



MARKETING MATTERS



Solving the Riddle of Online Marketing — Guiding Principles

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With the coming of the digital age, most marketers have become familiar with web-based applications. However, most marketers and organizations fail to use online marketing due to their own limitations and misconceptions of what the web and web-based applications have to offer. Solving the riddle of online marketing lies more in the principles and approach taken by the marketer than in the applications themselves. This article shows you the mistakes in approach that pose as barriers to your successful online marketing, and it provides the guiding principles that can turn seeming garbage into gold in your coffers.

Let's face it: while the real objectives of the marketer are to price and to promote, and the web offers tools to the marketer to achieve these ends, the real concerns of online marketing are to attract and to engage. In the rush to attain traditional marketing objectives, the concerns of online marketing are often forgotten, resulting in wasted resources and failed efforts. To attract and to engage is where online marketers should focus their most sincere efforts. Pricing and promoting comes naturally to any marketer, but solving the riddle of attracting and engaging consumers on the web does not. A common mental barrier that persists among marketers regarding online marketing is that they still think of online interactive media in the same terms as that of the static, unilateral, mass-market model of traditional media.

The change that online marketing tools and the Internet bring to the marketplace is the transition of marketing functions from a mass-market model to one that thrives on interactive personalization of services and interactions. Aligning marketing operations and capturing the opportunities offered by this change in paradigms is the key to successful online marketing.

The Three Opportunities of Online Marketing

The three main opportunities of online marketing are:

- Opportunity for cost-effective delivery of information

- Opportunity for building relationships
- Opportunity to use online marketing as a new channel that allows the elimination of intermediaries

Marketers who fail to integrate online marketing with their existing business systems and marketing programs in a manner that will make these opportunities meaningful fail in online marketing.

How to Solve the Riddle of Online Marketing

To cash in on the opportunities of online marketing, one needs to build an approach that revolves around five core elements that are the essential factors of success in online marketing:

1. Attracting users ethically
2. Engaging the interest of the user and enhancing user participation
3. Ensuring the return of a user to the online application and thus retaining the user
4. Learning about user preferences and aligning the marketing model on feedbacks
5. Relating to users through customized interactions

Each of these factors pose multiple issues and challenges to be overcome by the

online marketer in building a successful online marketing model. The prodigious clutter on the Internet ensures that just building your website is not sufficient to draw visitors — finding effective ways to attract them to your website *in a cost-effective manner* is the first challenge.

The second challenge is to engage the visitor who has fortunately deigned to respond to your efforts of attracting visitors. Most online marketing falls short here. Either the content is poor or the application and graphics are confusing or time-consuming. The ways to overcome this challenge lie in the creative programming and valued content.

The third challenge is to retain, and here marketers need to fully recognize that online marketing is not a one-shot wonder, but it requires continuously committed resources. Consumers may visit out of curiosity but will not return unless there is a reason. At the very minimum, this implies continual renewal of content and content categories that clearly imply that they change periodically.

The fourth challenge with successful online marketing is to overcome the challenge of learning about consumer preferences. Interactive media offers unlimited opportunities to learn about the consumer. Judicious use of applications that both attract and engage the consumer need to be created to tackle this problem.



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The fifth challenge with online marketing is in creating value by relating to the consumer. Interactive media provides ample opportunities to relate to the customer, but such opportunities are mostly neglected. Relating requires marketers to break their mental barriers and to consider how to make online marketing an integral part of the business system. To really relate to the

consumer, the marketer must constantly enhance the value proposition placed before the consumer, and this is the only strategy that allows the marketer to earn the right to online relationships.

Online marketing today requires significant and profound changes to the marketing organization. The target is to develop online

marketing systems supported by dedicated experts revolving around the principles that guide successful online marketing and to link online initiatives with the core business in a profitable manner. A lot of developments in online marketing trends today happen outside the organization, and the marketing system has to pick up such developments and align them in order to achieve results.

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