

Wondering Which Way to Go with Online Marketing? Get Up to Speed in Five Strategic Moves



Good business is about connecting with your customers. The more effectively your organization capitalizes on both push and pull online marketing opportunities, the more likely you will own the customer relationships around which you can build your business.

Looking for the best direction for your sales marketing message? Most marketers agree that the Internet – that interactive conglomeration of multiple media – constitutes the fastest growing and most cost effective marketing communications opportunity today. While there's no single clear-cut path through the worldwide web, there are some specific tactics you can use to drive sales.

Allocate Resources to Align with Buyer Behavior

Because buyer behaviors are changing, the web is providing access to a larger pool of prospects than ever before. The percentage of time that individuals spent watching TV, reading newspapers, reading magazines and listening to radio dropped by five points from 2007-2009, while the percent of Internet time (personal and work) increased substantially.^(1,2) Companies across every industry are responding to this trend by increasing their online marketing budgets. According to the *Fourth Annual Marketing and Media Survey* of more than 5000 agencies and marketers, approximately 75% said they expect their digital marketing budgets to steadily increase through 2014 with nearly 18% indicating that their budgets will *greatly* increase between now and then.⁽³⁾

Control Strategic Assets to Drive Sales

Online spending varies by company, but the most effective includes some combination of search marketing, email campaigns, display advertising and social media. Search marketing, specifically search engine optimization (SEO) as well as paid search listings, continues to lead the pack. According to ComScore, self-proclaimed global leader in measuring the digital world, more than 131 billion searches were conducted worldwide in December 2009, a 46-percent increase from the previous year,⁽⁴⁾ with mobile technology fueling some of the growth.

Email marketing continues to grow as well. Forrester Research indicates that 97% of marketers will be using email marketing in 2010.⁽⁵⁾ This method is particularly useful for ongoing relationship-building that is essential to a strong business-to-business sales and marketing strategy.

Although online display advertising saw a dip in total revenues in 2009, JPMorgan analyst, Imran Khan, is forecasting that it will rebound 10.5 percent to \$8.3 billion in 2010.⁽⁶⁾ Social media continues its meteoric rise, and with collaborative partnerships like Nielsen and Facebook working together to create *BrandLift*, a tool designed to measure the effectiveness of Facebook advertising, marketers will likely gravitate even more toward incorporating social media into their overall strategies.

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Leverage New Media Dynamics

Ironically, with the emergence of such diverse media, marketers are finding that they must concentrate on the basics in order to use *any* online media to fullest advantage. No amount of blogging or tweeting will overcome a lack in the most powerful combination: a solid product, great creative and a strong message. Such fundamentals remain the hallmarks of successful marketing because they work.

Today, more than ever, crystal-clear and target-driven direct communication perseveres across all media, because deliverability has turned to discoverability. According to HubSpot, "Businesses spending 50% or more of their marketing budget on inbound marketing activities *spent 60% less per lead* than businesses spending 50% or more of their marketing budget on outbound channels."⁽⁷⁾ This transition from a push strategy to a pull strategy is great news for b-to-b marketers who are information rich. Today's challenge is not only about the ability to create discoverable messages; it's more about the willingness to engage, react and respond – and effectively driving prospects to your resources.

Layer Tactics for Powerful Marketing Leadership

When it comes to navigating Internet options, a layered tactical approach is a sharp turn in the right direction, particularly for sales and marketing initiatives. Rather than selecting just one medium, a best-practices approach incorporates traditional outbound sales tactics with innovative and stimulating inbound marketing activities.

Clearly, different industries, market conditions and target prospects require different

strategies. For example, Facebook is more advantageous for b-to-c promotion while LinkedIn is a better choice for an extended b-to-b reach.⁽⁷⁾ Specific layering will depend on the availability of resources, inventory of information assets, and a willingness to invest in real interactivity.

Without a compelling call to action or a clear method for interacting, potential clients will quickly turn off whatever message you are trying to deliver. It's critical to find a way to engage them with something that is of interest to them – and that's probably not going to be the features and benefits page on your website. Instead, think outside the box, or better yet, ask them. What do they need to run their business better? What information are they craving? What tools are on their wish list? Address their needs before you try to tell them how wonderful your widget is.

Partner Effectively

It's never too late to make the right strategic move. To jump-start new or expanded interactive marketing, your best bet may be to outsource with a strategic ally that understands both marketing and business-to-business sales – and how to create and capitalize on effective *push/pull* opportunities. After all, if your marketing efforts are not fueling your sales machine, you might as well pull over and hand the keys to your competitor.

1. North American Technographics *Benchmark Survey*, 2007.
2. North American Technographics *Benchmark Survey*, 2009.
3. *Fourth Annual Marketing and Media Survey*, Datran Media, 2010.
4. searchenginewatch.com, *ComScore Reports Global Search Market Growth of 46 Percent in 2009*, January 2010.
5. Forrester Research, *Interactive Marketing Channels to Watch in 2009*, June 2009.
6. Tech Crunch, Erick Schonfeld, *JPMorgan Forecasts A 10.5 Percent Rebound In U.S. Display Advertising in 2010*, January 2010.
7. HubSpot, *The State of Inbound Marketing*, 2010.