

# HOW TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS IN AN **OVERLY-MARKETED** **WORLD**

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Combining ads, direct mail,  
websites, email and more  
into a business-building  
marketing strategy.



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## Welcome to the *How to Market Your Business in an Overly-Marketed World* eBook. I hope you find it to be a concise and information-packed guide to business-building marketing strategies you could be using for your company.

The whole idea to write an eBook started innocently enough a couple of years ago when I was getting serious about building my own design business after having taken time off to stay home with my new son. I went back to a 40-hour work week as a graphic designer, but I had decided that I wanted to be able to offer my clients more than just decoration added to their latest project. The meteoric rise of the internet has been making design more and more of a commodity, and you know what happens to commodities, prices drop and drop until you can barely get by. How could I offer clients more? How could I differentiate myself in a crowded marketplace? I've always been interested in marketing and business strategy, but I had no formal training in that area. So, I decided to go on my own informal training adventure. The result is two years of reading articles, books, blogs, and online research as well as attending seminars about branding, marketing and multi-channel marketing that have been extremely educational. It has completely changed the way I approach projects, prospective clients and my own business promotion.

Now that I have gained this knowledge I thought it would be a good idea to share it with potential clients and marketing colleagues in an eBook (the white paper's cooler cousin).

This eBook is an overview of current and upcoming marketing methods and trends. It gives you information on all the hot topics you've been hearing about and, maybe, some you haven't come across yet. It also includes resources and links to find out more about the topics you think might be right for you.

I hope you get a lot out of reading this book, I know I did by writing it. Please feel free to contact me with questions or comments at [ann@piercingcom.com](mailto:ann@piercingcom.com).

*Sincerely,*

Ann Pierce

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## Introduction

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Today business is more competitive than ever. Small business is the fastest growing segment in the country and, thanks to the internet, your competitors are not just the company down the street, they can be a business in another state or even country. With all this competition consumers are being deluged with advertising messages. Every day it becomes harder to reach them as they tune out more messages. On average, people look at a print ad for no more than two seconds before moving on. That's why your ads, brochures, direct mail, website, etc. have to stand out from the clutter in order to succeed.

Your ads can no longer cater to the masses because the masses aren't listening. Most will research the offerings on the internet before ever entering a store or calling a salesperson. This means the advertiser no longer controls the flow of information. Old-fashioned advertising techniques won't be enough to break through to this new consumer.

Let's face it, there are only a limited number of people who will buy your product or service. How can you persuade them? Success is possible, if you develop a strong, unique branding and positioning program for your company's product or service and target the right prospects, then execute a multi-touch, multi-channel marketing effort to get your message in front of these valuable decision makers. This integrated, multi-touch marketing strategy helps boost response rates in several ways: it greatly increases the odds that your message will reach your prospect, overcomes the timing issue, and after multiple impressions, dramatically increases recall rates to also serve as a means of branding. This is the best way to get a response from this limited pool of decision makers.

Multi-channel, multi-touch marketing is a must in today's business climate. This eBook will show you how to get started. We'll start with your company's branding and positioning, teach you how to stand out from the competition and create a strategy to efficiently market your product or service. By the end of this book you'll be ready to go!

## What Is Branding and Marketing Strategy?

*We hear the word BRAND a lot in association with McDonald's®, Nike® and Microsoft®. But what is branding really and how can it help small to midsize businesses?*

A **brand** is the combination of your company's personality and values. It is in the look and feel of your facilities, in the behavior of your employees and in the tone of all your communications.

Brands serve as mental shorthand for customers looking to decide what to purchase. McDonald's is the family-friendly restaurant where you can be assured of a quick, consistently good meal. UPS is the convenient global shipper that will get your package to its destination on time, every time, "What can Brown do for you?".

Every point of interaction between a company and its customers is an opportunity for its brand to be evaluated, either positively or negatively. Your customers are forming opinions and attitudes about your brand that may last forever. You will usually get only one chance to capture a new customer, satisfy their needs (or better yet, exceed their expectations), and create a loyal customer who will give you repeat business and even recommend you to others – "the holy grail of marketing"! Your brand identity is as important as the product or service you sell. Investing in that identity and increasing awareness of your brand is invaluable.

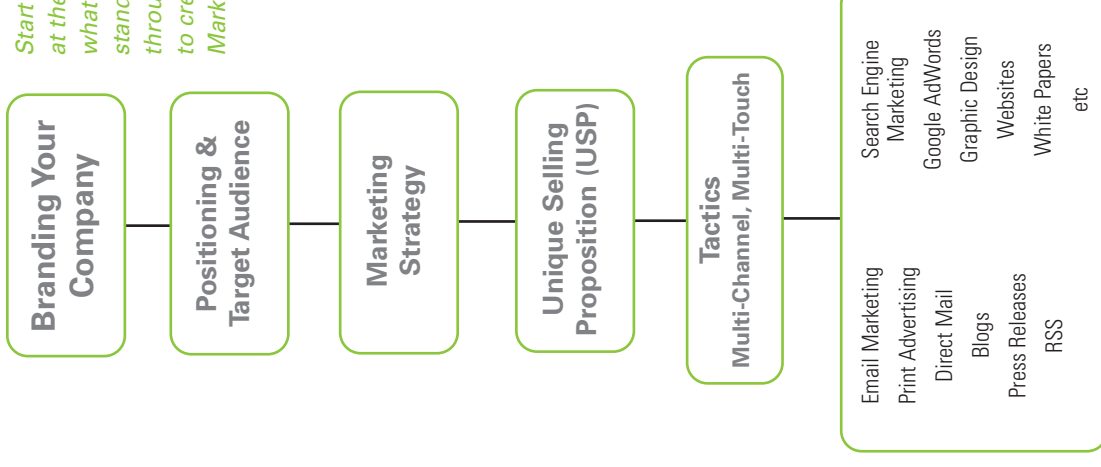
### What can a Strong Brand Deliver?

Having a strong brand allows your company to rise above commodity status. Strong brands thrive in good economies and weather slowdowns well. They are able to charge premium prices. They help attract great employees, business partners and customers. Strong brands capture market share, inspire customer loyalty and increase bargaining power with retailers and distributors (for manufacturers).

A close cousin to branding is **positioning**. Positioning your company involves identifying and

Your brand identity is as important as the product or service you sell.

*Start the process at the top by defining what your brand stands for. Then move through the steps to create your Multi-Marketing Strategy.*



gaining understanding of your **target audience**. Who are you trying to appeal to and how will you do it? Your target audience should not be everyone. You need to be more specific in order to spend your marketing dollars wisely. Target audiences are usually chosen in one of two ways: demographically or behaviorally. Demographics involves identifying certain traits your prospects are likely to share: age, income, geography, job title, education, etc. One of the demographic profiles I targeted as a designer was marketing directors at mid-sized businesses in Southeastern

Massachusetts. Behavioral targeting is more on the psychological/lifestyle side. You may need to contact women between 29-40 who are unsatisfied in their current career and are open to change. Maybe it's men 18-30 who consider themselves trendsetters and must have the latest electronic gadget, no matter the cost. Your target will simply be the people you believe have the most potential to buy what you are selling.

Your brand's positioning statement identifies this audience and states how you would like to be perceived by them. A women's apparel shop may want to appeal to women between 22-35 with an average income of \$50,000 or more. They may want to be perceived by these women as THE place to go for trendy, European-style clothing. Notice that they are not trying to appeal to women in general, just a select audience of profitable prospects.

### Is Your Company Passionate?

Once you've defined your brand and positioning you need to know one more very important thing: the reason why anyone should care! What is it that you do differently from your competitors? What is your organization passionate about? Instead of classifying yourself as a generic financial planner, try saying "I create long-term, easy-to-follow investment plans for newlyweds" or new parents, or small business owners. Whatever it is that you really want to focus on, that you believe in, and that will bring you plenty of profitable clients. Don't be afraid to be specific, no one can be appealing to everybody. If you narrow your audience you can concentrate your marketing on a smaller, more interested target.

Let's use the male trendsetter as an example. If our company is an electronics store we could appeal to this target by having a special spot on our website where these early-adopters could post reviews of the products they buy from us and gain a following among later shoppers who read and vote on the accuracy of the reviews. This would appeal to their interests, boost their ego and increase their loyalty to our store/brand, all by being a little unique.

Although we may hate to admit it, most of what competing companies do is the same. They all strive for good management and customer service and price themselves competitively. They all try to offer quality products or services that people will want. Performing well is just how a company stays in business. It is not unique. It's what you do **differently** from the competition that constitutes your **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** and that's what you'll base your strategy on.

This USP is a relevant and compelling reason why prospects should choose you over the competition. It can't be a temporary situation such as a sale or special offer. It shouldn't be generic like "great customer service". It needs to differentiate you from your competitors in the minds of your target audience and make you the natural choice for them to make.

Some companies find their Unique Selling Proposition by deciding to focus on an under-served niche in an otherwise crowded market. Nokia, for example, was the first to treat cell phones as a fashion accessory with changeable faceplates. They used style as a USP to stand out in the glutted consumer electronics market when everyone else was busy hyping tech features. That's differentiation.

Have you seen the new Dutch Boy® paint containers? Someone at Dutch Boy® saw that traditional paint cans are just plain annoying! Why were all the paint manufacturers using this terrible packaging? Habit, tradition, nothing more. They used this key insight to introduce an easy-to-use plastic paint jug. Sales went way up, and Dutch Boy® got more distribution at higher retail prices. They created a USP by changing the customer experience with their product, not the product itself. Pretty smart. Can your company dig into the customer experience in your industry and come up with a key insight that would make you the obvious choice among consumers? It's definitely worth a try.

You don't have to have a revolutionary idea; the point is that you must have a way to stand out from the crowd. You need to give people a reason to choose you. What are some of the reasons current customers enjoy doing business with you? Are you easy to use, have more efficient processes, supply truly unique technology? You can take any of these concepts and turn it into your USP. But, remember, it must be relevant to your customers' needs, compelling enough to cause them to change, and most of all, true. Once you've found your USP, don't keep it hidden. Get it out there where it can be seen on a consistent basis by your target audience.

### Fear of Uniqueness

It can be scary to be unique. Most companies follow the competition's lead and produce similar ads and offers. It seems safe, but it actually assures that you'll never overtake the competition; that takes innovation and daring. Unless you have an effective strategy and a unique message, it doesn't matter how many brochures you send out or how many salespeople you hire. You won't get the results you need to move your business forward. You'll tread water at best.

## Creating Your Marketing Strategy

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Now you have a brand identity, positioning, target audience and USP. It's time to come up with a marketing strategy or plan that will grow your business. Your marketing strategy is the way you'll promote your products or services to the public, but not simply by running an ad. You'll select the most cost-effective and efficient ways to reach your target audience with your USP, thereby gaining an advantage over the competition.

**Tactics** are the elements you will use to execute your strategy. They can include: direct mail, print ads, PR, sales training, promotions, event sponsorships, holding seminars, email marketing, etc. You'll use a combination of tactics to get your message out there and get your prospects to take the action you want – call, email visit a store, download a brochure, etc. This is called **Multi-Channel Marketing**.

### 12 Great Tips for Creating Your Strategy and Targeting Prospects

The two most important branding concepts that small to medium size businesses must focus on are awareness and relevant differentiation (USP). Either one alone is ineffective; together they can be a powerhouse. These tips will help you create a strategy to achieve just that.

#### 1. *You can have the best product or service in the world, but if no one is aware of you, you will go out of business.*

You can build awareness in a variety of ways: advertising, PR, newsletters, signage, direct mail, product samples, etc. But, have you thought about holding workshops, writing an article, sponsoring an event, branding your vehicle (a traveling billboard) or co-marketing with a complementary product? Be on the lookout for great promotional ideas and strategies used by other industries and see if you can adapt them to your advantage. Awareness comes with time and repetition, so the important thing is to keep at it. Make sure your company is being seen and talked about on a regular basis, in various places your target audience is likely to see it.

#### 2. *Once people are aware of your product, why should they choose it over all the others?*

Awareness is great but it isn't a magic bullet. People choose products that stand out in relevant and compelling ways. Your USP should be based on your knowledge of your prospects, their needs, their wants, anxieties and expectations. Then you fill those needs, alleviate those anxieties and exceed those expectations. The key to a

good USP is having a clear message that highlights your unique strengths and explains to prospects why your product is the best choice. You'll find it more effective to tell them how your product or service solves their problem rather than just listing its features. Keep their perspective in mind, not yours. If you have a case study of how your product has solved the problems of others, even better! That can give you the credibility you need to make the sale.

#### 3. *How, exactly, do you get your message to the audience?*

You'll need to gain some knowledge about your prospects in order to reach them. You need to find out:

- Who the primary decision makers are in your target audience (there may be more than one)
- What motivates him or her (speed, price, ego, etc.)
- Where he or she gets information about your product category
- The type of message they are likely to respond to: product samples, coupons, free evaluations, etc.

Then you'll get the appropriate message to him or her as efficiently as possible through the sources or channels they rely on for information.

One way to determine all these facts is to hold an informal focus group with some of your current customers. This could be done by a phone or mail survey, or even by taking a select group of customers out to lunch, independently or as a group, to discuss these issues. Ask them where they get their information. For example, how did your prospects find out about some of the other products or services that they purchased recently? What websites do they turn to for information? What keywords do they use to search for your type of product? (You'll learn the importance of these keywords later). What trade associations do they belong to? What trade shows do they attend? What publications do they read regularly? You can rent these publications' mailing lists, advertise on these websites and visit or exhibit at these trade shows. This process of getting to know more about your existing clients will help you decide what methods to use to reach others like them.

#### 4. *Perform your own analysis of the competition.*

It's always a good idea to keep an eye on the competition. Start by reading local newspapers, trade journals, industry newsletters and visit websites in your category. Visit your competitors' websites and request information. Check who comes up in the top 30 results for Google® searches your potential clients are likely to use. You can learn a lot about your competition through their own advertising and PR. The idea here is not to copy them, but to know what you are up against.

## 5. Say it loud and say it often: multi-touch.

Once you know who you are selling to and what methods you will use to reach them, you'll need to contact them at regular intervals using several channels (methods). Frequency of contact is important simply because people forget. It takes an average of 7-9 impressions to make an impact. Even when you have piqued their interest, if they don't act they will forget you in a week or two. Also, remember your prospects' lives are constantly changing and their needs change unexpectedly. Just because they didn't need your product or service two months ago doesn't mean they don't need it now.

## 6. Say it here, say it there: multi-channel.

Be sure to use more than one method of contact or "channel". Your prospects are bound to have different preferences in how they like to receive information: email, print ads, direct mail, etc. These channels allow you to communicate more often. The more often you interact with your prospect and the more relevant the information you provide, the more effective your campaign will be at rising above the clutter.

All of these communications need to make an offer and give a clear Call-to-Action. Then state it again and maybe again. Tell them what you have to say and what you want them to do: call, order, visit a store, etc.

Measure, refine and optimize your marketing channel mix. Spend wisely and calculate your cost per generated lead. Implementing a good campaign will not only help your message reach the client at the correct time, but also extend the reach and improve the effectiveness of your sales force.

## 7. Anticipate objections.

Ask your salespeople (or yourself) what your prospect's main objection to buying usually is – cost, fear of change, etc. – and address it up-front in your marketing. Then direct them to where they can find more information, request a brochure, visit your website, etc. Many people won't call a sales rep early in the decision making process because they're afraid of getting a hard sell. Give them a painless way to learn more.

## 8. Sometimes less is more.

No matter which channel you're using, don't overwhelm your prospect with too much information at once. Company history and mission statements can wait. Tell the prospect what problem your product or service will solve for them and use your USP to make you the obvious choice for them to make.

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*Yes, I actually received this postcard in the mail. It's almost painful to look at, isn't it, both front and back! Keep your message simple and you'll get more response.*

If you have several benefits to extol, try different mailers emphasizing one benefit in each. You can still use the text of the piece to mention the additional benefits, but if you give equal emphasis to everything nothing will stand out. Test to see what benefit gets a response from what target audience. Then you can target more effectively. Always ask the prospect for an action or response. You want them to call, mail or visit your website to sign up for a newsletter or class, download a white paper, get more information or order your product. In any case, you now have a true sales lead to follow up on.

## 9. *Make it easy for an interested prospect to contact you.*

Always consistently display your brand's logo, tagline, contact information and website address at all customer touchpoints, from letterhead, business cards and emails to company vehicles, signage, ads, etc. Provide several ways to respond to your offer – call, visit our website, mail a response card, etc.

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It takes more than  
strategy to build a  
brand. It takes  
strategy and  
creativity together.  
Our brains are  
hardwired to notice  
what's different.

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Professional design and copy will add emphasis to your message and get the most mileage out of every marketing dollar you spend.

It takes more than strategy to build a brand. It takes strategy and creativity together. Many people treat graphic design only as style or decoration. It's capable of much more; it can overcome communication problems, positioning problems, change perceptions and add differentiation. These are strategic advantages – a way to stand out from all the other communications that are bombarding your prospects each day. Our brains are hardwired to notice what's different and to pay attention to it.

Quality design and copywriting are the principal agents used in communicating and supporting your brand's attributes. It shouldn't just apply to your logo or a tagline; it must go far beyond that. The layout and usability of your website, the design of your retail space, your brochures, your packaging, your advertising, everything your prospects see or read that comes from you must reinforce your message, instill confidence and inspire prospects to take action.

You will often hear graphic designers say they are problem solvers. Yes, it's true that they sometimes solve a specific problem for a client, but creating a logo isn't a problem, designing a new catalog or annual report isn't a problem. They are opportunities to use design to make the pieces more effective. Design is all about opportunities. Good graphic design is about recognizing, and often creating, opportunities for clients to get their message to their target audience clearly, effectively, efficiently and memorably. Good design helps you to separate yourself from the competition and rise above commodity status.

Consistency is key. Be sure to convey a consistent message, tone and visual look in all of your projects. Tying all these disparate materials together with design and a common voice creates brand harmony. This will help you communicate your USP clearly.

## 11. *Performing a brand harmony audit—not as painful as it sounds.*

There is an easy way to determine how consistent your current marketing materials are: perform an audit. Gather together all the materials your company puts in front of customers on one table. Find all the brochures, ads, direct mail pieces, signage (take photos where necessary), website, packaging, trade show exhibits, etc. Start sorting them by visual style. Is your company's brand and USP coming through? Does one item relate to the next, or does it look completely different? Start reading the headlines and copy. Does the copy have the same tone or "voice" from piece to piece? You may find that some pieces are working well together, but maybe the signage or website needs to be brought in line. Or, you may find a huge kaleidoscope of design styles and copy tones. In either case, you now know if you are using design and copy to their fullest potential and you can start producing materials that are based on your strategy.

Now that you are in auditing mode, why not take a step further and compare your materials to the competition's? Collect sales and marketing materials from your rivals. It's always a good idea to get on their direct mail and email lists. Do their materials look and sound alike? Are they all making the same claims? Don't duplicate them, be different and beat their offer or benefit. This is where your USP comes in. Use it in combination with good graphic design and copywriting to stand out from this crowd.

In order to get the most out of your designers and copywriters you need to involve them as early on in the process as possible. They have the experience to craft your message visually and verbally for maximum effect. If design is applied at the end stage of a project as an afterthought it will only serve as decoration that won't add

to the effectiveness of the piece. Professional copywriting will give clarity and add interest to your message. Both add value by providing distinctive content and credibility. Consider them a good investment of marketing dollars.

Understanding and managing the creative process will give you a distinct advantage over the competition. Use it to achieve maximum brand-building results with each project. If this task seems too daunting or expensive, redesign the pieces one at a time, as time and budgets allow. But don't miss out on this important aspect in implementing your new marketing strategy.

## **12. *Getting it done.***

Sales is a process of communication, not a one-time event. You've got to stay in front of your prospects through repeated contacts – whether that's direct mail, sales calls, ads, PR or, more likely, a combination of these activities. That's the essence of multi-channel, multi-touch marketing. Not just any contact will do. You need meaningful, informative, educational, persuasive contacts that address the issues and concerns of your prospects through your USP.

Smaller or newer businesses on tight budgets can approach these goals in stages as time and money allow. Start with your USP to set yourself apart. Define your goals, determine some tactics to achieve them, then start with your next marketing piece or activity. Take every opportunity to align your efforts with the new strategy until all your marketing efforts have brand harmony.

Regardless of whether you sell B2B or B2C, marketers are finding out that it's all about people. Tap into your target audience as a person, not just a title or statistic. If you connect with them emotionally, by solving their problems and addressing their concerns, you'll succeed.

## Choosing the Right Tactics

Now that you've gained all this marketing information and formed a strategy, you will need to choose the tactics or channels you will use to deliver your message.

Response rates and costs vary greatly from channel to channel. You will need to analyze the data you've gathered from your existing customers and target audience to decide which tactics you will use to reach them.

**Three-quarters of all envelopes mailed are 24 lb., white, #10 size. So, change it up.**

In the following sections we'll review many tried-and-true channels as well as some newer, more daring ones you may want to use.

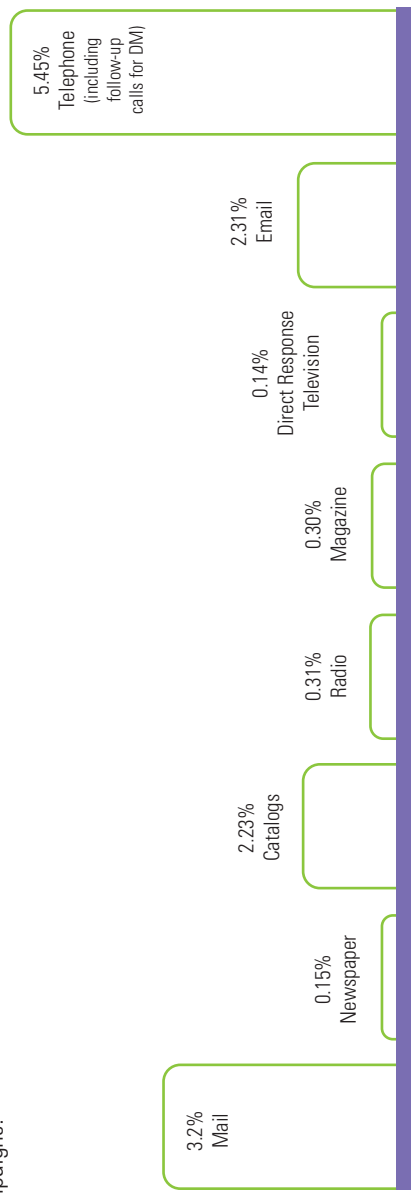
### Direct Mail...still important to the mix.

What is one of the first things you do when you get home at the end of the day? I bet you get the mail! It's part of almost everyone's daily routine. Mail is still one of the easiest ways to reach decision makers. It's tangible, portable and can be read at the prospect's convenience. An email has to get past spam filters and actually get opened to be effective. Direct mail goes right to the mailbox and can start the sales message on the outside of the envelope or on the front of the postcard. Direct mail is also great for gathering opt-ins for your email campaigns.

Studies by the United States Postal Service and other independent groups found that consumers — even heavy internet users — continue to view mail as a highly relevant and significant source of information. Mail provides a physical quality consumers find lacking in electronic communications. The USPS says that 41% of Americans shop using both catalogs and the internet; I know I do. Your target demographic may be a lot higher. The studies also showed that mail, working side by side with digital media, can have a substantial impact on the use of commercial websites. Blending the two together will help you achieve high-impact results.

*Direct mail is definitely effective, but, just like the email inbox, your customers' mailbox gets pretty full as well. So you'll need to stand out here too. Some ways to accomplish this are:*

- **Teaser Copy.** What you say on the outside of the envelope can start the sale before they even open it. Use headlines that challenge them... "Do you know what it takes to..." or appeal to their curiosity "Find out why so many of your colleagues..." If you already have a relationship with this prospect make sure to call that out. Even printing a line on the back of the envelope lifts open rates.
- **Stand Out.** Did you know that 3/4 of all envelopes that are mailed are 24 lb., white, #10 size? So, change it up. People will open an intriguing envelope. Try a #12 envelope, or one with bubble pack, or unconventional sizes and colors. You'd be surprised what can be mailed. People have mailed barf bags, anti-static bags, burlap bags, even a life-size cardboard cutout of Elvis. Just be sure to bring a test piece to the post office first.
- **Postcard Campaigns.** They may have less real estate for your message than an envelope mailing, but you don't have to worry about people not opening them. They are also very easy for people to save or pass on to another interested party. Try an oversized postcard or a die-cut shape to stand out.
- **Interactive Mail.** These include zip-pull envelopes, scratch-off cards, sticky notes, stickers, etc. The longer a person interacts with the piece the more retention and response it will get.



Overall Response Rates for Different Media Channels

- **Dimensional Mail.** This type of campaign can triple response rates and message retention. The cardboard Elvis was a dimensional piece. Other examples would be sending a premium gift – mailing a sports water bottle with a letter inside, or one walkie talkie with an offer to have the other delivered by your sales rep when the prospect responds. The typical executive gets a huge amount of unsolicited mail, which is then sorted by an assistant. An important or valuable-looking package is never thrown away like a generic DM piece; it makes its way to your intended recipient. As long as you have a great strategy and message, once your mailer is opened, you should hit your sales goals.

- **Personalization.** Variable Data Printing technology has come a long, long way. It used to be cool just to inkjet the recipient's name in the mail piece. Now, you can go far beyond that. New digital presses can change the text and even the imagery of your piece based on each recipient. Pearl scripts can generate unique URL's (web addresses) that can be printed on each piece, putting a prospect's name right in the web address of your site's landing page. Smart use of this personalization technology can raise the response rate of a campaign by up to 450%. If a 2% response rate is good, an 8% rate is exceptional! Although this personalization increases the cost per piece, the increased response rates almost always justify the added expense.

- **Get the Right Mailing List.** It accounts for 40-50% of the campaign's success rate. If your budget is extremely tight target your list more specifically so you can spend more per person. It's more important that your piece stands out in the mailbox than that it goes to more people and gets ignored by them. When you have a quality, highly targeted list it's safe to assume that many non-responders may actually be your best prospects. The timing of your effort or the delivery method might have been off. That's why it takes an integrated, multi-touch, multi-channel effort to get their response.

- **Segmentation.** All prospects are not created equal, so invest accordingly. Segment your prospects and try a concept that can be executed on two different cost levels. Maybe one is an elaborate envelope with variable data printed material inside. Then repurpose the printed material without VDP for a simpler mailer for prospects that are likely to be less profitable.

- **Make it Easy.** Give people multiple ways to respond; website, physical address, response card, toll-free number, etc.

- **Don't Skimp on Execution.** Using full-color printing makes your piece much more attractive and pulls higher response rates. The cost of 4-color printing has come down due to very heavy competition in the industry. If you are mailing to a

small list try a printer with a digital press. You'll get 4-color output on small runs for a very reasonable cost.

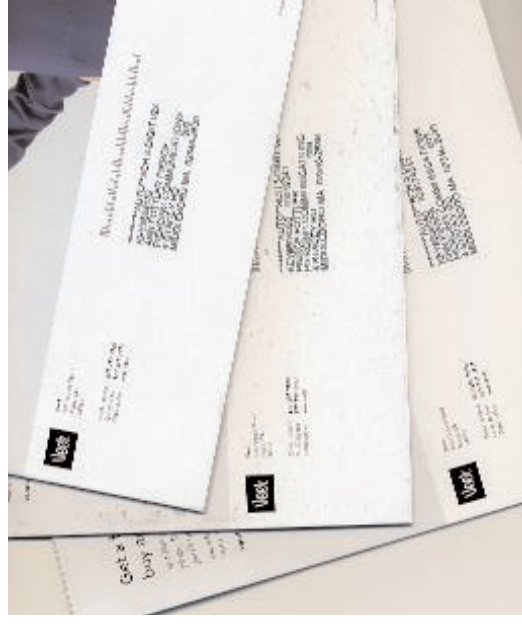
## || Why a High-Quality website is an Absolute Must!

More and more people are turning to the internet to get information on the products and services they need. Websites are becoming the most important touchpoint you can have with potential customers. Your site should not just measure up to the competition's, it should be a well-organized, information-packed, lead-generating machine.

### 13 things you need to know to make your site more effective.

#### 1. First Impressions – Your Brand

Potential clients form their initial opinion of a company based on its website. A professional look, relevant content and ease of use are essential. Is the site up-to-date with the latest news and info? Is the company attentive to detail? Bad grammar, typos and broken links raise questions of quality. Is the company up to my standards? If it's not they are gone in 15 seconds or LESS. After a prospect forms a



*I receive three catalogs from this company each time they do a mailing, under slightly different versions of my name. Although I am an appropriate prospect for them, they are wasting a serious amount of money here because their list has not been purged of obvious duplications.*

general opinion of the quality of a company they continue on to decide whether the company's offerings fit their needs (assuming they have not dismissed the company based on a bad first impression). This is where your branding, strategy and USP reel them in.

## 2. Offline and Online Marketing

All of your print ads, direct mail pieces and promotions should be driving prospects to your site. They should contain a compelling Call-to-Action directing them to your site for more details, etc. You should go a step further by using a unique web address or landing page for each campaign. It helps you measure the effectiveness of each ad or mailer and actually raises success rates for campaigns. Techniques like this will help you refine your marketing efforts, making them more profitable.

## 3. Relevance

Now that your offline marketing is driving qualified prospects to your site, your core message and content must be seen, found relevant and remembered! You know from your own research on the web that you'll visit several sites to gather information, but there's always that one that you keep going back to that seems to address all your questions in a well organized and attractive manner. That's the kind of site YOU want to have.

## 4. Lead Generation

Determine who the primary visitor to your website is and make sure they can quickly and easily get what they want. When a consumer goes to your site you want them to take action. This may include signing up for a free newsletter, a consultation, registering for an event, requesting a brochure or inquiring about a purchase itself. A well written and designed website will help elicit these actions and is a necessary step to convert someone from a website visitor into a live prospect. Talk to your sales force. Find out what your prospect's typical preliminary questions and obstacles to buying are. Your site should address these to help pre-qualify leads and help convert visitors into buyers. Raising your

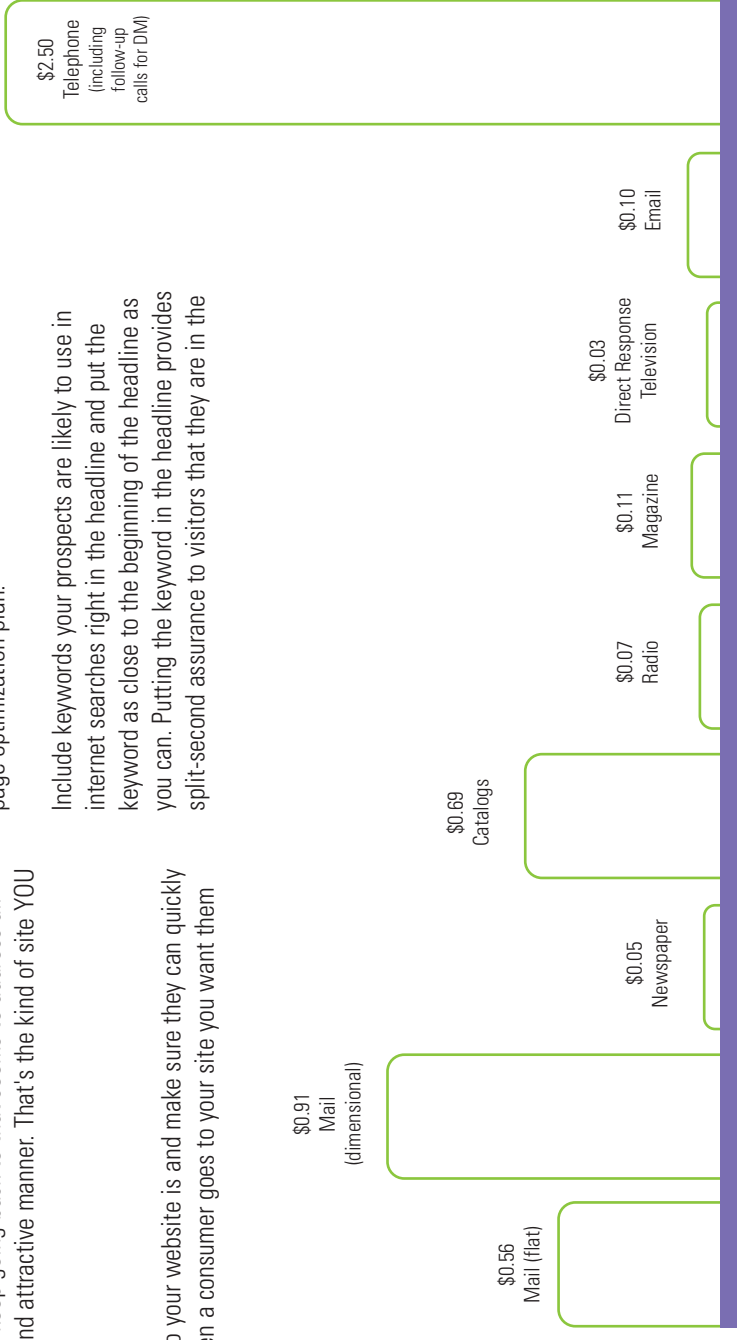
conversion rate from just 1 to 2 percent is the same as doubling your website traffic, and it is almost always easier and cheaper to do.

## 5. Don't just Regurgitate your Brochure onto the Web

Visitors will expect a greater benefit if they take the time to check out your website. A good website uses compelling and succinct text, interactivity, intuitive navigation systems, etc. Everything on an entry page must be designed and written to entice a visitor to click. Use active words such as "Learn", "Ask", "Browse", "Sign up". Use "you" and "your"; avoid "we" and "our". Keep copy short and to the point with links to pages containing deeper information. Remember, you just want them to make that first click and start down the path.

Use effective headlines to help both your website and your advertising-specific landing pages. People read text on websites very differently than they do text on a page. In fact they rarely read at all, they scan. Headlines are one piece of copy that users will actually scan when deciding if your site is what they are looking for. So, writing headlines that engage users is going to be an important part of your landing page optimization plan.

Include keywords your prospects are likely to use in internet searches right in the headline and put the keyword as close to the beginning of the headline as you can. Putting the keyword in the headline provides split-second assurance to visitors that they are in the



## Cost-Per-Contact for Direct Orders

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You know from your own research on the web that you'll visit several sites to gather information, but there's always that one that you keep going back to that seems to address all your questions in a well organized and attractive manner. That's the kind of site you want to have.

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#### 6. *Images are Great but don't forget the Website Copy*

Many businesses put a great deal of emphasis on website graphics and on creating a visually interesting site, but many sites don't have enough text. Although on an initial visit people will just scan headlines and subheads, informative text is reassuring to visitors and it gives search engines something to crawl (see Search Engine Marketing). Once you've succeeded in capturing their interest, satisfy their need to know. People often use the web to do basic research, only later going back to buy on the site or contact you to do business. How well you anticipate and answer their questions will determine whether you earn their trust and loyalty. Ask yourself, "What would I need to know if I were in the market for this product or service"? Thinking like a customer looking for information will change the way you write and organize your content.

right place. It will make them relax a bit and be more receptive to your message.

Try not to sound like an ad. Highlight benefits rather than features. Talk about how your product solves problems and make an emotional connection with the prospect. Make your headlines easy to read. For example, instead of "Brand X delivers unprecedented storage density, industry-leading scalability and unrivaled performance!" try "Three easy steps to truly secure data!" Try testing different headlines to see which ones minimize bounce rates and result in the most clickthroughs to actual sales.

Don't forget subheads. They are another easy way to quickly offer more information about your product. Similar to headlines, they're a piece of text users are likely to scan. Bullet points and captions are also popular with scanners.

To help your visitors see how your service could benefit them, consider adding one or more case studies to your site describing how a customer was able to solve a problem and overcome challenges with the help of your service or product. You might also add a "Frequently Asked Questions" page. A FAQ page can be a powerful marketing tool. Use it to address the questions you think customers might or *should* ask about your product category.

Writing articles and white papers related to your business and publishing them on your site can put you in the enviable situation of being perceived as an authority. It's also a way to add relevant content to your site on a regular basis. Consider asking visitors for their email address in return for access to these articles. If you don't want to require registration for free downloads like white papers, try sending an automated thank-you email with a sign-up form for further updates and offers.

Sometimes, just by raising an issue and providing information, you will be able to establish a point of difference. As visitors research other sites, they may look for more information on issues, benefits, and features that they learned about on your site. If a competitor's site doesn't adequately address something that they have become interested in, you will have gained a bit of an edge.

#### 7. *Fear of Fraud*

Although experts say using your credit card over the internet poses no greater risk of fraud than using it at a store or restaurant, customers' fear of fraud on the internet is still an issue that needs to be addressed. Smart marketers counter these fears by placing third-party endorsements such as "VeriSign secured" or "BizRate.com customer certified" on their pages to give visitors the confidence to buy. Testimonials from previous customers also help to decrease these fears of fraud.

#### 8. *We're All a Little Lazy*

Few visitors will scroll down your web page to find what they are looking for, so your marketing message should be short and sweet and above the fold.

You should also keep your registration forms short. Limit your page to six or seven fields and don't require too much personal information like phone numbers. Be sure to include e-mail privacy information so the visitor knows that you won't share their information with other companies.

#### 9. *Newsletter Subscriptions – Stay in Touch*

Visitor conversions don't always happen right away. Keep your visitors coming back by having an easy email newsletter or special promotion sign-up on your landing

page. If customers like your site or products enough to opt-in to these regular communications they are telling you they are a prospect. A newsletter is a great vehicle for staying connected and continuing customer interest. Some suggestions for making newsletters engaging include:

- *Offering big discounts during slow periods for your business.*
- *Sharing information that only you have; if your site is an information or professional services site, use abstracts of papers or other special data that may pique your customers' interest and bring them back to your site.*

You're more likely to keep your customers converting when you build a relationship with them by sending various offers, news and discounts directly to their in-box. This also works for continued sales to existing clients and cross-selling other products to your customer base.

### **10. Search Engine Marketing...Increase your Visibility**

When people look for information on the internet, and that's where they are looking today, they usually start by entering a topic or keyword into a search engine like Yahoo® or Google®. You'll want your site to be in the top results of that search. This is achieved through a process called **Search Engine Marketing (SEM)**.

SEM is the practice of setting up and running a successful web presence while gaining maximum **search engine visibility**, i.e. the position of your site in the search engine results for certain keywords or key phrases people type in the search box to obtain information on products and services. Everything depends on how deep you are listed in these results. If you appear on the first or second page of results it's very likely such visibility will bring you many visitors from Google. If you are the 556th result it's unlikely that anyone will stumble across you.

SEM programs usually consist of three main strategies: Search Engine Optimization, Paid Inclusion/Paid Advertising and Web Analytics.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** is the art and science of changing the content and HTML code of your pages as well as the structure of your site to make them more compatible with the robots (spiders) search engines will send to read and rank them. The content of your website must include the keywords that your prospects will use to search for your offering. They must be used in such a way that the search robot will consider your keyword-focused content as relevant and not as spam.

**Paid Inclusion** is different. You pay the search engine and it guarantees the inclusion of your site in the index. Many search engines also offer advanced pay-for-performance programs like the "sponsored results" that you often see at the top of your results page, and sponsored links or ads next to the organic results (pay-per-click ads).

A very important part of any SEM program is **Web Analytics** – tracking and analyzing visitor behavior on your site. Find out the bounce rate for your landing pages – people who arrive at your landing page but leave almost immediately. Find out what's working and what isn't. Test different headlines and offers. Use this information to make improvements and raise visitor and conversion rates so that your site becomes a money maker, not just a business expense. Most website hosting companies offer these analytics programs as an upgrade to your hosting plan; take advantage of them.

See the section titled: *Search Engine Marketing and Search Engine Optimization... Don't Leave Home without Them* for more information on this very important topic.

### **11. Automated Emails**

Use auto-responders to trigger an automatic email message for people who came to your site but didn't buy, abandoned a shopping cart, downloaded a white paper or filled out a survey. Contacting them when your site is still fresh in their mind with content specific to their area of interest may convert them into customers.

### **12. Multiple Landing Pages**

Create specific landing pages for every ad and paid search term you use. Custom landing pages are so important for pay-per-click advertising because you are creating consistency from keyword to ad to landing page. Many campaigns fall short of their goals due to an overly general landing page which does not meet the customer's expectations of relevancy. Just make sure you include some branding elements that will help consumers understand who you are and what you offer.

### **13. Set up a Follow-Up Program to Act on Leads and Track Website Performance**

Once you've developed your lead-generating website you'll need a systematic way to follow up on these prospects. You can start with auto-respond emails to any inquiries letting prospects know that you received their inquiry and will be following up appropriately. There are lead capture programs that can import information gathered from forms on your website and add them to your database. You must assign someone to either follow up on these new leads in a timely fashion or distribute them to your sales force. Don't let these valuable leads get cold.

The website visit is a critical component of the overall impression a potential client forms about your company. You not only need to be online but you also need to be doing the right things online for the right reasons; in other words – strategy. An effectively planned site can outperform its well-funded competitors that are less focused and strategic in their online branding efforts. That's a competitive advantage you can't pass up.

### !!! Email Marketing...Is it Right for You?

Email marketing can be a very effective, low-cost, timely and efficient way to communicate with current and prospective customers when done the RIGHT way, otherwise it's just annoying! You can use email to do just about any kind of advertising you would normally do; advertise a new product, a sale, service, ask for donations, etc. What email offers that traditional media doesn't is the potential for interactivity. Your recipient is already right there at the computer. They're just one click away from your site and making the critical connection to you. There's an immediacy there that you can't get from traditional advertising even with your toll-free number, pre-paid reply card, or website address visible to them,. Nothing is easier than just clicking right now!

So, how do you get them to click?

### Building Your Own List with Opt-In Compliance

It's really not hard to start an email list for either newsletters or email marketing campaigns. First of all, you have to encourage people to sign up every chance you get. This includes on your homepage, landing pages, any direct mail or print ads you run, etc. You probably already have some customers you could send your first

campaign to. Be sure to include a reminder that you have done business together in the past, that you want to send them relevant, useful information, and include a prominent way for them to unsubscribe. You certainly don't want your new campaign to alienate your existing customer base. Remember, current anti-spamming laws insist on a permission reminder saying they signed-up for your email campaigns, or are current customers, and an easy way to unsubscribe from your list if they wish.

There are many other ways to grow your list. Include a link for people to forward your offer or newsletter to interested colleagues and friends. Collect business cards in a basket or keep a sign up sheet prominently displayed at your place of business. Encourage staff to ask customers to sign-up. Offer special benefits for sign-ups: free white paper/downloads, coupons or exclusive offers.

When someone does give you their email address it's a great opportunity to either develop a relationship with that prospect that could lead to sales, or, to alienate that potential customer and become persona non grata. Be sure to respect the people on your list. Stay in contact with them on a regular basis, but don't overwhelm them with offers. Make sure each communication you send contains relevant and useful information.

Most people who subscribe to your list will open the first few emails you send to see if they are interesting; if you haven't captured them by the second or third one and proven your worth to be allowed in the inbox they won't open any more. They may just delete your subsequent emails and newsletters, or even unsubscribe from your list. There's real danger in sending irrelevant communications.

### Your email has to compete with all the others in the inbox to get attention. Are you up to the challenge?

Here, again, content is king! These tips will help you gain an edge over the competition.

- **Getting the Right Look and Feel.** Using some simple design and copywriting techniques can help your email campaigns succeed. Most companies use far too much text in their campaigns. People naturally tend to scan emails, they seldom read all the text. Your emails should be concise, uncluttered and easy to read. The reader should know almost instantly what's important – your main message. If your emails are too busy and hard to focus on they will be deleted and your opportunity will be lost. See if the following ideas would help your email's image:



Recently I found 6 unsolicited emails in a row from some baby gift company in my inbox. I immediately opened the first, found the unsubscribe link, and used it! An opportunity lost for them.

*Don't be afraid of a little white space (blank areas that allow the eye to rest).*

*Make sure your subject line grabs attention and has relevance.*

*Try cutting your initial text by at least 30%. I bet it still works.*

*Make judicious use of headlines, subheads and bulleted lists, as they attract the greatest attention.*

*Use links to your website to finish long articles by putting the headline and an excerpt or summary in the email.*

*People tend to prefer light-colored, neutral backgrounds with dark body copy. It's*

*easier on the eyes. Headlines and subheads can be in an attractive, brighter color.*

*Many email campaign services have templates available that can help you with this.*

Now that you have a nice, clean design for your campaign don't forget to add some relevant, professional-looking images. Using only text in your emails will make them seem dry and boring. Images attract visual focus, so captions and text that appears next to images gets read. Use this to your advantage. There are many stock photography sites on the web that can provide you with great-looking images for your emails. If you sell unique products, getting professional pictures taken of these will serve you well, not only for your online efforts, but also for direct mail, signage, packaging, etc.

Remember to always send yourself a test email of your new campaign before sending it out to your list. View it in the preview pane of your email program to make sure that your important message will be visible in that small window without scrolling. You'll see for yourself how important a great headline is to your readers. Also, preview your campaign with images turned off to make sure your message comes across well to people who prefer to leave images turned off.

- **Targeting for Results.** Take the time to target your emails by dividing your subscribers into interest groups or segments. Set up your email opt-in form to allow subscribers to choose from several specific interest groups or topics. Make sure they can choose more than one if they wish. If you currently have an email list, review your readers' histories. Investigate what have they responded to in the past. You could also send them an online survey to learn more about which topics interest them. Explain how you'll use this information to keep them updated on interesting topics, and cut down on unnecessary emails! Who doesn't want that? You will then be able to segment your list into categories and supply your readers with what they want. By sending them only valuable, thoughtful communications you will increase open rates, click-throughs and sales rates. This approach builds loyal readers and makes your email marketing efforts welcome and effective.

- **Writing a Compelling Subject Line.** Your subject line needs to tell the prospect the purpose of your email and entice them to open it – all in 50 characters or less. Some great words to include in subject lines and headlines are: "You," "New," "Exclusive," "Introducing" and "Free". Test different subject lines over time and you'll learn what your prospects will respond to.

- **Calls-to-Action and Landing Pages.** Each new email campaign you send should have one defined goal. Do you want the reader to visit your website, buy a particular product, attend an event, download a brochure, etc? The best way to get them to respond the way you want is to have one goal per campaign and make it known with a Call-to-Action. This Call-to-Action should be prominently displayed in the beginning, middle and end of your message to make sure readers know how to respond to your offer. Try using action phrases like "buy it now", "click here to find out more" or "sign up today" to make it even more compelling.

If the goal of your campaign is to drive readers to your website, then the transition from email to website needs to appear as seamless as possible. Readers will respond to a continuation of the sales experience started by the email. The design, feel and content should match the email as closely as possible. Highlight the offer or Call-to-Action again and encourage them to follow through.

This kind of seamless transition usually requires you to set up custom landing pages. These are pages on your site designed specifically for these readers. Sending them to a homepage or a general products/services page will drop your conversion rates. If your goal is for people to buy a certain product, send them to a page devoted to that product. If you want them to download a brochure, send them right to where they can do that immediately. The important thing is that the page your reader lands on by clicking on your Call-to-Action seamlessly continues the sales process the email began.

- **Things to Avoid at All Costs in Your Email Campaigns:**

- *Irrelevant content*
- *Broken links*
- *Generic landing pages*
- *Bad writing and too much text*
- *Cluttered design*
- *Overly-frequent contacts*

After you've sent a few campaigns you'll want to analyze the statistics supplied by your email campaign provider. See who's opening and responding to what. You may want to test some different variables such as headlines, subject lines (very important), offers and Calls-to-Action to see if you can boost response rates.

Overall, email campaigns and newsletters are great, low-cost ways to promote your business and grow your sales. Just remember to take the time and care to do it right and you'll see your subscriber list grow.

## IV Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Don't Leave Home Without Them

These two concepts have become unbelievably important for companies today. I was originally going to put this topic under the website section as a couple of paragraphs, but, while taking a SEO certification course, I learned that search engines are receiving around 400,000,000 searches per DAY. I decided it needed to have its own chapter in order to get its importance across.

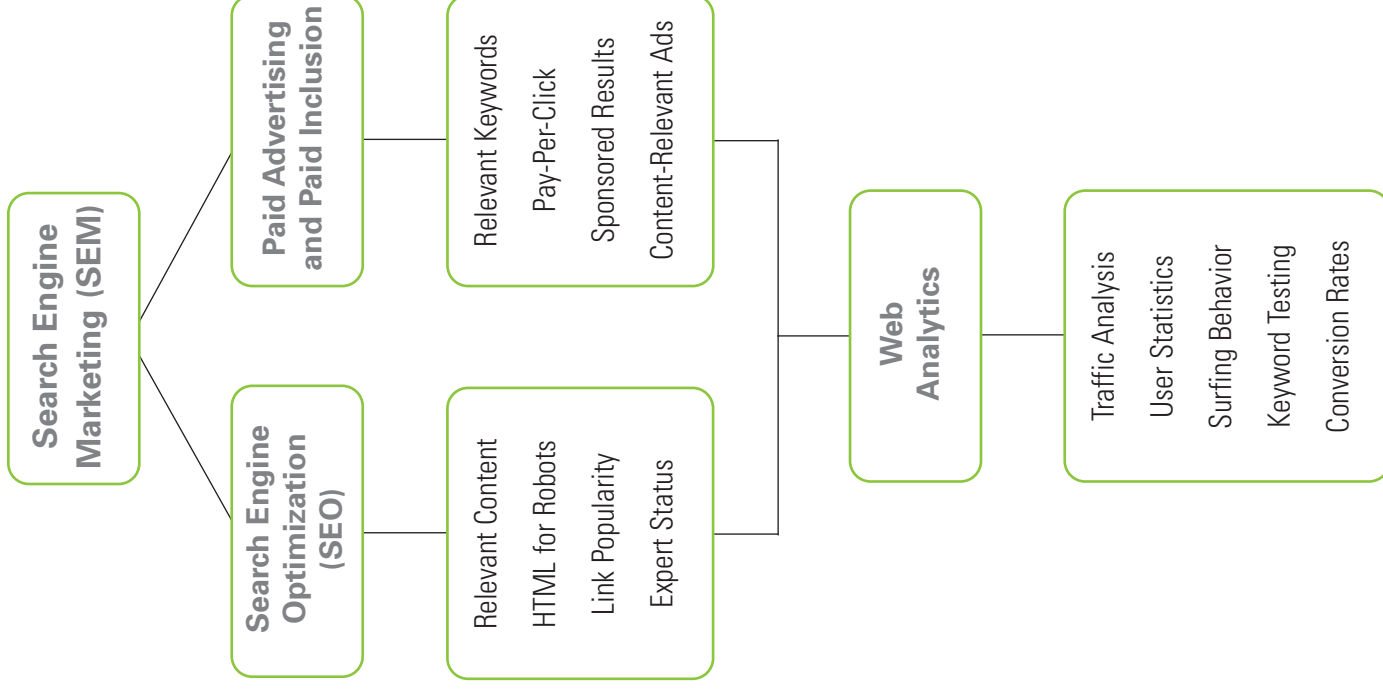
### *Search Engine Marketing (SEM)*

SEM is the practice of setting up and running a successful web presence while gaining maximum **search engine visibility**. Your visibility on the web is made up of two different factors: **organic search engine rankings** and **paid listing and advertising**. Organic rankings are what you get for free. When you publish a website a search engine robot will eventually find it (either by itself or as a result of your paid submission). The robot will "read" your site, analyze its content and add it to the index. Now your site will be found when people use that search engine and query it for some words contained in your pages. Your place on their search results page is your organic search engine rank.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** techniques can be used to raise your ranking in the search engines' organic results. SEO is an ongoing process of designing, writing and coding your website to maximize the chance that it will appear at the top of search engine results pages. The content of your website must include the keywords that your prospects will use to search for your offering. But, they must be used in such a way that the search spider or robot will consider your keyword-focused content as relevant and not as keyword stuffing (see page 16).

### *Pay-for-Performance and Paid Inclusion*

Paid listings are different. You pay the search engine and it guarantees the inclusion of your site in the index. Many search engines also offer advanced pay-for-performance programs like the "sponsored results" that you often see at the top of your results page, and sponsored links or ads next to the organic results (pay-per-click ads). These are all good ways to get your site's link to the top of the search results page.



Most major search engines offer a paid listing option as part of their indexing and ranking system. Paid inclusion is when you pay just to be included in search results. In a Pay-for-Performance advertising program listings are guaranteed to appear in response to particular search terms. You specify the maximum amount you're willing to pay for each click and you only pay when someone clicks on your ad. These Pay-for-Performance or Pay-Per-Click (PPC) listings are usually offered by search engines in an auction format where keywords and phrases are associated with a cost-per-click (CPC) fee. The higher you bid, the higher your position on the search results page will be for those terms. And you can set a maximum budget per day, so you won't get a surprisingly large bill.

Advertising your product or service online is a great way to get your target audience to notice you. The web allows you to be very specific about where your ads will appear and who is likely to see and hopefully respond to them. Once you've optimized your website according to certain keywords and phrases your customers are likely to use to search for you, you can now target advertising to those customers using those same keywords. The best known way to do this is to advertise with Google AdWords.

You can also pay to have your ads appear on content sites that match the interest group you are after. When you create this kind of site-targeted ad in Google AdWords, you choose the exact Google Network content sites where your ad will run and specify the maximum amount you're willing to pay for each thousand page views on that site. You pay whenever someone views your ad, whether the viewer clicks or not.

Web marketers try to use both organic optimization and paid strategies, in the correct amount, to get maximum results.

*For organic listings:*

- Increase the amount of traffic to the site.
- Increase the quality of the traffic by gaining high rankings for those keywords that bring you visitors with the best conversion rate.

*For paid listings:*

- Monitor your keywords to gauge the amount of traffic they are bringing, switching off advertising for under-performers.
- Put resources into the right keywords that have been proven productive.

*Some terms you may want to learn are:*

**Keyword Prominence:** The measure of keyword importance that indicates how close a keyword is to the beginning of the analyzed page area. Prominence is calculated separately for each important page area, e.g. page title, body, etc. As an example for page titles let's look at two.

*Cooks Expo - Kitchen appliances at affordable prices.*  
*Kitchen appliances at affordable prices - CooksExpo.com*

If your keywords are "kitchen appliances" the second title will have 100% prominence because those are the first words that appear in the title.

**Keyword Density or Weight:** A measure of the percentage of keywords to the general number of words on a page. You want high keyword density while maintaining natural readability for your visitors. You will also want to avoid keyword stuffing – artificially inflating the amount of keywords on a page in order to fool a search engine into giving you a high rank. This is now considered spam by the search engines.

**Keyword Frequency:** The number of times a keyword is used in the area of the web page being analyzed. Unlike density, this does not depend on the number of words in that area, it is an absolute index. If you repeat your keyword 5 times your frequency will be 5.

**Keyword Proximity:** Some engines, including Google, measure how close keywords that make up your key phrase are to each other. In other words, if you have a key phrase of "brown spotted horses" Google will give a higher rank to sites that use those words as one phrase instead of separately, as in "Mr. Brown was recently



*Just searching on Google for Search Engine Optimization is proof of its necessity. That one key phrase brings up over 64 million results.*

spotted at an equestrian event where various local breeders were showing their horses." That page would rank much lower for keyword proximity.

**Link Popularity:** The number of links from other high-ranked pages to your site. This has become more and more important to search engine rankings as a way of measuring the quality and relevance of your content. Just like with keyword spamming, getting hundreds of irrelevant links from some companies promising you high rankings is risky business with the search engines. Quality is more important than quantity here.

All this must be done while still assuring that the content sounds natural to your human visitors.

**Web Analytics** is the third SEM strategy you should employ. It involves collecting, analyzing and using information about your site's visitors to increase sales. By analyzing their details, their surfing behavior, the ways they have found your site, the efficiency of your links and advertising, conversion rates and other eCommerce information you can raise conversion rates. Tracking these numbers and putting your resources behind what's working and changing what isn't can produce tremendous results. Many hosting providers offer these traffic analyzing packages as an option for your hosting account. There are also numerous third party providers with robust traffic tracking products available. Any serious web effort must include web analytics to succeed.

It's great to know some of the lingo and techniques involved in Search Engine Marketing and Optimization but, this is just the tip of the iceberg. You may want to hire a professional for the job.

## **V** What is a BLOG and Why Should I Care?

Blogs have begun to reshape the web, impact politics, shake up journalism, and enable millions of people to have a voice and connect with others. And it's just getting started.

*So, what exactly is a blog?*

### **Wikipedia Definition:**

A weblog, which is usually shortened to blog, is a type of website where entries are made much like in a journal or diary, then they are displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food,

politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Most blogs are primarily text based although many focus on photographs, videos or audio. The word blog can also be used as a verb, meaning adding an entry to a blog.

Blog hosting services make it easy to create a blog. All the development is done through the browser, and no software downloads are required. Most large website hosting companies now offer blogs as an add-on option to their hosting plans.

Bloggng for businesses is not only about putting your content on the web, but hearing back from and connecting with your customers. Companies can post their latest content, press releases, announcements, product features, etc. They can also use blogs to get customer's opinions and ideas for bettering their product or service. Think of a blog as an online, interactive newsletter for your company.

Readers of your site from all over the world can give feedback about what you share on your blog. You can choose whether or not you want to allow these comments and you can choose to delete certain posts. You may be afraid of getting negative feedback but it's a great way to find out what your customers really think. If you address negative feedback in a positive, problem-solving manner, you can gain trust and loyalty. This kind of service can differentiate you from your competitors and potential customers may see it as a real plus.

## **Why You Should Consider Hosting a Blog**

The "blogosphere," which is the world of blogs, has become such a forum for public expression that it is being routinely crawled for reactions and opinions about products, politics and issues of all kinds. One big advantage of a blog is that every post is searchable. That means having a blog on your site will influence your site's visibility and ranking. It's another way to increase your link standing for search engines and it will help you to be perceived as an expert in your field.

If you decide to blog, make sure your posts aren't over-promotional. Blogs should provide truly useful information or commentary. They are usually written in a more casual style than standard business-speak and should be authentic, not marketing driven, in order to instill trust in your readers.

Many blog sites offer an RSS feed that provides headlines of their latest entries along with links to the content.

## VI Have you Heard of RSS?

*RSS stands for really simple syndication.*

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### **Wikipedia Definition:**

RSS web feeds provide web content or summaries of web content together with links to the full versions of the content. In addition to facilitating syndication, web feeds allow a website's frequent readers to track updates on the site using an aggregator.

RSS is great for getting breaking news and staying on top of your favorite sites in a matter of minutes without actually having to visit them in your browser. It's like having someone clip all the stories you would find interesting out of newspapers and magazines and hand them to you. How convenient!

It's common to find web feeds on major websites and some smaller ones. Browsers such as Mozilla Firefox, Safari, Opera and Microsoft's Internet Explorer 7 have integrated support for RSS feeds. To read a feed you need to sign up to receive it and have a reader to compile it for you. On web pages, web feeds are typically linked with the word "Subscribe", an orange rectangle, a feed icon, or with the letters XML or RSS. The users' feed reader or aggregator can check a list of feeds on behalf of a user and display any updated articles that it finds.

Some aggregators combine existing web feeds into new feeds, e.g., taking all football related items from several sports feeds and providing a new football feed just for you. There are also search engines for content published via web feeds like Feedster or Blogdigger.

### **Why You should Consider Using RSS**

These news feeds aren't for everyone. They are most effective for companies who have frequent product updates or technical information that customers need to be aware of. These customers can sign up for a feed and get that information almost instantly.

RSS will help avoid the downfalls of email product notifications and ad campaigns such as spam filters and unopened messages. They are also great for content-oriented sites as another way to publish their offerings. One big advantage RSS has over email is its searchability and influence on site visibility and ranking. It's another way to increase your link standing on the web and to position yourself as an expert.

## VII When is a Press Release not just a Press Release?

The internet seems to have changed every aspect of marketing and communications. Even the stale, old press release has been transformed by it. It's become a marketing powerhouse and you should be taking advantage of it.

Press releases used to be written to appeal to the editors of the publications you were praying would run the release. You often had to include third party reviews or independent studies of your product or service in order to get published. The internet has completely changed that scenario.

Now marketing departments and business owners can release their information directly to the public on their own websites. They can also submit them to services that will spread them far and wide over the internet. Even editors and journalists now look to the web first for new stories that they will publish in print or on content-driven websites. Your press release can now focus on pleasing the end reader, not just the editors.

*There are several good reasons for issuing press releases about your company or industry and making it an important part of your marketing strategy:*

- To provide information about your company to interested parties. Be sure to post them to your website, this gives you instant credibility with visitors.
- To provide content for journalists searching for new information about your company or industry. They may choose to write about it, either for a website or print publication. Either way, it's free advertising for you!
- Posting your press releases to your website gives you a source of new content, and this is very important to search engine page ranking. Your release should be in a searchable format, keyword-rich and, even better, contain live links directing people right to your site or offer. That way, when people come across your release in a search, they can go directly to your site for more information.
- Putting these live links directly in the text of your press releases serves another important purpose – raising your link popularity. Your site's page rank in search engines like Google (how deep your site is when someone searches for your category/product) is largely dependent on incoming links to your site. This is called Link Popularity.

All these press releases floating around in cyberspace will be incoming links. People reading your release may put a link to your site on their site as a resource for their readers, giving you more incoming links. This particular aspect of Search Engine Marketing is cheap and very effective in raising your page rank.

### ***So, when should you issue a press release?***

Anytime something of note happens at your company. When you introduce a new product or service, win an award, hire a key new employee, publish a white paper, launch a new website, sponsor a workshop or land a big new client (with their permission). Issue a press release anytime you have something to say that your target audience may find interesting. Be sure to archive your older press releases on your site in a searchable format for as long as the content seems relevant.

Use a journalistic style when writing your release; avoid seeming too promotional. Use keywords and phrases in the title, headlines, subheads and text that people are likely to use as search terms on Google or Yahoo. You can post your releases directly to your site's News section, but you should also consider using some press release services to get the word out. These are some of the most popular services:

PRWeb [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)

MarketWire [www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com)

BusinessWire [www.businesswire.com](http://www.businesswire.com)

PRNewswire [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)

Compare the various services and decide which one will be best for reaching your target audience. Most of these services also offer RSS feeds for your releases. This will make your information available to content-driven sites, blogs and individuals who have interest in your offerings. How can you beat that?

Now that you've taken advantage of the internet services, don't forget the traditional approach. Submit your press release, a one-page company profile and owner/CEO biography to traditional print outlets such as newspapers, relevant magazines and trade journals. They may publish your release or, if you're lucky, write an article about your company.

There's just no downside to trying this tactic. Press releases are a low-cost, high-impact way to gain publicity, link popularity, credibility and expert status. You should consider making them a regular part of your Multi-Marketing Strategy.

## Conclusion

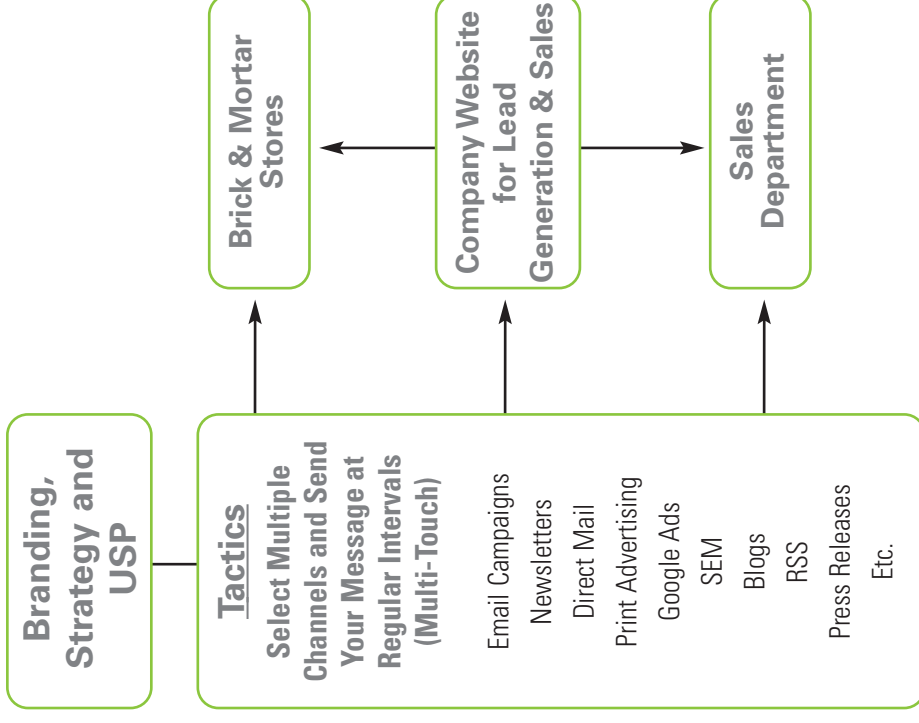
I've learned an enormous amount on this little journey into marketing strategy. After all this research, my humble conclusion is that companies need to move to a **multi-channel, multi-touch marketing** effort founded on a real differentiation from the competition.

The internet allows consumers to search out product and service providers like never before. They will no longer just settle for the supplier nearby, they will search for the best. Pricing has also become transparent. How will you justify charging more than the next guy? You must be different from the next guy, and you must shout it from the rooftops.

A strong, content-driven, search-engine optimized website will be key to your effort's success, but it can't do all the work. You will need to select other appropriate channels to drive traffic to that all-important site in order for this **Multi-Marketing Strategy** to be successful.

I hope this eBook has given you some new information and inspired you to build your company's brand through thoughtful positioning and a great USP. If you take the time to develop a powerful strategy and select some killer tactics to execute it, you will have gotten serious about marketing!

## The Multi-Marketing Approach



# Resources

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## General Business & Marketing Resources:

### Books:

The Brand Gap, Marty Neumeier  
The Purple Cow, Seth Godin  
Rules for Revolutionaries, Guy Kawasaki

### Magazines:

Fast Company  
Entrepreneur

### Websites:

[www.fastcompany.com](http://www.fastcompany.com)  
[www.clickz.com](http://www.clickz.com)  
[www.imediainconnection.com](http://www.imediainconnection.com)  
[www.entrepreneur.com](http://www.entrepreneur.com)  
[www.marketingprofs.com](http://www.marketingprofs.com)  
[www.chiefmarketer.com](http://www.chiefmarketer.com)

## Blog Resources:

### Sites that Index Blogs

[www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com)  
[www.blogdigger.com](http://www.blogdigger.com)  
<http://blogsearch.google.com>

### Blog Service Providers

[www.TypePad.com](http://www.TypePad.com)  
[www.Blogger.com](http://www.Blogger.com)

## Direct Mail Resources:

### Websites:

[www.the-dma.org](http://www.the-dma.org)  
[www.nedma.com](http://www.nedma.com)

## Website Resources:

### Websites:

[www.sitepoint.com](http://www.sitepoint.com)  
[www.lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com)

### Magazines:

Wired Magazine

## Email Marketing Resources:

### Websites:

[www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com)  
[www.sharpecopy.com](http://www.sharpecopy.com)

### Books:

The Copywriter's Handbook:  
A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing Copy That Sells, Robert Bly

## Press Release Resources:

### Websites:

[www.micropersuasion.com](http://www.micropersuasion.com), a PR blog by Steve Rubel  
[www.webinknow.com](http://www.webinknow.com)  
[www.DavidMeermanScott.com](http://www.DavidMeermanScott.com)

### Press Release Service Providers:

PRWeb [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com)  
MarketWire [www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com)  
BusinessWire [www.businesswire.com](http://www.businesswire.com)  
PRNewswire [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)

## RSS Resources:

### Websites:

[www.rss-specifications.com](http://www.rss-specifications.com)  
[www.feedster.com](http://www.feedster.com)  
[www.blogdigger.com](http://www.blogdigger.com)

## Search Engine Marketing Resources:

### Websites:

[www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)  
[www.seochat.com](http://www.seochat.com)  
[www.digitalpoint.com](http://www.digitalpoint.com)

## Piercing Communications

*Branding & Marketing Strategy*



Thank you for requesting this eBook. Your interest is appreciated.

Please let me introduce myself and my company to you.

My name is Ann Fottler-Pierce and I'm the principal of Piercing Communications.

PCom helps small and mid-sized companies create branding and/or marketing strategies for their businesses.

### **Are you interested in making your marketing more effective?**

### **Do you want to improve your marketing to generate higher revenue, greater prospect leads and a higher company valuation?**

PCom creates unique marketing programs and materials for companies who put an importance on using marketing to grow their business.

PCom's strategic process is designed to maximize return on your marketing plan by combining proven tactics, techniques and trade secrets for a powerful marketing system. We provide consulting, marketing direction and creative design all in one complete package.

PCom works with a diverse range of business clients in a wide variety of markets and product offerings. The industry experience we have gained over the last 15 years has given us insight into proven marketing tactics and approaches that make almost any company model more successful. PCom provides plan, direction and design for success for the entrepreneurial company.

If you are interested in learning how Piercing Communications can help your business please go to [www.piercingcom.com](http://www.piercingcom.com).

### **Ann Fottler-Pierce**

*Principal/Creative Director – Piercing Communications*

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Tel: 508-801-2353

Fax: 508-946-9000

### **What Clients have to Say About Piercing Communications:**

*I have used Ann Pierce of Piercing Communications for a number of diverse projects from the design of direct mail pieces to web site creation and have always been extremely pleased at the quality of her work, attention to detail and dependability. I consider Ann an extension of my consulting business. She develops an understanding of my clients' business and their target market so that the design work has the proper "look and feel". She communicates well with the client and can manage the project from beginning to end while staying within the original budget.*

*Ann is a very talented designer and I would highly recommend her for any graphic design assignment at any level.*

**Joe Costantino**

*President, Business Marketing Success, Inc.*

*Working with Piercing Communications was a positive and painless experience. Ann really keyed in to what we needed and came up with a wonderful design. She was easy to work with and readily accepted my input. The final product is something I am proud to be associated with.*

**Barbara Augello, M.S.,EMTB**

*President, Health Ed of New England  
Exceptional Training in CPR/AED and First Aid*