

TEN THINGS ENTREPRENEURS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE MARKETING

by Alex Theis

Online marketing is growing rapidly and getting the spotlight on your business can mean the difference between do or die. Here are our tips to successfully keep up with internet marketing and grow your brand.

1. Your online brand is everything and everywhere

Establishing your personal and, or company brand is essential in today's business world. Your success depends on the brand you build and the presence you create. It's everything. It's also everywhere. From social media to your website, to what gets posted about you in a forum, take your online brand seriously. Marketing starts with your brand story, and your brand story is told online.

2. Have a strategy, based on your goals

Oh wait, you don't have a goal, or is it just to make sales? The old S.M.A.R.T. acronym for goals applies to online marketing too: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely. The big goal of getting clients and sales starts with smaller goals. Once you know what you want to accomplish, create your strategy to get there. Many entrepreneurs fail to employ a strategy, which leads to online marketing failure.

3. Analytics and metrics matter

Measuring your progress helps you see what parts of your strategy are working and what are not. You can then make course corrections to get the most out of your online marketing. Google Analytics is a great place to start.

4. SEO is worth the time (and money)

If your potential customers and clients can't find you online, you are missing opportunities, big time. Search engine optimization, or showing up high in a Google search, is critical to staying in front of eyes online. SEO isn't just about showing up first when people search for your name or company. It's also important that you show up when your ideal customer is looking for a solution, not just your name.

5. Email marketing is alive and well (sort of)

The days of spam and blind email marketing are dead. While you will still see companies trying it, unsolicited email is largely ignored, if not despised. But permission marketing through opt-in campaigns is alive and well. The important piece to takeaway is this: are you collecting email addresses from web visitors? If you need some ideas to get people opting in to your emails, see No. 10.

6. Get help where you need it

If you don't understand SEO or analytics aren't your specialty, get help. Your areas of expertise probably lie in your business model and product offer. Why waste precious time on these areas when you could be focused on what you're great at? Even on a tight budget, you can find the help you need to grow your online marketing. Use social media and referrals to locate what you need.

7. Use Twitter

One of the biggest benefits of Twitter is the number of business people, entrepreneurs, and thought experts using it. Twitter is simply a great place to meet like-minded people, promote your brand to a new audience, and learn from others. Twitter doesn't have to take much time either, and there are fantastic tools to help you use it effectively.

8. Get a business page for Facebook

A business or fan page is an excellent communication tool. People are spending hours a day on Facebook, and they love to check in with their favorite brands while logged in. Prospective customers may not be visiting your website daily, but they will see your Facebook updates and posts, which creates engagement and sales.

9. Having a blog brings traffic and gives value

Offering tips, advice, and education through a blog provides another place to drop people into your marketing funnel. With great content you can drive subscriptions, opening up more email marketing. When someone likes your blog material, they share it on social media, introducing you and your brand to a new audience. Keep in mind that a blog does not have to be written. Podcasts and YouTube videos can serve the same purpose, sometimes better.

10. Scrape the database

When marketing online, you want as many people put into the top of the funnel as possible. Instead of an offer that attracts less than 1 percent of people who see it, think of ways to appeal to a larger audience. Creating free, value-packed downloads or other offerings will get people clicking your ad, post or tweet, and viewing your website. Giving away great value also builds trust which is more important than ever before, with millions of online choices for consumers.