



How to Make an Internet Marketing Plan Work

by Julia Zavileyskaya



In the most recent issue of *Fortune* magazine, the largest article was devoted to Internet advertising. Yahoo!, Google, and MSN have all become an integral part of a large company's business plan. IBM sets aside an enormous budget for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and its web site's return on investment (ROI) is always increasing. How about your company? Do you think about the Internet when preparing your marketing plan?

If you are working in a small or medium-sized business, do you have the budget for TV advertising? Do you have enough money to pay for everyday advertising in *The New York Times*? Most likely you don't. You are probably looking for ways to promote your business and don't want to spend all your money on PR and advertising that won't actually bring you any guaranteed profit.

Let's explore Internet marketing and see if it might work for you.

Internet Marketing is an all-inclusive term for marketing products and/or services online. It's all about Web sites, search engine optimization, content, newsletters, blogs, webinars and so on. All of these marketing tools can be used to attract a prospective customer, to grow your client base, to make sales, and build long-lasting relationships with customers.

I recently heard someone say that professional services don't need Web site optimization. It was as if I had heard a thunderclap. I know definitively that SEO works for professional service companies. 25% of respondents to the MarketingSherpa IT Marketing Benchmark Survey said that both Search Engine Optimization and Online advertising are very effective for them. However, I believe that many companies don't pay enough attention to the benefits Internet marketing can bring them.

Search Engine Optimization

First let's consider search engine optimization and its components. Sometimes marketers think that search engine optimization is only about attaining the top position in particular search engines. But that is not all it is about. Think about SEO in terms of capitalization of your marketing budgets. That's the main difference between SEO and advertising.

Start your SEO with what you currently have on your website. It's not about design, it's about content. SEO will teach you to think specifically. You have to choose one or two important concepts for promoting and work with them. You must learn how to repeat them many times without speaking platitudes. The main secret is that your site has to be created around your two chosen concepts. Oftentimes you need to get creative to execute it in an acceptable way.

Next we'll cover another possible problem: how to explain to the PR department and your top managers why you don't use the whole range of all possible copy instead of the repeated company phrases. It is my belief that you need to think in terms of metrics. Otherwise you'll be bombarded with stockholders' opinions. Think metrics, not opinions.

Backward links

After a Web site has been prepared it's high time to tell the world about it. The more links on other sites directing users back to your site, the better for your marketing and promotional efforts. The more these links are relevant to your subject the better. I know a Web site that has only 60 backward links and at the same time it is ranked first on Google with 30,300,000 sites as competition!

Another reason why you need to build link-to-us or backward link campaigns is to increase traffic to your site. A carefully prepared and planned links campaign can be your save you from relying solely on search engines and can point prospective customers directly to your Web site.

Strengthening

Your organization's website is a capable tool for increasing the strength of your offline activities. A professor and consultant friend of mine told me a story about how people tried to locate her on the Internet after she gave some lectures at New York University. They spent a lot of time trying to find her even though they knew her name! By utilizing Search Engine Optimization and backward links, you can create an easily Googleable Web site, giving potential customers additional information and offering them unlimited opportunities to find and choose your service.

A native of Russia, Julia Zavileyskaya is the Director of Marketing at DataArt. She received her Masters Degree in Fine Arts in 1997 and started her career in IT as head of customer support in Russia's largest and most popular webmail provider, mail.ru. In addition to DataArt she serves as co-Executive Director for RusWIT, WorldWIT's chapter based in St. Petersburg, Russia. She can be reached at juliaz@worldwit.org.