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The New Marketing Landscape

By Lee Traupel

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Many of us in the marketing services and/or agency business are starting to see some real tangible marketing patterns emerging that businesses need to be aware of if they want to leverage their marketing dollars in this "post .com implosion economy."

Good Web Site Design increasingly More Important

It's imperative for a company to have a quality web site today – but many firms are still throwing up web sites that are just poorly designed or overly complex. Poor navigation (menus and overall site structure) when coupled with low quality graphics is really problematical (!) – online visitors think less of your company as a result which will hurt revenue in the long run. Many think just doing a minimal job is sufficient but they aren't factoring in how close your competition is! On the web any potential customer is only one click away from seeing a high quality web site that is well designed and conveys a quality image

A good rule of thumb when budgeting for a web site is to assume you will pay approximately \$250–300. USD per page – this should include your graphics design, content development, setting up registration forms, etc. This may sound too expensive for many companies but for better or worse perception is reality in the online world! So, don't short change yourself, put some resources into your web site and be prepared to continue to do so – it's now a vital component of any company's ongoing marketing processes that needs constant upgrading like traditional marcom (PR, print, etc.) materials.

Opt-in E-Mail Trending Down but still Viable

Opt-in or permission based e-mail (meaning people give you "permission" to market to them) response rates for Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer are dropping below where they were a year ago by 30–50% on average. What's happening? The ever-increasing deluge of Spam is negating the throughput (response rates, purchases, etc.) of quality opt-in e-mail.

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Opt-in e-mail is still a viable and excellent way to market your company but expect less results, lower costs/fees (more vendors equals more competition which is good) and the need to repeat your campaigns if you want to see tangible results. And don't get dazzled by a design firm or your in house marketing staff that wants to design a fancy HTML e-mail message for you – 65–75% of the market today still doesn't want fancy graphics, they want a short message, delivered concisely with short paragraphs in a text format. Less is more!

Performance Based Marketing on Upswing

Publishers and advertisers are more and more willing to accept advertising which is "performance based" and/or based on a "cost per click" or even a revenue share basis. Meaning, it's not like putting an ad in the USA Today and hoping people respond to the publication – you can now work with list brokers, online publishers and marketing organizations to setup very targeted campaigns that are

based on your paying a small cost for an actual response to your message via an opt-in e-mail campaign, text link ad on a web site and/or an insert in a newsletter.

Case in point, companies like Virtumundo, Inc. (they are a pioneer in the performance based market) are now willing to charge nothing upfront in many cases for an advertising campaign and to just do a revenue share with you on the back end; this is typically 20–40% of your SRP, will vary depending upon your goods and/or services. And, they will do a test campaign prior to a full-bore campaign to make sure that the response rates will be worth their investment.

Another key benefit to any business that wants to leverage the shifts occurring in performance-based marketing is its inherent ability to be highly targeted. You can tie a marketing process (campaign) to web site, newsletter or pay per click search engine (Overture and now via Google's Ad Words Program) with specific demographics that are highly qualified and targeted. Contrast this again with the traditional print medium where you can target to a certain extent; but not like performance-based marketing. Consider an add again (for example) in the sports section of the USA Today – it will clearly deliver a sports enthusiast, but not a male who plays tennis that lives in the Western US, etc. And, better targeting will always deliver better results, assuming all other issues are on a level playing field.

Search Engine Marketing still a Mystery to Many

I hate to say it but most of the web sites we analyze still don't have the basic HTML fundamentals (Title, Keywords, Description) in-place so their sites can/will be indexed (reviewed by an automated bot/software agent) properly. Their title is wrong (don't repeat your company name), there are too many keywords (you want 8–12) or the wrong keywords and the description of the company is either poorly written or reads like yet another "mission statement" that has been developed by the CEO/CFO and three Senior VPs. This is basic block and tackling marketing and should be setup properly when a web site is designed.

Be prepared to deploy some marketing resources for quality Search Engine Marketing – it's fiercely competitive for web site rankings; you've got 3–5K web sites coming online every single day of the week and many are trying to drive market awareness via S/Engine ranking. What's a rule of thumb of

what to pay for standard S/Engine Marketing Services: i.e. Title/Description Development, Keyword Analysis, Content Rewrites, etc.? Costs can vary tremendously, depending on your market segment, web site size, what type of services you outsource, competitive issues, etc. Generally expect to pay \$3–6K for a basic 3–4 month campaign and then some modest fee for ongoing maintenance (say \$200–500.per month). There are alternative sophisticated S/Engine processes that cost much more than this, but these are typically suited for companies that have a good sized marketing budget and or a large web site that necessitates a different approach.

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Brighten Your Path By Installing Decorative Landscape Lighting

By Mike Yeager

Landscape lighting can add a beautiful quality to any home. There are many choices available to someone who is considering it. Landscape lighting, and any outdoor lighting, can help protect a home as well as keep people from stumbling in the yard. Mainly, people purchase landscape lighting to enhance the appearance of their yard or landscaping.

There are many types of landscape lighting. You can purchase low voltage landscape lighting is recommended if you are interested in conserving energy. Another option to conserving energy is solar landscape lighting. Solar, or from the sun, is powered from the sun's rays. It stores energy during the day while the sun is out and then, at night, when it is dark, they are lit using this saved energy. They give off a faint glow that really can light up a little area or large area. These types of outdoor landscape lighting can be great ways to light your yard cost efficiently.

If you are considering doing work on your landscaping, consider landscape lighting design. Designing a beautifully light yard can be tough work, but there are professionals that can help you. For example, something that can be done is light a walkway to the front steps to your home or line the driveway with lights from the street to your garage. Maybe you would prefer to focus your lights on a single bush or tree that is special in some way or to shine on a flag.

When considering landscape lighting, ensure that you think of safety first. Consider speaking with a professional to help you design what you would like your yard to look like. Consider as well using energy efficient landscape lighting such as solar or low voltage. Landscape lighting can add beauty and charm to a home when it is done properly and safely.

Mike Yeager
Publisher

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