

## Are you interested in strategic marketing solutions for your business?

**Summary:** *How can strategic marketing solutions help a business? The Internet has seen the emergence of a whole new playing field where even small businesses can reach out to a huge international audience, both for product ideas and product promotion. Therefore, it is imperative that any business on the Internet uses persuasive marketing strategies that help it reach the right target audience. Read more...*

Philip Kotler in his book Marketing Management, defines marketing as "a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others". Don't we wish it were that simple? As many great inventors found out the hard way, it is not just about what you make, it is also about how many know what you have made. Conventional businesses face tremendous hurdles when it comes to letting the world know of the products and services that they have on offer.

Consider. Unlike big business, small businesses rely on the entrepreneur's understanding of the market to give the ideas for innovation. After all surveys and trials cost money and time, both of which are perennially in short supply. Even after the prototype is built, small businesses depend on family and friends to test the product and give them the feedback they need. And even if a great idea were to make it through these odds and come out as a great product, the small business continues to face the hurdle of making enough people aware of how this product can fulfill their needs better.

No wonder that in the physical world, entrepreneurs that succeed are rare and deserve all the appreciation and accolades that the corporate world heaps on them. But with the advent of the Internet, we have begun to see the emergence of a whole new playing field, where there is no "big" or "small" or "far" or "near". In many ways, the internet is a true level playing field allowing small businesses to reach out to a huge international audience, both for product ideas as well as for product promotion.

However, in order for us to leverage the opportunity that the internet (and its sister opportunities - the intranet and the extranets), we need to know some fundamental rules of the game. The list I give below is not permanent, and it's certainly not comprehensive. However, I hope to keep adding to this list as this area of technology matures and settles down.

The fundamental rules of Web based marketing:

### 1. Internet is about involvement.

Many businesses build their websites as a development project with the end point being the launch of the website. However, the launch of a website, is only like the publishing of a book - no one's going to read it unless they come into the store and pick it up. This is where a carefully thought out **promotion plan** that starts with the launch and carries on from there is vital. Some useful activities include submission to search engines, directories and lists, as well as targeted advertising and email marketing.

As your business grows look for additional ways to invite customers. Promote in places where your targeted customers gather. Make it easy for your existing clients to promote you, by giving them material they can forward to their friends, or by allowing them to refer their friends on your site

## 2. Internet is information.

On too many occasions we have come across sites that look like they've been created to satisfy the owner's ego, and little else. If a site is to become truly credible, it needs to have credible content. **Good content** that deals with the customer's areas of interest help the website in many ways. It provides a sense of credibility to the site. It also serves as useful fodder to **search engine bots** and allows visitors to come in using a large range of keywords. In effect, each of the pages can be promoted separately, thus opening multiple doorways for visitors to enter through. Thirdly, it also creates positive word of mouth. You will be surprised how quickly word spreads of good content that's available on the net.

## 3. Internet is interaction.

Unlike any other print or media channel, the internet provides the unique ability for the customer to interact with the message. Truly successful websites understand 'user experience' as something more than just good graphics, it involves a combination of aspects such as ease of access to appropriate information, layout, the help it gives the customer as he navigates through the site. Technology allows customers to **personalize** interfaces, so that they have quick access to just the content they require, while simultaneously allowing the marketer an insight into the attitudes and characteristics of the visitors. Really effective sites also ensure that they use this **interactive nature** of the internet to get the customers to take small steps such as filling in a registration form, in return for giving something of value.

## 4. Internet is iterative

Recently I happened to read the history behind the success of Netscape's Navigator - the internet's first killer app. Netscape was certainly not the first web browser in the market, but its trump card was that its creators understood its weakness vis a vis many larger companies - it didn't have the large teams or the money to test and refine the product. So they implemented what is now the norm for all software development - free beta releases. All of a sudden, Netscape had hundreds of thousands of software testers who were more than willing to let Netscape know if there were any bugs in their software. This allowed Netscape to develop iteratively, each release building on the previous release, till all chinks were ironed out. This had the added advantage, that as users became more comfortable about the product and the company, they were willing to purchase their other products and services, thus opening out huge business opportunities. The beauty in this whole exercise was that Netscape did not have to invest substantially more as the number of people downloading the software increased, thus allowing huge scalability at almost no additional cost!

## 5. Internet is about impact.

If you want use the internet to give your marketing a new dimension, then an important point to realize is that the internet is about impact. It needs to have an impact in terms of experience, in terms of cost differentiation, in terms of how it can make the whole customer relationship management easier. Customers like to feel that they are valuable. Amazon.com has done an exceptional job of managing this relationship. It tracks the items purchased in the past, and intuitively guides the visitor to areas that would be of interest to him. This not only ensures lower drop out rates, but also increases sales.

## 6. Internet is interdependence

What really made the internet take off is its ability to foster collaboration between people all over the world. In spite of the trend towards payment based services, there is still a huge scope for collaboration. For instance, affiliate programs are still a very useful way to bring prospective visitors to your site. By implementing a commission based sales ([www.commissionexchange.com](http://www.commissionexchange.com)) system, you ensure that you only pay based on sales that you accrue, not based on clicks or hits. In turn, can direct customers to other sites that would be of interest to your visitors, thus ensuring that you too, have other sources of income. And it's not just sales. There are a number of link exchange sites, where you can participate in campaigns that dramatically increase the number of links on the site (in exchange for you putting up some links as well).

Even after considering all the above points, there is no guarantee that your business will take off. That depends on many other factors as well. Sound business models, good financial planning, good people and systems all play their respective roles. (Go through some of the other articles in this site to see how we have helped business in these areas as well.) However, keeping these points in mind while working with your **web enabling** specialist will definitely help you avoid some of the common pitfalls associated with marketing on the web.