

Permission Marketing

In a world where there is a sign or person trying to market an item to you at every turn, it gets ever harder to get your message through.

No one is in a constant buying mode, and more and more people resent being sold something. The most obvious sign of this is the recent movement to ban telemarketing to homes in the US via the Federal Do Not Call list. The sign-up rate at some states is higher than predicted. Although the Direct Marketing Association is pleading their case in the court of law to preserve household telemarketing, popular resentment in answering phone calls at odd hours for unwanted products or services is a tough opposing force to stop.

As the telemarketing practice becomes limited or simply eliminated as a business-to-consumer marketing tool, what will fill the void as a reach vehicle to increase awareness of your offerings? Effective telemarketing campaigns generate interest for an item the prospect was previously unaware of, or one they were interested in but just not quite motivated enough to buy. A successful approach would be to time the calls for the most logical moment when a prospect is ready to purchase, to the extent that that were possible. In any case, telemarketing, direct mail and spam email always have the reputation of being intrusive marketing, pushing something that's unwanted.

So what is a better way to introduce a prospect to your message? Ask their permission.

Yes, You May Sell Me Something Today

If you were walking down a crowded street and a person stops you to ask for directions to the nearest Italian restaurant and you were an owner of a French restaurant what would you say? Yes, there is one just right around the corner, or no there is only a French restaurant just up the street. Answer only yes and you lose the chance of acquiring a new customer, or saying no could get you caught in a lie if they walk just a bit further. Or instead, you could answer their request and then ask their permission to market to them. For example, "Yes, there is an okay Italian restaurant right around the corner, but if you are looking for a really great French meal I could tell you about one that is just as close." After you received their permission to present your sales pitch the task of handling objections becomes much less difficult because you overcame the first challenge of getting them to say yes to being marketed to.

So what does permission-based marketing have to do with Internet Marketing? A lot! As telemarketing loses its effectiveness, using search engines as a replacement tool will only increase in popularity. Search sites are like a crowded city street where thousands of people are asking for directions. They are looking to find both places and products they already know and researching the offerings they don't know about. These web searchers are the prospect looking for an Italian restaurant, and you are the French restaurant owner. So how can you leverage the search engines as your permission based marketing tool?

First, address their question with a direct and straight to the point answer. Review the search keyword logs of your web site. When a search is being made to a particular feature or attribute of your product does the web page it lands on answer the question? If the answer typically is "no,"

then it is time to rework the web copy. Next, are there related search terms that you could intercept to present an alternative offering? If you have competition there are sure to be ways to divert search traffic to your site. And what is the most effective strategy to execute this, while still following Internet Marketing best practices?

Paid placement or pay-per-click for top ranking is a one way to reach similar target markets. As in the above example, you could launch a Google AdWords campaign for your French restaurant that appears when someone searches for "Italian restaurant." Much like a normal marketing campaign, present a compelling example of why the prospect should consider an alternative. Focus your normal search engine optimization efforts around the core business you have and use the paid placement tools of Google Ad words or Overture to highlight special benefits or options.

If you are a business that has engaged telemarketing in the past with some success, you don't need to give up on it. Leverage the search engines as a method to create that first level of awareness and when you get them to your site ask permission to market to them further. Once you have them saying yes to that first request, then it's the right time to place a telemarketing call as a fulfillment mechanism. By granting permission, they will actually expect and appreciate the telephone follow-up, rather than dread or avoid it altogether.

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