

Target the Little Guy. This Could be a Reely BIG Shoo!

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By Mike Banks Valentine

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Out once again to illuminate the dark corners of internet shows for the tiny shining light of small business tools, I have just returned from AIIM 2002 where they describe the show thusly:

Enterprise Content Management creates successful SYNERGIES between paper, document, and web content. It focuses your best marketing on the best opportunities. It streamlines processes. Cuts costs. Edges your competition. Boosts customer loyalty. Spurs growth. And sustains innovation. But only if you have the know-how and the tools to set up your BEST ECM Solution.

Would anyone argue those goals and values apply to the small business? Without a doubt! Is anyone there interested in that customer? Not a chance! They prefer BIG (enterprise) customers.

I use a now familiar introductory line when speaking with sales representatives on the show floor at major conferences. As I approach with my "Press" badge prominently displayed to alert them to the potential of that coveted "free promotion" that is so vital to growing companies and say, "I'm covering solutions of interest to the small business. Does your company offer anything targeted at that market?"

They usually stare back blankly and respond with confusion saying, "Not really." They look me over quickly noting the lack of the corporate uniform three piece suit, I wear instead blue jeans and polo shirt. "Who are you with?" Meaning, of course, "Are you BIG enough for me to care?" They inevitably

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shunt me over to the "Marketing Director" because, "She'll be able to answer your questions better."

As Miss Marketing Director approaches, all smiles, I ask again adding, ". . . or do you partner with any resellers or offer hosted applications to microbusiness?"

Inevitably she'll stumble, steady and then with furrowed brow often makes it clear she is thinking, "No, but what a great idea! I'll have to propose that in the business development meeting on Monday!" And sometimes she'll even say it directly, "Not currently, but I sure do wonder why we're not persuing

that market!"

I recently stumbled across a wonderful application for small business through affiliate tracking firm, Commission Junction. It was promoted via their in-house forum to members of other affiliate programs who use their tracking services. Oddly, it is offered by one of the MONSTER's of ebusiness, Oracle.

Just as strangely, it is one of the most powerful and yet affordable programs I've ever seen for the small business owner online. It's called "Small Business Suite" and it's based on their Enterprise Customer Relationship Management software. (That's ECRM for you corporate geeks.)

I'm baffled at why it takes so long for the BIG boys to find a way to offer hosted solutions like this Small Business Suite to what amounts to 50% of the economy, microbusinesses.

I have to admit that I attend these shows partly as agitator for the cause of the little guy. Nobody wants to "find" that sector of the market as it is inevitably fragmented and hard to reach. But Oracle has seen the light and Microsoft is after the little guy with their own suite of tools through their small business portal, bCentral.com offering a far less powerful suite of solutions broken up into modules to appeal to the penny-pinching needs of small business owners.

As for the AIIM show, I found an email solution offered by one company AIIMing at BIG boys of ecommerce who became VERY interested when I suggested they seek out a partner to buy their software and offer it as a hosted solution to small businesses. Fifty percent of the economy? Yeh! That's worth

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persuing! Damn! I gotta mention that in the business development meeting on Monday! This could be BIG!

I'm so glad he thought of that! Damn! Why has BIG business mostly abandoned the small business market? Some of the most successful corporations rely primarily on the small business market to become the megalithic behemoths they are.

Staples, Office Depot, Costco, Home Depot and dozens of BIG corporate discount stores got huge by offering solutions (read, cost savings) to the small business person. Where is the ecommerce superstore? How about eDepot.com? (The name has been reserved, could it be the small business ecommerce superstore arriving at last?) Shopping carts, payment gateways, merchant accounts, web hosting, site development, SEO services, ebusiness software, do-it-yourself-ebooks and tutorials. I wish I'd thought of that! Wait, I did!

Ooooooh, if only I had some venture capital or angel investors! Not to say that this idea hasn't been badly attempted by some well-meaning small business portals. The problem has always been that they partner with BIG businesses who insist on immediate, BIG growth and vast volumes of business before losing interest and pulling the plug on 50% of the economy.

How BIG a market is 50% of the ecommerce pie? Must BIG dogs eat ravenously at the market before the scraps are left to the little guy scavengers? Go for the vast quantity that is represented by the little guy and stop relying on premium prices and the rare BIG single purchase by monopolistic corporations. Why just rely on the fortune 500 when you could just as easily tap the Fortune Five Million?

Let me see now . . . 157 Billion dollars in Ecommerce divided down the middle is just under \$78 Billion for small business. Market worth persuing? Doh!

Mike Valentine does Search Engine Placement for the SmallBusiness
http://website101.com/Search_Engine_PositioningWebSite101 "Reading List" Weekly Netpreneur
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Little Guys and Big Guys

By Jim Schulte

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In the world of business there are the big guys and there are the little guys. The big guys like Home Depot and Lowes are the multi-million dollar stores that carry everything and have an inventory greater than the payroll of many small U.S. cities. The amount of "shrinkage" these big guys have every month would probably allow me to live very comfortable the rest of my life.

The little neighborhood guy on the other hand, is scratching his ass every week just to meet his payroll. They are however, making a decent living. Only because they have been around for so long. That longevity has helped them build a loyal customer base.

Those loyal customers know damn well that they are going to pay a little more for certain items, but they go to the little guy because it's close to where they live, and the service they receive is outstanding.

The little guy carries pretty much the same product as the big guy, but the price is of course higher. The little guy can't buy the quantity that the big guy can. So the price has to be higher because his margin is lower.

The big suppliers, like Toro are now selling to the big guys because the big guys can buy more and sell them at a lower price, which leads to more sales for the Toro's and other big names of that industry. The little guy has to rely on the service he gives his customers and not the quantity. The big guys don't offer much service or knowledge anymore.

It's the same for any one doing business online. The big guy with the big mailing list has a greater advantage than the little guy with only 300 or less subscribers. The big guy can set a

much higher price for his ads because he can

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expose your ad to a much larger audience.

The little guy practically gives away the ads in his newsletter because he cannot offer the same exposure for your ad that the big guy does. Any person trying to sell their service or product will be more likely to spend \$50.00 to have their ad seen by 45,000 readers, than pay \$9.00 to be exposed to 300 pairs of eyes.

So the little guy newsletter and ezines must offer better service than the big fat cat publisher with a subscriber base reaching 100,000 plus. This means more hours of searching for new and informative things. Hours that you don't have because you're working a 40 hour job because you don't have a huge subscriber base to which you can charge big bucks for advertising so you don't have to work a 40 hour job . See the Catch 22?

Unlike the little guy local store, you can become a big guy publisher. All you need is money to purchase leads, there are many places to do that on line today. Then you need the time to cultivate those leads, and turn them into subscribers. Over time you too can be a big guy publisher. The more money you have to buy leads, and more time you have to cultivate them, the quicker you get to charge big dollars to advertise in your ezine or newsletter.

Your second choice is to remain a little guy. Making little or no profit by charging \$1.50 to expose your customers ads to all of your 300 readers. But take satisfaction in knowing that every week, week after, sore fingers from typing, week. You put out the best damn newsletter or ezine that you can possibly publish. And you do all of that month after month for one reason and one reason only. Because even though you don't realize it.....deep down inside you really love doing it, and you kind of like being a little guy.

Jim Schulte
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Creator of the Internet Marketing Junkie Mouse Pad. Editor/Publisher of the Internet Marketing Junkie Newsletter. Designed his own website and has written several articles, sll of which, are not related to online marketing.



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