

Learning to “Do It Right” on the Internet

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My company provides services to other companies. We do have a website, with a contact page for people to email requests to us. If we get an email a month, that's a lot. How can I start getting people to contact us via the internet?

The internet is a world whose time has come. According to the Pew Charitable Trust, a research group, 70% of American adults use the internet, 91% read or send emails, and use search engines to find information, 78% research a product or service before buying it. These stats are US market only, international numbers add significant volume.

You have to learn to “do it right” on the internet. Marketing on the internet is a process, not an event. It is crucial to have clear objectives for the website. The internet is a world that is robot driven, constantly searching for new content. Rewards go to those people who come to understand how things work in the internet world. Let's get to work.

Attracting users to your website can a powerful tool, given that in any one day 18 million people are specifically doing research prior to purchasing, and 92 million are just out looking. The challenge is helping the right people find you.

Traditional marketing, for most of us, means we design a business card, a brochure, a sell sheet, a proposal package, and then use

them over and over again. In retail businesses, we periodically dress up the storefront window with an attractive display, and then wait for people to walk buy and be drawn in. Many of the early attempts at building on-line brochures took the same approach: build a good looking website, and then leave it out there, hoping people would see what they wanted, and stop in for a further look. Thinking like this in today's internet world would be a big mistake.

As a society, we have been taught that the internet is a source of information. The internet is also relationship driven. People surf the web, to see what's new. People return because they find value, in terms of information that will enrich their lives. Occasionally people pause to conduct a transaction. In the meantime, you need to accommodate the average internet user's thirst for information.

Think of building community. You get rewarded for how connected your website is to the internet community at large, or the subset of the internet community you want to reach. What I mean by that is, the more that people go to your website regularly for information, the more your website becomes a place to go to.

You want to be clear about why people would come to your

website. Ask your best customers to tell you about words and phrases they think of, when thinking of your business. Use this list over and over again in your website. Then monitor who connects with you, to see if this list of phrases is getting you in touch with other people, just like your best customers. If yes, keep going; if no, try again until you get it right.

You have to offer information. Easy to read, easily printable, information rich reports are perfect for the internet. Quick, superficial bullets, like those you might find in a small tri-fold brochure, probably won't satisfy your visitors.

Getting people to engage with offers to get more information is good. Getting users to hit the “favorites” button, and hang onto your website page for a later visit, or forward it to a friend, is a home run. Why? If people come back, and send their friends to you, that builds higher standing in the internet volume game.

You also have to make it easy for your visitors to find what they want. Tolerance for frustration on the internet is close to zero. Ask customers to visit your site and navigate through it. Ask them what else they might have wanted to see. And what they didn't want to see. Sit with them while they go to your website. If they get frustrated – fix the problem.



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Know that the internet is a robot driven world. The robots want to know what's new, what's popular, what's on the frontier. And they never get tired of searching. If you help the robots to find your website repeatedly, through links with other information sources, and by adding information-rich content, your site becomes a destination. More visits turn into even more visits.

Remember, rewards go to those people who understand how things work in the internet world. You have to work at it. Nurture and expand your community of visitors. Give them what they want so they come back again and again. Make it easy for them to engage with you, and do business when they're ready.

Looking for a good book? Try *Advertise, Promote, and Market Your Business or Website, With Little or No Money*, by Bruce C. Brown.

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