

Technical White Papers



Online Presence

Abstract: The modern era of marketing requires revising old solutions and being creative in the new advertising landscape. A company that begins with a website can venture into social media marketing more prepared to meet the customer's needs.

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Summary

Marketing has changed throughout the ages from a marketer-driven medium to a customer-driven one. Initially, ads were one-way communications using television, radio and print. The advent of the internet and the creation of websites took marketing from a mass endeavor to an individual one. Further, mobile devices and social media allowed customers to communicate directly with business. These relationships allowed new marketers to determine quickly which types of products were most popular thereby increasing sales and reach. Beginning with a website is still the best way to connect with an audience, create marketing campaigns identifying a need, and design specific strategies to meet those needs.

Introduction

Marketing has evolved from the era of simple trade when artisans made goods by hand and exchanged them through barter with other artisans. With the Industrial Revolution, mass production became the primary way to make products. The age of mass production ended in the 1920s when market saturation of goods required that more creative means be employed to sell those goods. This led to the marketing department and marketing company period, which began after World War II and still exists today. Modern-era marketing allowed marketers to be experts and identify the ideal audience, in essence, they set the trends and everyone followed them.

Flash ahead to the post-modern age of marketing - it is defined as “relationship marketing” with the idea that connections lead to customer loyalty and a mutually beneficial alliance. Add internet marketing into the mix and the age of customer relationship management (CRM) systems, keywords, data mining and the following of consumer behavior and buying habits is born. The paradigm shift is called the social/mobile marketing era. This new marketing era requires that the relationship go both ways – from the customer to the business (C2B) and from the business to the customer (B2C) – and is driven by consumers. The relationship allows the customer to opt-in (inbound marketing) to receive valuable content shared by the company.

Social media plays a large part in the new marketing world because it provides the customer immediate access to the company. A customer can view a traditional website to opt-in for content, add comments to a blog, post on a Facebook page or tweet a question on Twitter. Additionally, the company may contact the customer this way as well to identify what products interest them and how they would like to have those products presented.

Marketing in the 21st century requires an ability to review analytics, optimize searches, provide valuable content, produce e-books and white papers with detailed information and also to share videos showing an authentic view of the business or product. Further, marketing requires more interruption (direct marketing) to the flow of information to get the message to the consumer. This takes the form of image or video ads embedded in social media feeds on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and pop-ups when a website is accessed to encourage the customer to join a mailing list.

Background/Problems

Businesses have long relied on word of mouth and foot traffic and more recently, a website to bring in customers. Lately it seems Facebook has taken the place of the traditional website. Though having a Facebook page is important,

as is all social media presences, having an updated website which displays on the front page of a Google search often brings more traffic into the business.

A history of websites for business began in the 1990s with company web pages simply showing information about the business with very few updates. In the 2000s, the new trend of having weblogs – or blogs – became commonplace as free services allowed everyone to make their own sites. These blogs provided changing content as often as the site owner wanted to make the updates. By the late 2000s, blogs were increasingly popular, but used more to convey personal opinions than to reach customers. With the dawn of the mobile age, when the iPhone was released in 2007, it became more important that websites be viewable for a mobile audience. Today, marketers must design websites with valuable, relevant and up-to-the-minute information to satisfy an ever-growing data-consuming audience that looks good and works well regardless of the device used to view them.

The goal now is to use a website to drive traffic, build an audience, to generate and develop those leads into sales, but give the customer more than just a sales pitch. Two tactics that work are:

- **Direct marketing** where markets invite customers to their website for offers, to purchase eBooks or checklists or to have them request white papers and opt in to their email list.
- **Indirect marketing** where sharing photos, blog posts, videos, event invitations and third party information provides a variety of content which can increase the awareness, reach, and engagement of your brand. This has been shown to be more successful because markets are not constantly selling to the same customer base. However, the already established customers can continue to be advocates since they have already proven that they enjoy the marketing content. This type of marketing also prevents customers from having ad fatigue.

Solution

Modern marketing requires a basic media strategy that begins but does not end with a website.

Digital marketing has come of age in the modern era due largely to the use of mobile devices and marketing strategies must adapt quickly to accommodate real-time data. An updated, well-designed website complete with a landing page describing the business, current branding information, and recent blog posts using relevant keywords are the first steps in attracting and keeping customers. Additionally, the website must be optimized to rank well on searches and appear “above the fold” on the front page of search results to capture additional customers.

Websites are the best marketing tool because they allow customers to view details about the business and also allow the business to obtain valuable information from visitors. Email marketing and having the ability to get those addresses from prospective customers increases a business’s return on investment (ROI). For the price of setting up a website, businesses can increase their traffic up to 34%. By creating valuable content and offering a portion of that content for free to customers who request it simply by sharing their email addresses, a business can obtain the most value from this beneficial and lucrative marketing tool. Email marketing (inbound) allows a company to market exclusively to their customers who ask to be, and want to be, informed of updates to specific products. And those same customers appreciate the valuable content provided to them in exchange for sharing their personal information.

One step further in the marketing process is the innovation of subscription services. Traditionally a website remained static once created. Now the website is used as a key marketing tool to attract customers with useful content and appealing to the desire to remain “in the know” for new products and services. A company can now offer those items to those who have opted-in to email lists and newsletters as a subscription.

Conclusion

Though marketing has transformed from the early days of trade, the goal is still to provide goods and services and encourage prospective customers to purchase them. Having a current, mobile- ready website is now the key to selling those products and the means to creating relationships, two-way communications, and optimizing the social media presence of businesses.

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