

My experiences of internet marketing with no knowledge and a very limited budget

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By Craig Lock

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Four years ago I was a total "computer dummy", not even knowing how to turn one on (a computer, I mean!). However, fortunately I developed associations with some "computer geeks", who suggested marketing my various books on the internet. This subsequently developed into on-line creative writing courses (the first one was free and I was completely overwhelmed and going broke fast), which have been very successful.

In spite of a huge amount of time and effort put in, our first attempts at marketing products were minimally successful. As "newbies" we tried the usual techniques: search engines (all of them with automatic submissions), web rings, banners, links (with sites getting fewer hits than ourselves), free classifieds and a guest book – all with very limited success. (I never did try newsgroups). However, all we got was other "internet pros" trying to sell us something (we still get that many times daily – trash bin). Fortunately, we had no money to spend on promotion, so capital was not wasted. With our "learners plates" on, this was all done on two "freebie sites" (Geocities and Tripod). However, the steep learning curve and persistence gave us a great deal of new knowledge regarding internet marketing.

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Things changed drastically once we got our own domain at NZ Enterprise.com (with Webcom), and suddenly all our sites got listed with Yahoo, as well as all the major search engines. Must have been the PERCEPTION that we were "successful" and "bigger" than we were. Image is everything (as in life!). It also helped having quite a unique product in getting a high ranking ("creative writing courses"). Eureka, Hooray! Incidentally, we submitted to Yahoo (Australia and New Zealand); so I suggest you try the regional Yahoo, rather than their main database. We also get quite a few hits from some of the lesser known S/E's (see even I'm learning the internet terminology!), like

Looksmart, Snap and Northern Light. (we also tried Go To <http://www.goto.com>, but with limited success). The traffic to our various sites started increasing substantially and sales started materialising. Mostly, our creative writing courses and money management courses, but a few books too.

Incidentally, we do all our marketing on-line; but hope to do some off-line too as more money comes in. We are presently getting 200 hits a day plus, and sales most weeks. Whilst sales are still nothing like we would like (and I realise it's much harder to sell products on-line than off-line), they are increasing fast. We started to make a small profit after 18 months on-line and sales have increased substantially since then !

As part of our marketing strategy to INCREASE TRAFFIC, I do a lot of submitting articles on self development and writing to e-zines (extracts from my books) and this has been the main focus of our marketing strategy. We've found submitting my various articles (with a resource box at the bottom of each article) to ezines and publishers who bring publishers and writers together, has made a big difference in getting our sites noticed – in terms of both "hits" and SALES. It's FREE ADVERTISING AT ITS MOST EFFECTIVE.

Living in a small isolated " city" of 30000 people near the bottom of the world with , made us realise the tremendous benefits of distributing useful

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information around the world at minimal cost via the www. I truly believe e-commerce is the way of the future (especially for geographically isolated, like us). Also I started this one man business with NO capital (just one or two "very clever" friends with technical expertise) in the most economically deprived region of "little old New Zealand". This has now developed to 3 people working (and having heaps of fun) in "Sleepy Hollow", together with an American associate. I believe an idea, a big helping of enthusiasm, together with a great deal of time and effort in implementing it, belief, faith in yourself and persistence (not necessarily in that order) is the key to internet marketing success.

Having little capital can be a blessing in your internet marketing efforts, as it makes us resourceful through relying on our initiative.

A final word to sum up...

Do the basics, then "hang in there, mate" (as good Kiwis, New Zealanders say) and the results will surely come.

Hope this helps and all the best in your internet marketing strategy

Craig Lock

About the author:

Craig Lock is an author of numerous books and the creator of the ORIGINAL online creative writing course. He has been writing for the past "lucky" seven years. Craig has had five books published on various subjects with another 12 manuscripts being published and marketed on the internet. He started the "ORIGINAL" (and still highly successful) online creative writing course.

<http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/creative.html>

Craig's various books are available from:

<http://www.novelty-gift.com/>

or

<http://www.nzenterprise.com/writer/books.html>

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HOW TO BUILD AN ONLINE AUDIENCE ON A VERY LIMITED BUDGET

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I find that writing articles based on my own knowledge and life experiences is the best means of internet marketing. In other words, you are **BRANDING** yourself. Writing down information (valuable), that can inform and most importantly, **HELP** others through **SHARING**.

A few words of advice here...

Just write in your own **UNIQUE** and distinctive style – what comes naturally to you. Be yourself in your writing and you will find that the words will flow. Use your individual area of expertise (and/or interests) to help others through sharing your unique knowledge and experiences of the magical journey that is life.

Then submit your articles to relevant ezines in your area of interest or expertise, and/or publishers resources – lists like Shelley Lowery's Article Announce, Mike Valentine's Free-Content, Angela Giles-Klocke's TheWriteArticles, PromoteYourArticle and Free-eContent. All very useful lists, that we regularly use.

Their web addresses are:

http://www.egroups.com/group/article_announce
TheWriteArticles@yahoogroups.com
<http://www.yahoogroups.com/group/Free-Content>

Also,
Publisher Network: publisher_network@egroups.com
PromoteYourArticle@yahoogroups.com
Free_eContent@yahoogroups.com
and finally ArticlePublish@yahoogroups.com.

They are all an excellent source of information and many ezine publishers source relevant articles from these lists. Sometimes even ezines with huge readerships pick up articles.

I believe that this strategy is the most effective form of **TARGET MARKETING**... that get's us the best results on a very limited advertising budget (like most start up home online businesses)...

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and best of all it's **BRANDING** oneself through free advertising.

A few final words to summarise...

Why not start **WRITING ARTICLES** for the www and see what happens...transpires (nice word, eh?). You **DON'T** have to be a "professional" writer to write articles. You know more about the subject matter (based on your past knowledge and experiences) and especially **YOUR** business. It doesn't matter whether you have never written anything before, just make a beginning.

"Be bold and unseen forces come to your aid."
(that is one of my favourite quotations – story of my life!).

Progress in life is accomplished by doing the basics right – the "little chores day by day". Success is never instantaneous – in any field of endeavour. For a while it may appear as if you are not making a noticeable difference through your substantial efforts (in time and dedication put in). However, just keep "chipping away" at your online marketing long enough and I can assure you, you **WILL** get noticed with web traffic...even though it may take awhile. The key to internet marketing success is **PERSISTENCE** – taking the small steps daily and making them **HABITS**. Ingrained...like writing articles!

This whole business of internet marketing has been one long learning curve for us over the past five years – seeing what works and what doesn't... like the lessons of life itself.

Finally...

Just make a beginning. Take that first step and you'll find that one step naturally leads to the next.

As the ancient Chinese proverb so wisely said:
"A journey of a thousand miles starts with a broken fanbelt and a leaky tyre... er sorry, a single step".

Good luck with those first few steps in writing articles for the www (without a broken and leaky pen) and **ENJOY** the journey.

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