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Online Marketing 201 :: Marketing to Early Adopters

By Rob Sullivan

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recently attended a search engine marketing seminar and there was lots of discussion about how to mass market your site online.

Because that is essentially what search engine marketing is: Marketing to the masses. But a question came up as I was listening and that is: How does a website market to early adopters?

In this article, I hope to address some of the points you need to cover to market to this distinct group of people.

I consider myself an early adopter. When there's a new gadget or toy out there I gotta have it.

The same goes for my online habits as well. I already have a Google Reader account with feeds from my other reader already set up and I was one of the first to have a Yahoo! 360 page. I also embrace any other new software that comes out. I love trying this stuff out even if it's a little buggy.

That's probably also why I switched to Linux from Windows some time ago - because to me it's in the early adopter stage of product life. It is slowly growing but it doesn't have near the critical mass it needs to move it to the next level - namely broad market adoption.

So the question then becomes: How does Linux (or any online business) move beyond the early adopter stage? Or more importantly how does one market to those early adopters to get their buy in before the company can move into the broader market?

In my experience there is no way to market to a broad audience until you've marketed to the early adopter. Online, you need these guys to recommend your product or service to their friend and family to help build it's reputation. But marketing to this person is different than "regular" online marketing.

Why are Early Adopters different?

That I can't tell you, but what I can tell you are some places that you shouldn't try to target in order to market to them.

For one thing, PPC is out of the question. Early adopters tend to stay away from paid ads. They don't like the whole idea of a site simply paying to be number one. They'd prefer that it earn that spot.

Which leads to my next point - investing heavily in SEO.

You have to optimize your site properly to target those "early adopters" but focusing on merely Google, Yahoo! and MSN is not enough. You also need to have your site appear in areas where early adopters frequent.

As an early adopter I learned pretty early that I wouldn't always find the information I wanted on a new product or service in the regular organic results. This is because generally the search engines are slow (in my mind) to respond to trends.

Too often I find my self turning to blogs as a source of information as they are generally more relevant and timely to me. In fact, I often find information in blogs weeks before the "mainstream" searcher finds it.

I even tend to find my news weeks or days earlier on a blog than in search engines - even news search engines like Google News or Yahoo! News.

Which leads to my point - you gotta get your site found where these guys spend their online time - namely (mostly) blogs.

I just checked and I find that I have subscribed to the feeds of 50 different blogs. I was surprised to see the number, as I've never checked before. But it's true - I scan these 50 feeds on a daily basis to see what's new and catches my eye.

My interests vary - I have feeds relating to the search engines and news about them, as this is the industry I work in, but I also have feeds on DIY projects for new hobbies I can take on, and even feeds dealing with console gaming (Xbox, Playstation and so on) as I find the changes in this industry fascinating (FYI - the gaming industry changes almost as quickly as the search engine industry). There's also a couple feeds from sites that provide interesting little tidbits of information from around the globe from strange news to new devices only available in Japan.

It is in these regions of the web where you will find the early adopter and it is in these areas where your most likely going to grab their attention.

Just how does one grab an Early Adopter's attention?

As I mentioned, my interests are varied. You need to be found where I (or others like me) go to get their news and information.

For example, one of the most popular blogs on the web (and also one of my favorites) is boingboing.net. This site covers a broad array of subjects. Similarly, Gizmodo.com is another blog that reports on new gadgets from around the world and also is one of my favorites.

These 2 blogs are examples of the hundreds of other sites out there that are frequented by early adopters on a daily basis - likely many times per day. If you have a new product or service which is aimed at the early adopter crowd I'd suggest visiting these sites and getting to know what they do.

And don't just automatically opt to post an ad on the site - that won't cut it. You need to get your product or service mentioned in the postings. A mention in the posts means you'll be found in the feed which is probably read by many more people than the site itself.

In other words, most of these types of site's users prefer to subscribe to the blog feed than actually visit the blog. Therefore you need to get found here.

So, are there other ways to find Early Adopters?

Definitely. As I mentioned, many early adopters probably won't use search engines very much, but that doesn't mean you should ignore them. Be sure to effectively optimize your site in case a few stragglers need to find you there. This means knowing the terms they will use to find you.

As such you shouldn't really rely on search volumes as provided by tools like the Yahoo! Search Term Suggestion Tool, as these tools won't accurately represent the search habits of your target user. Remember, you are marketing to the early adopters. These are the ones that make the trends, not follow them.

Also, find other places to be found by them. Use blog search services like Bloglines, Feedster or Technorati to find out where the "cool kids" hang out.

How to use blog services to find your target

A simple search on Bloglines, Feedster and so on will show you the sites blogging about a topic. You could always approach a few of these sites to see if they will give you a mention. Or, even set up your own blog, talking about your product or service. Be sure to get it listed in the various blog engines, however, or it won't get noticed.

Also, you can use sites like Technorati, which provides a list of popular topics. They do this by allowing bloggers to "tag" their posts. You can look at their tags page to see what are the "hot topics" by the size of the text - larger text means the topic is blogged about more.

From here you can devise a list of other "hot topics" and the blogs you could approach about your product or service, or topics you could blog about if they are relevant to your product or service.

The more blogs you can get mentioned on, the more your online reputation will grow with your target.

Keep in mind, though, that bloggers (and early adopters) can smell a con a mile away. Therefore you shouldn't be paying bloggers to write positive reviews about your product or service. Instead let them write an unbiased review, and use any negative feedback to help improve the product or service.

In the end, these types of reviews (both positive and negative) will help to build your online reputation to the point that early adopters will sit up and take notice.

Conclusion

I think I've made it pretty clear here that in order to market to early adopters you need to shift your online marketing strategy. Typical SEO and PPC campaigns just don't work for this crowd. You need to find them on the web in areas they tend to frequent. This includes blogs and other similar sites.

You also need to find a few in the group to provide an unbiased review of your product or service to help stimulate discussion among themselves. This is one of the only ways you will get noticed by this group.

So before you go out planning how much your PPC campaign is going to cost you consider who you are really targeting and plan your campaign around them. It will be money well spent.

And remember, you can use the feedback you get from the early adopters to help tailor your campaign

to the next audience on your list - the mainstream. This group will include the friends and family of the early adopter. If you've impressed the early adopter you will get a positive recommendation from him to his family, and in the end, these are the people that will make or break your online business.

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Develop An Online Marketing Strategy To Maximise All Of Your Marketing Activities

By Wendy Hearn

Developing an online marketing strategy is essential before you do any marketing or promotion of your business. Without a strategy it's like stabbing around in the dark, not knowing what you want to achieve. You

risk your marketing becoming unfocused and not producing the results you really want.

An online marketing strategy is the general and overall approach you'll take with your marketing and encompasses the big picture. It's the starting point for choosing the most effective marketing tactics to use and then the actions you need to take. A clear strategy helps you make the right day-to-day decisions, saves you time and keeps you focused.

Before doing any marketing of your business, you need to develop your strategy. This gives you a clear picture of what you're up against and what you need to overcome through your marketing. This enables you to choose the best marketing tactics. The tactics are the means of achieving your strategy.

With so many different marketing tactics to choose from it's too easy to do what many people do and that's just pick any tactic. Just picking any tactic prevents you from maximising your marketing and the results it produces. You may use a variety of marketing tactics to fulfil your strategy.

So, how do you develop an online marketing strategy?

First you need to do an appraisal and gather information about your company, competitors, customers and other industry players. You need a clear picture of what you're up against. This includes identifying your target market/clients and carrying out a SWOT analysis.

S – Strengths

What are the strengths of your business?

W – Weaknesses

What are the weaknesses in your business?

O – Opportunities

What opportunities are available to your business?

T – Threats

What threats is your business facing?

Next, define specifically what are the challenges and problems that you need to overcome. From this answer the question, "What will it take to overcome your main marketing challenges and problems?"

Once you've developed your objectives, then choose the strategies to support these objectives. Your strategies could include:

Improve communication

Educating potential clients

Sharing information

Increase awareness of your products/services or company.

Then select the most effective marketing tactics to bring your strategies to life. These tactics then need to be turned into an action plan.

Develop An Online Marketing Strategy To Maximise All Of Your Marketing Activities
Affiliates Should Ask For The Sale
Will Online Marketing Work For You?
Internet Marketing Made Simple
Dust Off Your Marketing Plan

Coping With Alzheimer's Disease
Ready-Made Niche Websites
eBartering Tactics
Affiliate Marketing PLR Kit
How To Create HOT Information Products



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