

ONLINE MARKETING

101

I will boost my conversions...

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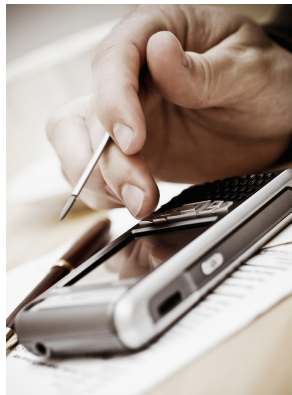


Benchmark
EMAIL

How to Make the Most of Online Marketing

Email marketing grew in tandem with the internet. Resiliency has enabled this old school technique to thrive in spite of spam and stay relevant amidst the many new channels that at one time or another were viewed as a threat to its existence. Still, although arguably the digital medium's most effective marketing tactic, it benefits from a wide variety of supplementary strategies.

As you seek to expand your online presence, you will need to evolve with the market. Peruse any leading journal or survey on the growth of email use, especially since the rise in mobile devices, and you can rest assured that it will remain the



core method of access. But if a business does not build upon this foundation, it runs the risk of being confined to the inbox alone. The web is multidimensional and your online strategy must follow suit. This guide should function as an introduction to the broader methods of advertising and interacting beyond the inbox.

The wealth of options presented by the internet gives the savvy marketer the opportunity to not only explore but also sculpt those opportunities. The following will highlight other forms of media you can branch out to and discuss some of the factors that need to be considered in order to maximize your marketing efforts.

Earned vs. Paid Advertising

When it comes to online business, there are essentially two types of media at the core of a marketing plan: earned and paid advertising. In most cases, these two variations aim to accomplish the same goal of helping the marketer connect with their target audience.

Earned advertising takes more of an organic and natural approach to marketing. It is amassed by the articles you submit to the ezine directories, the posts you publish on your blog, and the expert advice you provide on the Q&A sites. Think of it as all the extra effort you put into creating awareness and engaging your audience. When your advertising is earned, that means you are generating word of mouth by virtue of your professional presence, product, or services.



Paid advertising is represented by all the online marketing efforts you pour the budget into. It is manifested in Google Adwords, the SEO consulting, your Pay-Per-Click, etc. With paid advertising, you are investing money to create awareness and engage your audience.

Both earned and paid advertising are often at the center of a successful [online marketing strategy](#) and both come boasting unique advantages:

Earned

- **Cost Effective** – In most cases, earned advertising doesn't require you to make any financial investments. Here it's all about devoting the time, energy and effort into communicating with your audience and delivering solid content on a consistent basis.
- **Qualified Traffic** – Whether through your efforts in SEO or [social media](#), earned advertising can ensure that you generate highly qualified traffic. This is traffic that consists of visitors who come in pre-engaged with a high level of interest in your offering.
- **Diversity** – Earned advertising can be leveraged in a wide variety of ways. It allows you to execute your marketing strategy through blogging, social networks, online video, and other media that could benefit those efforts.

Paid

- **Greater Reach** – Paid advertising offers the ability to instantly extend your reach to a larger audience. A single advertising campaign could enable you to generate a steady flow of repeat visitors and potential customers.
- **Effective** – In the soundly executed marketing strategy, paid advertising can be highly effective. A mobile marketing campaign that gets you a high number of subscriber conversions for your mailing list is a perfect example of how it can produce excellent results.
- **Deeper Insight** – One of the biggest advantages of paid advertising comes from being able to measure your marketing efforts. Whether it's a simple [email campaign](#) or a more elaborate digital marketing program, you have access to powerful tools that provide calculable insight into your performance.

Dealing with the Drawbacks

Earned and paid advertising also have their downsides that warrant a closer look. Take search advertising, for example. With this paid advertising venture, you have to pay for your ad placement and also devote time to managing it. Fail to optimize your campaign or give it the proper attention and you could end up going over your budget or wasting money on something that doesn't produce desirable results. If you are not careful, paid advertising can quickly become cost prohibitive for your business.



Although generally more cost effective, earned advertising is not without its flaws. Some marketers are struggling to consistently deliver quality content, and few are reaping the rewards that come from the word of mouth marketing that keeps this form of advertising economical. How do you keep cranking out the hits your audience will gobble up? How do you garner attention for a brand that didn't exist a week ago? Which outlets do you choose to spread the word when there are so many options available? These questions represent a few of the many challenges you face when trying to turn earned advertising into a prosperous marketing venture.

Earned and paid advertising both have their advantages and disadvantages. The key to making the most of either is giving the maximum effort and, more importantly, taking a disciplined approach to your marketing strategy. Someone who clicks on a Google advertisement is not guaranteed to immediately make a purchase. The visitor who runs across your interesting blog post will not always become a regular reader. Instead of chasing sales and conversions, focus on an [online marketing strategy](#) that provides value and builds real relationships with your audience. Getting the most from both earned and paid advertising takes a lot of effort, and the harder you work, the greater the reward.

The Truth about SEO

For many businesses, [SEO](#) (Search Engine Optimization) is the most important marketing component of them all. This practice is so effective that it is widely viewed as a marketing strategy no online business can do without. SEO is a proven method that enables content owners to capitalize on the legions of internet users

who rely on search engines like Google, Yahoo!, and Bing to find what they want online. When done correctly, it can improve your rankings in the search engines, which means the potential for more traffic, conversions, and sales is considerably higher.

The effectiveness of SEO cannot be denied, but even this globally adopted practice isn't always what it's cracked up to be. Too little or too much optimization could leave you with the same poor results. If you do not implement the right keywords into your content, your chances of receiving a decent ranking are slim to none. Insert too many keywords, and you run the risk of being penalized for intentionally spamming your page regardless of how genuine your intentions. To add to the complexity, you have Google's algorithm, which seems to change the rules of what is and what is not acceptable every few years. All these variables can make staying on top of SEO a full time gig.



According to the old saying, putting all your eggs in one basket is never a good idea. While SEO is a highly recommended practice that definitely works, it is not the end-all solution to online marketing. As content publishers, we can invest so much effort into appeasing the search engine algorithm that we tend to forget all about the human visitors who play the bigger role in our success. SEO is a powerful weapon, but a well rounded marketing strategy is one that enables a brand to flourish beyond search engine traffic. While Google can give you visitors, it is those visitors who will ultimately decide to give you business.

Enter Social Media Marketing

Marketing and networking have been integrated into the business world long before social media and the internet itself. Of course the digital era has brought these two tactics together under one roof to make integration seamless and convenient. The social web has emerged, and with an audience of billions plugged in, it has become a force no online marketer can afford to ignore. Extended reach, greater awareness, and [viral marketing opportunities](#) are just some of the benefits up for grabs.

There are hundreds of social networks but an obvious few that get more attention than others. Following is an overview of the sites deemed as the most prominent and influential:

Facebook

At one time, it looked as if Myspace would forever dominate the top of the social networking charts. The site that put [social networking](#) on the map was riding high until Facebook seemingly came out of nowhere and seized the number one spot. Facebook is currently the most powerful social network by far, leading the way with more than 600 million members. The platform has evolved to better suit users and brands, providing a way to connect the two through targeted advertisements, apps, and genuine dialogue. Facebook is equipped to support the best of both worlds, giving you the opportunity to bolster your marketing through earned and paid advertising.

Facebook has tremendous potential, but using it effectively as a marketing tool is tougher than you may have imagined. While some are seeing positive results, several more are finding it difficult to make a real impact. Marketers are increasingly learning that this platform is not the Holy Grail for generating direct sales. With [social media marketing](#) and Facebook especially, you must work to build relationships rather than engage in aggressive advertising. This means you may have to devote a considerable amount of time and effort in order to enjoy the fruits of your labor. People must see you as a credible brand they can benefit from before deciding to do business with you.

LinkedIn

The mere size of Facebook qualifies it as a platform that warrants a marketer's attention. However, the focus of LinkedIn makes it potentially an even better option. While Facebook is geared more for consumers, LinkedIn is exclusively designed for companies, entrepreneurs, and other professionals. The LinkedIn network is on the rise, rapidly approaching the milestone of 100 million users and launching major updates on a regular basis to increase its relevance in the social media space. Most people go to Facebook to socialize with friends and family. Everyone goes to LinkedIn to seek out networking, marketing, and recruitment opportunities.

LinkedIn's strong focus on networking and marketing makes leveraging it a bit trickier than other social networks. All of your connections are out to accomplish similar goals. They're seeking opportunities. They don't want to be sold to and tend to be selective about who they connect with. Making the most of LinkedIn is all about knowing who is potentially most valuable to your network and how to communicate amongst your connections. You must resist the easy temptation

of overly promoting yourself and demonstrate value that makes you a worthy professional others want to link up with.

Twitter

Twitter is another social networking platform that allows you to incorporate both earned and paid advertising into your marketing mix. This platform can be very cost effective when considering that it costs nothing at all to engage your audience through simple 140-character communications. Twitter also has paid advertising options with Promoted Tweets, Promoted Trends, and Promoted Accounts. The true beauty of Twitter can be seen in the enhanced functionality that is enabled by a variety of third-party applications and adaptability that makes it easy to integrate into almost any marketing strategy.

While Twitter certainly has its advantages, there is a dark side marketers need to be aware of as well. The service is reputed as a spam haven, which often makes the process of filtering out the meaningless tweets and determining just who is truly valuable to your network a challenge. Twitter is also very addictive, so much so that you may find yourself straying off course and involved in discussions that do not relate to your business objectives. In the world of Twitter, there is a very fine line between socializing with your audience and keeping things professional. Finding the right balance is crucial.

Broadcasting Your Marketing

The YouTube brand has become synonymous with [online video](#). This bustling online video community has captured the imaginations of users as well as businesses large and small. Marketers are flocking to YouTube because it's cheap, SEO-friendly, and already generates tons of traffic. The craze behind this sensation makes it hands down one of the best viral marketing channels available today.

YouTube is a big thing right now. How big? According to online monitoring firm Royal Pingdom, the site currently has 490 million unique visitors per month who generate an astounding 92 billion page views on a monthly basis. This only accounts for the domain at YouTube.com, not all the destinations that enable YouTube content to be viewed on both the conventional and mobile web. YouTube's steady growth offers tremendous reach while its cost effectiveness allows you to keep your video marketing expenses affordable.



Avoiding the Pitfalls of YouTube Marketing



Just like the major social networks, YouTube also has its disadvantages. In fact, these drawbacks are more significant than most other platforms. For starters, you are limited in terms of your ability to manage comments, which can be a time consuming task on its own. The limitations of this platform extend to the content of your post. Your videos are at the mercy of YouTube's policies. And because the site has strict rules regarding marketing content, your videos could be here one day and gone the next.

YouTube can be an effective marketing tool when you know how to avoid the pitfalls. Here are some things you don't want to do:

- **Spam** – The nasty epidemic that infected the inbox has slithered across the entire web. Spam is anathema to everyone, and that includes YouTube users. You don't want to be too aggressive in your communications or create misleading titles that trick users into viewing your content.
- **Post Irrelevant Content** – YouTube is a powerful viral marketing tool, but you can't just throw up anything and expect it to make an impact. Why should people watch your video? Where's the value? How will it benefit them? While a large number of YouTube videos are being viewed over and over, others are sitting there getting little to no play at all.
- **Commit Copyright Infringement** – Infringing on someone's copyrights could get your video pulled from YouTube and result in more serious legal issues. You have to make sure that whatever you post is original in terms of both the video and audio content. Be imaginative about the unique benefits of your brand or solution and maintaining originality shouldn't be a problem.

What's Your Online Marketing Strategy?

Customers and potential subscribers are logging on all the time. Thanks to the growing prevalence of the internet, online marketing is increasingly becoming an integral part of business (and social) marketing operations. As you have learned, there are several options available, each with its own pros and cons, so having a plan and soundly executing it is crucial. Tap into your informational resources, determine which methods are best suited for your marketing efforts, and devise a strategy that enables you to meet your business objectives.

As you build an online presence, you will incorporate the tools needed to gain traction with the prospects you want to convert. Small businesses especially have an exciting new chance to engage the internet's multidimensionality: fostering likes and connections with Facebook and LinkedIn; participating in questions and answers on related forums and business blogs; optimizing for the search crawlers with quality content and vetted strategies; broadcasting yourself; tweeting regularly to tap your perpetually moving subscriber base; and providing your users with customized [HTML email newsletters](#), targeted autoresponders and promotional info and deals.



Choose wisely which areas you invest in and refrain from spreading yourself too thin. Focus on the areas you need the most work in or where you want to plant your stake. And do not be discouraged by the plethora of available channels. Online marketing requires users to be every bit as dynamic as the internet itself. Meet that challenge and your business will not go unnoticed for long.

About Benchmark Email

Take powerful features by the dozen, sophisticated list management, hundreds of email templates, ultra-precise reports and dazzling email and video email. Now, package all that together for an extremely affordable price. Sound appealing? That's us.

There's a reason – or 100 – that more than 73,000 users trust us with their email marketing campaigns. With a second-to-none feature set, headache-free tools that make every campaign a snap and extremely reasonable price plans, we're the email marketing service for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

At Benchmark, we're more than email marketing experts, we're innovators. Our main aim is to perfect our email marketing service, but we also follow social networking, search engine optimization (SEO) and Web 2.0 just so our 100% Web-based software is completely compatible with the ever-changing Internet world.

No other service gives you this robust, standard range of features for just \$9.95 a month to start. Find out for yourself by enrolling in our free, 30 day trial at www.benchmarkemail.com/register.

Contact Benchmark Email

We welcome your feedback and would love to talk with you about your email marketing needs. Please contact us at the addresses below.

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