

How Do You Define Internet Marketing?

We interviewed a cross-section of selected companies to define successful Internet Marketing from their viewpoint. Here's what they said.

Many people seem to be searching for the definition of Internet Marketing. So, we did a survey of some of our clients and prospects. At the end of this article, we'd like to offer our own definitions as a result of our findings.

Go to your favorite search engine site and search for: define internet marketing. Today, I searched Google, because I was curious to study both the normal results and paid placements ads. What type of impression do you get at this first look? The top search results are the industry veterans who have long established themselves during the early "gold rush e-commerce" days of the Internet. They deserve that spot for their dedication to building up the Internet Marketing industry. But, look at the paid placement ads and it's a different story.

Do you notice that the majority of ads associated with 'internet marketing' are focused on helping web sites get more "hits" or traffic? Is bringing in web traffic what defines successful Internet Marketing? While traffic is indeed the lifeblood of any web site, this is only the beginning phase of Internet Marketing. We interviewed a cross-section of selected companies to define successful Internet Marketing from their viewpoint. Their responses varied accordingly to the type of business they are in, B-to-C or B-to-B. Interestingly, our survey results show that they share many common concerns, which basically are only different in how they prioritize the challenges.

For example, having lots of web traffic and good search engine ranking is a priority for many of the B-to-C clients, while generating awareness and interest is a bigger concern for B-to-B companies since they typically do not close business directly on the web site. In either case, when we started asking more detailed questions, both types of clients admit it isn't the amount of traffic that really concerns them; it's converting a visitor to a sale or qualified lead. A very fundamental follow-up question presents itself: Do you believe your web site speaks to your ideal customer or prospect? In many cases, the responses were mixed. Graphics and navigation aside, many companies expressed frustration that their web site was not providing enough sales conversion or drawing enough of the right prospects.

We asked all of the companies what types of web draws they were using to generate traffic to their site. Creating a web draw is very much like what many marketing departments have done in the past to generate trade show booth traffic. Typical draws at trade shows are handing out brochures, giving away T-shirts, demo a product, free sample, or even a theater style presentation. Developing good web draw materials is the separation point between companies who understand the real potential of Internet Marketing and those who are just simply handing out brochures at the edges of the trade show floors. In this area, traditional offline marketing and Internet marketing share a common purpose and benefit of increased awareness.

We then asked companies how Internet Marketing has affected their traditional marketing efforts. Some companies indicated that when they roll out any new offline marketing effort, the campaign must incorporate the Internet as part of the plan. For example, when they send out a direct mail

piece promoting a trial use for a new software product, they assigned a unique URL in order to track the success of the Business Reply Card. This is offline marketing integrated with online marketing.

The goals of Internet Marketing and traditional marketing are the same. Ultimately, the common purpose is to increase awareness and influence new customers. Internet Marketing has its own unique advantages for tracking and measuring every dollar spent on campaigns. You also have the advantage of studying the behavior of your visitors and making critical changes in your campaigns and your site to effect to reach your business goals.

Understanding and applying accountability is the new challenge in Internet Marketing for classic marketing people. Some marketing professionals will also have to create closer ties to their sales process, which is a task that the marketing department formerly didn't have to, or wasn't able to, perform. The choices in tools used to measure and track a successful campaign are many and have a range of implementation prices and effectiveness.

In conclusion, our definition of Internet Marketing is a mix of Internet related activities that target the right audience directly or indirectly and causes prospects to initiate a relationship with the company behind the website. Internet Marketing activities can include opt-in email campaigns, webcasts, portal site media and newsletter sponsorships, and search engine optimization and marketing. Internet Marketing is not limited to the web and should be integrated with your offline marketing if that's an effective way to reach your target audience. All activities will extend downstream processes into sales force automation systems whether they are simple low-cost client software or ASP-model products or sophisticated CRM systems.

Definition of Internet Marketing Terms

Internet Marketing - Using the interactive technologies available via the Internet to further create a dialog with potential customers by connecting with them with good educational content about your company's products or service offerings.

Search Engine Marketing - Improving an organization's visibility within search results when search phrases entered at search sites returns a listing of related web sites.

Internet Marketing Consultant - an extended member of a company's marketing team who is not only ready to advise but "roll up their sleeves" and get the work done.

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.