketing. On average, over 80% of the traffic that comes to a website finds the website through the search engines, so search engine listings are vital to internet marketing.

Search engine marketing consists primarily of optimizing your website using targeted keywords, filling it with relevant content, building relevant incoming links, and submitting the site to the search engines. With pay-per-click search engine marketing, the process of internet marketing through the search engines is simplified a bit because you bid on keywords that will provide results for your particular website and your search engine rank is based primarily on your bid rather than relying solely on site optimization which can be quite challenging.

Rather than focusing on a variety of internet marketing techniques at once, you'll find it is much more effective to pursue internet marketing options one at a time. After perfecting one strategy, you can move on to the next, continually strengthening your internet marketing efforts.

Jason Tarasi publishes the reciprocal links newsletter "Elite Links" Learn HOW thousands of other Elite Links members generate FREE traffic and increase their search engine rankings by swapping links. Grab your free lifetime subscription now at:

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