

MARKETING FOR FREE ON THE INTERNET

INTRODUCTION

No matter what type of Internet business you have, you need to be promoting it at all times. If you don't make the effort to tell the right people about it (i.e. those people who are going to be interested in buying whatever it is you have to sell) then your business is not going to be seeing the number of sales it could be seeing.

And in the worst case scenario, you might lose your business altogether.

The problem is that marketing is expensive. Every advert costs money, and you could easily spend at least several hundred dollars on an advertising campaign if you aren't too careful.

Or then again, perhaps not.

You see, despite what other people might say you don't HAVE to spend a fortune on your marketing efforts. In fact, if your budget is tiny or you are just starting out, you don't have to spend a single cent if you don't want to.

It's true – sometimes the best things in life really are free. And marketing your business online can be one of them. So let's find out how it's done, shall we?

WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH?

Before you start marketing your Internet businesses in the ways we are going to discuss, you need to think about who your audience is. There are lots of ways to market your business for free, but depending on your audience you may not need to use all of them.

For example, if you have a product that is aimed at retired people, the chances are you won't find too many of them on social networking sites. Always know exactly who you are trying to reach from the outset; that way you won't waste any time using methods that aren't going to give you a good enough return.

In other words, a small amount of time spent figuring out who you are looking for and where you are likely to find

them will pay huge dividends later on. So with that said, let's move on to the next step you need to think about.

PUTTING A PLAN TOGETHER

When an Internet marketer is investing money in a marketing campaign, they tend to put a lot of effort into it. After all, they want to be sure they are going to see a good return on their investment.

But when it comes to marketing a business online for free, some people just don't put enough effort into it. It's understandable – after all, you aren't putting any cash on the line so it doesn't really matter if you do something and it doesn't work. It also doesn't matter if you forget to do something or you skip a stage when you are too busy with other things.

But you need to think differently. You need to take the same professional approach to a free marketing campaign as you would if it was going to cost you \$10,000. Not only will

you learn a lot by doing this, but your business will thank you for it too.

So start having a think about what you are aiming to achieve with your free marketing efforts. Start thinking about how you could develop your business in this way. And as you read through the rest of this report, you will soon find yourself starting to come up with fresh ideas and plans that could make you a decent amount of money in the weeks and months to come.

USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES

It's not supposed to be done, and if you read the conditions of using most of these sites you will see that they frown on the idea of businesses using them for their own ends.

But they are free (for the most part, at least, and certainly for our purposes) and they are easily able to accommodate people who have an interest in a specific subject and want to share that with like minded people.

So for example, you might have a website that regularly sells USB gadgets. And of course you would be fascinated by all the different USB gadgets that are on the market, wouldn't you? So why not share your thoughts and knowledge with all the other people out there who like the same thing and have a growing selection of them themselves?

You will be able to have a link to your website on most social networking sites – in fact they usually have a specific place where they ask you to type in the URL if you have one! That's fine by them – but what they don't like is blatant advertising.

But you aren't going to do that. All you are going to do is share your fascinations and interests with people. They will naturally follow you onto your website anyway, so you won't even need to try and sell to them.

Can you see how effective these social networking sites can be for finding potential new customers? Lots of businesses do this and it doesn't cost you anything to get it started. You do need to invest some time in it to get the best results though, and this is where planning ahead really helps.

Remember what I said just now about planning your free marketing efforts? This is exactly what I am talking about. You can put in just a few minutes a day on this, so we're not talking about taking on a full time task here. But you need to be doing this regularly so that people will come to realize you are around on a regular basis. When they realize this they will be more likely to follow you and what you have to say – and that can be a very important step towards turning them into a future customer.

WHAT KIND OF SITE ARE YOUR POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS GOING TO FREQUENT?

This is another example of why it is worth spending that little bit more time thinking about how you are going to proceed with your free marketing plans. Ask yourself this question. When you think about social networking sites, what is the first one that comes to mind?

Now unless you already happen to be using another one, I can virtually guarantee that your answer will be either Twitter or Facebook. That's understandable, because these are the main two contenders that everyone knows about.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that they will be the ones that are ideal for finding the people you are looking for. So investigate ALL the possibilities before diving in, and don't spread yourself too thinly either. You are always going to be better off concentrating on using just one or two sites and really making a mark there, at least to begin with.

WHATEVER YOU DO, MAKE SURE YOU'RE TWITTERING...

You only have 140 characters in which to communicate with anyone reading your page, so you have to be brief. That's why it is so easy to fit into your day, no matter how busy you are.

Just launched another new gadget? Tell everyone on Twitter about it. Just added a new page of products to your website? Make sure everyone knows.

You can see the possibilities here, and once again if you put a little regular effort in and tweet your updates every day or so, you will get a merry band of followers who will also check out your website to see what else you are up to. Job done, and no cost involved. Perfect.

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK, I'LL SCRATCH YOURS

This is another free technique you can use to help you enhance your marketing efforts. A lot of people simply overlook this one, because it is not perhaps one of the most obvious ways to go about things, and it does take a little more work. It also relies on making connections with other marketers online, and some people don't appear to like doing this.

But don't knock it! A lot of associations with other marketers can really help advance both your and their business in the long run. So look at this as a long term venture that will help you to promote your business for free AND find a whole new audience in the process.

How does this work? Well, there are a number of ways you can do it, but basically the idea is that you exchange services with another person who is in a similar business to you.

Now I know you are thinking that means talking to your competition, but if you do it right they could become a valuable ally instead. Let's check out the various ways you can make this happen.

GUEST BLOGGING

If you have a blog that you use to help you promote your business and find new customers, see how many other marketers you can find in the same business who also have one. Make sure you pick those whose blogs are of a standard that is at least equal to yours – one that you would be happy to see one of your own blog posts on.

The thing is, as you know yourself, writing a blog constantly can be tricky at times. You may run out of ideas here and there. You may struggle from time to time to keep it looking and feeling fresh.

So wouldn't it be nice to get an injection of knowledge and advice that is somewhat different to your usual mix? And who better to ask for such an insight than a fellow marketer

in the same arena to the one you are making your money in?

What you need to do is approach them and ask them whether they would be willing to write a guest blog post for your blog. Make sure you confirm that in return you would write one for their blog, and you could both link back to your own websites at the foot of the post.

This gets both of you free publicity for your businesses; and of course it also means you can tap into an established audience that won't be exactly the same as the one you already promote to. Let's suppose for example that you both have a visitor rate of, say, five thousand people a day to your blogs. That's 35,000 a week. Now there is no way that you are both going to be reaching the exact same five thousand people every day. So there is a chance that you could as much as double your reach just by writing a blog post for someone else.

And of course, you don't only expand your connections to other marketers online and open up the possibility of more free marketing chances later on down the line. You can also write for each other's blogs once a week or once a month if you wish. This turns a one off freebie into an ongoing event

that really builds up your marketing efforts and doesn't cost a cent in the process.

EXCHANGING ARTICLES

This is basically the same as the blogging opportunity. Some websites have room for articles on topics that are related to the main subject matter. This may not be a regular item like a blog post would be, but you can still approach the site owner with a similar proposal.

And of course the articles would remain on the site for the foreseeable future too. This means that half an hour spent writing a 500 word piece to go on a website would get you a steady stream of traffic for the foreseeable future as well.

EXCHANGING LINKS

If you're not that keen or confident about your writing skills, don't worry. You can still approach other people with similar websites or blogs and ask them if they would be prepared to enter into a link exchange agreement with you.

You provide a link back to their website (together with a one or two sentence review or description about it) and in return they do the same for you. If you do this with several other websites and/or companies, you can create a recommended links page on your own site which contains all these recommendations.

This has a couple of advantages. Firstly you will increase the number of places that could lead to your site being found by new visitors. But secondly and most importantly, quality links which lead back to your own website will help your search engine rankings.

If you are struggling to rank highly in the search engines, this will definitely be of use to you. And a better search engine ranking will of course lead to more visitors and hopefully more sales. And all this happens because you asked for a few reciprocal links – all completely free of charge.

Who said that anything worth getting was worth paying for? As you can see, it doesn't always ring true when it comes to Internet marketing.

CREATE A PRESENCE ON HUBPAGES

With Hubpages you may think of each separate hub as being more like an article. Check out the different hubs that are already on the site and you will see what I mean.

You cannot add your website address to each hub however; just make sure you don't tout for sales or really promote your business in any heavy way.

So how would you go about creating free traffic streams to your website on this site?

Well, the best thing to do is to think about the different aspects of your business. So for example, think about those USB gadgets. You could write about all the different people who buy them. You could write a separate article about each one (something along the lines of 'Why buy a USB massager?' perhaps). You could even write about unusual stories or incidents that have occurred as a result of owning a USB gadget.

And here's an idea – how about creating some USB gadget ideas of your own? That one would no doubt tap into just the right audience, and you may win a few extra fans along the way if you pick hilarious ideas!

You could soon have plenty of hubs up and running – and the more you have, the more chance there is of someone finding them... and you... and your business, as a result.

START WRITING ARTICLES FOR THE FREE DIRECTORIES

Any Internet marketer worth their salt will have heard of Ezine Articles. But this isn't the only article directory out there and if you devote some time to writing a few articles about various aspects of your line of work, then you can submit them to the directories on a regular basis.

Once again this does take work, but you will have an ever increasing number of links out there that are going back to your website. What's more, each article represents a chance

to get someone else interested in what your business is all about.

The same rule which applies to Hubpages applies here too though. Make sure you don't promote your business at all while you are writing your article. There is plenty of opportunity for that afterwards, when you are giving people the link to your website. That bit happens at the foot of the article, and you only need to check out some of the thousands of other articles that are on these sites to see how it is done.

SEEKING OUT OTHER METHODS

There is no doubt that the above methods will get your free online marketing campaign off to a roaring start.

But there are other things that you can do to promote your website or business, so make sure you don't just stick to these. We're going to take a look at a few of these other methods now... before looking at a few things you may have considered that aren't always such a good idea.

One of the methods I haven't mentioned yet is advertised via classified ads. There are plenty of websites online that allow you to publish a simple lineage ad free of charge. Most of them are split into categories so you are able to put your own ad in just the right place.

The only problem with some classified ad sites is that you don't have any real idea of how well your efforts are doing. One way to combat this is by setting up a special web page on your website (so it won't cost you any money) and directing all readers of that particular advert to that web page. That way you'll know whether the ad is working or not.

Another good method that can help you is to write the occasional press release that you can have distributed free of charge. You won't be able to do this all the time, but whenever you have a new product to sell or something new to tell your visitors, then a press release can get you that extra bit of attention and another stream of visitors.

If you go via this route simply search for free press release companies in the search engines. Most of them will also

happily supply you with information and advice on how to write a release that will actually be read by other people.

A third method that helps your website to be seen more readily is simply to submit your site to as many search engines as you can. It is a little time consuming but it might mean your website gets listed and seen sooner than it would be otherwise. This really applies more to new sites rather than old ones that have already been around for a while.

THINGS TO AVOID

You might be tempted to try any number of free ways to get more attention and more traffic to your website. That's understandable – after all you want to make sure that your website is seen by the right target audience.

But don't let that tempt you into trying anything and everything without considering the consequences first.

For example, link farms are a definite no no. They basically exist just to provide links to peoples' websites, and Google

has taken to frowning on them as a result. That means you won't get any benefit from being listed with any of these link farms, and you might actually do your website some damage as well, as far as its reputation is concerned.

Another method that a lot of new Internet marketers do involves traffic exchanges. Now I am not dismissing these entirely, but you need to know exactly why you are using them if you want to go down this route.

A lot of people put their website home page address on there and surf for hours to get credits. These credits are then turned into visitors to your own website. But how many of those visitors have any interest in what you are showing them? In truth, the only reason they are looking at your website is because they want to view sites in order to earn credits and get their own websites seen.

Do you see how it works? You might be getting visitors, but they won't be the people you want.

The only people who really use these sites are other Internet marketers. That means that unless you have something that is relevant to that market, you are better off devoting your time to some of the methods I have shown you above.

It can take quite a while earning enough credits to really make a difference to your traffic levels anyway... and once they run out, you are back to square one again, with no traffic at all.

This is very different to the other methods you now know about, such as creating pages on Hubpages, writing articles and press releases, and using those social networking sites. Once you have put these into motion you can reap the rewards from them even when you aren't actively working at developing them any further.

All the methods I have shown you can be targeted to your specific audience. There is no point going for free marketing opportunities online that send your message out to the world at large. You might reach a lot of people – but a lot of those people simply won't be interested in what you have to tell them. So always make sure you evaluate any future free marketing opportunity you come across before you dive in.

IN CONCLUSION

You are now in a position to drive your Internet business forward and reach even more people than you ever thought possible. And the great thing is that you won't have to spend a single cent to do any of it.

All you need to put into this is time and effort. Those lenses won't create themselves, but they will reward you with traffic once you have got them going. The same goes for articles and guest blog posts. All it takes is half an hour here and there and you have something that will send you traffic for the foreseeable future and beyond.

So take some time to think about how you would like to promote your business. Generate some fresh ideas and then go about finding the people who would be interested in hearing about them. Remember that not everything takes a huge (or even small) amount of money to get started.

And good luck!