

Unlocking the marketing power of the web!

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By Frank Williams

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If you are not utilizing the power of the web as an integral part of your marketing program and business strategy, you are simply asleep! And your competition loves you for it.

In today's Internet-loving environment, you and your business should clearly understand the huge benefits of an effectively designed and properly utilized e-presence. Using the Internet is virtually free, providing a worldwide customer reach for your message and product. Imagination is the only limitation in effectively utilizing the Internet in your marketing. Quickly and easily, the Internet will cost-effectively provide current information to your target market in a non-intrusive and timely manner.

The Internet has become the great equalizer for thinking businesses wishing to thrive in the 21st century. I dare you to surf-the-web' and pick 10 companies at random and tell me how big their annual revenue is. Whether your business is just starting out, or celebrating its 25th year, the Internet tends to level the playing field, initially providing equal access to your targeted market. And that is a primary task for any marketing group wishing to grow their business.

There are a number of aspects to an effective "on-line" presence adding both reach and currency to your total marketing strategy. Short of being just an e-business, your e-presence should compliment other marketing efforts. In other words, the look & feel of the web site, e-newsletters, e-mail, etc. should reflect and reinforce the image you already send to your target markets through sales brochures, direct mail, product presentations, and corporate communiqués.

Developing an on-line presence takes some thought and planning. Don't wing it! As a start, apply the same process to creating a first class web site that you do to your other marketing programs. Capture the same image and message on line that you already convey in other marketing collateral dispensed by the company and its sales representatives. Don't skimp – a poorly deigned web site sends the

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wrong message. Especially when there are many inexpensive ways to create a highly polished, professional grade version.

Depending on your business, Global Marketing believes that a comprehensive Internet effort should include a few key parts. Each part comes with a set of Do's and Don'ts that will make or break your e-marketing programs. If you are new or not sure, Global Marketing recommends that you hire a consultant or a reputable Web site design group to assist your initial entry.

### ° Creating your web site

Your web site becomes the centerpiece or catalyst for all of your e-marketing efforts. Don't get caught up in telling everyone how great your company and senior executives are, rather inform the potential customer why working with your firm will benefit them. After all, the primary purpose of marketing is to

create sales opportunity. The web site should be another tool to this end.

If you hire a consultant or web design group, they already understand how to effectively paint your message on the Internet landscape. If you decide to do it in-house, then a few simple reminders may help:

- Make your web site easy to read with a crisp message on how and why the customer benefits
- Make your web site intuitive and easy to navigate, keep things simple and informative
- Make the look & feel similar to your other marketing collateral to reinforce your brand image
- Stay away from fancy graphics, video and audio – many people still access through slow modems
- Make sure it's clear how they can contact you if they want more information
- To increase your web site traffic ( leverages search engine use ) utilize meta tags
- Keep your site fresh with frequent and informative updates that motivate return visits
- Test your site often with multiple browsers to ensure it plays at all levels
- Make your content important, timely and relevant – provide value to your visitors, and they will return

### ° Creating Sales opportunities

A web site begins to stitch together your overall e-presence. Your next step is to turn your web site into a pro-active marketing tool that reaches out and creates sales opportunities for your business. One method used frequently is a high quality and informative eNewsletter.

An eNewsletter is easy to create, and easier to distribute. With the click of one button, you can literally send your eNewsletter to millions of prospective customers. The beauty of an eNewsletter is that it is immediate and virtually free via the Internet – consider the alternative snail-mail of \$0.18/copy (bulk-rate) and 5-7 business days to delivery. An eNewsletter can be an effective promotional tool breathing sustained value into your company's offering, while providing a greater competitive advantage.

eNewsletters can be an effective tool in generating new sales opportunities or made irrelevant and considered worthless spam. The way you approach this important and special communication with your target market decides which label your customers give it.

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Some things to consider when developing your eNewsletter. The key to any well-written eNewsletter is capturing e-mail addresses and building your customer database. The more email addresses the better, however, give your target market an option by inviting them to "opt-in " to your eNewsletter. In other words, don't spam' them by sending the eNewsletter unless they asked for it. It devalues your eNewsletter no matter the contents.

Global Marketing realizes that it is tempting to buy a ready list of e-mail names. There is a time to buy e-mail lists; this is not one of them. Keep your eNewsletter as a special prize provided to select individuals and only available by visiting your web site. By getting them to your site you can present your marketing message and the benefits to their company. The eNewsletter now becomes an effective follow-on hook. And you get them to sign-on for your eNewsletter by making the content compelling. Your topics should be current and relevant, with tips that help their business grow and develop. An easy read, that is non-intrusive, yet timely, focused and value packed.

Shy away from incorporating graphics into your eNewsletter. It's tempting to use frames and splash fancy graphics around that make the piece more eye appealing, but resist. As ubiquitous as the Internet is, many individuals still access the Internet through slow modems and older, non-compatible

PC's. Don't make it hard for your prospect to gain information. These bring the same sale opportunity as those using broadband Internet access. Try to concentrate on content, not form. You'll reach more opportunities and won't lose one point in image. Make it effortless for your readership to get easy access to additional information by inserting hyper links into your eNewsletter, but make sure they work. Nothing is more frustrating than to click on a link and find out it doesn't link!

Use your eNewsletter to inform your customer base and potential clients about new products, or services. Selectively discuss significant corporate events but only to the extent it reinforces the customers' decision to work with your firm. Gratuitous self-promotion is meaningless. Certain promotions and value adding programs that benefit the customer should be routinely included. The frequency of your eNewsletter depends on your target audience. Weekly or bi-weekly seems to strike a good balance between too little and too much. However, the decision should be driven by how often you have enough important news'. Global Marketing has seen daily eNewsletters that retain importance to the customer.

° Other important e-marketing tools and considerations

e-Marketing has two basic responsibilities once the web site is built ---to create compelling content and increase traffic to the web site. All in an effort to uncover sales opportunities.

There are a variety of tools to drive up traffic. Earlier in this article, Global Marketing mentioned meta tags in relation to web site development. Meta tags are used by search engines such as Google, Altavista, etc. to quickly scan and return the most relevant web sites based on words or a group of words entered into the search field. This article won't cover all aspects of meta tags, suffice to say that meta tags should be incorporated into the heading of each page as well as the title page of your web site. The selection of these words is critical. Meta tags should be words that reflect what you do, and be descriptive of your products or services.

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The importance of picking the right words and phrases plays out when the search engine returns numerous web sites – say 30,000. Meta tags is part of the process by which web sites are ranked against the criteria you put into the search field. And there is a variety of programming tricks that will raise your web site's ranking. With literally millions of web sites available on the Internet, Marketing's goal should be to get ranked in the top 25 for words and phrases that are important to your mission, product or service. This brings visitors that seek what you offer – an initial qualifying process. Global Marketing's experience can be of vital help in this area.

e-Marketing works for a variety of reasons. However, many of the same basic marketing principles applies. You need to understand your customer, and serve them faster and more compelling than your competitors. Building a database of customers in your target market is key. In e-Marketing you are looking for e-mail addresses rather than mailing addresses. When you first start your e-presence, you need e-mail addresses. Lots and lots of e-mail addresses. Now would be the time to buy a ready-made list. You may also decide to use various pieces of software that captures e-mail addresses on the Internet. E-mail lists are plentiful and available for select markets, and can be sliced and diced to meet your particular needs. Typical costs will range from \$0.10 to \$0.50 per e-mail address depending on the quality and source of the list. Or you may decide to use any of a number of inexpensive software programs that will trowel-the-net capturing literally 100's of thousands of new e-mail address per hour. You may get quantity, but quality can be poor and is unqualified.

Proper use of e-mail addresses will help to increase you web site traffic. However, the company still has a burden to make the content of the web site compelling to the visitor. By keeping the web site

fresh, with high content, the visitor will return. Your web site can be the beginning of a customer qualifying process. As a pivotal customer support tool, your web can provide access to information customers need while saving them a phone call and allowing them access time on their terms. Done correctly, e-marketing provides a very sustainable competitive advantage.

How effective is your web site will be something you want to know? You'll want to know if your content is compelling and does it drive up traffic. You'll want to know what pages are accessed and how many times. If you run a special, you'll want to know if visitors read about it. Traffic statistics can be a powerful monitoring tool to assist the marketing group to adjust the web content , ensuring maximum visitors. Software programs are available that do a wonderful job of reporting and slicing and dicing the data to how it best fits your needs. Most servers will also provide limited data and reports on traffic.

Depending on your target market, you must decide what content provides your target market the most value. These include decisions on what is available for free and what requires payment. Payment can take the form of asking for an e-mail address to actually accepting credit cards. Typical web site content may include product or service data sheets, applications notes and/or certain downloadable software giving 24 hour, 7 day-a-week access. This convenience clearly makes it easier for customers to do business with you and that's a plus. You may also direct clients to other web sites that offer resources that compliment your products. There is a host of ways to use your web site to enhance your competitive position, while qualifying and informing your target market.

Establishing an e-presence is a marketing imperative in today's global market. Global Marketing can

provide ideas on content and additional ways to drive up traffic to your web site. Call today!

## **Greater Online Exposure through Press Release Submissions**

**By Hillary Lane**

Every business owner looks for ways to constantly stay ahead of their competitors when doing business on the Internet, or in general. The main component of success involves increasing their website visibility in the search engines. Obtaining better search engine placement and having increased online exposure is a process that takes time, patience, and access to qualified resources. The solution? The implementation of press release submissions will be one giant leap toward a successful online marketing strategy.

Online press release submissions can accomplish many goals that relate to your online positioning strategy. Getting your website content syndicated should be a top priority in your overall marketing strategy. Content syndication will send your website marketing efforts into overdrive if conducted in an ethical manner. I say the word "ethical" because there are many so-called website owners who are using shady techniques to get better search engine rankings and online exposure by utilizing short term spam techniques. Consequently, you will be left with short term placement results and have created a bad name for your company within the Internet marketing community.

Online news wires are taking advantage of RSS (Real Simple Syndication) technology in order to extend their marketing reach via the Internet. This enables your company news to be seen on a variety of websites related to your business news. Furthermore, your news will also be syndicated on other websites if they use news related content. This is a popular means of keeping one's web site up-to-date with industry related content.

Imagine being able to see results in matter of weeks, instead of months as with traditional internet marketing. If your marketing efforts are not getting you the amount of online exposure you desire, I would suggest implementing the power of press release submissions through RSS technology. It is time to gain a competitive advantage in your industry and jump start your online marketing exposure. Press release submissions are the key to unlocking your true marketing potential.

Hillary Lane is an Internet Marketing professional who specializes in Writing, Optimizing, and Distributing Press Releases and Articles. Her core competencies are in Link Popularity strategies and acquiring new customers through Search Engine Optimized News Releases. To learn more about her services, please visit

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