



VIRAL MARKETING - A STUDY OF SUCCESSFUL SITES

Viral marketing is a concept which allows word of mouth advertising to spread your message far and wide without ongoing maintenance and promotion from the originator.

Hotmail is the most famous example I can think of to show you the power of viral marketing.

Everyone who used their free email service would advertise the service at the bottom of the each email they sent out.

The types of advertising messages which grow the fastest are services which advertise themselves when being used...such as the Hotmail example.

Another good example is a service such as <http://Plaxo.com>

This is an online address book. When a user signs up, the service scans the user's address book in the user's email client and emails all those users an invitation to join Plaxo. This is done with the member's permission, of course.

Other services which use this technique of viral marketing are social networking sites such as <http://Myspace.com>

When users sign up for a free account, the first thing they see is a form to invite their friends to the site.

I've deduced a few tips from following high profile and low profile viral marketing campaigns of many types.

First of all, you can provide incentives for someone to spread your advertising for you, such as giving them money but just the incentive of money will not make something truly viral. Often some of the best viral marketing campaigns are purely accidental as you'll discover in a later example.

I don't know if you've ever seen the example of a site called "The Interview With Jesus".

Here's the url: <http://www.interviewwithgod.com>

The story of that site, I think is, the owner took a public domain poem and created a website to host the poem. Word got out and the thing just exploded with traffic from friends sending to friends.

So something that is truly viral will spread on its own even without an incentive attached to it.

Another truly viral example is the story of a New Jersey teenager who created an online video with his webcam. In the video, he lip syncs to a popular Romanian pop song called "Dragostea Din Tei," which translates "Love Among the Linden Trees,".

He sent the video to his friends and it became so viral that he got some television time and his 15 minutes of fame.

To create a truly viral campaign such as the above two examples is not easy but there are ways to boost your viral marketing efforts from studying those examples.

First, it must have mass appeal. The wider the audience, the better. Second, it must advertise itself. Look at the Plaxo and Hotmail examples.

If you study the examples I've provided of viral marketing, you'll find that some require a lot of programming knowledge and others require nothing but an idea that many people enjoy and like to pass around.

If you're aiming to make money from a successful viral marketing campaign then you have many options.

- 1.) Capture email addresses and build a target database of prospects.
- 2.) Place AdSense ads on your site and benefit from the sheer volume of traffic to your site.
- 3.) Promote affiliate products.
- 4.) Sell advertising on your site.
- 5.) Create a product of your own.
- 6.) Take donations.

Even if your site is purely altruistic, you will need extra money to pay for bandwidth charges so the above forms of monetization will come in handy.