



25 Tips to Create an eStrategy

Forward

“But 90% of established small businesses still market like it was 10 years ago.”

A few years ago, we felt a seismic shift in the way that growing businesses were being marketed.

So much of what worked in the past, including print ads, direct mail, trade shows and catalogs just weren't having the same effect anymore – yet costs were continuing to skyrocket.

You probably already know this.

But 90% of established small businesses still market like it was 10 years ago.

Why?

We believe it's because the new world of Internet Marketing and Social Media can be daunting, especially for business owners who don't have enough hours in a day as it is. Social media has exploded in the last two years. But, many small business owners can't imagine how their business could benefit from social media. After all, isn't Facebook and Twitter for the kids?

We know. As successful entrepreneurs, we were in the same place two years ago. That's why we decided to write this eBook.

This eBook is dedicated to the legion of business owners who want to be part of the 10% of businesses fully engaged in eStrategy, but don't quite know how.

Enjoy it, share it, and if you learn from it, subscribe to our blog.

Welcome to the first step of a brave new world!

John Peretz
Partner, Thrust Internet Sales
John@ThrustInternet.com

Rob Newton
Partner, Thrust Internet Sales
Rob@ThrustInternet.com





Tip #1: Your web site cannot be a static brochure. That's old school.



*The most effective websites
are dynamic, growing sites...*



Most businesses have a web site that acts like a brochure. It looks nice but it hardly ever changes.

The most effective web sites are dynamic, growing sites that have specific pages tied to keywords that match the way different people search online.

Each page has the appropriate meta data, complete with unique page titles, page descriptions, meta tags and keyword integration.

They also provide a myriad of ways to interact with their visitors, through blogs, eNewsletters, eBooks and more.

Fresh content and pages are being continually added, and customer visits are tracked and analyzed.

Why go through all this trouble? Because in order to rank better in Google and other search engines, you need great content, lots of quality links, and a larger, focused site.

Creating a blog and a series of eBooks helps create fresh, new content. Great content also encourages others to link to you, a major factor in the Google ranking algorithm.

Statistically speaking, a 50-page web site will almost always outperform a 10-page web site. A 100-page web site will outperform a 50-page site, etc.

Building a web site used to be a great mystery to many business owners, who usually times hired the local technology geek and never had access to computer code.

Today, there are several very affordable Content Management Systems (CMS) that allow you to work with keywords, meta data, content and images without having to go through your computer folks. All you need is Internet access and a commitment to making your web site better.

You can, and should have a better web site. Turn it from a brochure into a dynamic, growing web site, and watch your page ranks soar!



Tip #2: Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing.

“Focusing on Inbound Marketing instead of Outbound Marketing dramatically improves your R.O.I....”



There's a huge shift that is taking place with fast-growing, savvy companies. It's the move away from outbound marketing to a more customer-focused inbound marketing eStrategy.

Outbound marketing includes many traditional, expensive forms of intrusive marketing. Direct mail, print ads, radio, television and trade shows are prime examples.

Today's inbound marketing focuses around online search and new online referral sources. Because it is focused on when a prospect is looking for your product or service, not the other way around, it tends to be much more affordable and cost effective.

Think of the way you use the Internet. The average consumer performs dozens of online searches every day. They're looking for specific information, and they want quality answers.

What if you could develop content based on that exact moment when someone is looking for your product or service. Wouldn't that make them a better prospect as well?

By having a dynamic web site and integrating important search keywords on specific pages, prospects can find you when they're ready to buy.

Today's Inbound Marketing eStrategies focus on creating quality content, with many ways for prospects to find you. Think of blogs, online articles, quality web site content, social media involvement (like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), public relations, eNewsletters, email, and more.

Focusing on Inbound Marketing instead of Outbound Marketing dramatically improves your R.O.I. and conversion rates, saving you money and making your company a much more relevant player in today's digital world.



Tip #3: Every brand can and should be social.

"You need to be part of the conversation."



Whether you are a part of small, medium or large business or even an individual entrepreneur, your customers are using social media and chances are they talking about your brand. You need to be part of the conversation.

Many people have concerns about how their company fits into social media. "We make ball bearings. How are we going to talk about that in social media?" Guess what? For the most part you are not. The worst social media programs treat their social media pages like a yellow pages ad and drum on about how they make the best widgets in the world. This makes it difficult to engage anyone.

To make social media work for your company, find ONE THING in your company that is unique and interesting. It might be your outstanding customer service program or maybe the way your customers use your product. Take a look at Fiskars for example. They make scissors, but within social media they focus on crafts and scrapbooks. If necessary, seek input from your salespeople, your customer service staff and even some of your valued customers. Find that ONE THING.

Like any project you've got to get started somewhere. The best way to get your feet wet is to set up your pages on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Then, start out by just listening and observing. Follow your competitors, and some of the top experts in your industry. Search LinkedIn and Facebook for groups that you might want to join.

Once you have become comfortable, begin to engage in some conversations and you will learn more about social media and how your products or services fit in.

Then, begin to develop your Social Media Marketing Plan.



Tip #4: DANGER! Social Media can be hazardous to your business.



... you do need to take responsibility to make reasonably fast responses to your customers and loyal followers.



Facebook can be a very valuable business tool, but it can do more harm than good if not used properly. The single biggest mistake that we see small to medium sized businesses make, is putting up a page without first establishing a clear objective and assigning specific responsibilities within their company.

Social media is by its design “social”, and meant to be interactive. Facebook for example, is not a place to put up a static “brochure”. Do not underestimate the time and effort needed to be successful in social media. If a customer posts a question or comment to your site and it goes unanswered for three days, you are doing more harm than good.

The online world we live in today requires fast response times. The world has become accustomed to instant gratification. We expect our emails to be immediately responded to. We'd like our Skype call to be answered. What do you mean you're not online to reply to my IM or my Tweet?

We're not saying that you have to monitor your pages every minute of the day, but you do need to take responsibility to make reasonably fast responses to your customers and loyal followers. Remember to be considerate of your followers and deliver timely and valuable content and responses. Be consistent and you will be rewarded.

Social media is a tremendous and exciting opportunity, especially for small businesses. But, make sure you have a well thought out plan and the resources needed to execute it before you jump in.

Woody Allen once said, “eighty percent of success is just showing up”. If you can't commit to showing up, don't get in the game.



Tip #5: Your e-Marketing Strategy evolves around keywords. Lots of them. Like 300.

"You'll go a lot further in optimizing your strategy with more keywords."



Most people know what keywords are. They're the words that you try and integrate into your web site, pay-per-click (PPC) program (Adwords) and other marketing efforts.

But how many keywords should you have?

Most small companies have anywhere from 5-50 keywords.

But did you know that keywords best practices suggest a minimum of 300 keywords, and many larger companies have literally thousands?

Why? There are three big reasons.

First, people search for things differently online. The way that you and I search for things may be different. You may say "online marketing tools" while someone else may say "web site marketing tools", etc.

Second, your content on each page of your web site should be closely aligned to specific keyword groups. Learn the difference between "broad search", "phrase match" and "exact match."

Third, there are big benefits towards having "long tail keywords". Long tail keywords are phrase types that are generally 3, 4 or 5 words long. Often times a word like "Internet Marketing" has lots of competition and becomes very hard to rank for. However, a key word that says "Denver Internet Marketing Companies" may have less traffic but a more qualified buyer.

So, how many keywords should you have? Only you can answer that, but keep in mind that if your web site is growing (and we suggest that it should), take the time to build better content and landing pages (more about this later) that tie into specific keyword groups. You'll go a lot further in optimizing your eStrategy with more keywords.



Tip #6: Start a blog this week.



Blogging helps create an incredible amount of content.



Starting a blog is one of the most critical things you can do for Inbound Marketing and your eStrategy.

Blogging helps create an incredible amount of content, and you can build a great following over time that is perfect for your business niche.

Blogging and participating in blogs can seem daunting, but it shouldn't be. Here are some tips to help you be better blogger:

- Come up with a good blog title
- Work your keywords into your blog for strong S.E.O. opportunities
- Look at your blog as an excellent way to generate traction for your long tail keywords (keywords that are 4, 5 and 6 words long)
- Imbed photos, logos and videos into your blog whenever possible
- Develop a list of 25-50 blog topics so you're not always scratching your head for blog ideas, especially when you get busy
- Your blog articles should be just 200-400 words.
- Break up longer blog ideas into several blogs
- Use bullet points and lists. People scan until they find what they like
- Blog a minimum of 2 to 3 times a week
- Share the company blog responsibility with other employees, or even consider outsourcing the function (but don't outsource a personal blog)
- Analyze your results. See how your keyword ranking improves over time

If you blog consistently, you can build a lot of new indexed pages about your company and category. Two blogs a week will generate over 100 pages of new content a year, and 3 blogs a week will build even more.

A well-written blog that uses the right headings and keywords can have a significant effect on your search engine optimization (S.E.O.) efforts.



Tip #7: Facebook is not just for friends.

“By 2010, Facebook grew to over 350 million users.”



Facebook is currently the dominant social networking site. Although Facebook started as a web site for students, it has grown well beyond that and is now a highly effective business tool. It's important for marketing, customer service and connecting with your customers and prospects.

Facebook's fastest growing segment has been users over age 35 and recent reports indicate that the 35 to 50 age group has become bigger than the 18 to 24 age group.

Why is Facebook so important? Quite simply – reach. By 2010, Facebook grew to over 400 million users. Growth in the last half of 2009 was astronomical; over 500,000 new users per day!

Take a look at few great pages on Facebook like, Levi's, Victoria Secret, and Sony, to get an idea of the presence and the design that top brands have.

Consider these points and how they can positively impact your bottom line:

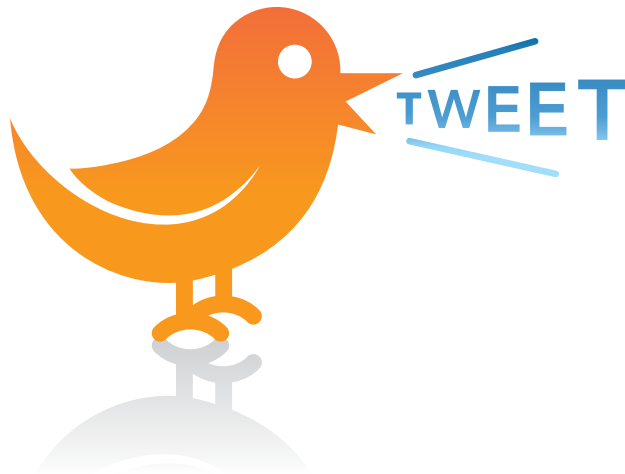
- Facebook provides the opportunity to build, nurture and strengthen relationships with your prospects and clients.
- Your customers consume content differently today. Facebook makes it easier for you to share content, reach interested buyers and build trust.
- Facebook, used properly, helps establish you as an authority in your field through creating a community of fans for your business.
- Facebook can raise your visibility and drive significant traffic to your web site and blog.
- Link your blog and Twitter accounts with Facebook applications.
- When customizing use unique content; don't just replicate your web site.



Tip #8: Why you should be Tweeting



Can you afford to ignore a social media site that has 75 million users?



Do you have an active presence on Twitter? Is Twitter a part of your social media plan? Do have a plan? If not, you may not get Twitter and its use for business. You may have been turned off by a tweeterbox, a user that tweets too much about something that nobody cares about. Or maybe you just need to know how Twitter can be used for business.

Consider this. At the beginning of 2010, Twitter had over 100 million users. Can you afford to ignore a social media site that has over 100 million users?

So take a fresh look at Twitter and consider these points:

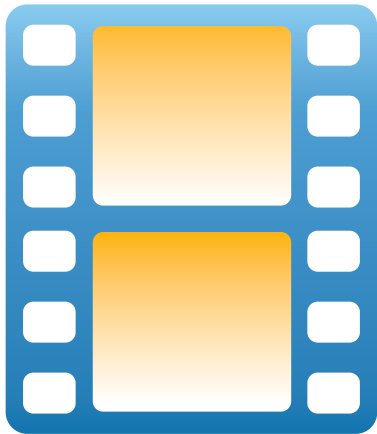
- You'll get to personally hear and feel what people think about your company, your industry and about you.
- You'll find Twitter useful at building a customer-centric organization.
- You'll have the chance to turn prospects into customers. That should impact your bottom line.
- You'll have the chance to turn semi-loyal existing customers into loyalists, even evangelists for your business.
- You'll find there are many smart people out there with good ideas. Twitter is a great place to test ideas, get feedback and improve upon ideas.
- Social media success comes from being honest, open and generous. Your followers will appreciate your presence on Twitter and this alone can produce high returns for your business.
- Twitter is a great place to reward and motivate your prospects and customers with special, valuable offers.

With Twitter, you'll be one big step ahead of your competitors. Unless of course, they get there before you.



Tip #9: YouTube - a channel for conversation starters

*"Keep your videos short.
Three to five minutes is
great."*



YouTube is currently the 4th biggest web property in the world. More than 100 million videos are viewed each day, making it the most popular video site on the Internet.

Content on YouTube is no longer just about stupid pet tricks or amateur comedians (although some of these are really funny). You will now find lots of news, "How To", "Expert Interviews", and lots of funny commercials.

YouTube sign-up is free and you can establish your own company TV channel. Once established, you will want to create some great video content. You don't need to hire a professional video team. Most modern video cameras provide excellent quality and many successful videos have a bit of homemade look to them. You can match the style to the culture of your company. Remember, the content is what is most important.

Here's some ideas:

- Create a few discussion videos with customers. Get them to talk about your business and how your product or service solved a problem. Don't make it too much like a testimonial, but rather have them share information that would be useful to others.
- Expert interviews are great. Choose an industry expert or other credible person to discuss areas of interest to your customers. Again, don't totally focus on your products. Soften up the selling and provide useful viewer information.
- How-To Videos provide great content. You should build a library of these that your viewers will find interesting and helpful.
- Keep your videos short. Three to five minutes is great.
- YouTube now has a feature to allow you to add captions and clickable areas to your video. Use these to link your videos together.



Tip #10: Work the LinkedIn trail.



There are over 250,000 groups on LinkedIn.



LinkedIn is a web site for professional social networking with over 60 million members. While Facebook has more of a casual and broad base of users, LinkedIn is all about business.

LinkedIn allows you to search its database and find people at specific organizations.

There are over 250,000 groups on LinkedIn. Group participation and the ability to form your own group can provide high returns for your company.

Here a few things to consider when working with LinkedIn:

- Join a group. Start by joining a couple of groups and study them for a while. By participating and providing useful interaction and not shameless self-promotion, you can gain valuable contacts.
- Start your own group. It's quick, easy and best of all, FREE. You might even form a group for your specific company or brand. There is little downside and considerable upside potential.
- LinkedIn Answers. This Q&A feature within LinkedIn can help establish you as an expert. Over time, this can result in considerable traffic for your web site and blog.
- Don't try to answer every question. Answer questions in which you can provide useful and valuable input. Quality trumps quantity.
- LinkedIn will automatically put your company name in the answer, so don't duplicate by including it within your answer as this will come across as self-promotion.
- The user that asks the question gets to select which user gave the best answer. LinkedIn uses this over time to establish your authority so always have a goal of winning the "best answer".
- Take a soft approach to self-promotion and always try to provide value to the other users.





Tip #11: eMail Marketing Still works. But you have to be consistent and have the right tools

“HubSpot recently reported that business blogs average 12 times more subscribers by email than RSS.”

HubSpot recently reported that business blogs average 12 times more subscribers by email than RSS. The fact is that people are still more familiar with email as a means for receiving news. Email is still relevant and should be a part of every social media plan.

If you are doing email marketing right, the recipient is telling you they want to communicate and they want to do it by email. It simply becomes another way in to engage with your loyal followers. It's another way to provide them with valuable information and remarkable content.

Here are a few hot tips from a leader in the business, Mail Dog:

- The 'from' field is one of the first things your subscriber will see, so make sure it clearly states who the email is coming from. A good way to test whether your 'from' field is effective is to ask yourself, 'will the recipient recognize the 'from name' and/or 'from email'? This will increase your open rate.
- 35% of readers cite the subject line as the main factor in determining whether they would open the email. Keep it short and show value in the first two words like, "Top 12", "6 Actions", etc. Get creative.
- If you want your subscribers to do something, give them a reason. Explain to them the who, what, where, when, why, and how. Do it well, and they will be compelled to click to your site.
- When your customers click on an email link, be sure that the landing page matches the copy. For example, if it is a "click here for more information" about a specific product link, land on that page. Don't send your customers to your home page and expect them to search for the page they want.



Tip #12: Don't forget that PR is part of the mix.



You should engage in online public relations in some form, every day.



Traditional P.R., as we know it, has changed dramatically in recent years.

The consolidation of traditional media outlets and the new financial dynamics of mainstream media makes it harder and harder to get coverage. Newspapers, consumer magazines, radio networks and trade journals are fighting for their lives.

In its place, there is a new online landscape of blogs, message boards, social media, video sites, micro blogs (Twitter) and podcasts that has created a new world of opportunities for businesses of all size.

Here's what you need to know.

- You should engage in online public relations in some form, every day. Start and make blog entries (at least twice a week), pitch an article or an idea to an editor or a blogger, make comments on someone else's blog, make a Twitter tweet, join a user group and participate – just do something!
- Today's P.R. focus really benefits small business, because for the first time ever, you can consistently create a buzz and be part of the conversation.
- Try and be relevant and somewhat brief. Include photos, videos and logos in your posts and entries. Use bullet points, and don't pontificate. We encourage you to develop videos and podcasts, but make them short (1-4 minutes instead of 10 minutes).
- Google and other search engines reward fresh content, and public relations has always carried a credibility factor not found in advertising. You'll be surprised at how a long-term strategy of public relations and content development will help your rankings.

If the thought of this seems overly daunting, consider sharing or giving this task to someone in your company, or outsourcing the work.



Tip #13: Always monitor what is being said about your company

"You should also monitor key employee names, competitor names and keywords."



Chances are good that people are already talking about your business on the web. This is all the more reason to have a social media marketing presence. You want the ability to know about these conversations, whether positive or negative, so that you can respond accordingly. You don't want to get caught off guard. Things can move very fast within social media circles.

There are many tools for monitoring. Start by searching for your name, business name, and product names. Subscribe to the search results by RSS and check these feeds once or twice a day. You can also use Yahoo Pipes to look for keywords appearing on many popular sites. Other sites to monitor include:

- Delicious
- StumbleUpon
- LinkedIn Answers

You should also monitor key employee names, competitor names and keywords.

It's also great to find compliments about your company or products. These can be used like testimonials and references and you should certainly value each of them. Include them on your web site and in sales collateral when possible. You can also save them in your account on Delicious. You might even find them to be useful in your blog posts.

Even though monitoring can be very time consuming, it's very important. In our opinion, it's extremely valuable to monitor at least a couple of times a week. If you don't have the time or resources to do it in-house, then by all means explore subscribing to paid monitoring services.



Tip #14: Use Pay-Per-Click Campaigns (PPC).



Even though Google accounts for about 66% of search today, don't forget about Yahoo and Bing.



When you are first starting out, you will have little chance of ending up on Google's first page because your site will need time to build its authority with Google. Using PPC can be a great alternative for several reasons.

First, you can launch a PPC campaign even if you only have a modest budget. Secondly, PPC provides many ways to test which keywords drive the best traffic and which content and ad copy converts the best. Google's tools in this area are quite good.

Another huge advantage of PPC is that you control where the user lands on your site, versus organic rankings in which Google makes that decision for you. You should always create a targeted landing page for each PPC ad. Remember you are in control of this landing page. This is your big chance to make it very clear what you want the user to do when they arrive at this page. Further, you can test not only the ad copy itself, but the landing page conversion rates.

You must monitor and track your PPC efforts in order to make the most of your marketing dollars. Research shows that optimizing for post-click conversions can keep your costs down and increase your ROI. Be sure to look beyond just the ad copy and keywords.

Even though Google accounts for about 66% of search today, don't forget about Yahoo and Bing. Yahoo accounts for about 17% and Bing accounts for 11% of search volume. As with Google, Yahoo and Bing results can be measured and the ROI determined, so they can still provide excellent results for some businesses.



Tip #15: Content is king. Here's how to build more.

"Either write something worth reading about, or do something worth writing about." - Ben Franklin



Building relevant content for your web site and other online activities is a very important element of an eStrategy.

That's because more content and web site pages provide search engines with more search terms to find, and also because creating great content helps build more inbound links, which many people believe is the highest consideration in the top secret Google algorithm.

But how do you effectively build more content?

For one, adding pages to your web site can be a big help. But the way you structure those pages is a huge determining factor. In general, you should tie specific pages into specific keywords and groups of key words. You also need to make sure that the metadata is also consistent within the framework of each page (i.e.: page names, headers, copy).

Adding a blog is another great way to build content. Most blogging experts suggest blogging at least 2 - 3 times a week. Tying your blog into specific keywords and topics is very important, much like crafting additional web pages. Your specific blogs should be shared on social networking sites, including sites like Digg and StumbleUpon.

Finally, consider creating several new landing pages tied directly into your key words and PPC campaigns.

Finding an effective Content Management System (CMS) that allows you to add web content from any online connection and distribute it to social media and bookmarking sites without the help of your I.T. team can be a great way to affordably add content.

And always try to create remarkable content, because your chances of generating inbound links to your web site through alternative channels greatly increase when you actually write something worth reading.



Tip #16: Don't fall in love with your products.



Don't fall into the trap of constantly writing about your products.



My number one tip for web site design and content creation is – DON'T SUCK! That's because most websites suck. Really, I'm serious. But, that's not a bad thing actually. I look at it as an opportunity, because it's not that difficult to not suck. This will go a long way towards differentiating yourself from your competitors.

Don't fall into the trap of constantly writing about your products, which is largely the cause of ineffective marketing today. Avoid all too common, jargon laden, product messaging, like "integrated approaches to the challenges of the global marketplace" that are built with "cutting-edge technology" and serve "top worldwide clients". Not only does this not differentiate you from the marketplace, it doesn't help your customers.

The average person searches Google 12 times a day. They are researching and looking to solve a problem or fill a need. Essentially, they are looking for help. Establish your web site as an authoritative source. Your buyers will naturally gravitate to your site once it is rich with valuable information.

You normally have 3 seconds to convince visitors to hang around. Rather than have them wade through your "mission-critical applications", provide them with useful information about how your products solve their problems.

Take the time to really listen to your customers. Understand the problems they face that you can solve. Then you will be able to write your content in a fashion that uses their words, not your own. You'll be able to really give them the information they need to make the choice to do business with you.

Good content respects the visitor's time and attention. Give them something great in return and not a bunch of buzz words.



Tip #17: Link building is not for fences.

"The single most effective way to get links is by creating remarkable content..."



Google uses a proprietary algorithm to decide how your web site will rank with regards to certain keyword searches. The exact algorithm is as closely guarded as many of the CIA's top secrets.

Some experts say that inbound links (links from other web sites to your web site) account for close to 70% of the equation. While the exact percentage is really not important, what is important to understand is that links, as they pertain to the domain name and its individual pages, can be even more important than the page's content.

So, how do you get them?

The single most effective way to get links is by creating remarkable content that users will find interesting and valuable. This is best accomplished by using your blog and a good social media plan.

While there are many other important details that need to be considered about links, such as the quality of the link and the use of anchor text with links, it is most important to know that there are no real short-cuts or secrets here. It's mostly a labor intense process centered around creating and distributing great content.

Using "anchor text" with links is a good practice, as it helps the search engines understand the relevance of the page you are linking to. Whenever possible, use keyword phrases as your links, rather than your site's home page URL or "click here". For example, instead of saying "click here", say "portable widgets" with the hyperlink.

Now, we'll give you a quick word of caution about links. Stay away from link farms and questionable quick fix practices, as they may do more harm than good. You might find your rankings going down rather than up, or worst, you might get banned by Google.



Tip #18: Give first to get later.



Instead of doing a white paper, how about creating an eBook?



This seems to work well in our personal lives, but in our business? Well, yes, you do have to give to get. Let me give you some examples.

Let's say you want to turn your static web site into something more interactive. You want to build a community of people interested in your product or service, or you want to sell something online. How do you gather your prospect's contact information, and keep them coming back to your site?

One of the best ways is to give them something. Developing fresh, innovative content is one way to do this. And distributing the content through a variety of avenues, such as blogs, blog responses, eNewsletters, email programs, white papers and eBooks helps you reach people you probably wouldn't have without it.

And speaking of white papers, they may not be the best choice anymore. Often times white papers are outdated and many people perceive them to be boring. Once downloaded, they do not always serve as a very good catalyst for further interaction.

Instead of doing a white paper, how about creating an eBook. And, in order to get the valuable eBook, people fill out a form, so you can collect prospect data in exchange for giving something valuable. So, you see, you have to give first to get.

Additionally, the eBook can be sliced and diced into a variety of blogs, tweets, eNewsletter content, emails and more.

Do you know how to do something really cool within your business? Do a YouTube video. Distribute information about it. Give to get. It's a simple principle that goes a long way with your Web 2.0 eStrategy.



Tip #19: Google Alerts and Google Reader.

“Ever been around that person that knows it all? With these two tools, that could be you.”



Most businesses know about Google AdWords, but not so many know about two other impressive tools from Google. One is called Google Alerts and the other is Google Reader.

Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts) lets you select certain topics and monitor web activity on these. For example, you can select your industry, specific search terms, competitors and even your name.

Using Google Alerts is an excellent way to keep on top of the latest news, as well as following late breaking news. It can help you with blog ideas and creating your unique point-of-view on current news. You can even control how often this news is collected and delivered to you via e-mail.

Google Reader (www.google.com/reader) is an excellent RSS (Real Simple Syndication) reader. Like Google Alerts, it's completely web-based and free, and it allows you to track blogs, comments and many other things. It's like having another inbox on your computer with all the latest news on a certain topic.

So instead of searching on the web, have the news and latest topics delivered right to your computer. It's a great way of keeping tracking of a variety of keywords, interests and competitors without having to do all the work.

For both items, you need to sign into an account at Google to begin the process. But the ability to stay on top of the latest industry news, blogs, reactions as well as your outside interests adds a whole new dimension to your web browsing and social media strategies.

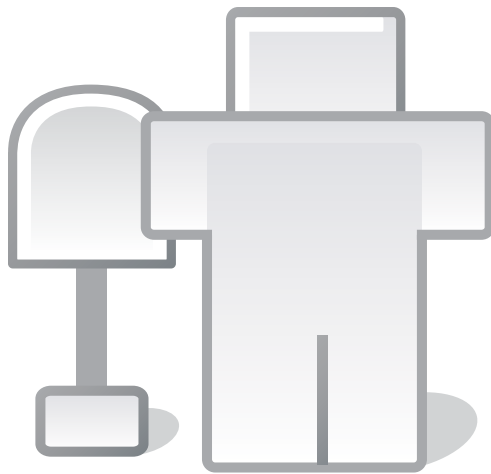
Ever been around the person that knows it all? With these two tools, that could be you!



Tip #20: Can you Digg it?



...you should only post your very best material on Digg.



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One of the primary driving forces behind Inbound Marketing is that we are no longer web site managers as much as publishers. Creating content on a continual basis helps provide a constant flow of new material that creates a ripple effect through your entire company.

No longer do we look at a web site as something that gets updated once or twice a year, but rather a living, growing entity that distributes content in a variety of sources through blogging, articles, podcasts, tweets, videos and more.

One great source to post material is Digg.com. Digg is a web site where people discover and share content from anywhere on the web. The community decides whether they like it or not, and if you're lucky enough to get enough votes (Diggs), you could end up on the front page of Digg, where millions of their viewers can see it. If that ever happens, you can generate more traffic on your site in a day than you do in a year.

Not only does being on Digg help your exposure, it can also be a link-building gem. And the more links, the better your overall organic ranking.

But you should only post your very best material on Digg. You can submit news, blog posts, videos and images. But this is not the place for the mundane. Make sure your entries are captivating, interesting, and perhaps a little unusual. Think of an exceptional headline that's a little unusual and fits the content.

A couple of final thoughts on Digg: You should familiarize yourself with the site before you begin submitting. Make sure you submit it in the right category. And be sure to put the Digg button link on your on your web site or blog where the content exists.



Tip #21: Landing Pages are not for airplanes.

"You can test the effectiveness of different landing pages in your pay-per-click campaigns."



Are you familiar with landing pages? If not, this will give you an overview.

Landing pages are pages on your site designed to tie into a specific action you want your visitor to take. Often times, they're tied into a Google Adwords or e-mail campaign, or an offer of some sort. And, they are often not included on your web site navigation.

Landing pages can help in many ways. For one, they can isolate an offer, and are best designed to focus on that specific offer. For example, if you run an Adwords campaign for a free eBook, it's best to have a landing page that focuses on downloading the free book.

Landing pages should be clear and simple. Use bullet points and short copy. Don't make this page so full of copy that it will scare people away. People clicked on the page for a reason – now close the deal. Your conversion rates on landing pages should be amongst the highest on your site.

Often times, landing pages have forms or a link to a shopping cart. Make the forms simple and your shopping cart offer clear and concise.

You can test the effectiveness of different landing pages in your pay-per-click campaigns. Test headlines, copy and graphics and always measure the conversion rates. It's the only way you'll know what works and what doesn't.

Make sure your specific keywords, PPC ads and landing page content are aligned. Search engines serve up ads that are most closely tied with the consumer search terms. That's why it's smart to have several online ad campaigns going, each tied to a different set of keywords and aligned at the landing page level with the same keywords and appropriate graphics.

Create some landing pages and watch your conversion rates increase.



Tip #22: Chances are your shopping cart can be improved. A lot.



Retargeting conversion rates are from 10-20% for a fairly minimal investment.



If you have an online shopping cart, a main focus of our business should be on maximizing the results. Small improvements can add up quickly.

If you haven't heard the term "shopping cart abandonment", you should read up on the subject. According to a 2009 study by PayPal and ComScore, just under half of all Americans abandoned an online shopping cart at least once in the past three weeks, leaving behind an average cart of \$109.

There are many reasons for this. They include (in order of priority) shipping costs (46%), comparison shopping only (37%), lack of money (36%), wanted to look for a coupon (27%), wanted to shop online (26%), payment options (24%), item unavailable (23%), couldn't find customer support (22%) and security issues (21%).

There are a variety of factors to consider:

- Can you offer free or very low flat rate shipping?
- Determine your products that provide you the most profit, then put them in the best positions, above the fold, to the upper left.
- Test various offers like, buy 1 get 1 free, buy now pay later, Buy 1 get 1 50% off
- Add a reassurance graphics like BBB online, Hacker Safe, credit card icons, your guarantee, etc.
- Add testimonials from happy customers
- Make additional offers to buyers who just bought. This is the best time to offer another product

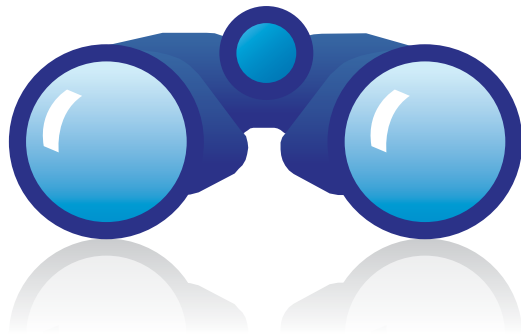
A new program called "retargeting" can also help. These programs deliver banner ad messages to visitors who have left your site to surf the web. Your banner ads will appear as they visit other sites. Retargeting conversion rates are from 10-20% for a fairly minimal investment.

There's always room for improvement. Keep at it and keep selling.



Tip #23: Test, test, and re-test.

“Visitors that arrive at your site through different channels tend to behave differently.”



Today there are many tools available for testing. Start by focusing on the free Google A/B testing features. These tools allow you to test different versions of PPC ads and landing pages to determine what performs best.

Begin by testing headlines and calls to action. You should also test different variations of conversion forms as well as pricing and product images. Experiment with colors, flash vs. HTML, and the use of testimonials.

Don't focus on your top producing pages and ads first, but rather start with the worst performers. Google Analytics is a free tool and it will help you identify these.

Visitors that arrive at your site through different channels tend to behave differently. Focus on your most important channels, like PPC, e-mail marketing, first time visitors and repeat visitors. Segment your testing by these channels to increase your conversion rates.

Experiment with free shipping. 78% of online customers say shipping cost is a deterrent. 43% abandon shopping carts due to high shipping costs.

Test your opt-in e-mail subject lines. 35% of readers cited the subject line as the main factor in determining whether they would open the email. Try different subject lines and see what works best for your list. Some marketers suggest spending as much time writing the subject line as you do the copy of your email.

Testing can seem overwhelming at first. Start by developing a plan. Identify your primary objective and the most effective way to accomplish it. Get a good Content Management System so you can be efficient and minimize the need for IT support. Then, start small and keep testing.



Tip #24: Establish Social Media guidelines for your company.



Every company engaging in social media marketing should establish policies.



Every company engaging in social media marketing should establish policies. Your overall corporate culture will probably dictate whether you have a very formal plan, like IBM, or a more relaxed and “hip” approach like Southwest Airlines. Either way you decide to go, there are certain things you should definitely consider:

1. Establish the purpose of the policy

Don't be overly restrictive. This is an emerging media and you should focus on the positive spirit of social media. Think in terms of writing the policy to focus on what the employees can do rather than what they can't do.

2. Think before you click

Employees represent their company and they need to be responsible in their communications. Sharing your ideas is one thing. Using slurs, inappropriate slang, or demeaning and inflammatory messages is not acceptable. Always be positive and thoughtful. There are consequences for saying stupid things, so think before you click. Use good common sense.

3. Be credible, authentic and build trust

Trust is critical and especially so in social media. Always, let your real name and position with the company be known. Also, understand that being transparent doesn't mean you should give away trade secrets and confidential information.

4. Understand the concept of community and bring value

The social media community exists for mutual support, between the company and its customers. Go the extra mile to respect your customer's time and attention. Focus on your followers and “show them the love”.

5. Productivity still matters

Social media can provide a more effective and productive channel for communication. In order to be successful you will need to find the right balance between social media and other work activities.



Tip #25: eMarketing requires an integrated strategy.



The ability to manage the integration of all the new elements is at the core of your strategy.



By now we hope you realize the potential of eMarketing programs for your company and you're ready to dive in.

The final thought we would like to leave with you is that online marketing plans and social media programs require an integrated strategy. It should dovetail your existing marketing programs. Even though you may back off on some of your more traditional marketing programs and replace them with more interactive and less expensive Inbound Marketing initiatives, the need for integration is stronger than ever.

The ability for you to manage the integration of all the new elements is at the core of your strategy. We highly suggest that you or a non-techie have the ability to add regular content to your web site. You should be able to blog seamlessly, or outsource that task to a marketing person, not someone on your technical staff. Most geeks just think differently and are usually not the best at developing great marketing content.

Your Facebook page should be integrated with your Twitter and LinkedIn pages, and all of these should have ways to post or link to your latest blog. Create custom social media pages with consistent brand images.

YouTube videos should be imbedded in your Facebook account, as well as your web site and blog.

Include buttons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, email, and links to any free giveaways such as an eBook. Most major news organizations have all this – why not you? And finally, consider hiring someone or outsourcing this specialized area if you don't have the time to do it yourself.

About the authors



John Peretz is a Partner in Thrust Internet Sales, a hybrid online marketing and social media company that helps growing companies greatly expand their presence on the web. Before starting Thrust, John worked at several of the top advertising agencies in America and owned his own advertising agency, Fireball Marketing, Inc. "We opened Thrust because of the growing need for small to mid-sized businesses to fully embrace social media programs and optimize their online presence and sales potential," Peretz states. "It's where the smart money is going, but there's a certain level of resistance because the process seems daunting. It doesn't have to be that way." John has a degree from the University of Minnesota and lives in Steamboat Springs, CO with his wife Pam and their nine-year old boy Justin Tyme.



Rob Newton is a Partner in Thrust Internet Sales, and is an Inbound Marketing Certified Professional. He advises companies and organizations on how to use inbound marketing to build relationships, value and sales. Rob has over thirty years of entrepreneurial achievement. "Several years ago I became very frustrated. We developed some very successful businesses, but were having trouble getting found online", Newton stated. His frustration was shared with some of his best entrepreneurial friends. "We tried using different S.E.O. experts with limited success. So we decided to learn this ourselves", Newton continued. Word began to spread and others sought them out for help. "The demand became so great, that we started a new company to handle the work." Thrust Internet Sales was born. Rob currently resides in the Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL area with his wife Lynne.

Contact Us:

t: (888) 779-9869 | e-mail: Contact@ThrustInternet.com

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