AtHeath LLC   **Engage. Transform. *Advance.***

Is My Current Marketing Helping or Hurting My Bottom Line?

Put another way:
Will Improving My Marketing Really Lead to an Improved Bottom Line?

Contents

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Of course, the answer to questions such as these is. . . It Depends! Any other answer would be disingenuous. Don't trust anyone who gives you a simple yes or no answer.

Moreover, we have to define what we are talking about when referring to "marketing" or more to the point the type of marketing activity. Marketing covers a very broad spectrum of activities and is a lengthy discussion indeed. Therefore, I will narrow the field a little and discuss online marketing with a focus on a few essential elements of lead generation and in doing so accomplish two goals:

1. Provide useful information you can act on immediately and,

2. Not overwhelm you with too much information.

Let's begin.

Generating Leads

Today we are going to discuss online marketing and more narrowly the process of conversion along with some aspects of how to nurture leads.

To nurture leads one must first, generate leads. One of the better developed approaches is to create a system that:

A. Finds people interested in what you have to offer

B. Provides some way for them to experience what you offer and,

C. Has a call to action such as asking them to Sign Up to be on your email list (e.g., newsletter)

To accomplish your Call-to-Action (CTA) objective you must convert your lead into a prospect, which requires you to overcome "friction."

Friction is defined as "a psychological resistance to a given element in a sales or sign-up process." In other words, it's a psychological element present in your marketing that prevents prospects from acting on your offer (MarketingExperiments).

Finding people interested in what you have to offer can be accomplished through a dozen means, PPC campaigns, twitter, USPS promotions, networking discussion sites and many others. Once you have someone's interest, what's next? Assess your degree of friction.

Creating Friction
Focusing for the moment on a basic CTA, i.e., an email sign up form, here are a few ways your marketing approach might prevent a person from taking action:

1. If your sign up form asks a person to enter: first and last name, email address, phone number, company name, mailing address, title, income level, and how the person found out about you. You have created friction.

2. If the sign up form is small and the font, sizes or fonts types are difficult to read. You have created friction.

3. If your sign up form is hard to find, perhaps lost at the bottom of the page in an area where few people tend to scroll down. You have created friction.

4. More aggrieves still your page doesn't have a sign up form on it or the sign up form is on a page other than where people initially land. You have created friction.

Some or all of these examples may seem to be obvious mistakes to you, but I see these and similar errors made all the time and not only by novices (but I will resist the temptation to name names).
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Clearly, it is easy to create friction, but I can hear you asking the all-important question, "Okay so how do I reduce friction?" I'm glad you asked!

Reducing Friction
Let's go back to our sign up form example.

1. We'll start by <u>not</u> making the aggrieves mistake of not having a sign up form and we'll place the sign up form on the page where people first land on your site or in the case of a landing page the only page they see.

2. Furthermore, we'll place the sign up form well above the "fold" a term used and adopted from newsprint media. We want the form to be visible, in fact, highly visible when a person lands on the page. Thus, we place the sign up form where it

is easy to see without scrolling. Now we must consider a few other details, such as font style and size, colors and graphics, and content.

3. There is no one answer for all situations to optimize your sign up form as stated above it will depend. However, there are some guidelines worth considering. First, while large fonts may seem a little "in-your-face" the fact is the person's eye will be draw to the large print. The type itself should be a mix of upper and lower case letters – do NOT use all caps. The font should be clean and not italicized – keep the legibility very high.

4. Make sure the colors you choose pass the color blindness (color vision deficiency) test. Color blindness does not necessarily mean someone cannot see color it often means he or she cannot distinguish between colors. One form or another of colorblindness affects roughly 18% of males and a small fraction of females. Of the various types of color deficiencies, the most common is the red-green color difference deficiency (7-10%).

5. Finally, we must decide on how much information to capture during the sign up. It will probably come as no surprise that a negative correlation exists between the amount of information and number of people signing up. Said another way the more information you ask for the fewer number of people will sign up – it's just that simple.

    If you are asking for 10 or more pieces of information and you reduce the number to four or less you will very likely increase your conversion by 100% or more!

    Even if you already have only six fields on your sign up and reduce the number by half to three fields, you will see a strong increase in conversions perhaps as high as 200% or more. In fact, reducing your sign up from five or more fields to two fields will almost certainly make a vast and positive impact on your conversion rate.

Wait, I hear a rising chorus of protest, "I need at least some of that information I can't just drop down to two fields." Understandable and the good news is you may not have to remove all the fields to improve your conversion rate you can simply make them optional.

Of course, this does not guarantee that people who sign up will provide the optional information, but at least it protects you from the loss of a significantly higher conversion rate. Moreover, how much difference making a field optional has on your conversion rate will depend on the information you are asking a person to share. Asking for an address will increase friction much more than asking for the name of the person's company or their title. However, if you ask for their phone number you had better be prepared to make that information optional.

Summarizing

As you can see, the amount of information and the type of information are both factors that affect conversion rates. To optimize fully your sign up rate you will have to test the different mixes of required and optional information. Keep in mind that you may want to control the flow of quantity and quality of the leads (e.g., more leads with less information or the reverse). Changes to the number of fields, the type of fields, and whether a field is required or optional, are all factors you can adjust to meet your current lead generation requirements.

There is also a debate about the left or right placement of a sign up form on your page, but I think we'll tackle that question at a later time.

Give Prospects an Experience

Now it's time to talk about another important part of the lead generation process – providing a way for prospects to experience what you offer. In the retail business, a tried and true approach is to offer "samples" of the product. Walk through the aisles of a big box club store and you are likely to be presented with samples and/or product demonstrations. The samples provide an effective way for you to try the products.

The online equivalent is often a trial period, free content, discounting for the first month of a subscription, or in some cases actual free hands-on help. These are ways to nurture prospects and they are not mutually exclusive. Your objective is to lower friction so you can move your audience from awareness to consideration and then lower friction that stands in the way between consideration and purchase.

Content as I am sure you have heard is "King" and while that might continue to be true as a rule of thumb, there is more to it. Content is an effective way to inform and educate your audience – providing them with value. However, you know as well as I do that not all content is created equal; and poor content can do more harm than good. Therefore, your focus must be on presenting your product and/or service in a positive light throughout the nurturing process – obvious perhaps, but not easily or often well executed.

Nurturing Prospects

The nurturing process is one filled with small easy to make "yes" responses. The result is a growing level of trust and appreciation for you and your offering. Accumulating "yes" responses helps to deepen the commitment made between you and your potential customer. Use content as a way to inform and educate to create a more committed relationship.

If you are using content to nurture prospects start with good headlines that not only interrupt, but also more importantly convert attention to interest. Headlines are "pick-up" lines and we all know the power of a good one versus one that is lame.

Table 1: Example Headlines

Lame	Pick-up Lines
Read this report to learn how to lose weight	Hey, still want to lose weight?
Protect your computer with our software	How safe is your computer from threats?
If you wear high heel shoes you need to read this article	The shocking truth about high heel shoes
SEO investments may not live up to your expectations	Seven lies SEO experts like to tell
Your dentist may be keeping important information from you	Ten important things your Dentist won't tell you
You can have healthier skin with very little effort	Get rid of blemishes and wrinkles once and for all

Create a Strong Marketing Plan
While headlines are a key component to a successful content marketing campaign, the larger effort of creating a strong integrated marketing plan - one that doesn't skip steps in a rush to close the deal - is the real goal.

Start by taking an inventory of the content you have and the content you'll need to create an integrated marketing plan. Map content across the venues you intend to use and remember to era on the side of simplicity [Think about the Google launch they used the simplest homepage ever and took share immediately away from Yahoo].

Next, work to frame the offer with customer logic not company or brand logic, see the offering through the eyes of you potential customer. To do this, create a biographical sketch of your ideal customer. Try to find the commonalities of your ideal customers, but don't be afraid to segment your market as needed.

The most important task is to connect the content to their needs and to make your content relevant, important, and as urgent as possible. It's easy to say keep it fresh and appealing, but not so easy to do. However, if your content is not grabbing attention and influencing the marketplace it is a waste of time.

Every time you write content, ask yourself, what is the appropriate CTA? Help your prospect make the micro or small yes commitments that will lead to the one large commitment you eventually want from them. In one way or another nurturing requires that you clearly articulate your value proposition or essential message, but that is a topic beyond our scope today.

A Final Note on Nurturing
The page your audience lands on (e.g., Website, blog site or landing page) must quickly, (you have less than 7 seconds) answer three key questions:
Where am I – what is this page about?
What can I do on this page?
Why should I do anything?

Always keep in mind that clarity will trump persuasion – you cannot persuade someone who has left the page or in analytic terms, "they bounced."

Every-Time-You-Write Checklist

The fact is every element of your message must be created thoughtfully. Always answer the question, "What function is this copy serving? In order to do that, you must know and understand the elements of powerful copywriting and apply them. Here is a quick checklist you can use to ensure the likelihood you are hitting all the main elements in your communication.

- ✓ **Does your headline convert attention into interest?**
  Obviously, headlines are the first thing readers see, and if yours fails to capture attention and interest, they will not read anything else.

- ✓ **Does your sub-headline support the headline's objective?**
  You may not use sub-headlines and if not I would ask why not? You write sub-headlines to support the main headline's focus by building on the concept in the main headline or to introduce a parallel concept. However, if your sub-headline isn't supporting the main headline you might be better off without it – don't confuse your readers!

- ✓ **Have you written your copy in the "language" of your readers?**
  If your target audience is unlikely to use specific words or wording, or expressions, you should probably avoid them too. Unless you are introducing new concepts essential to your message, than educate, but do it in a nurturing way.

- ✓ **Have you focused on your reader and not yourself?**
  Remember and never forget - It's all about them! People are on your site because of their needs, they are much less interested in you. They want to pursue their goals and solve their problems. Write about the benefits they will receive, write about their problems and the solution to their problems. They are not interested in you, they care about themselves – this may sound like everyone is narcissistic, but it's really just a matter of value and the time required to reach an objective.

✓ **Do the images and graphics as well as their placement support the value proposition?**
Images, graphs, photos etc. must all be part of an integrated format that supports your message and helps readers understand the offer and the value of the offer. Do not decorate your page with images – select them for the value they add.

✓ **Is your call to action (CTA) backed by enough value to be compelling?**
A CTA should ask people to do something they want to do. Something that based on your offer has low friction and is one the small yes responses that will lead to the large yes. Here is a great example: The button on the registration form should not say, "Submit." No one wants to submit to you or anyone. However, they do want to "get the video" or "download the eBook" you are offering - ask them to do that!

✓ **Does your page address readers' concerns and handle objections?**
Stick to the important stuff - provide the information your audience needs and focus on benefits. Address common objections you know readers will have, but don't talk about objections they are unlikely to worry about. Stick to things that might be reasons for not taking action. Remember, you want to answer the important questions and minimize the main objections. You can also provide an easy way for them to ask questions – you want to be open and unassuming.

✓ **Have you included unnecessary elements on the page?**
Websites, blogs and especially landing pages should have a simple design. Focus everything on the page's conversion goal.

✓ **Does all the messaging communicate your value proposition?**
This is by far the most important element to keep your eye on. If you don't have a strong value proposition, the game may be over before you're on the field.
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The value proposition is the reason your targeted audience is listening to you and will prefer your offer to that of the competition. In other words, if you don't have a strong value proposition, your target audience doesn't have a sufficiently strong reason to do business with you. Your communication must convey a clear message to your readers, making them understand and feel the value they will receive when they take action.

Focus on your product's benefits and try to show how what you provide is unique. Convince and better yet demonstrate your uniqueness. Make a case that your offer is unavailable elsewhere, but do it without exaggeration or being misleading.

✓ **Did you add the all-important P.S.?**
The P.S. is often one of the most read parts of any page. More on this topic in a forthcoming short article titled "**P.S. It's Anything But Trivial**."

P.S. If you have not done so, please consider my free offer to help you take steps to improve your business opportunities Click the link below to get started.
http://businessmadepossible.us/business-review-form/