

## Engaging customers via your Web site

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My concern is about my Web site. It's just a statement of what we do. No one ever uses it to contact us. How do I fix that?

You could have one or two problems. One is traffic to the Web site, the other is motivating prospects to take action once they get there. In this article we're going to concentrate on the latter, getting prospects to act.

One of the most frustrating things in web marketing, is not knowing who visits your Web site are or how to follow up with them. Making offers on the Web site is one way to get visitors to tell you who they are.

Before you get going on offers, take a good critical look at your Web site.

- Does it represent what your company does?
- Is it an inviting combination of visuals and words?
- When you talk with people who have visited the site, do they pick up on what you've presented on the Web site?
- Is there balance between leaving the visitor curious and looking for more information, and providing enough information to get the visitor back?
- Does it promote your brand?
- Is there contact information on every page?

If you're comfortable with the answers to these questions, keep going. If not, you have some work to do to fix the overall look and feel of the Web site.

Once you're OK with the website overall, it's time to concentrate on getting visitors to engage with you. You want them to tell you who they are. One of the best ways to do that is through offers.

What are offers? Offers are opportunities for Web site visitors to get something they want. Offers need to be visual, compelling and something likely to interest visitors to your site.

The best offers are opportunities for visitors to learn more, get something they might find useful, make a request, make contact, or otherwise engage with your company via the Internet. Get people to engage by offering them something they are likely to find useful.

The best way to find out what might be useful to a prospect is to talk with current clients and prospects. Ask them what they would like to see or get from your company, or what they would have liked to get when they were first checking out your company.

It's also important not to be too subtle with your offers. Each offer needs to be presented in a way that visitors recognize this is an offer. Making offers throughout the Web site, rather than waiting to put them only on the "contact us" page is a good idea.

Come up with three or four different things you want to offer to people on the Web site. Here are some examples that might work:

- Register for a drawing.
- Request a free consultation.
- Get a product sample.
- Talk with clients who have used the product or service.
- Get a white paper on an industry related topic.
- Request research.
- Complete a quiz or profile so the prospect can learn more about themselves.
- Submit a question that the prospect is looking to get answered.

Scatter offers throughout the Web site. Make sure they are visually appealing and have a clearly marked "click here" to submit the request. Allowing people to check off what they want, rather than making them describe their request, is likely to increase response rates.

Now test the offers. Track which ones people click on. Play around. Change one thing at a time, until you find what works.

Concentrate on building traffic to the Web site, so that more people see your offers. That's a whole other topic for another day. Read books and articles about increasing traffic through search engine optimization and Internet ad words.

You can also do a mailing and point people to your Web site. For example:

- Find out the top five reasons why people . . .
- Get inside information on what's happening in the . . . industry
- Look at ways to get what you want, by . . .

Then direct the reader to go to the Web site for more information. One advantage of this approach is it seems less risky to many prospects. A mailing approach has the double advantage of telling you who is responding to print mail, as well as building traffic to the Web site.

All in all, working on creating offers that cause people to respond is a good idea in general. Figuring out how to get prospects to take action is the first step in sales. Learning how to motivate people to move out of their comfort zone, and seek out your company will help you build sales.

Looking for a good book? Try "Web Design and Marketing Solutions for Business Websites," by Kevin Potts.

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