

HOW TO MAKE A FORTUNE ON THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

Everyone's Guerrilla Guide to Marketing on the Internet

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MAIN IDEA

Amidst all the media hype surrounding the emergence of the information superhighway, one fact is clear - the information superhighway offers an exceptional opportunity for profitable direct marketing.

The most widely established branch of the emerging information superhighway is presently the Internet - a global computer network having in excess of 30 million users. These users can be marketed to through electronic mail, by postings to user groups they belong to, by use of the world wide web or by established Internet capabilities such as file transfer protocol and gopher. Any or all of these marketing vehicles can be used in creative and unique combinations to develop a product-specific marketing program.

Historically, the Internet attracted those who are computer savvy. However, a much broader cross-section of the business community are now moving on to the Internet. This is creating an impressive and lucrative marketing opportunity for Internet advertising and marketing.

1. INTERNET BASICS

Success in generating personal wealth is usually based on one simple principle: the ability to do something better, faster or cheaper. The Internet provides access to a large pool of potential customers through better, faster and cheaper advertising than has ever before been achievable.

In short, the Internet has the potential to become the most successful salesperson you've ever employed.

2. SPECIFIC INTERNET SALES DEVICES

1. Advertising to People on the Usenet

This is Internet's most active public communications area. The Usenet is a collection of more than 10,000 discussion groups, each covering a different and specific topic. It is estimated that between 3 and 10 million Internet users participate on the Usenet each day. Anyone can start a Newsgroup on the Usenet on whatever subject they like.

To advertise on the Usenet, you send an e-mail message to the group where anybody who tunes in can read your message and follow up on it if they are interested in your product or service.

2. Using E-mail and Electronic Mailing Lists

Everyone using the Internet or any other branch of the Information Superhighway have their own personal e-mail address. E-mail has the potential to very quickly replace faxes as the primary means of fast written communication because there is nothing a fax machine can do that can't be done cheaper, faster and more conveniently with e-mail.

E-mail marketing involves approaching prospective clients or customers by sending them an e-mail message asking them to buy your product or service.

3. Using the Chat Channels

Any Internet subscriber can join a live chat group at any time. You do this by typing a simple command on your computer keyboard (which is given by your Internet access provider). You can then join any active group that is shown on your computer, or start your own chat channel.

When you're part of a chat group, typed conversations between all other members of the group appear on your screen live, and you can contribute anything you like. At any one time, Internet chat channels can have up to 10,000 people or more participating.

4. Using the World Wide Web for Multimedia Advertising

The World Wide Web (or web for short) is the most exciting Internet development at present and is the area in which commercial ventures are forging ahead.

Basically, the web is an Internet address and indexing system into which anybody can store a home page which is accessible to anyone searching the web. Audio, colour pictures and text can be made available on the home pages. Additionally, pages can be linked together by "hypertext links". To move from one page to another, you simply point at one of these links and click on it.

5. Indirect Marketing through Gopher

Gopher was originally developed by the University of Minnesota as a way of navigating around the Internet. (Gopher took its name from the University's official mascot).

In essence, Gopher is an Internet index. Anyone can use the Gopher menu system to readily move from one computer to another around the Internet without requiring too high a level of computer expertise.

6. Using File Transfer Protocol (FTP)

File Transfer Protocol (FTP) allows any Internet user to download files from your computer to theirs.

To be able to do this, an advertiser needs to first set up an FTP site through their Internet access provider. Once a site is set up, you can post any items you wish to make available - for example price lists, information packages, software, audio material, video material, graphics, electronic publications, etc.

In essence, an FTP site is a technically easier version of the web. To access and load web home pages, a certain standard of computer processing power is required. For an FTP site, any computer whatsoever will have access.

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Supporting Ideas

The term "Information Superhighway" was first coined by U.S. Vice-President Albert Gore in a speech to the National Press Club in December 1993. Since that time, the mass media have taken the term to heart and used it repeatedly.

Most people assume the Information Superhighway and the Internet are one and the same. However, in reality, the Internet is simply the most well known branch of the Superhighway. The Gore concept embraces all recently developed electronic resources for the exchange of information of all types. In addition to the Internet, commercial computer networks such as Compuserve, America Online, Delphi, Genie and Prodigy are all part of the Information Superhighway. So too are interactive television, video telephones and other new telecommunication options.

Another term that is widely publicized is "Cyberspace". Coined by William Gibson in his book *Newromancer*, Cyberspace is a convenient shorthand description of the vast number of electronic paths and messages flowing between people and computers on the Information Superhighway.

The Internet itself was first established in the 1970s when an arm of the U.S. Defense Department, called the Defense Advanced Research program Agency (DARPA), wanted a computer network developed. DARPA developed a computer protocol (set of standards) by which computers of different brands, sizes and types could electronically talk to each other.

Five university locations were chosen to have their computers linked together using the DARPA sponsored protocol in order to allow researchers to swap information. In the 1980s, the Internet was actively promoted by the U.S. National Science Foundation and existed solely for research purposes. Commercialism was totally banned and only universities, the U.S. Government or the research departments of technical companies could use the Internet.

This situation lasted until the early 1990s when the National Science Foundation decided to open Internet to commercial use and to allow anyone to gain access. This decision caused huge controversy with existing Internet users who had become firmly entrenched in the non-commercial qualities of the original Internet. A strong anti-commercial bias still exists on the Internet today among the academic and research communities.

The most common questions about the Internet are:

1. What equipment is needed to get on the Internet?

The basic tools required are:

- Personal computer - any brand, any speed, any type. The faster the better, but in reality any computer will do.
- A modem - again, any modem will do but in practice the quicker the better.
- A telephone line.
- A printer for making hard copies of electronic messages you receive.

- A communications program - which allows the computer to talk to the modem. (Most Internet service providers will also provide this software free of charge).

2. How do you gain access to the Internet?

You open an account with a company which provides commercial Internet access. They currently advertise regularly in major newspapers, and are easy to contact. There are a number of account charging options and you should be prepared to experiment with a few service providers and different charge structures until you find the optimum set-up for your own particular business operation.

3. What can you do on the Internet?

The four primary functions of the Internet are:

- Electronic mail (e-mail). Everyone on the Internet has an e-mail address. You can send a private message to another person on the Internet, and receive a private message from anyone else. Your messages are stored until you read them, and can then be erased or stored.
- Information. A huge number of databases (computer accessed libraries of information) are available. As an Internet user, you can look up information stored on other computers. You can also create your own database and allow other people to look at the information you provide.
- Public forum of ideas. One part of the Internet is called the Usenet and is made up of over 10,000 discussion groups covering a vast array of subjects. Internet users can post messages to any of these discussion groups and read whatever anyone else is posting.
- Talking and chatting. Similar to a CB radio or large-scale conference call, Internet talk channels allow people to send and receive typed messages from anyone else connected to that channel.

The key to making money on the Internet lies in the opportunity it presents to present your goods or services to large numbers of people at a very low cost. There are currently in excess of 30 million people connected to the Internet, although nobody is really sure how many. About 10,000 more people are obtaining Internet access every day. Millions more users are expected to join the Internet over the next few years.

Marketing products through advertising on the Internet has the following advantages over all other forms of advertising:

1. The Internet is interactive - that is, your potential customers can easily send messages to you if they have any interest, questions or a desire to purchase.
2. By selling over the Internet, you form an immediate association with any new clients. You have a common interest: the Internet itself. This assists and reinforces the selling process.
3. Computer advertisements wait patiently until your prospective client gives them his full attention, and then makes a decision whether to delete them or act on them. No other form of advertising offers this feature.
4. Due to the fact that Internet advertising is so new, there is a strong novelty factor at present. Advertisements attract a lot of attention.
5. E-mail is instantaneous. There is no lead time. An e-mail message can circle the globe in just a few seconds.
6. By comparison with every other form of advertising, Internet cost per thousand is exceptionally low. For example, typical costs to reach 1,000 people one time are \$7 in a magazine, \$7 by radio, \$16 on television, \$30 in a large newspaper and \$330 by direct mail. By contrast, an Internet e-mail may cost

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