

Advertising & Direct Marketing Options for Solo and Small Offices

Direct marketing is the oldest marketing method known to humankind. It involves phone calls, mailings and advertisements that communicate directly with your target market to make your offer. A direct marketing campaign starts with intense research on the target market to develop a product line and delivery method. You need a long list of leads to contact before you can start.

When Should You Use Direct Marketing?

Direct marketing works best for very specific niches. Like most marketing methods, you need a narrow target market that you understand well. The people on your list should be looking for products or services that help them solve their problems. Direct marketing can be expensive so it needs to be laser-targeted.

The direct method works best with products that are simple and straightforward. Unlike online methods, such as content marketing, you can't afford to be subtle. You have to drive home your message succinctly and firmly. The easier your products are to understand, the better. Direct marketing methods don't give you a lot of time to communicate your message.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Direct Marketing

The best thing about direct marketing is that you get quick results. You can find out whether or not your market is receptive almost instantly. It's a great way to collect hard data about your target market.

Another advantage is that it's a tried and true method that's been used successfully for years. There are proven techniques you can learn from direct marketing veterans which are known to get results. Unlike more recent marketing methods, direct marketing will probably always be around in one form or another.

The main drawback is that many prospects hate direct marketing. This is why the softer approach of content marketing is so appealing. People are annoyed

by phone calls and junk mail, and they've started to tune them out. There are no-call lists and increasingly strict regulations about what marketers can and can't do. Many people see direct tactics as an invasion of privacy.

Direct marketing also requires more of an investment of time and money. Printed marketing materials can get expensive and it takes a larger sales force to collect prospects by phone.

The Keys to Direct Marketing Success

There are three keys to direct marketing that can make it work for you:

- Detailed knowledge about your target market and what they're looking for. The most successful direct marketing campaigns are those that carry out painstaking research and gather lots of hard data.
- A clear message that emphasizes the benefits of your product. The most important things you want your prospects to know need to be stated clearly up front with no guesswork involved.
- The ability to get people's attention. The exact same tactics that make direct marketing annoying to some people are also what bring its success. There's no room for subtlety and the best marketers are good at grabbing attention.

Many marketers believe that the direct approach is old hat. Inbound marketing techniques that can be done online on a shoestring budget are preferred. However, this doesn't mean that direct marketing is finished. Its techniques change with the times and it still gets results.

Offline Marketing and Why It's Still Important to Solo & Micro Business Owners

The Internet makes it easy to market your products and services online, but traditional methods are still used offline because of their continued effectiveness. The best approach is to combine online and offline marketing to maximize your results.

Offline marketing is basically any marketing you don't do on a computer. These methods include:

- Taking out ads in print and on TV or radio
- Direct mail marketing campaigns
- Getting new customers through referrals and incentives
- Co-branding with other companies that share your market
- Cold calling
- Taking part in offline events

On the Internet, marketers find out where their target market hangs out (Facebook, online forums, etc.) and put their offer in front of them or draw them in through their content. The same goes for offline marketing but instead it's done in shopping malls, on TV, at local events, and in the local community.

Should You Use Offline Marketing?

Offline marketing works well together with online methods. For example, you may run an offline promotion in the local community to get people to your site. You may gather names and email addresses offline for your email marketing campaign.

One thing to consider, however, is budget. Online marketing can be done completely on a shoestring budget. Offline methods always cost a bit more in terms of money and resources.

The Pros and Cons of Offline Marketing

The biggest benefit of offline marketing is that it can be a much more personal approach, depending on the methods you use. There's simply nothing you can do online that compares to meeting your prospects face to face. This personal contact is what many businesses lack today.

It also gives you a huge credibility boost. People are somewhat wary of businesses that only operate online. When you see them offline, people have a chance to see your products and services with their own eyes and not through a computer screen.

Offline marketing is really the foundation of online marketing. The same fundamentals apply. Unlike online techniques, these are proven methods that have been used effectively for decades.

As mentioned above, the major drawback is the cost in terms of money, time and resources. Offline marketing strategies are not feasible for many small local businesses due to the expense and their limited marketing budgets.

It's also tougher to establish yourself as an expert offline. Online, you can do it quickly and easily through content marketing. This is where you provide valuable content to your target market that establishes your authority.

Finally, offline you can only reach a limited local audience. With the Internet, you've got a worldwide reach and you're open for business 24 hours a day.

Why You Need to Learn Offline Marketing

Even if you focus your marketing efforts online, it's a good idea to learn offline marketing since it involves the traditional techniques that form the basis of online marketing. Online marketing is essentially offline marketing plus technology. These proven sales techniques and principles can give you an edge in your online business.

Search Engine Marketing – Self Employed and Climbing the SERPs

In online marketing, you often hear people talk about dominating the search engine results for certain keywords. What they're talking about is search engine marketing (SEM). This is a broad term that includes everything you do to increase your site's visibility within the search engines, such as Google and Bing.

Many people mistakenly mix up this term with SEO (search engine optimization), but these are two different concepts. SEO is part of SEM, but there's much more to it. SEM also includes using the search engines' ad networks and other forms of advertising to target search engine users.

Advertising on Search Engines

Your SEM campaign starts with choosing the right search terms. These are keywords and key phrases your target market is using to search for sites like yours. It's important to choose keywords that are relevant and have a high number of searches per month. You can use an online keyword tool to do this.

Once you've chosen your keywords, you optimize your site for them (SEO) and take out ads that target these keywords. Search engine ad networks let you bid on keywords and decide on your budget. They place ads on people's searches depending on these factors.

Why Place Ads?

SEO offers a way to draw traffic to your site for free or very close to free. Why use SEM and pay for ads? The reason is that ads get you highly targeted traffic quickly. The results are immediate, whereas SEO takes time. It's a good choice for limited time offers or new sites that either don't have traffic yet or don't employ SEO techniques.

SEM also helps you when you want to dominate the search engine results pages (SERPs) for your chosen keywords. By basing your SEM campaign around those keywords, you can make sure that the search engines place you at the top.

The Pros and Cons of SEM

SEM is an essential part of any online marketing strategy. If you build a high quality site and employ no SEM whatsoever, it's possible to build a strong fan base over the course of several years through other types of promotion, but SEM gets you there much faster.

The main drawback of SEM is that it takes constant attention, maintenance and budget. Everything changes quickly online. The search engines (and especially Google) update their algorithms constantly, and you have to stay on top of these changes. If you rely too much on search engines for your traffic, one of these changes can seriously impact your business.

The Keys to SEM Success

How do you run a successful SEM campaign? Best practices include:

- Split testing by taking advantage of all of the tools available to see what works and what doesn't
- Clearly defining the goals you want to achieve with your SEM campaign
- Taking time to choose the right keywords and changing them if necessary
- Using the highest quality content possible to provide value for your visitors
- Giving visitors a clear call to action.

Finally, it's important that you don't put all of your eggs in one basket. While SEM is important, you should employ other methods as well to get human beings to your site. The best strategy includes marketing to both search engines and real human Internet users.

And Maybe, Selling Other People's Products with Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a type of performance-based marketing where revenue is shared between online merchants and website owners. In its simplest form, a publisher has a website where they promote affiliate products. They get a commission for each sale made.

How to Do Affiliate Marketing

If you want to use affiliate marketing as a publisher, you create a website and build traffic to it. You should also create a list of subscribers and build your relationship with them. You then join an affiliate network and choose someone else's products to promote based on what your readers and subscribers like. The network gives you an affiliate link, and whenever customers click it, you get paid.

Pay Per Action

Affiliate marketing is performance-based. This means that you get paid when a certain action occurs. There are many types of actions and they don't have to be sales. With Pay Per Click (PPC), you get paid each time visitors click on your link. Companies may pay you for each link you publish, each phone call from a prospect, or each person who signs up for their list. In these cases, you're helping the merchant by harvesting prospects for them.

When to Use Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is great for all kinds of products and services, but it's best used for niche marketing. Instead of casting the net wide, niche marketers focus on a very specific audience. It's easier to build a relationship with a small, laser-targeted niche and they're more likely to buy products and services that are customized to their needs.

Affiliate marketing is not a way to make a huge amount of cash quickly. It usually starts out bringing in a few dollars here and there, and then gets bigger over time. Many successful affiliate marketers manage multiple campaigns at

the same time to maximize their earnings. This can get you a decent passive income but not necessarily a fortune.

The Pros and Cons of Affiliate Marketing

One of the most attractive benefits of affiliate marketing is that you don't have to create the products yourself. You just sell the products of others. Affiliate marketing offers an easy way to monetize a blog or website that already has a following. All you have to do is start writing about products or services that your visitors would like.

Affiliate networks are usually free to join and you can run an affiliate campaign with very little money up front. All you need to pay for are web hosting and any tools you'll use. Networks offer all kinds of support and security, and they often give you other resources to work with. It's as close to 'plug and play' as any online business can be.

The main downside is that affiliate marketing income is usually fairly sporadic, even if you have a site with plenty of traffic. It's not a way to quit your day job. There are also many affiliate marketers who rely on spammy or unethical tactics, so search engines like Google don't particularly always like affiliate sites.

Keys to Affiliate Marketing Success

If you want to do well, offer something original and unique that nobody else is offering and which is helpful to your audience. Fill a gap in the market. Really zero in on your audience and give them exactly what they want. Like most forms of marketing, affiliate marketing is all about long-term relationship building. If you have a hungry crowd that knows you as someone who offers quality, you'll make good sales and a sustainable income.