

10 Key Steps to Successful Online Marketing




“The online market is out there - can you find it?”

More and more small businesses find it essential to market their products and services online. Customers are increasingly turning to the Web to research companies, compare product features and prices, and to purchase online. A company that does not take advantage of the Web and email to market their business can lose valuable customers.

It has never been easier or more cost-effective to market online. There are numerous Web sites, consultants, software packages, and other tools to help you implement a successful online presence.

Here are 10 key steps you should include to successfully market your business online:

1. Obtain a Good Domain Name. Before you establish a Web site for your business, you need a domain name. A few key tips on domain names:

-  Make sure that the domain name hasn't been trademarked by someone else.
-  Make sure it's easy to spell.
-  Pick a name that is easy to remember. Simple and descriptive is best as unrelated names require more branding effort.

2. Get a Professional Looking Web Site. Your Web site is a reflection of your business. People who come to your Web site will be impressed or turned off by the level of professionalism of your site. You can build your own site, buy software packages to help you create a site or use professional website designers such as Website DNA. Remember don't spoil your image by trying to save on a cheap website as your potential customers will go elsewhere.

3. Make Your Web Site Easy to Navigate. Whilst spectacular sites look good you must remember that your visitors are there because they are potentially interested in

your product or service. They are not there for entertainment – make it as easy as possible for them to complete what they need to do. Your product should be simply and clearly displayed, and purchase should be easy. This means a clear navigation bar and a consistent appearance throughout your website.

4. Build up Your E-mail List. Email marketing is one of the best and cheapest ways to sell online. It's a great way to communicate with customers and prospective customers. So it is very valuable to collect email addresses from visitors to your Web site. Offer them something worthwhile for their email address — such as a discount or a free newsletter.

Make it easy to get someone's e-mail address, but also be sure that you have set forth a Privacy Policy on your site describing how you will use any personal information and be sure that you are up-to-date on the laws affecting e-mail marketing.

5. Newsletters. Email newsletters can prove to be effective communication tools for existing customers, prospective customers, and other key audiences. Here are 5 key factors for effective email newsletter programs:

- 📧 Keep it reasonably short.
- 📧 Make it well designed and visually interesting. Include photos and graphics. Provide multiple links back to your Web site.
- 📧 Be professional; avoid typos and broken links.
- 📧 Include an easy way for the viewer to contact you and to unsubscribe from your e-mail list.

6. Buy Banner Ads. You can enhance visibility and traffic to your site by buying banner ads. The keys to effective banner ad campaigns are:

- 📧 Make the ad visually interesting with links to a particular offer or "landing" page on your site.
- 📧 Place the ads on sites relevant to your business.

- ❏ Constantly monitor and test the efficacy of the ads. Measure click-throughs from the ad to your site and resulting sales and return on investment ("ROI").

7. Optimise Your Site for Search Engines. Hundreds of millions of searches a day are performed on the Web through Google, Yahoo, and other search engines. The search engines "spider" billions of Web pages. You can use "search engine optimization" which refers to efforts to raise your Web site's ranking in search results.

8. Buy Keyword Ads on Search Engines. Many businesses find that key word advertising on search engines is quite beneficial. If the searcher sees your paid ad and clicks on it, he is transported to your Web site and you pay on a cost per click, or "CPC," basis to Google, such as 20p a click. The goal is to bring qualified prospective customers to your site.

To receive the most success from key word ad buying programs:

- ❏ Purchase the most relevant key words.
- ❏ Write ads that will compel qualified buyers to click on the ad.
- ❏ The ad should lead to a page on you site that sets forth the precise product or service related to the keyword. Sending a viewer to your home page is generally not as effective as sending them to a specific product page.
- ❏ Constantly review the amount you pay per click and the conversion of that click into buyers.
- ❏ Test different ad copy and different landing pages to determine what works best for your site.

9. Make it Easy to Buy. If you sell products from your site, you will need a shopping cart system and a credit card authorization process. Many companies provide such systems off the shelf, such as Yahoo! Small Business and Google Checkout. The key here is to make sure that the shopping process is fast and efficient. Many Web sites

whose checkout process is too cumbersome will lose potential buyers who became frustrated with the amount of time and effort involved.

10. Provide Great Customer Service. A satisfied customer will return to your site. So go out of your way to offer great customer support and service. To those customers who are not happy with their experience, try to turn them around with a discount, a free product, or some other benefit.