THE A-Z OF INCREASING YOUR ONLINE MARKETING ROI PART I

A - Affiliate Marketing
Merchant products are promoted on 3rd party (affiliate) websites. When visitors click through from the affiliate site to the merchant site and make a purchase then an agreed fee is paid to the affiliate.

If you advertise your products online, affiliate marketing is an efficient way to generate additional business. It is a cost effective form of advertising for merchants, and a simple way for affiliates to earn revenue from their website.

B - Banner Advertising
Banner advertising generally has a low response rate, often yielding about 2 visitors per thousand banner impressions. Despite the relatively poor value of banners for driving traffic, banner advertising can be particular useful in certain circumstances such as raising brand awareness.

C - Categorise
Structuring your site well can be worth its weight in gold, not just to users of your site, but also to search engines. A well structured site in terms of infrastructure (i.e. directory structure, page naming convention) will not only tell your visitor what the page is about quickly, but also provide the search engines with an idea of what the page is about before it is indexed.

D - Differentiation
A unique Marketing Campaign that allows a company and/or its products and services to stand out from its competitors. Having a niche product or service makes the job of marketing your product or service much easier. If your service is not unique, it is often possible to identify a "unique selling point" of your product or service.

Focus on your unique selling points, those products or services that differentiate you from your competitors, and ensure you portray these to your potential customers.

There are many aspects that can make you similar to your competitors, so ensure your unique selling point is clear to your customers. This can make a significant difference between success and failure.

E – E-Mail Marketing
Using e-mail as a means of communicating commercial messages to an audience (Direct Marketing) can be a profitable addition to your marketing strategy.

This could take many forms:

• Targeting your existing client base with additional services or products.
• Targeting your existing client base with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a client with its current or old customers and to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business.
• Targeting your existing client base with the purpose of selling 3rd party products for a fee.
• Purchasing a list of client email addresses for the purpose of marketing your products to a new client audience.
• Adding your advertisements to e-mails sent by other companies to their client base and marketing your products to a new audience.

Direct marketing is popular with companies online as it is:

LOW COST : Compared to direct mailing or printed newsletters the costs are negligible. The advertiser does not need to pay for production, paper, printing or postage.

IMMEDIATE : It is instant, as opposed to a mailed advertisement, an e-mail arrives in a few seconds or minutes.

TRACKABLE : It is easy to track. An advertiser can track hits, conversions and rise in sales. Real-time.

FAR REACHING: Direct marketing can reach substantial numbers of e-mail subscribers who have opted-in (consented) to receive e-mail communications on subjects of interest to them.

F – Focus

Keep it relevant!
There is no point spending hundreds or thousands of pounds on advertising on your site, and then sending a potential customer to a non-related "landing page". There are two scenarios as regards online marketing where this is especially true, namely

• PPC advertising - Send your customers through to a targeted page. Many companies send clients through to the homepage, or worse, a non related page to what the term is. By sending potential customers through to a relevant page, you reduce the number of clicks required to find the product, at the same time reducing the number of exit points, which have the effect of making the money spent on sending the client to the site redundant.

• Affiliate Marketing - These days may clients are using companies such as Tradedoubler and Miva to drive traffic to their site. However, the number of times I have seen companies use the extra functionality such as product feeds that these Affiliate Marketing companies provide, and then under utilise them is staggering. By again targeting the users directly to the product/service they are searching for you are reducing the chances of the customer leaving the site before he/she has even
viewed your product.

G - Gift Vouchers
Gift vouchers can be a good way of influencing users to your site to buy a product/service. Not only can this be a good way of adding conversions, it can increase your customer loyalty as well.

H - High earners vs Low returners
Differentiating what products/services offer the highest return on investment is often one of the best ways of increasing your bottom line, and as a result your return on investment (ROI). This may sound like common sense, however many companies overlook this, and continue offering products or services that never make any positive ROI.

The same applies to search engine marketing as a whole. For example, If you have a pay-per-click campaign, and are using very generic terms, you may find by tweaking the terms, and making these more specific, you decrease the amount you are spending on your PPC campaign, and increase your ROI as a result.

I - Informative
Having a site that is informative, interesting and unique is one of the best ways of keeping visitors coming back to your site, whether they be human or robots. Visitor loyalty is invaluable. This can be achieved via a number of ways whether it be a niche product, well written technical articles, your companies own PR or even just something that is just unique, funny or controversial.

J - Just keep it simple
Over complicating the conversion process is often the biggest barrier to obtaining a successful sale. Many companies place barriers in the way, giving customers more reasons to pull out of a sale before completion, whether it is up-selling, over zealous data capture, or an inaccessible website.

A recent client's buying process involved 10 clicks from site entry to sale completion. By reducing the number of clicks required to complete the sale from 10 to 6, sales increased by 400%. This involved streamlining the buying process, ensuring that the customer completed in as little time as possible.

In the modern era, time is money. Therefore time can be expensive so keep the time required to make a purchase to a minimum.

K - Keywords
Research thoroughly the keywords that your website can realistically be ranked for. If you have a new website in a highly competitive market then ranking naturally for the major terms will be close to impossible, so consider less competitive and more targeted terms.

Higher levels of visitors do not necessarily mean an increase in sales. A more focused set of keywords may mean lower traffic but the quality of the traffic can lead to a better ROI.

L - Landing Pages
This is another asset of search engine marketers that is either over-optimised for search engines or under-utilised for visitors. Both can have a detrimental effect on sales conversions and ultimately your ROI.

If you are using landing pages for any of your online advertising/marketing, it is highly advisable to keep these landing pages tailored to their requirement. You will find that by sending potential customers directly to the area/product they are looking for, you will significantly increase your sales as a result, and ultimately your ROI.

M - Mod Rewrite
A Mod Rewrite engine is a piece of web server software used to modify URLs, for the purpose of making your dynamic URLs more user friendly to customers and search engines.

A rewritten URL is easier to use if it is short but descriptive. The URL should have some text describing the content, but should not be too long.

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