

Perfecting the Art of Internet Direct Marketing

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The Panel

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Don Lange, Senior Vice President, Cornerstone Group of Companies

This discussion was moderated by Bob Becker, Principal, Software Marketing Associates.

Discussion Summary

Define Internet Direct Marketing – what does it mean to you?

- One mechanism to touch customers and prospects – to expand and allow us to be instantaneously in front of the customer
- Direct mail without postage. Gives more response options to customers and drives them to the web to enhance experience. Can be a personalized and a customized experience.
- Internet is a channel which allows us to cut the overall cost per acquisition.
- Very powerful yet dangerous tool – e-mail lists available do not always address the individual's needs and wants.

Describe some effective components of a past Internet campaign.

- Continually updated the website so repeat visitors would find something new each time they visited –made it compelling. Website became a way to allow the customer to penetrate the vendor and gather information.
- Implemented a variety of marketing techniques: traditional mail, e-mail, banner ads, print ads as part of a “drive to web” strategy.
- Segmented data regularly to understand who is coming to market.
- “Click-throughs” are worth “squat” if they do not translate into sales – responding to visits immediately with e-mails and offers is very effective. In this world of 24/7, you have to respond immediately.
- On a month-to-month basis we evaluated which method was driving the bulk of visits and acquisitions and then concentrated on that method.

- You have to evaluate “screw-ups” and react quickly. Listen to what the customer wants and react to it.

How do you determine when to use Internet direct marketing versus traditional marketing?

- Need to understand how the customer/prospect wants to communicate, then offer a service via the communication vehicle they prefer to use. When to use the Internet versus traditional methods should be determined by the customer.
- Dialogue with customer should be interactive – that will ultimately help you capitalize on this dialogue.
- How you touch the customer and how you optimize the communication can then be applied to future tactics.
- Look at how your own customer base is interacting with you to determine appropriate method to contact prospects. How do you currently handle customer service, look at your internal lists, etc.
- Learn about the particular job function and what they prefer – if they are not there yet, then don't force them to use the Internet. Also, International versus North American marketing is different.

Describe some of the key fundamentals or rules to move people from initial contact to actual lead.

- Understand needs and wants of the different targets in your market – who is the market and what are you selling? That will give you an idea of what method you should be using – Internet vs. Traditional.
- “Respect” the client – you want their trust. Your offer must be secure, compelling, of interest and value added.
- Segment your market into responders and non-responders. Non-responders can be considered “undecided”. Find offers to compel non-responders to respond.
- Offers are very important. Ensure your offer maps to the market pains, the customer and what you're trying to sell.
- Testing offers is crucial – just because you can send something out quickly, doesn't mean you should.
- Sharing information with prospects will help create trust. You have to bring some value to them over a longer period of time.
- Industry is so new – there is unlimited potential. This is the most promising revolution in marketing.