Hitting the Bull's-Eye with Online Advertising and Marketing

Online advertising and marketing are crucial components of running a business, one which many professionals miss the target on. In the electronic era we live in, just having a website doesn't provide enough advertising to attract the amount of visitors you would expect.

Using online advertising and marketing is a proven method to increase traffic to your website, and help grow your business at a faster rate. There are many ways to utilize the latest technologies to enhance the effectiveness of your website, and to make your advertising and marketing efforts beneficial.

As you may know, Internet campaign advertising can be expensive, and might not produce the immediate results needed. To get the most out of online advertising and marketing, there are many ways to leverage the Internet and gain free publicity for your organization or business. The following are a few cost-free methods to advertising and marketing online.

Blogs

Categorized as social media, a blog is an online diary of sorts that can be a regular series of commentary, descriptions of events, or even graphics, photos, or videos. With the popularity of blogs rapidly increasing, now is the time to jump on the bandwagon. This doesn't mean you have to blog every day or discuss every eye-opening topic. What it does mean is that you are getting the information out there to be found and linked to by potential clients. Over time, these links will grow, and soon so will your website.

Email Signatures

An email signature is a block of text that is located at the end of an email you send. Don't underestimate the significance of an email signature. Ensure that your email signature includes your contact details and your website details as well. You could even run a promotion through your email signature.
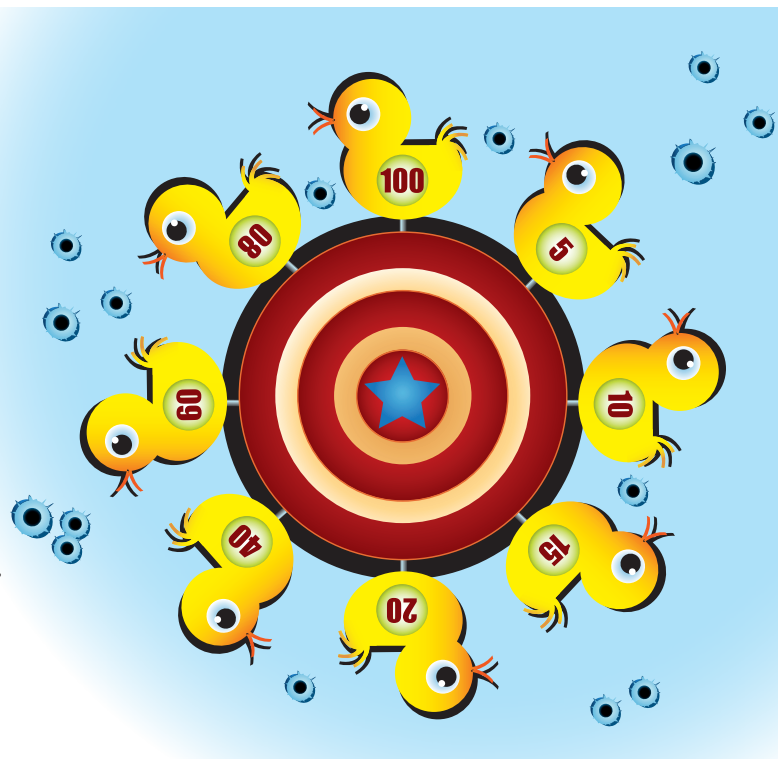
Email Marketing

Email marketing is a form of direct marketing, and is one of the most powerful and effective marketing tools available to businesses today. Even small businesses are tapping into this incredible resource. There are a plethora of reasons to send out an email newsletter, e-vites, or an email marketing campaign. Even though it can be very time consuming, developing a monthly email publication can be an important promotional technique. Whether it is a newsletter or e-zine, a list of tips, industry updates, news, new product information, or any other valuable information your audience will appreciate, this is a very effective way to keep in contact with your prospects. Email marketing can generate trust, develop brand awareness, and build future business. While developing an email marketing campaign (such as a newsletter) may be free, there could possibly be a charge for distribution if you choose to utilize a service besides your basic email. You can distribute your newsletter inexpensively using email marketing services such as:

- iContact
- Constant Contact
- AWeber
- MailChimp

Email marketing is very popular because companies can track an exact return on investment, as well as help collect email addresses from those who visit your site.

Network Socially

Social networking is another form of social media, and is a huge draw on the Internet today. Millions of people around the world use social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, hi5, Orkut, LinkedIn and a number of other like sites. These websites have options to create/join communities or post a link so you can use your profile to publicize your services.

Social media has taken on a life all its own -- no wonder it's been called web 2.0! Social media allows real-time communication with your members and audience, something that your website might not support. Connecting with 'friends' on Facebook is a way to build a target audience, ultimately pulling people back to your website. There are four types of social media you should be well-versed in -- in addition to the blogs and social networking sites mentioned above, there are also social bookmarking sites, and forums.

> ### *Social networking sites have garnered at least half a billion active users.*

Social bookmarking is a way for Internet users to organize, store, manage and search for bookmarks or resources online. With social bookmarking, users save links to web pages they want to remember and share. These bookmarks can be made public or private, and are shared with a specified group or network.

Forums, which are sometimes called message boards, are online discussion sites where people can participate in conversations by posting messages. Forums are different from chat rooms because the conversation is not real time in forums, but archived conversations.

Don't be upset if the distinctions between types of social media tend to blur. Social media helps promote your site by sending direct traffic-producing links to your site, and generating awareness. Social networking sites have garnered at least half a billion active users. Active users are those users that frequent the site on any given day. They put content on their pages quite often and actively use the site's features.

Although many online advertising and marketing efforts may be easy, they are not always free. Even if there is a "no upfront cost", developing a strategy and a campaign take time and often resources. For example, advertising on Google is relatively easy to do, but there are pay-per-click costs involved in doing so. If you want to put more money in your online advertising and marketing efforts, there are many paid ways to do so.

PPC, or Pay-Per-Click, is the number one paid way to increase traffic. Top on the list for PPC is Google AdWords. You set the bid amount for specific targeted keyword phrases in your Pay-Per-Click Management campaign. Choose the best keywords that you think your visitor (searchers/visitors) are using to find you.

This form of Internet marketing is simple. The higher your PPC bid amount, the higher your placement will be in the returned sponsored links results for those PPC keyword phrases.

If your PPC advertising efforts are successful and you are the highest bidder, you will be rewarded with the top listing in the "paid" or "sponsored" listing results, which are usually listed first, above the organic listing results on PPC search engines. Then, every time someone clicks through on your paid link you pay the bid amount you originally set. Basically, if you are willing to pay the top price, you get the top paid listing placement. Using PPC analytics, you can also measure your results and adjust your advertising to improve ad performance.

Advantages of Pay-Per-Click Advertising

- Pay-Per-Click advertising results can be immediate, delivering highly-targeted, motivated traffic. You will get qualified visitors who are actively looking for the products or service you have to offer.
- You can target your PPC advertising campaign to reach niche markets for local PPC advertising or to target specific countries and locations.
- You control all aspects of your PPC advertising management campaign.
- Using PPC analytics you can easily measure your Pay-Per-Click advertising campaign results to determine what is working and what is not.

Drawbacks of Pay-Per-Click Advertising

Unlike search engine optimization services where top listings in the organic search results can attain some longevity, there are several main drawbacks associated with PPC bid management and PPC advertising campaigns in general:

- Pay-Per-Click advertising results are temporary and last only as long as you are willing to pay the bid amounts.

- Pay-Per-Click advertising bids can become quite expensive especially if you get into a bidding war with a competitor.

- Your targeted traffic stops the moment you stop paying the PPC advertising bid amounts, either by halting the PPC advertising campaign or when your targeted keyword phrases are priced beyond your PPC campaign budget.

With all the many types of online advertising and marketing available today, it is your decision what to use, what to pay for, and how to use it. If you are considering hiring a professional to manage the online advertising and marketing portion of your organization or business, keep in mind the phrase "you get what you pay for." Professionals will give you the expertise that might otherwise take years to master. Many of the do-it-yourself items can reap great results, but in most cases there is coding knowledge involved, as well as an understanding of keywords. Take for example, keywords; you can add numerous amounts of keywords to your website to increase your ranking and exposure on Google; however, using too many keywords may cause you to loose ranking, in what experts call the spamming search engine rule. Even worse, you could get your website blacklisted all together. A professional will know where to place keywords to get the biggest bang for your buck.

Increasing traffic can take some time, but hitting the mark with the right strategy, tools, and expertise, you are nearly guaranteed to see increased traffic. However, don't let increased traffic be your only source for measuring success. Finding and serving your target audience is even more important than a simple increase in website visits. ☼

For more information on how to use online advertising and marketing to drive traffic to your organization's website, or for assistance with setting up a website for your organization, please call 800.807.0200 or visit cbprograms.com.

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With the right strategy, tools, and expertise, you are nearly guaranteed to see increased traffic to your website.
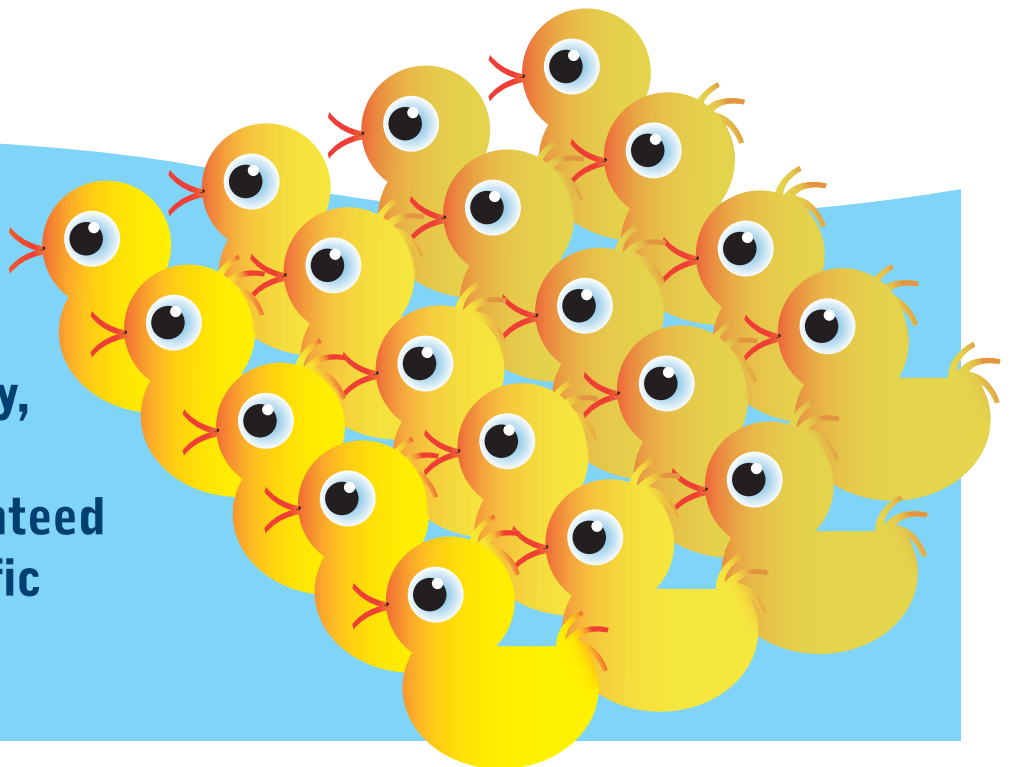
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