

Sure-fire Tutorial on Attracting Hoards of Customers with Autoresponders.

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**By Chris Kilian**

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You're constantly on the lookout for sure-fire ways to attract targeted customers to your online business.

Well, what do you know?

Really—what \*do\* you know? Think long and hard about this, because you can use your areas of expertise, your skills and/or your hobbies as springboards for promoting and selling your goods or services to a captive audience —by offering a free online course.

If It's Free, It's For Me!

Why offer a freebie when you're trying to make a profit from your business?

While at first glance the concept might not make sense, it is actually one of the oldest and most effective marketing techniques both online and off. People simply love to get things for free, and merchants oblige, with the goal of selling additional goods back end. From taste testings at wineries and supermarkets, to product samples delivered door-to-door, vendors have used freebies for decades to promote their products.

Free classes fall into this same "try something for nothing" category.

Again, using a comparable example from the brick and mortar world, consider the craft store chain that offers free classes on how to make decorative wreathes. Where will most, if not all, of the people who attend these classes purchase their crafting supplies?

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It's a win-win situation; those who take the class gain a new skill for free, and the store gains new—and probably repeat—customers!

Those Who Can Do, Teach

"But I've never taught anything in my life!"

Chances are, you have—whether showing a child how to bait a hook or bake cookies, or coaching a new co-worker on the job, we all have opportunities to take on the role of teacher now and then.

"Teaching" is simply taking something we've learned, and showing someone else how to do it.

The fact that your instruction didn't involve a structured course plan or weekly quizzes doesn't make you any less of a teacher in these situations.

When developing your free online course, focus on selecting a subject that meets these three criteria:

- One that involves a topic or skill that you consider yourself good at, or even an expert;
- Something that other people would love to learn;
- And, finally, has some sort of tie-in back to your business.

Going back to the craft store example above, you can see that offering free decorative wreath class successfully satisfies all three of these qualifications.

Still not sure what you could possibly teach in your own free online course?

Begin with the third criterion—base it on your business itself— and go from there.

Let's say, for example, that you operate a marine supply company aimed at sailboat owners; you might offer a free "Safety Tips for Sailors" course, or a "Long-Distance Sailor's Survival" class.

Or if you specialize in providing virtual office services to small businesses, you could conduct a course entitled "Simple Bookkeeping Techniques for Busy Business People," or perhaps a basic business writing course.

As with any marketing strategy, your free course ideas are limited only by your imagination—as long as you keep the three rules of thumb listed above in mind.

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### Develop Your Course Once, Teach It Thousands of Times

The best and most cost-effective way to develop and deliver your free online course is to use an autoresponder service that allows you to set up several (five to eight) messages which will be generated automatically to those who sign up for the class.

Set up each outgoing message as one "lesson" in the course; in the first lesson, you might provide a complete overview of what information the course will cover, followed by more specific information in lesson two, and so forth.

Each lesson needs to be no longer than a short article, ranging from 500 to 900 words.

You might also want to include little "assignments" at the end of each lesson, encouraging your students to put into action the material covered that day.

As for pacing your course, select an autoresponder service that allows you to preschedule the time intervals between lessons.

You can then choose to send a new lesson out each day, every other day, once a week, or whatever.

You only need to develop your course and set up the mailing strategy once, and let the autoresponder take it from there.

### Using the Free Course to Promote Your Business

Keeping in mind that your free online course is a marketing tool, you will of course want to somehow refer your students back to your business Web site.

This means incorporating the additional products or services that you offer, along with your URL, into each and every lesson.

The goal here is to strike a balance between sounding flagrantly self-promotional and being too subtle.

In other words, you do not want to chase off those who have signed up for your free course with a barrage of hype;

most of us already see too much advertising daily, and have become desensitized to it.

At the same time, you want your "students" to know where they can find additional information or tools on the subject—at \*your\* site.

You can accomplish this by covering each lesson in greater depth on your site (e.g., "For more information on today's lesson, visit <http://www.yoursite.com>"), including a trip to your URL as part of each day's assignment, or simply posting a brief advertisement for your site at the end of each lesson.

If your course-takers feel they have benefited from the free information they have received from you, they will be much more inclined to at least take a look at what else you have to offer.

Many Internet entrepreneurs currently offer free online courses to gain exposure and expand their clientele.

Although developing your own course requires a good deal of effort up front, the pay-off in terms of increased traffic and sales is tremendous.

Incorporate the "teach'em to reach 'em" philosophy into your marketing strategy, and watch your business soar!

Mr Killian is the author behind the Rapid Reply.net Corp. Find out sure-fire ways to promote your online business at <http://www.web-site-promotion.gr/cgi-bin/axs/ax.pl?http://secure.ibill.com/cgi-win/ccard/rscookie.exe?RevShareID=Maxout&returnto=http://www.rapidreply.net>

## **Internet Marketing Strategies — Customer Follow Up**

**By Shelley Lowery**

### **Internet Marketing Strategies — Customer Follow Up by Shelley Lowery**

Following up with your customer, once you've made a sale, is an important part of providing good customer service. Not only is it an important part of developing a good relationship with your customer, but it will also enable you to introduce your new products.

Although sending out a personal message to each of your customers may not be possible, you can provide them with the illusion that your message was personally sent. By using autoresponders, you can eliminate the need to manually respond each time you make a sale.

### Autoresponders

Autoresponders are one of the best promotional tools on the Internet. They were designed to automatically respond to any email message sent to a specific address with an automatic response. The more advanced autoresponders will enable you to set up a series of autoresponse messages to be sent out at a specified time.

You can use autoresponders to send all of the following:

- Thank you messages
- Welcome letters
- Order confirmations

Autoresponders can eliminate many of your routine follow-ups. However, they cannot eliminate your customers' support requests and your future mailings.

### Customer Service

In order to develop a good relationship with your customers, you must provide them with quality customer service. Let them know that, should they have any questions or problems, they are free to contact you. Provide them with all of your contact information to make the process simple. Even if you can't personally assist them, make sure that you have a good customer support group ready to help. Reply to their support requests as quickly as possible and assist them until the

problem is resolved.

Your customer service is one of the most important factors in determining your customers' satisfaction. Even if you have a great product or service, if your customer support is poor, your sales will suffer.

For every dissatisfied customer, you can expect to lose one hundred new customers. Why? When one customer has a bad

experience with your company, you can be certain that they'll tell everyone they know about their bad experience. It will travel through the grapevine and ultimately cost you sales.

Follow-up with your customers and ask them how they like your product or if they have any questions. This is a great way to not only provide good customer service, but to also obtain feedback about your product. By listening to your customers, you will know exactly what they want, what they're having problems with and how you can develop a better product.

### Mailing List

The best way to follow-up with your customers is to set up a mailing list. No matter what mailing program you use, make sure that it will allow you to send personalized messages. Your customers need that personal touch. They don't want to feel as if the message they received was sent to an entire list. They want to feel as if it was personally sent to them.

By following up with your customers and providing great customer service, you are creating a life-long relationship. Satisfied customers are more apt to purchase your new products in the future. Treat them with the utmost respect and go above and beyond the expected.

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