

Internet Marketing REPORT™

News and insights on how executives are using the Internet to drive business objectives

November 17, 2004

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The Purpose of Internet Marketing Report

The *Internet Marketing Report* is the fast-read source of ideas to help marketers support customers, increase revenues and cut costs.

Twice monthly, the *Internet Marketing Report* lets you know what's working for high-level marketers in a wide range of industries.

In addition, it reviews the best ideas and latest technology available. Instead of hype, we provide information you can use – every day.

Beyond clicks and visits: 3 ways to measure your site's impact

■ Getting hard numbers to prove your site's performance

Remember when clicks, visits and time spent on your site were enough to prove your online marketing was working?

Times sure have changed.

More than 59% of marketers say the pressure to measure results has gotten so intense that they face a “do or die” situation.

They must show tangible ROI or risk losing funds, says new research from Patrick Marketing Group.

Measuring success is a different ballgame for every company.

For instance, a services company won't judge its site's ROI the same

way as a b-to-b manufacturer or e-commerce-driven distributor.

Here are three ways top companies (with very different online priorities) pinpoint what's working on their sites:

Real-world examples

Four Seasons Sunrooms, at www.fourseasonssunrooms.com, doesn't sell online.

Rather, it uses its site to educate prospects and generate sales leads.

To measure success, the company looks at key metrics, including how

(Please see Impact ... on p. 2)

Why it pays to snatch up multiple domains

■ Bush-Cheney campaign failed to register domain with .org extension

If you're planning to register a new domain for an upcoming marketing program, remember to snatch up all the available variations too.

That's the lesson the Bush-Cheney campaign learned when it registered www.georgewbush.com but not www.georgewbush.org.

Trouble could have been avoided

Someone else saw that the latter domain was still available, registered it and set up a look-alike site that parodied the candidates.

While the parody itself wasn't so bad, the real problems began when campaign officials and volunteers sent e-mail to the look-alike site by mistake.

The parody site's operators then posted some of the messages, which included campaign ad scripts, progress reports and after-work party plans.

While the campaign obviously wasn't hurt much by the site, the GOP surely would have preferred it didn't exist.

Source: "Campaign Site Finds Darker Side of Web Branding," www.eweek.com

MEASURING ONLINE SUCCESS

Impact ...

(continued from p. 1)

many prospects:

- create customized brochures for download
- use the "Find a Dealer" tool, and
- request a print catalog.

By tracking these metrics, the firm learns how well the site motivates prospects to take their relationship with the company to a higher level.

It then makes adjustments to the site to boost results.

Incremental gains

B-to-b firm Misys Healthcare takes a similar approach with its site *www.misyshealthcare.com*.

This company measures its site's success by tracking the number of prospects who take action.

That is, how many out of the total number of visitors actually download white papers and other report offers?

Based on the data, the company periodically changes its site's copy, design or navigation.

The result: Continuous incremental

improvements in the number of leads generated through the Web site.

Matching content to marketing goals

But what if you don't sell online and your site isn't built to generate leads?

That's the challenge many service companies face.

Winstead, Sechrest & Minick, a professional services firm, measures its site's success by studying how well *www.winstead.com* conveys a particular public image.

The firm wants prospects to see it as a team of skilled professionals ready to help customers mitigate business risks and earn high returns.

To make sure its site conveys this image, the firm conducts annual

qualitative interviews with current and potential clients.

Through phone and face-to-face interviews, the firm asks for feedback on how well the site's copy, design and images convey its key message.

For more info about Winstead's marketing, check out Marketplace Masters: How Professional Service Firms Compete to Win," by Suzanne C. Lowe, ISBN: 0-275-98119-3, www.marketplacemasters.com

LESSONS LEARNED

Savvy marketers know measuring success boils down to:

- developing a metric that reflects the site's main objective
- studying how the results impact the bottom line, and
- making changes based on the findings to boost results.

Sharpen your JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

■ When can rivals use your trademarks in meta-tags?

"Your site is confusing our customers, Maria," Jack McCarthy, Neptune's marketing director, said to his counterpart at a competitor.

"I can't help it if they're dumb," Maria joked. "Nowhere on our site do we suggest that we're affiliated with Neptune."

"You don't have to say it explicitly. The message comes through when they see our trademark in your content and meta-tags," Jack said. "You're trying to boost business by riding our coattails."

Infringement or accuracy?

"Of course, we use your trademark in our content and tags. We sell replacement parts for your products. There's no other way to describe them accurately," Maria shot back.

"Your company is infringing on our protected trademark. And the unauthorized use could potentially confuse our customers and cost us business," Jack said.

"I understand your concern. But we're not changing our site just because you're unhappy," Maria said.

"Then I guess we'll see you in court," Jack replied.

Neptune eventually sued to stop the competitor from using its trademark.

Did Neptune win?

- *Make your decision, then please turn to page 4 for the court's ruling.*

Internet Marketing REPORT

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Proven ways to reach everyone who influences the buying decision

■ Offer tools to help prospects sell your services internally

Business purchases are rarely made by a single person. There are usually several people whose influence can make or break a deal.

So why don't more marketers try to reach these influential secondary prospects on their Web sites?

Here are two proven methods that savvy marketers have used to gain the support of everyone involved in the buying process.

Customized content that resonates

You obviously spell out the key benefits and features of your product or service on your site.

But you can gain more traction with prospects by explaining how your product or service will benefit the individuals who'll be impacted by the purchase.

For instance, Upside Software offers this type of targeted content to CEOs,

CFOs, CIOs, sales execs, procurement execs and contract managers.

In each specialized section of *www.upsidesoftware.com*, the firm outlines the features and benefits that'll resonate most with each individual involved.

Information kits that help sell

If that approach doesn't fit your needs, you could offer an "Executive Information Kit" on your site that helps prospects convince their peers and bosses your service is the best choice.

What might you include? Consider:

- downloadable PowerPoint slides that can be used in internal reports
- white papers
- charts that show how your offerings match up with rivals', and
- detailed product photos.

For an example, check out *www.atomz.com/company/resources*.

Placing e-newsletter ads: 4 keys to success

■ Low-risk way to use outside lists for customer acquisition

To acquire new customers you often have to go where they live – even online.

That's why more marketers are placing ads in industry e-newsletters.

One b-to-b company we know, Information Management Research, used this tactic to generate a flood of new leads and sales.

Making the right choice

With so many industry e-newsletters online it's important to choose the right one. Here's what to look for:

1. **Consistently good content.** A few months before starting your program,

subscribe to several e-newsletters you know prospects read. Make sure the one you pick has content that's consistently valuable.

2. **Frequency.** Consider going with a monthly e-newsletter since readers of dailies or weeklies may not read every issue.

3. **Ad placement.** Text ads placed in the body of the e-newsletter generally pull better than sidebar text ads or banners. Try to negotiate a limit on other ads appearing in the publication.

4. **Testing opportunities.** See if you can test your ad in a few issues before signing a long-term contract.

Source: *www.marketingsherpa.com*

STEAL THESE IDEAS!

Check out the Web sites referred to below. Each one has an innovative feature that you might be able to adapt to fit your business.

■ Keep content fresh

Rotating the images on your home page can keep your site looking fresh – even if you can't always change the content. Visit SkinMedica's site and click refresh several times to reload the home page. You'll see how the company rotates its main graphic.

Info: *www.skinmedica.com*

■ Get prospects to sign up

If you want prospects to register with your Web site, try spelling out the benefits of doing so right on your home page. That's what Simco does. It explains the four key benefits prospects get in return for sharing their info.

Info: *www.simco-static.com*

■ Make an emotional appeal

Even hard-boiled business prospects respond to emotional appeals. Spectra Logic taps into its prospects' need for personal time on its home page by asking: "Would you rather be watching your backup? Or enjoying your time off?" The firm then offers a report that explains how its products save time.

Info: *www.spectralogic.com*

■ Target your testimonials

Posting testimonials online that match the audience you're trying to reach in other channels is a great way to make your message more persuasive. At Road offers 15 testimonials in five industries.

Info: *www.atroad.com*

(To continue, please turn to page 6)

Does your site's message pack enough punch? 3 ways to find out

■ Getting prospects to take the next step

You know great online content can reach out, grab prospects by the collar and compel them to take action.

But how can you ensure your site's message packs enough punch to get the job done?

Questions to ask

Here's a quick, three-point audit veteran marketer Michel Neray suggests can help you size up your site:

1. Does my content ask a question, issue a challenge or present a disturbing fact? These tactics are great for grabbing prospects' attention.

Why is this important?

To get buyers to pay attention, you've got to give them the unexpected.

For instance, the first thing visitors to www.futurenowinc.com see is a question that's also a challenge: "How does your conversion rate measure up?"

The question instantly involves

prospects in the site's message and keeps them from falling into that glazed-over state that follows reading run-of-the-mill home page copy.

2. Does my content acknowledge – and heighten – the prospect's pain? Prospects don't care about your service or solution unless you show you understand their problem and pain first.

Check out FrontRange's site, www.frontrange.com/heat, to see how it establishes its knowledge of buyers' problems.

3. Does my content get prospects to visualize what business will be like after they buy? Sure, your site promises results, but does it paint a mental picture of what life will be like for customers after they've bought and used your services?

Info: "Are You Missing These Three Psychological Triggers in Your Message?" by Michel Neray, www.marketingpros.com

E-NEWSLETTERS

■ Keeping e-newsletter readers engaged

Give them a little something extra – something similar to the mint left on your pillow at a high-end hotel.

That's how some savvy marketers build loyalty and keep e-newsletter readership high even after publishing for years.

The good news: The something extra doesn't have to be elaborate or even related to your primary content. It just has to be engaging.

Phillips Nizer, www.phillipsnizer.com, puts a trivia question about movies at the end of its e-mail updates. Recipients are invited to e-mail their answers to the editor. Everyone gets a friendly, personal message in return.

Those who answer correctly get their names mentioned in the next edition of the e-newsletter.

The payoff? A high open rate and loyal readership. The firm also gets an opportunity to nurture relationships.

Sharpen your judgment...

THE DECISION

(see case on page 2)

No. Neptune lost.

The court ruled that the competitor was entitled to use Neptune's trademark in both its content and meta-tags.

The reason: There was no other way to truthfully and accurately describe Neptune's products, which the competitor marketed and sold.

The court also ruled that use of the trademark didn't confuse prospects because the site never suggested an affiliation between the two companies.

Finally, the court said there was no evidence that the

competitor tried to pass off Neptune's products as its own.

Analysis: Review the other site carefully

If another firm uses your trademark in its meta-tags, chances are it's trying to capitalize on your good name. In this case, the situation was different. The rival sold Neptune's products (in addition to many others) and was thus entitled to use Neptune's trademark to describe those products. If your company name or trademarks appear in another site's meta-tags, ask yourself:

- Will this site confuse customers?
- Does this site suggest that it's affiliated with us?
- Is there a way to describe our products or services accurately without relying on the trademark?

Source: *Bijur Lubricating Corp. v. Devco Corp., U.S. District Court, New Jersey, No. 00-5157(WHW), 8/26/04. Dramatized for effect.*

WHAT'S WORKING FOR OTHER COMPANIES

Our subscribers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular feature, three of them share an Internet marketing success story, often for the first time in print.

1 Quadrupled revenue for key service

We provided a specialized service that few competitors could match.

Unfortunately, this service wasn't widely known and, as a result, didn't bring in much revenue.

Since the service set us apart from rivals, we sensed an opportunity to grow this line of business.

The challenge was building awareness of the service and driving qualified leads in a way that was cost-effective.

We eventually decided to promote the service through search engines. Experience showed our target market was growing more Internet-savvy.

Improved awareness, sales

To raise our profile in search engines like Google, we developed a short list of keywords that prospects used to describe the service.

We then integrated these keywords into our site's content. We also embedded the keywords in links on our

site. For instance, we replaced the ubiquitous "click here" with, say, "We offer sapphire coating services."

Shortly after making these changes to our site, we appeared on the first page of Google results.

Since making the changes, we've landed a few new customers and more than quadrupled our monthly revenue for the service.

(Mike Vitamvas, sales and marketing rep, Wall Printing Company, High Point, NC; www.wallprinting.com)

**REAL
PROBLEMS,
REAL
SOLUTIONS**

2 E-newsletter drove in more repeat sales

We'd spent a lot of time trying to acquire new customers to grow our business. And our efforts eventually paid off.

Problem was, we didn't have much of a plan to keep these new buyers coming back for more.

Once they made an initial purchase they seemed to slip through the cracks and we didn't hear from them again.

That had to change.

We figured a low-cost e-newsletter

containing info about new products and special offers might:

- increase awareness of our full range of products, and
- drive more repeat sales.

Didn't send too often

So we built an HTML e-mail template that allowed us to plug in unique content for each mailing.

We could customize the content for special events, seasons or promotions while keeping the overall look and feel of the messages consistent.

To avoid bombarding customers with too many messages, we decided to send the e-newsletter only when we had valuable content.

This worked out to about one mailing a month.

The result: We see a spike in traffic and repeat sales immediately after sending the e-newsletter.

Last month, it drove in more than 20% of our revenue.

(Jose Nino, Jr., director of e-commerce, Estilonet.com, Miami, FL; www.estilonet.com)

3 Reached reluctant prospects online

Prospects in our industry seemed to be getting harder to reach. Our reps found they were reluctant to take their calls or meet in person.

We needed a new way to build credibility and start developing relationships with potential customers.

Offering prospects a series of educational Webinars seemed like a great way to build relationships with prospects for two reasons.

First, by making the content

educational – and not sales – focused, we could put prospects at ease and show the depth of our expertise.

Second, attending a Webinar is less of a commitment for the prospect than taking a phone call or meeting in person.

Spread the word

We invited prospects to the Webinars by sending e-mail and snail mail to our house list.

We also had sales reps make calls and invite prospects personally.

To make sure prospects got the

most value from the presentation, we brought in an outside expert to speak about the critical business issues our prospects face.

We didn't even mention our products or services until the very end – and only for a few minutes.

The Webinars have proved to be a great success. Participants love them.

They help us to qualify existing prospects and generate new leads. They've resulted in a host of new sales.

(Jenny McGee, vice president, Healthshare Technology, Inc., Acton, MA; www.healthshare.com)

How business buyers use search engines to research what you sell

■ 69% of business prospects turn to search engines as a first step

A whopping 93% of business prospects say they go online to research upcoming purchases, a new survey found.

And 63% say they turn to search engines first rather than go straight to a product or service provider's main site.

The message: If your company isn't visible in search engines, it's probably missing out on business.

Where do prospects click?

Your best bet for grabbing these prospects early in the buying process: natural optimization.

More than 69% of prospects say they pay more attention to organic results than paid or sponsored listings.

So how can you boost your site's visibility in the organic results?

Try these proven tactics:

1. **Build a site map or breadcrumb**

navigation trail that ties together all the pages of your site. This ensures search engines can crawl all your pages.

2. **Put keyword phrases in URLs.** For instance, try for URLs like *www.site.com/custom-utility-trailers* rather than *www.site.com/lasp?type=cut*.

This tactic helps you build greater keyword density.

3. **Include keywords in your links.** Label links on your site using keywords instead of "click here" (see top story, p. 5).

4. **Add more keywords to your site's copy.** Sprinkle them throughout the copy, headlines and subheads. Consider creating a navigation footer at the bottom of each page that repeats your keywords. Check out *www.surfcontrol.com* for an example.

Info: "The Role of Search in Business Buying Decisions," www.enquiro.com

Small steps that build loyalty, repeat sales

■ Adding a human touch to online transactions can boost results

It'd be easier to strengthen loyalty if you could look online buyers in the eye and shake hands.

Since that's not possible, focusing on small details that add a human touch to an otherwise impersonal transaction can help.

Creating a better buying experience

Here are three ways to do it:

1. **Write a personal thank-you note on packing slips** as orders get filled. One firm we know, Just Smoked Salmon, includes a short, handwritten note with each order placed through its site, *www.justsmokedsalmon.com*.

2. **Toss in something extra.** Kiehl's

doesn't do personal notes, but often tosses in free samples of its products when customers buy through *www.kiehls.com*.

If you can't offer free samples, goodies left over from your last trade show could do the trick.

It might only take a keychain with your firm's logo or a few company pens to differentiate a customer's buying experience.

3. **Send a follow-up e-mail.** The folks at *www.capeziodance.com* send personal e-mail messages to buyers after shipping their orders. Sent from the online strategy manager, the messages ask if the product arrived safely and how they like the item.

STEAL THESE IDEAS!

(Continued from page 3)

■ Help customers choose

An online tool can be a great way to help new prospects figure out which of your products best suits their needs. Interstate Batteries' "Find a Battery" tool helps new prospects narrow their search for the right product.

Info: www.interstatebatteries.com

■ Expand your reach

Sometimes you can't serve every market segment with a single Web site. That's why Schwan's Food Service has created four targeted sites, one for each customer segment. This allows the company to create more relevant content for different markets' specific needs.

Info: www.schwansfoodservice.com

■ Generate leads

You can get even more mileage from presentations that your top employees give at industry events. Consider creating an online archive of them on your Web site. Magma uses its collection of educational presentations to generate leads.

Info: www.magma-da.com

■ Improve navigation

Providing shortcuts to key content is one way to improve navigation and satisfaction. The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) does it through a pull-down menu that takes visitors to its site's most requested pages. The key to success: Keeping the list short. Research shows that visitors rarely look beyond the top three or four options in a pull-down menu.

Info: www.faseb.org

Are you capitalizing on these e-mail marketing opportunities?

■ 72% of customers say they welcome offers in transactional messages

The death of e-mail marketing has long been predicted by naysayers in both the marketing industry and the mainstream press.

But to paraphrase Mark Twain, the report of e-mail's death was "an exaggeration."

That's the take-away of a new study of e-mail marketing by DoubleClick, which found that the medium is alive and well – and is actually offering more opportunities for savvy companies.

Improving e-mail response

For instance, if you're not using transactional or order confirmation messages as a marketing vehicle, you could be missing out on cross- and up-sell opportunities.

More than half (52%) of customers said they would find it useful if these types of messages contained special offers for related products.

Some (26%) said special offers for related products from your business partners would be useful.

In addition, the study also

confirmed that personalizing product recommendations can boost results.

But be careful. Only 29% of buyers said that pitching products based on past purchases would likely get them to respond.

Instead, consider asking customers to tell you what types of products or offers interest them most. More than 71% said this type of personalization would likely increase their response.

The bottom line: Customers would rather tell you what they want to learn – so you don't have to figure it out.

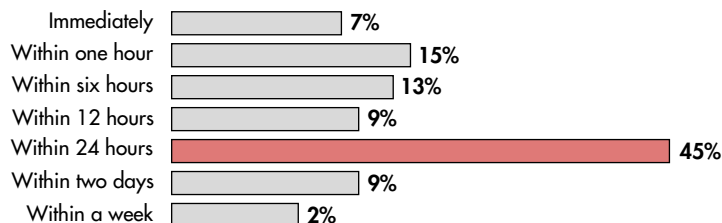
Finally, customers said sending too many messages – regardless of their relevance – is a sure-fire way to alienate them.

Frequency preferences vary by type of e-mail, so be sure to test thoroughly. For instance, news-related messages might be welcomed daily, but special offers might get better results if sent weekly.

Info: "DoubleClick's 2004 Consumer E-mail Study," www.doubleclick.com

ONLINE SERVICE

How quickly do you expect to get a response when you submit an inquiry via e-mail?



Source: www.doubleclick.com

Customers who send inquiries via e-mail expect quick answers. Nearly 90% expect to hear back within 24 hours. If your firm needs more time, try sending a brief initial e-mail that lets them know when they'll get a more thorough response.

LIGHTER SIDE

■ **A blonde walks into a bar with a poodle and salami...**

Blonde jokes may be tacky and offensive on occasion, but they're great for getting e-mail delivered, according to a new study.

Spammers who put blonde jokes in their messages are more likely to get their e-mail blasts through spam filters, says BlackSpider Technologies, a UK-based e-mail security company.

Apparently, filter technology often identifies e-mail messages containing blonde jokes as nothing more than harmless banter between friends. As a result, the messages go through filters unscathed.

If you plan to steal this idea from the spammers, remember to segment your list by customer hair color. The blondes you do business with may have more fun, but they might not think the jokes are funny.

And that could be bad for business.

Source: www.adrants.com

WHERE TO GET HELP

■ www.corporateblogging.info/basics/corporatebloggingprimer.pdf

This free report is a primer on setting up and running a business blog that contributes to your company's bottom line.

■ www.inc.com/magazine/20020901/24545.html

Take this quick online quiz to see how innovative and inventive you are. It'll tell you if you're the next Einstein or need to work on being more creative.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Does your site offer the content prospects need?

Three out of four senior executives say they're making more daily decisions, according to a new survey by Teradata. And these decisions are getting tougher and more complex.

You can differentiate your company by providing improved online content that makes buying decisions easier.

For instance, you could offer features or tools such as:

- ROI calculators
- side-by-side comparisons of your products versus rivals', or
- an "Executive Information Kit" (see top story, p. 3).

Info: www.teradata.com

The case for offering more online support

Giving customers more online service and support options can pay off handsomely – especially if they strengthen loyalty.

Companies with more loyal customers reported a 12% rise in profits last year. On the other hand, companies with more fickle buyers saw profitability drop by 12%.

This could be useful data to show your CEO if you're looking to get support for online retention and loyalty-building efforts.

Source: www.walkerinfo.com

Improving e-mail results: What others are doing

If the primary purpose of your e-mail campaigns is to drive incremental revenue, you're not alone.

That's how most marketers are using stand-alone e-mail campaigns, according to a new survey.

What are these marketers doing to improve results each time out? The survey found that:

- 69% are trying to improve their segmentation strategies

- 57% say they're focused on developing better copy
- 57% are trying different cross- and up-sell strategies
- 49% say they're adjusting how often they send messages, and
- 41% are testing various forms of personalization.

Info: www.e-tailing.com

Gaining the trust of online prospects

To boost credibility among buyers and ensure your site stays relevant, consider building a ratings system that allows Web visitors to leave feedback about your products, services or content.

Why? Customers want to voice their opinions online.

More than 33 million Americans have rated a product or service online, according to new research from the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Many others review these opinions when researching purchases.

Info: www.wired.com

Proof: Well-written blogs drive in qualified leads

Skeptics may say that business blogs are a waste of time and resources.

But one company has turned into a true believer after seeing a flood of leads come in as a result of blogging.

When a group of analysts at JupiterMedia began blogging about trends in its industry, top execs at the company didn't think much of it.

But once scores of potential customers began contacting the company – citing the blogs as the motivating factor behind their inquiries – management took notice.

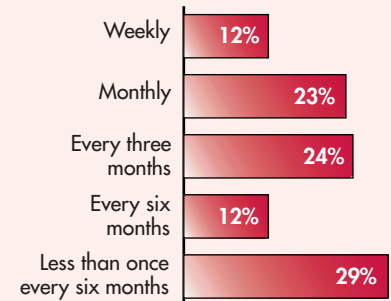
Now the chief executive of the company writes his own blog.

Info: http://biz.yahoo.com/ibd/041102/tech01_1.html

WHAT WEB MARKETERS SAID

Driving qualified traffic

Q: How often do you optimize Web pages for search engine purposes?



Source: www.iprospect.com

Natural optimization isn't a one-shot deal. It takes continuous effort because the algorithms used to determine the rankings are always changing. That's why 59% of companies update pages at least every three months.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

■ **Dec. 1-3: "B2B Marketing: Excelling in a Time of Transformation."** Miami. IIRUSA. 888-670-8200. www.iirusa.com/b2b

■ **Dec. 2-3: "Comprehensive E-mail Marketing Strategies."** Dallas, TX. Direct Marketing Association. 212-790-1500. www.the-dma.org/events

■ **Dec. 13-16: "Search Engine Strategies Conference & Expo."** Chicago. Jupitermedia. 203-662-2857. www.jupiterevents.com

■ **Jan. 31-Feb. 2: "Content Week 2005."** Miami, FL. IQPC. 800-882-8684. www.iqpc.com/contentweek