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Redefining Distance to Market Products or Services

By Lee Traupel

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The recent terrorist attacks here in the US have caused many companies and individuals to rethink how they want to market to and work with others. As a result, web-enabled presentations and or collaborations are finally coming of age - the technology works with a minimum of hassle, it's an efficient way to give marketing presentations, hold meetings, provide training and do product demonstrations. The cost savings can be significant, especially when contrasted with all of the burdened costs of holding conventional meetings; i.e. travel, hotel, transportation, facilities and "time out of the office issues." Here is a quick primer on some baseline issues to consider when weighing the effectiveness of virtual marketing presentations and meetings.

1) There are a broad number of vendors, although the "virtual presentation and meeting" market segment has undergone consolidation in the last few years. I'd recommend assessing these four market leaders: www.webex.com (well established with diversified terms of services), www.placeware.com (corporate focused), www.centra.com (provides a good client plug in that enables Voice over IP ("VOIP") communications), www.raindance.com (emphasizes teleconferencing).

2) PC configuration, Internet access and firewall issues all need to be considered when your assessing the effectiveness of this process and technology. Port settings need to be "tuned" or optimized, the PC must have multimedia capabilities if your using VOIP, just about any speed of internet connection will work, but the experience for the attendee can vary depending on the connection speeds and how "heavy" your presentation is with graphics.

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3) Web presentations offer a lower cost model versus traditional presentations or meetings, but there are burdened costs for web-enabled marketing - phone conferencing can be anywhere from \$.15–35 per minute per user, presentation uploads for a standard power point presentation (which is the defacto app for virtual presentations), can cost \$10–30. per presentation, costs per attendee can vary tremendously but average \$50–500. per session, depending upon the number of users.

4) One of the most expensive parts of virtual meetings is always the teleconferencing component. All of the market leaders have some VOIP component (voice over IP) but most are not publicizing this

technology or service, as they don't want to cannibalize a significant contribution to their revenue streams. One exception is Centra - they are offering VOIP integrated services with their standard web presentations or meetings. The audio quality is good, analogous to voice quality of a standard cell phone call - but there is a client download (small under 250K) to deal with and you must have a multi-media enabled PC.

5) Some web-enabled presentation challenges include the need to keep people involved - you can do this easily by leveraging the chat capabilities, dynamic polling, and standard Q&A components built into the application. The higher their interest level (as in real world meetings) the better your meeting or presentation will be.

6) Marketing presentations can be easily archived and made available to others on a 24/7 basis - this archiving can include the standard presentation, enhanced with video or audio components, depending on the sophistication of your presentation. Be prepared to pay an extra charge for this - but the marketing ROI can be significant, especially when you factor in how little most companies charge for an archiving service versus your front end costs.

7) Virtual marketing enables a whole set of web-enabled processes - you will have the ability to easily capture your prospect/customer's e-mail address and standard contact points via a registration process, involve them and capture preferences via polling in your presentations and "push" follow up communications during your presentation/meeting or later. But, it's very important to include standard "privacy" statements in your materials and adhere to them as you move forward through your business processes.

8) How does video conferencing impact your assessments of web-enabled

presentations or collaborations? This depends on your budget, number of people attending the presentation, presenter and attendee locations and other intangible that are specific to your business. In general, video conferencing works better for very small (under five people) presentations or meetings, due to some of the inherent challenges of this medium.

Market Through Distance Learning Courses

By Susan Dunn

Market Through Distance Learning Courses by Susan Dunn, M.A.

Distance Learning courses are a great way to market your practice and other products you sell.

First of all, it gets your name out in a new way. For instance, I'm a personal and professional development coach, and so its natural that I would offer further avenues for development in addition to personal coaching. The courses I offer reinforce that I'm an expert in my field. They also give the client something extra they can do on their own if they're serious about their personal and professional development.

Distance learning allows you to reach different markets for potential clients. Offering a teleclass on one of your topics of expertise will reach a whole new market and get your name out to a whole new group of people.

Listing your course on blackboard.com will reach yet another group of interested learners and potential clients. Some learn best by listening to the spoken word (teleclasses) and others prefer to read. Some are just looking around, and may click through to your website and get interested in something else entirely!

How you construct your courses and the content is up to you, and within the course itself there are many naturally-occurring ways to market too.

How often has someone said to you, "Oh. I didn't know you do that too." Within the course you can promote other products and services that you offer. For instance, in my Emotional Intelligence (EQ) course, it's quite natural for me to mention assessments the student should take (I'm licensed to sell the EQ-Map assessment), and the opportunity for other courses I offer (on the different competencies), and tapes and products I sell related to EQ. Once you know EQ, why not buy one of my mugs that says "EQ is better than IQ!" to help spread the word?

I'm also an affiliate for amazon.com and there are many books I can recommend the student should read. When they buy through my links, I make money. Developing your EQ means giving your right-brain some calisthenics so I can also recommend the "Dummies" music appreciation series through amazon.com. Since all studies show that EQ is best learned through interaction, it's a natural for the serious student to then sign up for EQ coaching to complete and round out their learning

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experience.

A good distance learning course provides resources for lots of other learning opportunities, some of which will be yours! I also pair with another coach who offers services I don't. I don't use a referral fee, but once they go to her to learn XYZ, her courses refer them back to me, for the special things I offer.

The interactive aspects of your distance learning course are also great new avenues for marketing. Set them up so that the students email their responses to you. In each email interaction there's a chance for you to teach more, and also to promote your products that are relevant. Make sure your sig line

works for you in that respect.

Be giving and personal in your responses to students' assignments. The person will have a chance to get to know and trust you, and we do business with people whom we like and whom we trust. Make the connection is every way you can.

If you know and love your subject, and love people, this will show through. You'll naturally attract a following for your services and products.

You also are in a position to take advantage of the teacher–archetype (Jung). A "teacher" holds a special place in our lives. We love our teachers who teach us well and with love. We naturally listen to them and look to them for guidance. Honor this archetype in all that you do, and your students will begin to look for you for other sources of learning and development. They'll also give you ideas for other products and services, and will refer you to friends. One of my students recommended my course to everyone else in his department.

There are many ways to use distance learning courses to market yourself and your products. Be a good teacher, and be creative and the opportunities are endless.



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