

The Truth About Electronic Marketing

By Bill Booth

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Most people who are prospering from this form of marketing are selling the sizzle and have forgotten the steak. This article will provide the facts behind the hype. You will get the straight truth from someone who uses online marketing personally and who isn't trying to get rich by selling direct response techniques as realistic BBS marketing concepts.

Marketing Electronically is a hot topic especially in these days of instant gratification. There are advantages and disadvantages to any form of marketing, but lately all I hear are the advantages.

Let me first mention the benefits as expressed by others and then I will provide the negatives that have been invoiced.

- (1) You can reach millions of people.
- (2) Lower lead costs.
- (3) Quickness of response.
- (4) Lower inquiry fulfillment costs.

All of this sounds great huh?

The disadvantages include:

- (1) You must consistently market, more than with direct response advertising or direct mail.
- (2) Trying to keep your material on the boards.
- (3) Your material can't be sales related.
- (4) Finding out if there is an audience for your product or service involves searching the online networks to determine if it's large enough to even bother uploading your material to.

One major disadvantage to online marketing as I mentioned in item three is:

You can't blatantly promote your material, your product, or your service. With conventional advertising you can go right after your potential customer with a salesletter, but, with bbs marketing you have to provide up front information in the form of a how to article and at the closing of your article you can include a resource box which invites the reader to respond to an offer that you make within it.

There are two advantages to utilizing a how to article. (1) You are considered an expert on the subject that you have written about. (2) Your material if information rich could remain on the boards for years.

You cannot provide information that points the reader to your product or service. In effect it must be generic. Give plenty of information up front. This is what the system operators want on their board and this will be what determines whether your material stays on the board.

The online services are like magazines, readers call back again and again if there is valuable information. If you are not providing valuable information that they can read and download, then your material won't remain up on the boards. Packaging Is Everything

One of the best ways I know of keeping your material on the boards is in a newsletter format.

You accomplish this by using a software program. I recommend Writers Dream (available from Infopreneur publishing for \$5) It is an easy but powerful program. You can create up to forty five individual chapters, each chapter can be a separate article, a portion of a book, manual, directory, etc. The online publication once created can be compressed with PKZip and uploaded onto the boards. When you place material as an online newsletter your chances are greater that it is going to remain up on the boards. I have a business associate who has had his material in this format on one large commercial network for over a year. One important point, you can't put your salesletter (water-down or not) into this online publication format and expect for it to stay on the boards.

If you create an online newsletter in this IBM software driven format, also create an issue that is in a straight ascii format. This can be accomplished with a simple text editor or word processor. This will cover all the bases and allow additional computer platforms such as Macintosh, Amiga or Unix to read it.

Direct Response Techniques Don't Work!

I must keep emphasizing that you must provide solid information. This form of marketing can not be approached using direct response marketing techniques. It won't work! I warn you to be careful if your following the advice of those who have a direct response marketing mind set. You need to listen to those who use the computer bulletin boards personally and know how to operate a computer. Such as myself.

Listening to those who don't market electronically or know how to use a computer is like trying to take advice on how to run a successful business from someone who has never started one. It's simply foolish!

Direct response marketing involves hype in print, you don't tell a lot, instead you sell a lot, offering the reader plenty of benefits that spell out what they want in it for them." With online marketing you need to tell a lot and I don't mean tell them what they're going to get if they buy your product or service. What do they need to do to accomplish specific objectives. If you're writing a report on 25 ways to make money staying at home, you can't write "order my book and I will reveal these 25 ways. No! You need to write an article that details the 25 specific (workable) ways to make money at home and within the resource box at the close of this article you can mention that there are also an additional 75 other ways to make money at home and if they would like to receive this valuable report simply contact you.

An Effective Method

Focus on building a list by lead generating. Offer something for free. Generate the name and address. Then follow-up with direct mail. This approach allows you to present the salesmanship, the professionalism (straight ASCII text is not very nice looking) the potential customer is getting your sales message.

You cannot do this on the boards, without gathering the names and addresses and mailing to them. This is the method that I prefer to use, and one method I see working.

If you don't have a computer then you need to get into the computer age. You can't utilize this new marketing method without one. Actually, this form of marketing is not new it's been around for quite some time. It's just been brought to the general public's attention most recently. However, it's been presented in a false and misleading way. All the hype and misinformation that has been given as fact has confused a lot of people.

Through a great deal of online research I have found that some things are downright false, yet they are still being presented by some individuals as fact. For your own benefit I highly recommend that you research this technology. I will tell you, from my own research that you're not going to make thousands of dollars just uploading your sales material on the boards.

There are realistic methods that can make you one, two, three, or four thousand dollars or more a month. But, it's not going to be instantaneous. You're not going to put your material up on these bulletin boards one time and then overnight get flooded with orders. I have discovered that online marketing is a

method that must be consistent and met with strict regulations. Each board has its own rules and you must adhere to them. Otherwise spending time uploading your material onto these boards isn't going to do much good. Your material will get kicked right off. Ignore the hype associated with this marketing method and do some research to determine what is true and what isn't.

One truth that will ring loud is that there are plenty of inconsistencies being promoted. If you do your homework you'll have an advantage over those who are still being taken for a money stealing ride.

Your first step should be of course to get a computer if you don't have one.

If you are going to get serious about online marketing get a computer if you don't have one. I have dealt with clients in the services end of my business (placing their material on the boards) and I can honestly say that if you want to get involved in online marketing you need to do it yourself.

The online tools that are needed for electronic marketing success can actually do a better job in your hands than mine or another. It's similar to marketing a book that you have written, you have a love for it because it's your creation. Only you can promote the book and sell it with the enthusiasm and intricate details that nobody else can. It's your own pride and joy. It's the same way with online marketing.

E-MAIL & CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

E-mail is a powerful tool to use. It's instantaneous delivery of your on-line classified ad inquiries. A lot of the boards like CompuServe, America On-Line, Delphi, Genie all except classified ads.

Classified ads on the various commercial on-line services are inexpensive. I placed a classified ad on CompuServe (a user base of 2 million) to run for 26 weeks and it's under fifty dollars. A benefit with on-line classified advertising is; readers of your ad can automatically respond to your ad via E-mail instantly. E-mail is faster than the postal service, even overnight delivery is slow compared to e-mail! The simple steps that it takes to place an ad on CompuServe for example include: (1) You type your advertisement into a classified section (exactly like those found in magazines), (2) The money is electronically pulled out of your bank account or charged to your credit card for your advertising order, (3) Your ad is posted usually 24 hours later on the board, (4) Within minutes of it being posted you can start receiving replies in regards to your classified ad.

Once you receive your replies. You could E-mail back to your inquiries your sales literature. This eliminates printing and postage. However, I have found that orders increase if you actually mail them your material by snail mail (first class). I believe that the professional hard copy appearance is a better selling device than straight ASCII text.

Detailed Know How Cheap!

If you want to make money marketing online, then you need to order a new 90 minute audio tape and special report (it's not a salesletter) entitled Electronic Marketing Bootcamp. This is truly a need to listen to resource that will get you started making money on the information superhighway. Send your order to: Infopreneur Publishing, Box 20412, Dept EMBC-R, El Cajon, California 92021.

A word of caution, don't become overly enthusiastic about online marketing that you forget other forms of marketing such as direct mail and print advertising. Online marketing is just another form of marketing not an end in itself. I would continue to do your print advertising and direct mail, but also utilize online marketing.

Electronic marketing like I've already mentioned is much more demanding. You're not in complete control. You have to overcome a lot of obstacles (as I have personally found out). If you cannot be patient and you cannot be consistent with this form of marketing I would not market electronically. As a simple starter, place classified ads on the boards. Lead generate, gather names and mail your offer.

Use this simple online marketing method. Gather your inquiries by placing a lead generating (offer something for free) classified ad or article. When you retrieve all your requests send out by first class mail your sales literature.

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I want to mention one important and almost overlooked point.

Focus on the commercial boards, don't waste your time with the little boards. A great deal of these little boards don't have the funds to promote their service in the massive scope that CompuServe, America On-Line, Delphi and Genie can and do.

They also don't have many callers as the larger boards have. Even if you got your material on 70,000 of the smaller boards, it still would dwarf the number of callers on the larger boards in a 24 hour period. You want a lot of people calling the board if your material or classified ad is on it. I would only utilize the smaller local bbs for practice and fun. For serious online marketing the only way to go is the larger commercial networks.