

Establish a Dialog and Trust Relationship with Prospects

First and foremost, people buy from people they like and trust.

People like to buy from people who give them the information they need, aren't "pushy," and are easy to do business with. They trust people who do what they say they will do, have solved similar problems for people like them or companies like theirs, are open in their dealings, and have well-documented policies on privacy and procedures and strictly adhere to them.

So how do you translate this environment to your web site? Somehow you have to project your friendly face to greet your visitors and get them to "open up" about themselves. Text and graphics (and sometimes audio) are your only tools. The very first thing to consider is what happens when a visitor "lands" on the page most relevant to their needs. Normally, people consider this the home page, but for web sites that have been indexed completely by the search engines, this is not something you can predict. A search engine could drop visitors anywhere on your site as a starting point. So be sure to design a web site that plans for multiple entry points.

One of the most common traps companies must avoid is leading with a "killer" greeting, likely created as a Flash introduction. We all have seen it. Watch these flashing text and animated graphics run across the screen, usually with voice and music alongside. Of course there is often an "escape" key or "skip intro" link so visitors can bypass the forced introduction, which now defeats the purpose of having the introduction in the first place. Marketing is about controlling the message to an audience and often companies that believe too much in this insist on investing in this misguided effort.

This is not to say: "Dump the Flash presentations" or give up on trying to funnel the communications down a pre-determined path. They can play an important role in presenting your company's offerings. A compelling presentation that sets the stage for you is a good thing. But consider an important design principle. Let buyers discover the solution to their problem at their own speed. The discovery process fosters a sense of confidence, which helps keep you in alignment with the customer. As they discover that your product or service is a potential solution to their problem, they will self-qualify and represent a highly qualified prospect.

The discovery process is even more important in the age of Internet shopping. When a prospective customer has entered a question at the search engine site looking for more information about a solution to their problem or feature to a product offering, they are expecting an answer. If your web site offers answers to a potential customer's problem, don't create barriers to these answers. Treat these answers as web draws offering a buyer real value for which they would gladly exchange contact information, such as email address, in return. Once contact information has been given, appropriate and highly relevant information will be provided on an ongoing basis. Buyers will begin to expect and look forward to receiving useful information from you and will feel very comfortable moving from an electronic relationship to a personal relationship.

Once you have created this first level of trust you can then follow-up with either traditional marketing reach methods such as phone calls or actual visits. If that is "pushing" the relationship too quickly, rely on less direct methods, such as personal email messages, newsletters or even

web blogs posting common exchanges. The most important aspect is remaining focused on the service or how you can solve their problem. Translate this concern via your web site and follow up with real examples before expecting the opportunity to win their business.

Market-Vantage specializes in Integrated Web Marketing. We help companies develop and implement effective Internet marketing strategies for a positive impact on their business. If you would like to improve your leverage of the Internet for marketing, please call us at 603-888-5600 or use our web inquiry form at <http://www.market-vantage.com/about/inquiry.htm> to request an initial confidential consultation about your specific situation.