

Ezines - Getting Permission to Market to Your Customer

Getting permission to market? Sounds at odds in a society where we are bombarded with advertising on a daily basis.

But actually it's not a new phenomenon. On-line, permission marketing has been around since the late 90s when companies began asking their web site visitors if they wanted to receive emails, known as ezines (electronic magazines).

And before the internet, companies invited customers to go onto mailing lists for newsletters, catalogues and so on.

Since then permission marketing has grown hugely. Now, millions of companies send out ezines on a regular basis to tell customers about new products or services, or to make special offers, give personal reviews and so on.

This is not spam, which is unwanted, unsolicited material. On the contrary, permission marketing asks the visitors to your website whether they want to receive information from you on an ongoing basis.

And that's the big difference between permission marketing and most other forms of advertising - customers choose to 'opt in' or not, rather than being bombarded with advertising in all facets of their lives. If they later decide it's not for them, they can just as easily unsubscribe, or 'opt out'.

Cheap, fast and tailored marketing

In contrast to paper-based direct marketing, on-line marketing is far cheaper, extremely fast and easily tailored to different groups. A company could potentially receive responses from emails soon after they are sent.

Wow, think of the possibilities to businesses. Not only do you have an eager group of customers awaiting more information, but those customers could be anywhere in the world. You need a web site, of course, but if you're already technologically up-to-date, setting up some kind of ezine is not difficult.

You'll need skilled help from website designers. They can help you design a system to invite visitors to subscribe to your ezine. Subscriptions are often free of charge. The more information you can find out about customers the more targeted you can be when sending out your ezines. You can group people depending on the products and services they are interested in and tailor ezines accordingly.

Instead of emailing customers you can just display the ezine on your web pages, but of course it doesn't get directly to the customer's inbox. Many companies, however, combine both forms.

Rules and Potential Pitfalls

There are rules, however, and a number of things to watch out for. Firstly, you've got to be clear about asking people to opt in, and saying what the information will be used for. You mustn't just send an email and then ask them to 'opt out' if they don't want to continue receiving the ezine.

And it goes without saying that whatever information they give about themselves cannot be then given out by you to anyone else.



INDEX

Permission Marketing using Ezines _____	1
Next Steps - Setting Up a Web Site and Ezine _____	2
Web Terminology for Beginners _____	3
Make it Easy for Harried Customers _____	2,3
Media Interviews - Preparation is the Key _____	4

It sounds easy but there are pitfalls. Because millions of other companies are already sending ezines, what you say has to be pretty fabulous - there must be some perceived benefit for your customers to want to continue receiving stuff from you.

New Zealand author Rachel McAlpine in her book *Web Word Wizardry* stresses the importance of good quality content.

“Typically a new ezine starts with a fanfare, and then it fizzles out. An ezine with truly original, interesting, and authoritative content is very rare. The ezines that survive have consistently high-quality content, specifically written for delivery by email to a highly targeted readership,” she says.

That said, if you intend setting up a web site and ezine, you should consult the experts - web designers and web content writers. Don't fall into the trap of designing an exciting website which is compromised by bad content.

Permission marketing is a term coined by Seth Godin in 1999 in his book *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers*.

Next Steps - Setting Up a Web Site and Ezine

If you want to get a website and ezine going:

- Consider the purpose - advertising and exposure? Opportunity to sell product? Means of communicating regularly with customers?
- Consult experts - find a good web designer to work with
- Do some research - find some websites you like so you can talk about them with the web designer
- Know your audience and what markets you are targeting - is it local or international? Your web designer needs to know these things
- Don't overlook content - clear, concise writing is vital for each web page. Find a good content writer
- Ensure content supply of your ezine - you need to have an ongoing supply of good quality content to put into an ezine

Make it Easy for Harried Customers

These days businesses are dealing with a new breed of customer - the 'time poor' but 'cash rich' variety.

While they've got the money to spend they don't have time to waste. Customers now are on tight schedules, are focused on their task - often with lists to work from - and are easily irked by hassles and inefficiencies.

Waiting to be served, having to come back next week when the product arrives, being unable to find a carpark or even being asked to keep children quiet - just one of these incidents may prompt a customer to say: "sod it!"

And when they do, you've lost them, possibly to the business down the road.

To put a stop to that, you've got to think like a customer and understand what they want.



Be sure to read each article with the mindset "How this could apply to our business". Thinking of it that way will guarantee that you get value. Also make copies for each team member. To really make sure something positive happens, work with your business development specialists to talk your team through ideas.



www.temperton.co.nz

What's Important For Customers?

According to various surveys it's not about price. In fact, the price people are prepared to pay is the cost price of the article *plus perceived added value*, i.e., the extra value they feel they are getting from the organisation's investment in things like staff training, product knowledge and after sales service.

The only time price becomes important is when all the other factors are equal. Here are some other factors which are considered important:

- **Make yourself convenient**
Convenience is hugely important for today's consumers. Are you in a handy location and is there plenty of car parking nearby? Can you adjust opening hours to better suit customers? Can you put your most highly trained staff on busiest days i.e., weekends?
- **Be welcoming and attentive**
Receptionists and retail staff need to greet visitors as soon as they arrive at the business, in a manner that encourages conversation. Don't give the telephone preference over a waiting customer.
- **Solve problems**
If you can solve the problem, you've saved the customer wasting time looking elsewhere. They'll pay your price, come back again next time and probably even recommend you to friends. It pays to spend time finding that solution.
- **What's in it for me? (WIIFM)**
What's the benefit to a customer of doing business with you? As a small business you may not have the power of a big brand behind you, but you might be unique in other ways. If it's a benefit to the customer - that's important. For example, toys to occupy small children can be godsend to harried parents especially when they need time to make a decision.

Web Terminology for Beginners

Ezine - an electronic magazine sent directly to your email address with your permission.

Spam - unwanted, unsolicited promotional stuff from someone you don't know. Not illegal but ill-advised.

Blog - short for web log, is a type of web page written by an individual as a personal log.

HTML - Hyper-text Markup Language. This is the coding specifications inserted into computer text that indicate how web pages should be displayed by browsers.

Search Engine - The software behind a company, eg Google, that goes to work when you type in a search query to help you locate sites on specific subjects.

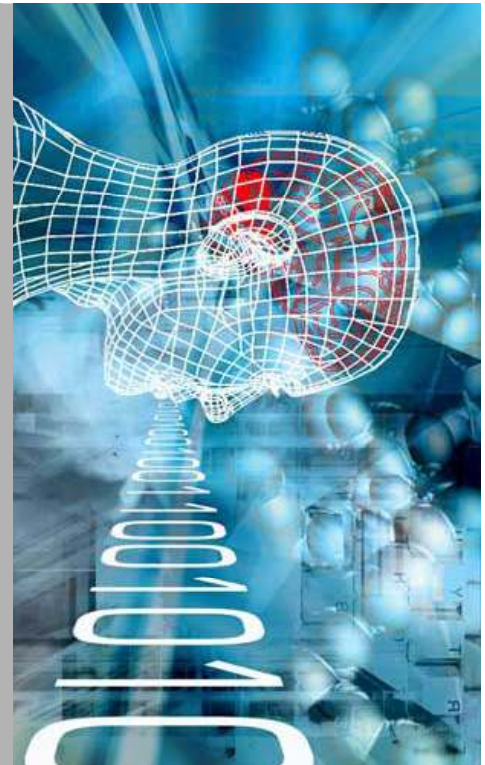
Spiders - computer robot programs (also known as crawlers, knowledge-bots or know-bots) that are used by search engines to visit sites and databases around the web to keep search engine databases up-to-date.

Ranking - the results of a search on a particular subject. Many searches can turn up thousands of results so reaching the top 10 ranking is extremely important for your web site.

Doorway - a web page that is designed to rank highly with search engines and therefore bring people into the site.

Hit - every time someone visits a web page equals one hit. Site owners can monitor the number of hits their pages receive.

ISP - Internet Service Provider - a company that sells internet connections via modem.



An important Message

While every effort has been made to provide valuable, useful information in this publication, this firm and any related suppliers or associated companies accept no responsibility or any form of liability from reliance upon or use of its contents. Any suggestions should be considered carefully within your own particular circumstances, as they are intended as general information only.

Media Interviews Need Preparation

Buses, fire extinguishers or clothes pegs - whatever you sell, your business may one day be under the media spotlight.

That's great for your business if it's a positive news story, but good news or bad news you need to speak and you need to be prepared.

For potentially explosive or inflammatory issues, you may need skilled public relations advice to help you deal with the situation. But ideally, your business planning would have already identified the course of action you will take in the event of something going wrong, for example, a product recall or an employee accident.

If you do encounter bad news you can't afford to be scrambling around doing nothing. You must have a plan and move quickly to take control of the situation.

If you have already sent out a media release to make an announcement you need to make yourself available for follow-up comment and speak to journalists as soon as they call. In the case where an issue suddenly crops up, don't feel pressured to take a journalist's call immediately. Find out the deadline and say when you will call back. Make sure you do.



Prepare Yourself

Whatever the situation, make sure you are prepared:

- Know all the details of the issue including the latest developments
- Write down the key messages you want to get across. This helps you confirm the messages in your head, and, in a telephone interview you have these notes to refer to
- Find out what the journalist wants to know. Ask for the first question
- Anticipate the likely questions they will ask

During the Interview

- Make sure you communicate each key message in the course of the interview. Don't wait for the question you want to come up - it may not. Instead, answer the question but make your point as well
- If you do not know something, do not attempt to answer the question, however do not be caught out by being ill-prepared with basic facts. In your preparation you should have anticipated the likely questions
- Don't just change the subject. You should have a good reason for not wanting to discuss a subject
- Talk directly to the journalist, speak clearly and avoid 'ums'

Points to Remember

- Ensure your media release goes to all the media at the same time
- Keep a good relationship with the media especially your local media. If you have a long-standing positive image in the community you'll be in a better position to deal with bad news later
- Never assume the journalist does not know what he/she is talking about. Their sources are sometimes better than yours
- Be receptive to a journalist at weird hours and return calls when you say you will
- If you are the original source, be available, even if you have a press officer



Temperton & Associates Ltd

Level 1
17-19 Seaview Road
Paraparaumu Beach
New Zealand

Phone: 04 298 6025 or 04 570 2991

Fax: 04 298 6205

accountant@temperton.co.nz

www.temperton.co.nz