

Introduction

We are alive to witness a time when humankind is using computer technology to push the limits of knowledge and freedom. We connect in the digital underworld of the Internet. Information and services are available at our convenience, making human contact unnecessary.

The Internet provides people with options. People want immediate results, custom-tailored information, and the freedom to make decisions when they are ready. The Internet has become a way of life and the way of business. Don't let the web intimidate you -- make your web site the best.

Get onboard with GlobalMarketShare.com to make a place for yourself on the Net. With a plan, a little determination, and our solid strategies for Internet marketing, you will make it happen.

What you'll learn

Marketing on the Internet is an effective way to create a future for your company. To learn valuable strategies and information, hang out with us for a little while and we'll take you through the steps. In this site, you'll learn how to:

- Build an online presence for your business
- Boost traffic to your web site
- Find out who your customers are
- Learn how to meet customer needs more efficiently

Why should I market on the Internet?

Be Available

The Internet is the fastest-growing medium of communication because it is cost-effective and convenient. By eliminating overhead expenses, virtual companies can spend more of their money on marketing. Not only do online businesses cut costs, they are open 24 hours a day. People have hectic schedules, and good business means working with your customer's availability. By creating an online presence you will show customers you care about being there when they need you.

Compete with Large Companies

Do you know someone who has a great small business but still has a hard time competing with multi-million dollar companies? Chances are you do -- just look around the town or city near you. Even when a small business offers quality service to its customers, it still struggles to compete with the big guys.

Big businesses have one thing that smaller ones don't: money. A small company might be stuck in a small town, and without money to market, people elsewhere will never find out about it. New technology can help reduce this problem.

Customers can access a company web site from anywhere in the world. Online companies are aware that if customers are unable to get to their business location, they lose profit. Rather than spend their money opening branches in every major city, these companies concentrate on keeping their customers satisfied through web sites.

Respect your Customers

There is nothing more frustrating than someone hanging over your shoulder waiting for you to make a decision. Not only are you under a lot of pressure, you're being told how long you have to make a choice, even though it's your money.

Customers want freedom and the Internet can provide it. Online businesses offer customers respect. Customers take action only after learning as much as they want about the company, product, or service. Not only do online customers feel more confident about their decisions, they feel more confident about the company they're doing business with. Customers are more likely to use a business for the second time if they had a positive experience to begin with.

Show yourself off

You have something great to offer and you know it. Now you need to make customers aware of this as well. People want more than just text on a page -- they want to look around, see pictures, even find out what others think. The Internet is a multimedia experience. Whether you want a new car or flowers for Mom, you can navigate through your choice of colors and varieties, then stop to read customer reviews before your purchase. The Internet offers a whole new way to shop, be entertained or learn.

Who are your customers?

If you spend time getting to know your customers you'll soon have a bulletproof marketing plan. Examine the similarities among your best customers. Find out where your customers live, work and play. Information about their interests or priorities is also helpful. Current customers will be similar to future customers, so if you get to know them, you'll have a better idea of your target audience. This audience should be kept in mind at all times when developing an effective marketing strategy.

There are various ways to learn about who your customers are and why they choose your business. Talk to them directly when possible. Try asking people for information while they are making a purchase so you don't catch them at a bad time. It is easy to gather information when customers feel respected, so avoid being bothersome.

People today are reluctant to give out information about themselves. Many companies have destroyed their customers' trust by selling personal information without permission. Be prepared to get mixed reactions when you ask questions, and don't get discouraged if people won't even tell you what city they live in. Inform customers that you want to gain new business and that you need their help to establish a target audience. Remind them that you will never sell their information to a third party.

What your target audience wants from you:

1. An organized and attractive web site
2. Privacy and safety for online transactions
3. Effective navigation to find specific information
4. Accurate online descriptions of your products and services
5. Guarantees and "added benefits" for choosing your products and services

It is also important to know who Internet users are. The group of people who are online is becoming larger and more diverse, but general demographic information provides insight into the future. Most people online are college educated and between 18 and 50 years of age. Despite the "young" group of users, the 50-and-over segment is growing more rapidly than any other. People use the Internet mainly for business, but product research and shopping are common reasons for personal use.

Business-to-business marketing

Target audiences work differently for business-to-business marketing. Marketing in this situation is a more focused process, and it's not easy. You need to break down your target audience and create smaller segments or target groups. Your advertising will vary depending on each individual group's characteristics and interests -- you'll want to accommodate everyone with appropriate text and graphics that they understand. If you sell a product, find a way to make that product appeal to different groups with offers addressing their unique needs. "B2B" target groups need more information and less "fluff." Effective direct marketing incorporates writing about product benefits while explaining the processes involved and any unique features offered. Though the audience is business-oriented, it is appropriate to do all of this in "normal" language.

Language

The Internet gives you the ability to reach just about any audience. Whether you decide to keep your business in Wyoming or make it available in every state, customers can access your site despite their location. Because you have the opportunity to reach people all over the world, you need to communicate particularly effectively. A wide range of customers means a wide range of needs, especially when it comes to language.

Communicate with everyone who visits your web site. Be open-minded about who you're selling to. Remember, not everyone speaks or reads English. If you are appealing to a bilingual country, you may need a bilingual site. The decision to go global is a big one, and if you do, you may need to provide several language options for your site's material.

Talk to people in their native languages. The most common languages among the non-English speaking population are Spanish, German and Japanese. When and if you decide to go bilingual with your site, you need to make each new language section appear the same as the English section. The text, graphics, and layout should be identical.

Maintaining a bilingual site is not difficult if your content rarely changes. Your audience may require a weekly or daily update, which makes this option less appealing. (Don't forget that when you change one language section, you should change all language sections.) If your site boasts pages and pages of intricate information, you may have your hands full with one language alone. Think about the time and money you are willing to invest before beginning the project.

Marketing on the Internet -- A whole new ball game

The number of web sites popping up today is astounding. Don't get discouraged; remember that many of these sites fail because of weak marketing or poor customer service. A good web site and strong customer relations are important for a successful site, but keep in mind that the Internet is a different ballpark when it comes to marketing.

Advertising is different on the Internet because it is fast-paced. Just as quickly as you attract a visitor to your web site, you can lose a potential customer. When people watch TV or listen to the radio, they are often engaged in another activity, so their reaction time is slower. Because the Internet is interactive, people are sitting up and paying attention to what's happening onscreen. If your site is exciting, this concept works to your benefit, and you move people to action. If not, you lose customers quickly.

Fast-loading web pages save your customers time. Assume that most customers lack the fastest modems and newest computers. Cut back on slow-loading features and use graphics sparingly. For companies with a global market, fast-loading pages are essential. Time is precious on the Internet, so use it wisely. You have only seconds to interest a customer and keep him coming back for more.

Making it Happen

You're going to need a plan if you're going to succeed. Sit down and decide where you want your company to be in five years. Consider how much time and money you are willing to spend, then brainstorm ideas on paper. Short-term plans help you stay on-task and keep you confident about your goals. Long-term plans give you and your employees something to reach for. Actively discuss these plans and consider marketing techniques for the product or service you offer.

What to have in writing before you begin marketing:

- A mission statement for your company (purpose of the site)
- Defined groups for your target audience and the best ways to reach them
- Business goals for the web site
- Budget
- Ways to ensure site success
- Deadlines
- Data on who your competition is and what makes them successful
- Weak company areas to improve on the site
- Strong company areas to highlight on the site

Get estimates before you establish your budget for web promotion. Try newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and other mediums to find out what online opportunities you have. Go to those media outlets' web sites to see if they have an online media kit. There you'll find information about the services they offer to help you successfully market your site.

Online Advertising

The Internet is a great place to advertise. With several options available and a growing population of Internet users, your ad will reach a large audience. Here are a few of your options...

Banner Ads

They are everywhere on the Internet. One of the earliest forms of advertising on the net, they are easy to use and create. Banner ads are rectangular boxes that sit on a web page and, when clicked, send a visitor to the advertiser's web page.

Banners come in a variety of sizes and types. Animated banners have higher **clickthrough** rates than standard banners. (The number of people who click on a banner and visit the advertised site is the 'clickthrough rate.') Conveniently, web-browser plug-ins are not required to view animated ads, making them a popular option for advertising. Using words or images, the ad designer can coordinate the length and detail of each particular ad. Simplicity is important however, because people move through sites quickly. Therefore messages should be easy to read and understand.

Banner ads are fairly simple. You buy a number of **impressions**, and then pay for them in **CPM**, a term meaning 'cost per thousand.' (The "M" stands for a Latin term "mil," meaning "thousand.") The number of impressions means the number of times that a person visiting a web page saw your banner.

There are various programs available to create animated banner ads. PhotoShop or CorelDRAW are examples of graphics software. Animator programs allow you to create your ad by putting together frames, timing and cycles. One example of this type of program is Microsoft GIF Animator 1.0. You can also look around online for free animated GIFs to get some ideas.

Banner exchanges

They boost your site traffic and offer new possibilities. Find a website you love and email the webmaster asking if they would participate in a banner exchange. In this case, your site and theirs will swap banners and share traffic. Your other option is a banner exchange program, where random sites run your banner and you run random banners for these sites in return. Guidelines differ between exchange services, but this option shouldn't cost you money, only space on your web page.

Ad Networks

Ad Networks give you a targeted audience and updates about the success of your banner. You have two options when you work with an ad network. The first option involves paying the network to place and monitor the success of your banner. Here's the second option: You allow them to publish their banners on your website, and they pay you. Both options give you results.

One example of an ad network is DoubleClick at <http://doubleclick.com>. Offering five types of services, DoubleClick helps you create brand awareness and reach your market, whether local or global.

Interstitial advertisements, also known as bridge pages, are set between pages in a website. When you move through a site's contents, often a page pops-up that displays an advertisement. Visitors have no control over viewing these ads because they appear on their own. Interstitial ads have almost twice the clickthrough rate of banner ads and come in different sizes as well. Links, animation and text are used with these ads to move visitors to your website.

Tips for Online Advertising:

- Banners placed on the right side of a screen tend to have higher clickthrough rates
- Visit the sites where you pay for or exchange banner advertisements. Make sure your banner is there.
- If you decide to use an ad network, make sure to discuss the type of banners that will be placed on your site. Most ad networks have guidelines about the banners they publish, but it's always good to be careful.