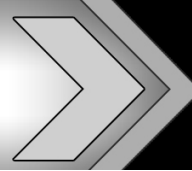**The Proven System For Turbo Charged Viral Traffic!**

VIRAL
TRAFFIC
TORNADO

EXPLOIT THE INSIDER SECRETS TO MAXIMAZING VIRAL POTENTIAL AND GENERATING TRAFFIC

DIGITAL COURSE

CHAPTER 1

VIRAL MARKETING FOR YOUR ONLINE BUSINESSES

Chapter 1: Viral Marketing for Your Online Businesses

The Elements of a Successful Viral Campaign

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When you're planning your viral marketing strategy, it's important to keep in mind the basic requirements of every viral campaign. Without these, your stampede might turn out to be more like a leisurely stroll.

To build a good viral campaign, make sure your plan includes

- A free product or service

- The product has to be easily transferable to another person

- It has to be able to scale easily

- It has to take advantage of other people's resources

- It has to be unique, original, and relevant

Over the next few pages, we're going to take a look at each of these elements, and examine how you can use them to design and launch your own viral campaign. Don't worry. It's not as complicated as it looks!

There's A Free Lunch, And You're Serving It!

Every single viral campaign begins with giving something away. Every one. It could be an ebook, a piece of software, an instructional video, or even a few laughs, but it has to be free. And when we say free, we mean free. Not free with an opt-in or a free trial. It has to be really free, because you're going to encourage your customers to share it with their friends, and no one wants to tell their sister she has to sign-up for your list to get the cool thing you're giving away.

Now that doesn't mean you're giving away the farm. But you do need to give away great stuff. There's lots of ways you can do that, while still leaving your customers wanting more.

For example, if you build and sell a software package that helps bloggers find free photos for use on their blog, you could offer a free version of the software that only searches one database instead of several. Or if you've written an ebook, you might release one chapter for free.

One thing to remember, though, is that the free product must be useful all by itself. You're not releasing a free trial, you're essentially building two products. One which you'll give away and one which you will sell, and they both need to be valuable to your users. Free software that is so limited as to be worthless is not a good candidate for a viral campaign. The same is true for a chapter of an ebook that ends with a question.

Some marketers pull just this sort of trick to "force" customers to upgrade, but very often it will backfire. Customers are savvy, and they dislike being manipulated this way, so don't make the mistake of thinking you'll lose sales by giving away too much information, because the opposite is actually true. You'll gain sales by giving away great stuff. Especially if your great stuff is easy for your users to share among their friends, family, and colleagues.

Share and Share Alike

The second element of a fantastic viral marketing campaign is the ability of your customers to share your product with their peers. Think about the hundreds of email forwards you get in a year. That's because people love to share great stuff. Good marketers know this and take advantage of it by providing their customers with what they want, and then they sit back and watch it spread.

Social Networks Traffic 101

Viral campaigns thrive on the Internet largely because of the social networks that exist. Ten years ago marketers had to rely on telephones and email (maybe) to get the word out about a new product or a great service. You can imagine the results were unpredictable and slow to materialize.

Today, we have dozens – maybe even hundreds – of social networks to use to get our message to the masses. But for some, that means having the opposite problem: where do you start?

For an online marketer, the first place to start is with your very own email list. These are the people who already know you, like you, and buy from you. They're your biggest fans, and

they're the ones who are most likely to pass your great products on to their family and friends and social network. So make sure you're keeping them informed about the latest products you're developing, any contests you're holding, or any other thing that's going on that they might want to share.

You probably have an account with several of the more popular social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter. But for viral marketing to work in these venues, you have to be hanging out with the right crowd. If you use Facebook primarily for friend and family interaction, trying to launch a viral campaign there is probably not a good move.

The same goes for Twitter and Google Plus. Do you follow those in your niche, or those who are other marketers? If it's the latter, your niche campaign won't have very good results here either. Instead, make an effort to follow those who share your passion for your niche, instead of those who are simply marketing their own online business. Now if your niche is internet marketing, then you should be following other marketers, but that's the only exception. Concentrate on following – and being followed by – those who are in your niche, but who are not necessarily selling in your niche. In other words, you want to be hanging out with the buyers, not the sellers.

For strictly social interaction, Google Plus, Facebook and Twitter are your number one choices. If your target market is other business owners, though – say for example you sell a product aimed at accountants – you need to get on LinkedIn. If you're not familiar with it, LinkedIn is basically a database of business professionals in all areas of expertise. It's similar to Facebook, but without the games and other social activities.

LinkedIn allows you to network with other professionals in your area of expertise, form groups, organize meetings, and develop a vast network of colleagues you can reach out to through private messaging or by posting status updates. You can automate your LinkedIn updates just like you can with Facebook and Twitter, and even link your other social network accounts so everything is up to date. If your product is geared toward professionals, LinkedIn is the social network of choice.

For viral campaigns built around funny videos, great photography, comic strips, or other visual media, StumbleUpon is the social network of choice. A combination of a social application and a bookmarking service, StumbleUpon is where you go when you're looking for new stuff on the Internet. Just click the button on your toolbar, and you'll be transported to the next interesting thing as determined by the choices you made when you signed up. Like animals? StumbleUpon will serve up a random cat video or heartwarming dog story. Into sports? You might land on a video of Tiger Woods hitting a hole in one, or an ad for a new kind of practice ball.

Of course, getting your content to go viral on a social network involves more than just putting it out there and hoping for the best. Later on we'll discuss how you can give your campaign a virtual push to get it started, but for now, just be aware of the options available in the social networking world. Each has its own purpose and followers, so pay attention to where your customers hang out to determine the best social networks for your needs.

Learn To Utilize Your Friends And Their Resources

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Leveraging the power of your own network is an important aspect of any successful viral campaign. Chances are some of your friends are marketers just like yourself, and chances are they've got mailing lists, blogs, and Twitter followers in related, complementary niches. These are powerful assets you can use when it comes to launching a viral campaign.

Here's a short list of ways you can leverage the resources of other marketers to get the word out about your new campaign:

- Buy ad space on related blogs

- Guest post on related, but non-competing blogs

- Buy ad space in newsletters or networks in your niche

- Offer affiliate commissions for lead generation

- Make yourself available for interviews about your product or business

Under that you will see a breakdown of the traffic by country. This gives you an idea of the national demographic you may be targeting. You may think all sites are geared towards the US market, but that's not so. Once you understood who is coming to visit your competitors' sites, you will have a better understanding of how to build and market your own sites.
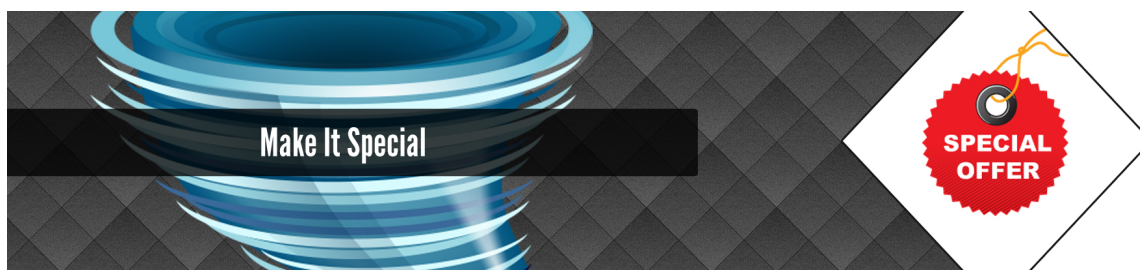
Make It Special

The final element of any viral marketing campaign is its uniqueness. The same old eBook offering the same old, seen-it-everywhere plan for planning a destination wedding isn't likely to go viral. But add a new twist or your unique take on it, and suddenly it has potential.

That doesn't mean you have to invent a new way to train dogs, though. It just means you have to offer a unique view. In other words, be yourself. You'll get a lot further by giving your eBook or video or podcast your own voice than you will with simply rehashing what others have already said many times over.

Another way to add a unique flair to your content is by giving away checklists, printable workbooks, and other user-friendly features that can't be found elsewhere. We'll talk about that

some more in the section on creating viral eBooks, but for now just remember that unique and unusual products and marketing campaigns will spread faster and farther than anything else.

You can see that all these elements go together like a jigsaw puzzle. Without all of them, the picture is incomplete, and they all rely on each other to work. Without the resources of your friends, your social networking strategy won't work as well or be as far reaching. Without a good product, your friends and readers won't be likely to share it with others. Without a great distribution network, it won't matter how good your product is, because no one will see it.

Software

Free software lends itself quite naturally to a viral campaign. It fits all the requirements we discussed earlier for successful viral marketing – it's free; it's easily transferable; it's easily scalable; it uses other's resources; and it's unique. Some examples of software that's gone viral include

- Article submission programs or automation programs

- WordPress plugins – and WordPress itself!

- Games (they don't have to be big or elaborate)

- iPhone or Android apps

- Browser add-ons

- Note-taking and organizing applications like Evernote

But before you decide you want to write a software package, you need to consider the special requirements of software. First, it has to work across multiple platforms. Unlike video hosted on YouTube or a pdf file, software has the added problem of so many possible configurations of computers to deal with. Is your end user running Windows XP? Vista? Or even Windows 97? What about the video adapter? You can see that a lot of thought has to go into the development of a large-scale software package, so it's not something to be taken lightly.

The second obstacle to software creation is ongoing support. You can't just throw out a piece of code and let it drift off without a support plan – not even a free piece of code. If you don't have plans to upgrade, fix bugs, and improve your software down the road, you might be better off sticking with eBooks and videos.

That doesn't mean you have to invent a new way to train dogs, though. It just means you have to offer a unique view. In other words, be yourself. You'll get a lot further by giving your eBook or video or podcast your own voice than you will with simply rehashing what others have already said many times over.

What's In It For Me?

With that said, though, software can quickly go viral and build a fantastic revenue stream for you, even if the software itself is free. Here's a few ideas you can use to monetize free software:

- Offer a limited functionality free version, with an upsell to the fully functional paid version. Remember though, the free version must be useful as it stands if you hope to get a viral stampede started.

- Sell ad space in the software itself. Evernote does this well, with one small, unobtrusive ad in the corner.

- Use a link-back strategy to build brand awareness. This is perfect for WordPress plugins.

Distributing free software isn't much different than distributing other forms of content. You can host the files on your own server (remember to use caution here if you plan on going viral!), host them on free file sharing sites, upload them to CNET or ZDNET or SourceForge servers, or – in the case of WordPress plugins – distribute them through the WordPress Codex.

The Basics of Going Viral

Can you force a viral stampede? Probably not. But there are things you can do to give your marketing tactics a nudge that might just send them over the edge.

Great content. This cannot be stressed enough. Without this, no matter how much effort you put into your marketing strategy, people are just not going to pass on links or eBooks or newsletters that aren't any good. Make an effort to go the extra mile for your readers, and they'll reward you by bringing in new customers for you.

Before we get into the specific aspects of viral marketing, what it means and how to implement it, let's spend a little time discussing the concept of traditional marketing, what it is, how to implement it.

There is nothing 'magical' about the concept of marketing. Simply put, marketing is any action that puts your company or its products in the minds of potential buyers of your goods and services. There is some magic however in successful marketing–a subtle blend of knowing your target audience and what will both be memorable and yet not overshadow the key elements that you need the target to remember. This, of course, takes research into what the potential sales of your goods or services might be as well as understanding possible pricing margins and the profitability that is possible for the given market; the costs of marketing can't be such that your efforts won't pay for themselves in the long run.

Obviously the most important part of any marketing scheme is the product itself–some things sell themselves and simply need to be introduced to the public to be recognized for the value they have. Others may be necessary and life altering, but may not be clearly understood, or the value may be undermined by availability from other resources.

The next most important aspect of a successful marketing scheme is to match the price point to a level which people will pay, and which allows for enough volume of sales to maintain future advertising and development—without being so high that it encourages others to enter competition with you.

Finding a successful price point starts with looking at your customers and the market niche, then at any competitor's current pricing models and how customers feel about those price points. If you find you could sell for half the price of existing vendors, but the public believes the price of the goods is already fair, then entering too far below current market values may cause them to believe your product is of a lower quality or has less assurance of longevity. An excellent example of a price that is unwarranted but widely accepted is diamonds–except for the fact a diamond is one of the hardest natural substances and is as pretty as cut glass, it has very little value and is not that difficult to obtain or process. So why are they so expensive?

Simply put, because the people in the business tightly control the price and help with marketing campaigns to set public acceptance of the existing price points.

Another one of the Seven Ps that is not *as* vital today in the Internet-driven world (but still bears thinking about) is the *place*—either where you will be presenting or obtaining the products you will be marketing. For most Internet-based businesses, this really boils down to the shipping model and company you will deal with to get the products to your customers. But for some, a physical retail outlet is still an important aspect of your business image and the way your company will be perceived.

There are things to consider here, too. For example, one vendor providing cheaper shipping but not enabling you to deliver without signatures can be an issue—your customers might be annoyed at having to take time off work or go to another location to obtain the product they will be anxiously awaiting. Having to arrange a schedule or fight to obtain the goods may override any excitement your successful marketing may have created. Of course, being able to physically hand someone the product in a nice bag from a retail outlet is the ideal scenario: but today most business deal at least in *part* with online and magazine sales. Other options may include sales at onsite locations such as exhibitions, conventions and fairs—all of which offer the same opportunities to stand out from your competitors as a retail outlet, but mean some additional planning and thinking ahead.

The "P" for Promotion is a key attribute to marketing, and especially viral marketing–it is the aspect where you pump up the public's knowledge and understanding of your goods or services in any manner possible. Smaller budgets mean more clever marketing approaches, but some concepts you can bear in mind that should work regardless of the amount of funds available to your campaign include:

➔ Indirect approaches such as PR can be more effective than 'above-the-line' activities like advertising. Coverage in the kinds of publications your customers read is worth its weight in gold, so don't be shy about approaching newspapers and magazines. Most journalists are keen to hear good stories, particularly if you make it easy for them by supplying photographs with a press release.

➔ For many new businesses, local coverage may not only be easier, it may also be more effective at generating sales.

➔ Know what works—look at how others in your field do it to see what kinds of promotions have been successful.

➔ Don't underestimate the effectiveness of small-scale advertising in local papers, bulletin boards, and directories such as the Yellow Pages.

➔ Come up with a catchy slogan that customers can recall easily, and get involved in local community activities.

➔ Consider direct mail, telesales and the Internet advertising to win new customers.

With the proper planning and a vision of exactly what you're trying to achieve, you should be able to hit just the right *promotional mix* of advertising, direct marketing and public relations. In many cases, you can learn by examining how your competitors handled early promotion concepts. Just be sure not to try and copy *theirs*—being unique and new is a vital element of successful marketing.

Your people can be your biggest asset or your most visible deficit–even if you're the only employee of your company, the attitude your customers see from you at all times (whether real

or just perceived) has a major impact on how your business is perceived. Ideally, you should reward existing customers in some way, and preferably in a manner that your competitors do not and to provide personalized service of some kind. It can cost you between three and ten TIMES as much in advertising revenue to replace a customer who has gone to a competitor than to just keep them in the first place. So in some cases you can come out ahead in the long run just by losing a little on a few key transactions.

One way to improve your customer relations is to welcome complaints, and to provide feedback to the customers who complain, letting them know that you value the input and what actions, if any, you are going to take based on their complaints. If you are not making changes, explain why. Establishing that you understand their position but cannot address it for whatever reason is the least you can do—provided doing so doesn't open you up to legal action!

Process refers to the methods and systems you have in place. These are what you utilize to deliver your products and track your customer satisfaction and sales as well as the costs, potential earnings and ongoing expenses per revenue generations. As far as marketing is concerned, it is perhaps the most important of all aspects of running a business. This is because with improper processes in place, you can neither understand nor extrapolate your *real* costs and revenue generation, and may very well be running at a long-time loss despite having profits being shown on the books currently.

Some aspects that should be included in your processes should be:

➔ How to track after-sales services

➔ Informing customers of delivery status

➜ Methods for dealing with delays and back-orders

➜ Tracking and ensuring follow-up phone calls are made

➜ Obtaining feedback and complaints about ongoing issues

➜ Tracking orders and issues in a manner that allows easy lookup

As with most of the seven Ps of successful marketing, a great deal of time and/or money could be spent in this area, but careful thought and creative thinking can normally come up with processes that will work well and fit within most budgets.

Most of us know that the first impression of our company and products are likely to be the way our web site, letterhead, company sign or flyer appears. Not only does the appearance of these items provide an initial impression. It can also help shape customers' overall concept of your company as they become more aware of other aspects of your appearance and the 'tone' of the business. There are basically three *styles* of design when it comes to physical appearance that impact your business, and those include:

- **Graphical designs**

  Covering everything from the logo and branding, to the style or 'type' of fonts you use, the graphical look of your company is vital to the image you will be portraying. Entire industries of graphic designers exist to help companies develop packaging, stationery, leaflets, promotional brochures, websites, corporate videos, CD and DVD-ROMs. Whether you use these or develop them on your own is up to you. Since quality and consistency are vital, this is one area that it is often well worth spending a few dollars in.

- **Product design**

  Everything from teapots to trains were created with the help of designers. It is not enough to fulfill a function, you need to do so in a manner that people will accept and

that is also being reasonable and cost-effective to produce. A good product designer can help you here.

- **Interior design**

    Whether a web site, the interior of a building, or the storefront of your convention display, spending time to develop exactly the right look can set you apart from competitors, or even improve your productivity.

VIRAL TRAFFIC TORNADO

CHAPTER 2

HOW IS "VIRAL" MARKETING UNIQUE

Chapter 2: How Is "Viral" Marketing Unique?

For most of us, the word "virus" has a negative aspect to it. We hear the word and think either of getting sick, of a nasty little bug that can make us sick, or of a computer virus which cost us tons of data and hardship at one time or another. In fact, viruses are not necessarily bad, and most life on earth relies at least in part on them in one degree or another. Some people even argue that humanity itself fits the classic definition of a virus, infecting the planet earth for better or worse! When you look at how we find and settle into the most supportive areas of the planet and then begin to change them into less-suitable places to live, the word "cancer" actually leaps to mind. But here, we're not talking about our race, but the word "virus" and how it relates to marketing.

When it comes to marketing and viral marketing campaigns, the idea is much simpler and focuses on the fact that most viruses (real or computerized) have the ability to replicate themselves without "outside" assistance. In this case a "viral" campaign is one which allows or stimulates customers who are exposed to the ad campaign to actively help spread the word themselves. That is, they send your advertisement on to other potential customers due to their excitement with the product or because of a joke, gift or award option associated with the campaign.

Having such a built-in replication capability, just as with real viruses, has the potential for exponential growth and can quickly spread a message to thousands or even millions of users from a single starting point. Urban myths are a good example of such growth. Even though numerous websites debunk such myths, they continue to circulate widely. More than half the people exposed to them forward them to others even though they've heard them already and know they are false. Sooner or later, the myths have spread too far and wide to stop.

One of the greatest examples of this in an actual working scenario was the original hotmail expansion program. Hotmail.com, as one of the first "free" web e-mail service group, began recruiting members by first giving away free e-mail addresses and services, then requiring that every e-mail sent via their service include a simple tagline at the bottom detailing that the receiver could also receive free e-mail by signing up at www.hotmail.com or even www.gmail.com. Like ripples from a rock flung into a pond, the initial offering quickly spread outward causing exponential growth and a huge list of members to be tapped for marketing other services towards.

Viral Marketing Strategies

Some strategies are obviously going to work better than others. The Hotmail campaign in which "free" services are utilized with no apparent cost to the end-user, are no-brainers. Approaches where some initial up-front costs are charged to credit cards or where "future" charges will be incurred are much less likely to generate active involvement.

Few promotions will work as well as Hotmail's strategy because most products and services don't generate revenue via their day to day use. Hotmail users spread the word and generated new business simply by using the service itself. You can increase your campaign's likelihood success and its ability to generate new business traffic by including proven one or more of the following "viral" elements:

- Gives away products or services

- Provides for effortless transfer to others

- Scales easily from small to very large

- Exploits common motivations and behaviors

- Utilizes existing communication networks

- Takes advantage of others' resources

Let's examine each of these success elements briefly.

Gives Away Valuable Products Or Services

There is no question that "Free" is one of the most powerful words in marketing. It's not surprising, then, that most viral marketing campaigns and programs include some method of giving away products or services of varying values to attract attention and draw customers. From free e-mail services or free information to free "cool" giveaway items such as buttons, posters and pens to trial software programs that perform powerful functions hinting at the full-fledged capabilities available in the "pro" versions, the list of potential products and services to give away for free is practically endless. Part of the reasoning behind this is the Second Law of Web Marketing known as Wilson's "Law of Giving and Selling" which in part stipulates that while words like *Cheap* or *inexpensive* may generate interest they won't do so as fast as simply saying "free."

One of the keys to the success of modern viral marketers is that they practice delayed gratification. They may not profit today or tomorrow, but if they can generate a groundswell of interest from something free, they know they will profit eventually and hopefully for a long time afterwards. Investing up front by providing goods for "free" to the end-user attracts attention that can then be redirected to other desirable things you are selling that will and eventually earn money.


Provides For Effortless Transfer To Others

With real-life viruses, you find that public health nurses offer sage advice during flu seasons and high risk locations: "simply stay away from anyone who coughs, wash your hands often, and don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth and you are much less likely to catch a virus or get ill." This is because a virus only spreads when it's allowed to transmit from one person to another. In the real world, the medium that carries the virus is normally mucus or other bodily fluids. Likewise, your marketing message must rely on existing mechanisms through which the message is just as easy to transfer and replicate: e-mail, websites, graphics, software downloads, etc.

Viral marketing works so famously on the Internet, in part, because of the ease of near-instant and inexpensive communication and because people like to share things they see and hear. Digital formats make copying music and images simple. Most software interacts with other programs in some form or another, despite AOL's noted exceptions! From a marketing standpoint, your goal is to simplify your message so it can be transmitted easily and without degradation: shorter is best. As with the Hotmail campaign, saying "get it free" and listing the

location is about as simple as it gets. The advertising links that display along with Google™ toolbar search results are another prime example of effortless information dissemination.
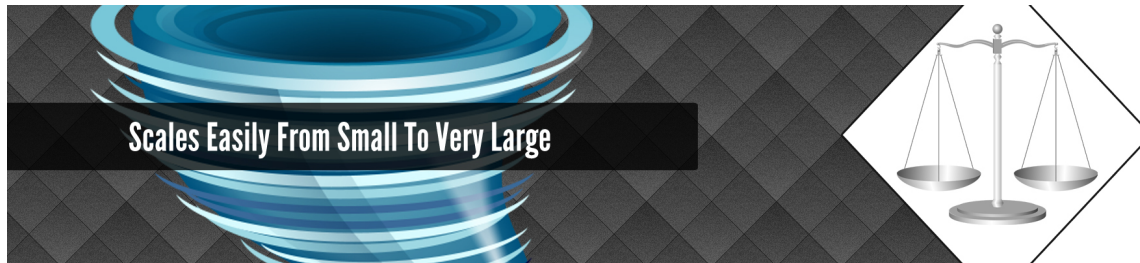
Scales Easily From Small To Very Large

If you expect your message to spread like wildfire, then the transmission method needs to be rapidly scalable from small to very large. This was one of the few weaknesses of the Hotmail model. As a free e-mail service, it required its own mail servers for transmitting messages. When the strategy turned out to be wildly successful, more mail servers had to be added very quickly to support the rapid growth. Otherwise, the service would have bogged down and people would have deemed it unreliable. Just as in real life, if the virus multiplies but kills the host before spreading, then nothing worthwhile is accomplished. Having an idea in advance of the potential for growth and for building any necessary scalability into your viral model is vital to a successful campaign.

Exploits Common Motivations And Behaviors

A clever viral marketing plan will take advantage of common human motivations. For instance, what proliferated "Netscape Now" buttons and "Microsoft Bob" T-shirts in the early days of the Web? The desire to be cool and be part of a trend. Another factor that always drives people is the desire to strike it rich, or put simply: Greed. A hunger to be popular, to be loved, and to be understood also stand out as driving human factors. The resulting urge to communicate based on these basic human needs can produce millions of websites and billions of e-mail messages. When you can design a marketing strategy that builds on these common motivations and behaviors for its transmission, you have a winner.

Utilizes Existing Communication Networks

It is a fact that most people are social. Nerdy, basement-dwelling computer science grad students may be jokingly referred to as the exceptions, but even they have friends and family with whom they connect. In fact, scientists tell us that each person in the modern society has a network of anywhere from eight to twelve people in their group of close friends, family, and associates. If you factor in a person's broader network that may increase to scores hundreds, or even thousands of people with whom they interact within a given period, depending upon their

position in society. A waitress, for example, may communicate regularly with hundreds of customers in a given week; a person running a news-blog may rich millions.

Network marketers have long understood the power of these human networks, both the strong, close networks as well as the weaker networked relationships. People on the Internet develop networks of relationships, too. They collect e-mail addresses and favorite website URLs. Affiliate programs exploit such networks, as do permission e-mail lists. Learn to place your message into existing communications between people, and you rapidly multiply its dispersion.

Takes Advantage of Other's Resources

The use of others' resources aptly demonstrates what makes viral marketing unique. In a traditional campaign, the marketers themselves must identify a niche in society, carefully design a campaign that appeals to that target audience, and then pay for and otherwise promote ways to reach that group of people. A viral campaign, on the other hand, both generates its own spread *and* is at least part self-targeting.

People who are interested in or use your campaign will tend to be communicating with other people like themselves. They do your work for you by reaching your "target"' without your having to first identify and locate that group yourself. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, you are not out all the costs associated with first identifying and them reaching those individuals.

While you may still have a large percentage of people who do not participate if your offering is not of interest even if it *is* free.

But considering that your costs are nil or close to it as compared to a regular campaign, this is still a remarkably inexpensive type of marketing campaign to participate in!

VIRAL TRAFFIC TORNADO

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY AND VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Chapter 3: History And Viral Marketing Campaigns

Perhaps due to the fact that the Internet is new, most people think that "viral" marketing is very recent and doesn't have much of a history on which to draw. In fact the concept of viral marketing is very ancient. Only the term and its modern application that are new, though not as recent as you might think! The modern incarnation of viral marketing is normally attributed to [Steve Jurvetson](#), a managing director of Draper Fisher Jurvetson, the founding VC investor in Hotmail and Kana, and previously an R&D engineer at Hewlett-Packard. The term "viral marketing" is almost ten years old now, and refers to a new incarnation of "word of mouth" advertising, a technique that's existed since time began.

How does "word of mouth" advertising classify as "viral" marketing you ask? Well think about it. The concept of viral marketing is that it perpetuates itself though existing (low or no cost) media: word of mouth is exactly that in its purest form. Since Cain heard how much Abel was loved and got jealous, this type of advertisement has been generating reactions from others. You can review a lot of history, human nature and past campaigns to see what has worked and what has not worked. Most importantly is having or gaining an understanding of personalities and people so you can learn how to influence them to spread your message when you want them to—and that's without doing anything that can harm you or your business.

It is a well-known axiom that word of mouth can either kill or make a company, and that bad news seems to travel much further and faster then good news. Studies have shown that people are much more likely to speak out when they are upset than when they are happy with a service or company. Simply put, people *expect* to get good service and don't react when they get it. If they get poor or insufficient service or goods, they feel that they HAVE to respond to "get even." The facts vary from research groups, but the consensus is that between two and eight people will complain about something that is upsetting for every one person who will speak out about

good service. This is why it is so important to understand customer relations and what makes people happy and what can make them upset in any interaction.

While viral marketing is more about getting the customer to come TO you, you also need to do a good job once you get them and make sure you meet (or preferably exceed) all their expectations once you do. Otherwise, you may find your own viral campaign being used against you, sabotaging the results you hoped to achieve!

Classic Historical Examples of Viral Marketing

As mentioned several times in the past, the best and most well-known example of a successful viral marketing campaign, at least in the electronic age format, was probably the Hotmail campaign. It was successful because the plan and resources were well laid out in advance, money was spent to ensure growth could match demand, and an easy to spread message was combined with a valuable and useful tool that was just too good to pass up. That tool itself was then used to communicate the message to other potential users who saw the value directly by having received the e-mail in question.

Another great example is the animated e-mail icons from IncrediMail. Simply by seeing the result and thinking "that's cool," the desire to have and use the technology causes users to click the link associated with the animation and in many cases join the service.

In days previous to the Internet searching for successful 'word of mouth' campaigns one thing has always held true: you can't fake interest and get it to spread. If the item or concept is not exciting and doesn't hold value to the end-user it won't get spread along, no matter how much energy or effort you spend trying to get the ball rolling.

Some ideas that rely on humor or jokes may spread, but may dilute themselves to the point of being useless. For example the "Budweiser frogs" campaign's hardest task was clearly associating the amusing antics of the frogs in the commercials to their actual product. There was no problem with people remembering the frogs and talking about them. But how often did you hear people say "what beer was that for again?"

Until the infamous Bud Why Zer campaign, a brief history of some of the more memorable and successful campaigns to date include:

1. (1978) DEC announced the DEC-20 using ARPANET e-mail in a marketing invite which earned it a complaint for "inappropriate use" as this violated ARPANET policies.

2. (1994) Media critic Douglas Rushkoff mentioned viral marketing in his book *Media Virus.*

3. (2000) Mahir Cagri "I kiss you!!" craze generates over twelve million hits to his home page encouraging eTour to join up with him on the power of viral marketing.

4. (2000) Slate magazine described TiVo's unpublicized giving away free TiVo units to web-savvy enthusiasts a great "viral" word of mouth effort.

5. (2001) *Business Week* wrote about the now "classic" campaigns of the web-based campaigns for Hotmail (1996) and The Blair Witch Project (1999) as *striking examples of viral marketing,* but warned of some dangers for imitation marketers.

6. (2004) Burger King's The Subservient Chicken campaign exists as an outstanding example of viral or word-of-mouth marketing.

7. (2005) One Six Right's viral High Definition Film campaign helped to lead to sponsorships and support from many large media companies.

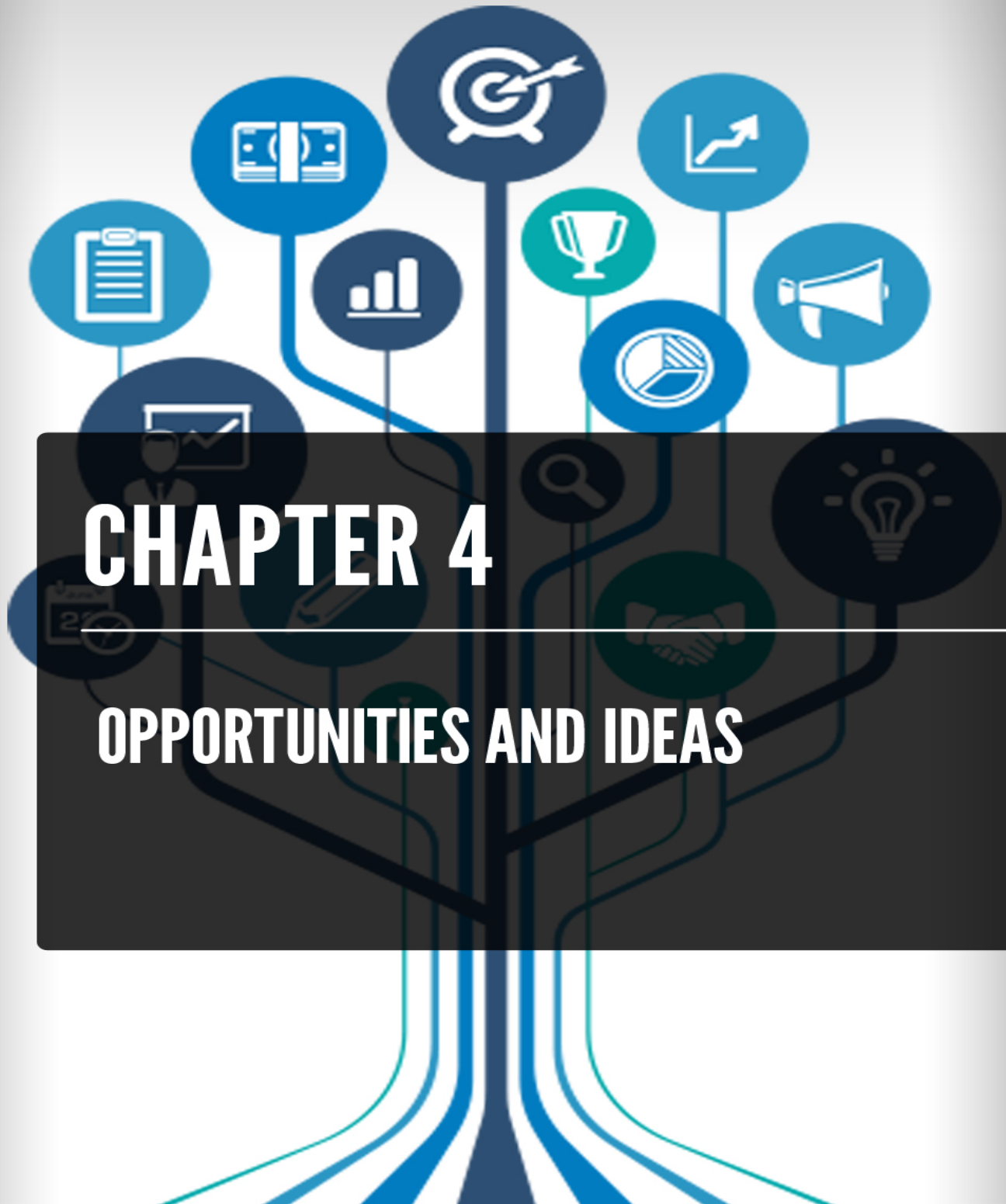# CHAPTER 4

OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS

Chapter 4: Opportunities And Ideas

When it comes to the opportunities available to you for a successful "viral" or word of mouth campaign, the list is theoretically limitless. In reality, when you start adding costs, what really drives people, and existing communication methods into the mix, that list begins to become much shorter very quickly. The key is to find ways to be heard, to rise above all the background noise already in place out there, and to get people to trust you and be interested enough to take some action to help further your campaign.

A successful viral marketing campaign accomplishes these tasks by getting customers excited and involved: and that means knowing what it will take to get them to feel like they should be involved. To do this, you must know what interests your potential customers and then take advantage of those interests by offering information, goods or services which they would be willing to pay for to them for free in exchange for participation in the campaign. A sort of "paid to play" plan, if you will, that helps to feed your viral marketing scheme has to be set up!

On a favorite TV show of mine which I was watching recently, a group of people started bidding fervently for some "rare" substance that a new cast member didn't know about. Yet, the new member got into the bidding because everyone else was excited and going at it. After she won, they informed her it was a joke and she had just been had.

Generating excitement such as is seen in an auction type mentality can get short-term involvement, but if the end result is anger or a feeling of betrayal or if the expectations set are not met by the results seen, then that can backfire. This is why it is important to use methods that are truthful and up front, as well as simple and straightforward whenever possible.

Methods That Work

There are several proven methods that work well, provided that there is value in the offering. Those include:

Winning A Prize

As long as we're talking true value and not a tee-shirt or novelty item, setting up a giveaway, competition or sweepstakes always generates excitement. Especially if you can arrange some type of ongoing or interactive event such as lotteries, or if some portion of the proceeds is being given to charity events that are near to your focus group's hearts.

One viral campaign that was reasonably successful dealt with a "ticket" to win a new motorcycle being given away with every $100 worth of purchases from a store. Additional chances were sold for $1 a chance directly to the public in addition to the campaign. Flyers and e-mail notices for this event were spread so far and traveled so well, that a yearly giveaway has been done every since. Business for that company has increased tremendously. Had the grand prize been just a jacket or a set of gloves, the response would likely have not been nearly as

favorable. The prize value has to be something that really generates excitement and makes the users want to take a risk or chance to get involved, even if all it involves is mentioning the campaign to others.

For good quality viral campaigns, a clever way of setting up such incentives would be to have contestants enter the e-mail addresses of people they think would be interested into your website database. Then, give them an additional entry for every such e-mail that is entered that is valid, (i.e. deliverable) to ensure your winner has not been defrauding you.

Inform Them (Your Audience)

Inform Your Audience

Perhaps an even easier way to provide a value and promote the sharing of gifts is implementing a viral marketing campaign that relies upon you giving away information that your users need or can use. Whether that is a health newsletter, interviews with the stars, tips and techniques for maintaining their motorcycles, taking photographers, or the best places to camp in the Pacific Northwest doesn't matter. You just need to provide information that is useful and pertinent in a form that is easily distributable and include your advertisements in ways that cannot be easily stripped out.

On your webpage having "E-mail this page" buttons that format and send the information including your links and content are good ways to take advantage of this type of viral marketing. Sharing content with other sites, so long as your links and information are retained, is another

way to start the ball rolling. There is a lot of value in site traffic both in advertising revenue and in being able to direct and catch attention to items you personally may have for sale. So why not take advantage of such easy to implement methods of driving traffic your way?

## Free Trials of Services or Products

A similar and very effective way to drive interest in products is to allow a stripped-down or time-out version of the product to be utilized in advance. Just be careful that you make very clear any limitations or problems that may occur such as an MP3 encoder that strips off the last 3 seconds of the song before allowing the trial. Nothing will sabotage your efforts so much as allowing a user to cost themselves time or money by not understanding how they should use the product. It is YOU they will blame, and that type of excitement is not what we're trying to generate here!
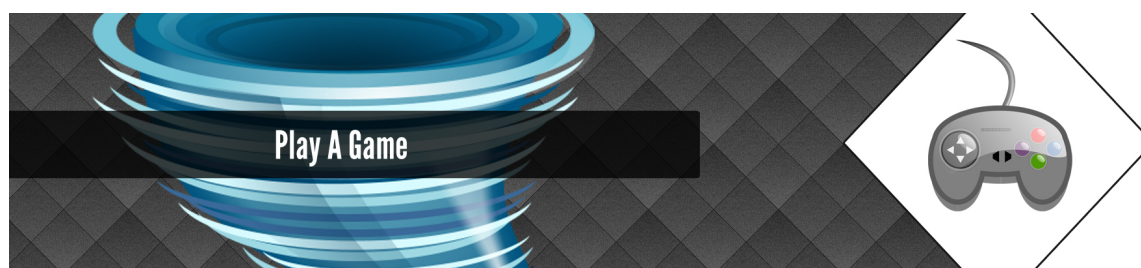
Play A Game

If you have a service or interactive site of some kind, allow free access or "trials" on the site. This is how sites like photo-share and YouTube generate interest. For free you can join and play,

and then once you become interested and want to take advantage of more that the sight has to offer, you have the option of buying into the more site's advanced features. This can be a very good way to drive interest and to create a good viral marketing campaign. Interactive sites often have downloads and forwarding of graphics or free e-mail all of which you can add your taglines to. This captures the attention of the friends which your trial user is interacting with and anyone to whom they forward your information or photos to as well!
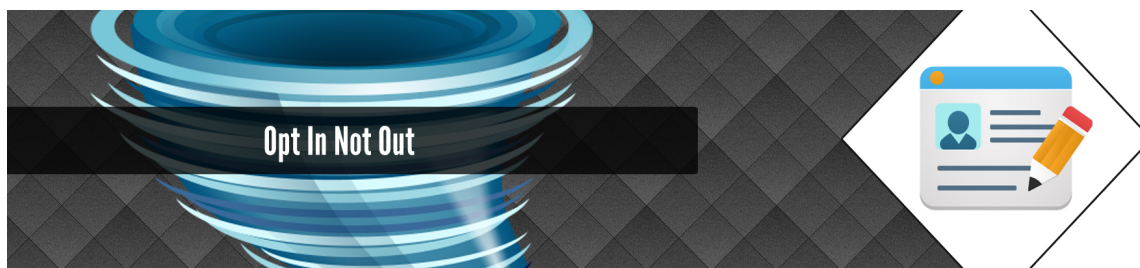
Opt In, Not Out

The term that is used when a user decides to take advantage of your services when a forwarded piece of viral marketing data comes across their screen is that they are "opting in" on your offering. However, you need to be careful on both how you consider someone to be truly opting in and how you track and utilize any information that you gather. For instance, if you get their e-mail address as a party who *may* be interested from an existing user you should not keep and track their data as if they had opted in. Doing so may cause them to become annoyed at any mailings and "junk" e-mail offerings that you then begin to forward to them thinking that they are interested.

Be especially careful about who has really opted in when you offer people a chance to win a prize for every e-mail contact they send you. Some may be tempted to pad out their list with everyone in their contact list, not just people with similar interests. This can cause bad feelings and animosity which, as we have discussed previously, can lead to a negative viral campaign which can be just as deadly as positive programs can be lucrative!

No matter what methods you use to start a campaign, the following insights can help you maintain control and are certain that the message your campaign is sending is the one that you wish to send. Using methods like these to steer your campaign and keep it on track are just as vital to successful campaigns, as is following up with existing members on a regular and valued manner to ensure you have neither lost their interest nor inadvertently annoyed them.

- Offer incentives in exchange for traceable actions that help positively promote your campaign. For instance, offering twenty percent discounts for every five leads that followed a link from their web site to your home page. Be sure to cap and clearly detail such offerings so that you do not cripple yourself or spend too much for the value received!

- Utilize public sympathy whenever possible. The classic e-mail hoax about the bottle caps and the little boy in England is a clear example of how drawing on people's desire to help others can propel a campaign into a near unstoppable juggernaut. Just make sure you use such power wisely! An example of a successful method of cashing in on such feelings came recently when a woman's clothing company started a campaign that rewarded participating members with a free Tee-shirt and a $1 donation to the *Susan G. Komen* Breast Cancer Foundation when three of their friends opted into receive the retailers catalog or join the e-mail list. This campaign was enormously successful in large part due to the feeling that simply by participating in receiving offerings they could help others less fortunate then themselves. That particular campaign drove a click-through rating more then three times higher then was normal on the company's web site links and an increase in the sign-up rate for their e-mail newsletter list of over thirty percent! At the same time their catalog subscription rate went up nearly seventy percent with little risk of "dead" deliveries since the people opting in to receive the catalogs were women and interested enough to choose the catalog over e-mail contacts. All of this free publicity also helped to lower the costs per sale during the campaign by as much as eight-nine percent! By anyone's considerations that is a successful campaign!

- Be Personal and keep it real. Just as not automatically considering *having* someone's e-mail address as free reign to send them advertisements is a good policy, is finding ways to personalize your contacts. This ensures that the customer or would-be customer feels that you are really reaching out to *them* and not just to a potential sale. Simply by using mail-merge features to insert names when available and using your records to focus offerings to the types of items shown to be of interest to the individuals, you can increase response by as much as twenty to thirty percent! In most cases the subject line is one of the most important aspects of this skill. Simply being able to recognize if something is junk mail or an offering that might be worth pursuing, will go a long way to avoiding annoyance even if the user isn't interested. If you DO use mail merge take the time to learn how to use "IF" fields and proper formatting using styles in your coding however. Nothing ruins the personalization of seeing your name in print as seeing clues such as it being in a different font or seeing "firstname" when a little extra effort up front can prevent that!

- Keep track of your campaign results and user details. Updating and optimizing a campaign and changing offerings to individual users based on their purchases and feedback, is not only good marketing sense, it is vital to the care and feeding of a successful viral marketing campaign. Tracking click-through and conversion rates based on your original customers is just one of the ways you can accomplish this, and having a good database is vital to maintaining and utilizing such data.

Although you can't avoid all negative feelings on the part of some contacts, these tips should help you minimize the number of users who actively campaign against your viral marketing scheme. Plus, they should keep your e-mails from falling into the dreaded "junk e-mail" folders and thus wasting all the efforts you might be taking to get both that person and those they might refer you to as a customer.
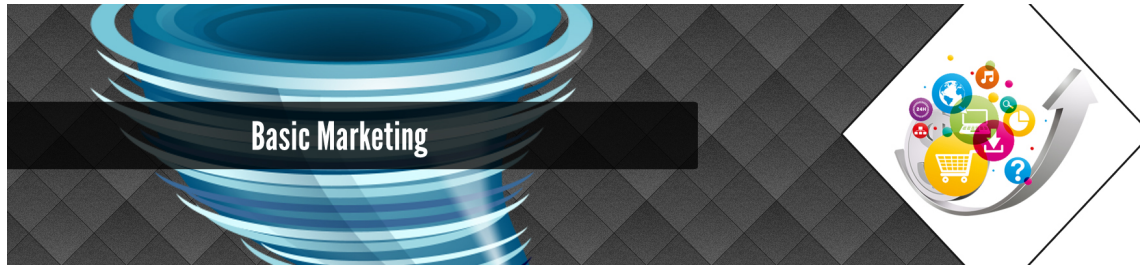
Basic Marketing

The concept of marketing, or advertising as it really is called, is simple enough. You are controlling the public presentation of your company as a successful business and promoting the public to both trust your company and want the products that you sell. In today's world especially, it isn't enough to have the best product, even at the best price. You have to let people know that you have it and do so in such a way that catches their interest and that they will recall. That's the real key to viral marketing: promoting your product or service in a manner that catches prospects up in the process, involves them as part of your marketing engine, and drives them to become excited enough to actively participate in getting your message across to others!

For any advertising campaign to be successful, remember to focus on the seven Ps (as discussed previously) and budget and understand both the total costs associated with your advertising as well as the returns you are seeing from it. It goes without saying of course that no matter how great your product or service, if people don't know about it they can't take advantage of it; but at what cost point can you afford to make them aware?

If you have a low-return product that has limited sales you may not have very much money with which to spread the word and traditional methods may seem too expensive. Just to reiterate a few of the more common "standard" advertising avenues, let's list them below:

1. Newspaper and magazine ads

2. The Yellow Pages and other directories

3. Merchandising such as leaflets, packaging, shelf displays and window displays

4. Trade journals

5. Websites and ad space

6. Facebook and Social Media Ads (More recent)

These are very common but costly ways to advertise. Viral marketing many times relies on some aspect of these existing tools. However, when you start a campaign, it's vital for you to know the start-up and long-term costs, and this includes the expense of directing the marketing efforts and of support overhead.


Tracking Costs And Expenses

For standard advertising efforts, many large firms just set aside a percentage of revenue in a flat rate to be spent wherever it is best thought to be effective. But the more successful methods include taking a more linear approach such as the following:

1. Isolate all of your expenditures that can affect revenue for both your short term and your long term goals

2. Rank the expenditures in order of cost, and determine how rapid a return they will generate, as well as how effectively you believe you can control each of them

Once you get the estimated costs associated with each of the items above, divide your anticipated marketing costs by the expected sales income, taking the percentage from among them that you identify as being the most likely to earn a return. Considering how important both getting this right and understanding your funding and potential costs can be, consulting an outside source that is not trying to sell you anything may be worth any fees or charges you would incur. Be sure to do this step correctly! Nothing is worse then getting into a campaign, especially a viral campaign over which you may not have total control, and then finding you do not have the financing to keep up with the marketing demands.
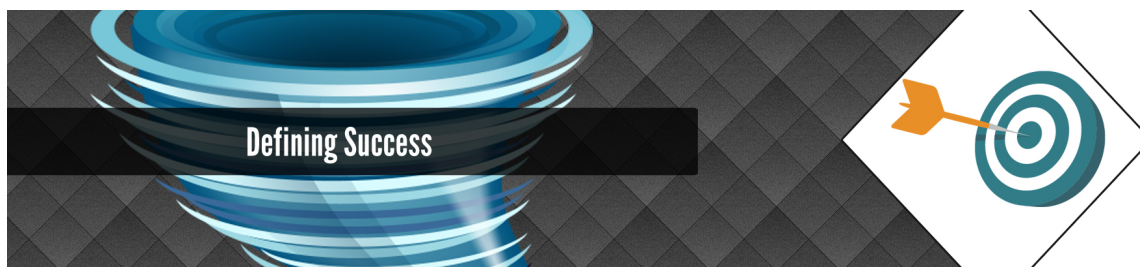
Defining Success

So what would you call a successful campaign anyway? Ideally every contact you make would result in a sale and a profit, but in the real world this is not only unlikely but a ridiculous notion! John Wanamaker was once quoted as saying "I know that half my advertising is wasted…I just don't know which half," and that is the real key to understanding the problem inherent with advertising. This is especially true with viral campaigns where so little control is held by the

company starting the campaign. You know a large percentage of the costs of getting the word of your company or product out there will be wasted up front. So all you can do is build in methods of tracking and understanding what those costs are, and where the returns are coming from so you can adjust and target those aspects during your ongoing campaign.

Some ways in which you can help isolate which aspects of an ongoing campaign are working and generating revenue are to:

- Run the same ad in two different publications with a different identifying mark on each. Ask customers to clip the ad and bring it in for a discount or free sample. Or, if you're running an ad that asks customers to order by mail, put a code in your company address such as "Dept. SI." By looking at the marks on the clipped ads or the addresses on the mail-in orders, you'll be able to tell which ad pulled better.

- Offer a product at slightly different prices in different magazines. This has the added benefit of showing whether consumers will buy your product at a higher price.

- Advertise an item in one ad only. Don't have any signs or otherwise promote the item in your store or business (whether online or offline). Then count the calls, sales or special requests for that item. If you get calls, you'll know the ad is working.

- Stop running an ad that you regularly run. See if dropping the ad impacts sales.

- Check sales results whenever you place an ad for the first time.

Checks like these will give you some idea how your advertising and marketing program is working and which avenue is reaching potential customers. Be aware, however, that you can't expect immediate results from an ad, especially with small ads. You need to give the reader a

"getting to know you" period during which he gets to feel comfortable with your business. This is one reason you need to maintain advertising even during good sales periods!


Importance of Having A Plan

It is vital that you actually have a business and marketing strategy and plan for these types of approaches to work successfully. The advertising plan that you create will serve as the basis for your objectives, budget, media plan and a creative approach concept. There are many types of paid media to deliver your message. A few of the most commonly used include:

- ➔ Print (newspapers, magazines and newsletters)
- ➔ Radio
- ➔ Television, including cable
- ➔ Internet
- ➔ Yellow Pages
- ➔ Direct mail
- ➔ Trade shows

Whichever media you decide to use, word-of-mouth or viral campaigns can be implemented successfully. Becoming knowledgeable of the do's and don'ts of advertising in any particular medium will help you to accomplish this goal. For example, if direct mail works best for your products, bear in mind that there are hundreds of books in your library devoted to this subject: reading them may provide insights into how best to target and promote a successful viral

campaign using e-mail as the focus, as well as warning of potential pitfalls (such as scalability) that you need to avoid.
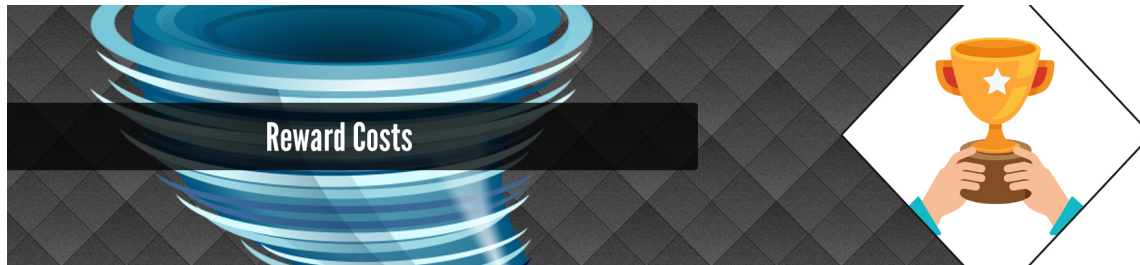
Reward Costs

A successful viral campaign requires incentives for your users. That translates into costs. In some cases these may not be out of pocket to you directly, but they still need to be considered and understood if your campaign is to be accurately tracked and the benefits versus costs weighed in the proper context. One of the ways to generate participation is to have a reward program for customers who actively help spread your message. For this to work, you have to get them to "opt in" or agree to collaborate with you.

The following tips provide ways you can accomplish this:

1. Get Them To Sign Up

Give your customers a reason to join your "club" or let you track them. Think about it: which would you be more likely to participate in, a program that promised future rewards of some kind, or one that told you exactly what you'd earn and when?

2. Track Them

Begin with your existing customer database or e-mail list. Then add to your list by capturing vital information from customers when they enroll in whatever reward program you generate. If you sell online, you can obtain this information when customers are completing the purchase process by giving them a "checkbox" option to join your rewards program. If you're a brick-and-mortar retailer, you can enroll customers during the checkout process.

3. Boost Sales

A program that offers graduated rewards can actually stimulate customers to buy higher-priced products and services. By offering graduated rewards you can avoid problems inherent in programs that primarily reward when a customer enrolls.

4. Offer The Right Rewards

Choosing the right reward is a challenge for many small-business owners. It's best to reward customers by offering special value on products or services you regularly provide and have control over, since you are trying to forge a strong relationship between your customer and your company. To achieve that goal, customers must be brought back to your business, its store or its website to gain their rewards.

Don't make the mistake of offering unrelated rewards, such as gift certificates for movie tickets, because these rewards are less effective when it comes to reinforcing a positive customer experience. After all, you want customers to have a successful interaction with you, not some unrelated company.

An effective loyalty program will stimulate your best customers to return time and again, and provide the insight you need to target and win new customers.

The bottom line is, whether you operate a service business or sell products, a good reward program that offers graduated, in-kind rewards will enable you to up-sell and resell current and lapsed customers for a maximum return on investment

Targeting The Right Audience

If you are like most businesses you have a *target* audience, that is a group of people or individuals who find your service or product interesting or useful.

Hopefully, this group can be easily delineated, such as "Campers" or "Bikers" or "Singles." But in many cases, the goods and services being sold, while specific enough in themselves, cross many easily defined boundaries of consumers and make it harder to know or understand exactly to whom they will appeal.

This makes targeting a campaign very difficult, and may even cause knowing which media to focus on for the promotion to become blurred.

The term "Target Audience" refers to any distinct group or segment of customers; having a definition that is applicable to your business' target audience will help you promote whichever aspects of your business are pertinent to specific groups.

There are steps you can take which will help you identify and segment the various aspects of your existing customers so that you can begin identifying targets groups within your existing database.

Segmenting Your Customers

Look at your existing customers and what they have been buying, what their stated interests and locales are, etc. Try and define them further if necessary or send out questionnaires until you can determine from your existing group which:

1. Are your most profitable and consistent customers

2. Make up the bulk of your sales and ongoing business

3. Elements these customers have in common with each other

Finding what customers have in common is vital to successfully identifying a niche to which you can market your product. If you find out, for instance, that 80% of your sales of reading glasses are to computer users who also read, then you know that you have two distinct target groups that are coinciding: readers and computer users. However, if you find that your glasses are selling in seemingly random patterns but then realize that 56% of these sales are to subscribers to Vogue magazine, you may realize that your appeal is not utilitarian at all, but fashion-related! Knowing this type of information is vital to crafting a successful marketing campaign, whether viral or standard.

Say, for instance, you are running a diner and notice that you get the highest profits on breakfast and that during a specific time of that period you get a rush of incoming customers.

By doing a survey you may find that that rush is from a specific company that is nearby and you may be able to further target that group by offering discounts based on their company badges or even by offering to deliver to them for "free" on orders placed in advance, thus increasing the amount of business during a profitable time that otherwise would go untapped.

Further Segmentation

Another method that is commonly used to segment target audience groups is by demographics or psychographics. Demographic information breaks people down into categories based on aspects of their age, physical location, occupation, sex or income levels. Psychographic factors define people more on their interests such as whether they read or what types of animals they favor, if they have an interest in science fiction or motorcycling etc. Both are valuable and useful tools to track in your customer database. Here are a few of the more important features you need to keep track:

- Age groups, both median and the ranges

- Sex: are primarily males or females responding?

- Location: are they homeowners, apartment dwellers, rural or urban?

- Education level

- Interests and hobbies

- Income levels and financial status

Some classic public health campaigns have learned the hard way that predicting public behavior and response is not an easy task, regardless of the amount of data and the time spend trying to do so. They started by identifying which audiences were:

- Directly affected by the problem

- Likely to change their behavior

- Most feasible to reach

- A key secondary audience (A group of individuals that can help reach or influence the primary target audience but is not considered part of it.)

They would then create marketing campaigns such as the WIC-Breastfeeding campaign and run test markets which often would identify unexpected problems with the images and responses they would present. In one campaign the developers argued against a poster that showed a young woman on a cell phone, feeling that the phone showed her to be "too affluent" yet public opinion about the poster liked the cell phone but found the woman looked too poor and destitute!

The final campaign showed a much more professional lady (with cell phone) which worked well with the target audience much to the surprise of the decision makers who had been conducting the feedback. This type of ongoing tweaking of campaigns and receipt of feedback on proposed methodologies is vital to understanding your target audience and how they will respond. There are no hard and fast rules that you can follow. Simply put, every campaign has to be an ongoing and dynamically adjusted one if it is to be successful!

Audience Segmentation Defined

Before we go further, we should define further what we mean by "segmentation." The concept of audience segmentation, especially in social marketing such as the WIC campaign I mentioned earlier or the ongoing "Click it or Ticket" seat-belt campaigns, is that not all consumers are alike. Each group of consumers can be grouped into various "segments" which allow you to design campaigns to focus your scarce resources where they are most likely to do accomplish the most good.

For instance, in the seat-belt campaign it became obvious that the primary target audience, Hispanic families who had strong feelings about God causing death and injury, were unlikely to be convinced to belt their children due to risk or education. They were more likely to accede to cost-driven aspects such as being forced to do so or pay a fine that they could ill afford.

This drove the campaign to take the current model where the advertisements are more a warning of the potential actions and penalties you will incur rather then an educational treatment showing the damage that you could avoid by using the existing seat belts available to you!

The types of information that were used to identify which specific groups made up the *real* target audience for this particular social marketing campaign included information about the:

- Incidence or severity of the problem
- Prevalence of risk factors
- Size of the group affected
- Relative defenselessness (if applicable)

Often in social marketing such as this the audience segments are described by a wide variety of variables such as:

- Those at risk for the health problem
- Attitudes of those segments
- Perceptions
- Demographics
- Preferred information channels

Much of this type of information can be gathered directly in the form of polls and questionnaires, but often the real research and leg work necessary to correctly target your audience has to take place through trial and error. The process of segmenting your audience starts by first making a list of all the primary audience segments that you wish to target, then defining each of those segments in terms of:

- Demographics (e.g., age and race/ethnicity)
- ➔ Behavioral determinants that distinguished "doers" from "non-doers" *For example, if you are trying to promote forwarding e-mails for a motorcycle campaign, identify bike riders who have actively participated in the past rather then just all bike riders in your database.*

For each of the potential segments listed, pull the following information from your research findings:

- Goals/drivers for the users in the segment
- What has previously and historically worked to influence this segment
- Which contact and information channels appeal to the users, e-mail, website links, newsletters, etc.
- How receptive they are to direct contact

Another aspect that you should bear in mind when working with target segments is the secondary or "influencing" audience segments.

For example, if you are targeting bikers, then motorcycle dealerships are a secondary or "influencing" segment which has some control and/or input to your target audience. As such, that "influencing" segment may also be worth targeting as directly or in a related campaign. In the WIC-Breastfeeding social marketing campaign we mentioned earlier, a secondary audience segment that was found to be influential to woman's decision to breastfeed or not was identified and included and resulted in a significant increase in response once involved.

Making the difficult decision to prioritize segments and focusing your efforts early on is vital to a successful campaign, especially when limited resources are available!

Gather Segment Data

Perhaps the most important part of segmenting your market is in getting the raw data on your customers themselves. For many, the time and effort to respond to a flyer or questionnaire is simply not worth it. The level of detail that necessary to properly classify a customer and learn what is needed for proper market segmentation identification is by no means a short and easy task! Ideally you would be able to have conversations and get to know your customers in one-on-one talks and discussions either via chat or phone or even face to face talks, but in the real world this is often not possible. In lieu of that, the survey or questionnaire is the only way to gather the information you need. If you are going to use this method there are some tips that will help generate more truthful and usable results including:

- Be up front about what you are seeking and why
- Offer incentives for them filling out the information honestly
- Explain honestly how long it will take to fill out the information and which sections are the most vital
- Have a "comments" section for feedback both on your company and its products and on the questionnaire form itself so you can get feedback in a non "yes" or "no" format to improve future surveys.

Other sources of information that are often ignored or undervalued by small business owners that you should track in your database include:

- Comments made both online and in any storefronts regarding sales and ongoing issues.
- Feedback on wishes and desires regarding items sold
- Questions on whether you stock certain items or price points and discounts
- Suitability of products for certain uses

Targeting People With Money (Profitable Leads)

It goes without saying that your best target audience will be the segment with the greatest income that is willing to spend it. But that doesn't always mean those with the largest incomes are the ones to target. The second half of that equation is just as important!

If you find from your reports that the second most affluent of your customer base are the ones who return more often, you should try and identify why this is.

- Do they lose or destroy the product?

- Are they giving them away and if so what about this segment is unique to drive that behavior?

Either way finding out which target audience has both the ability and willingness to purchase the greatest amount of product is vital to knowing where to spend your efforts in marketing.

A few questions worth keeping track of about your most profitable customers include:

- How often do they refer you to similar customers?
- What amount do they spent on average per visit?
- What types of goods and services do they purchase from other, related sites?

Finding out valuable data like this can help you not only target your audience but tailor your offerings and services to better meet your customers' needs, thus making you more competitive and providing you an edge over the competition.

In any case, the better you are at keeping track of what your customers are buying, whether they are coming back and whether or not they are helping (or at least willing to help) spread the word about your business, the better off you will be in knowing how to target a viral marketing campaign and your hard-to-come-by marketing budget.

Viral marketing, or word-of-mouth, can be applied in conjunction to or with most advertising streams. But it is most commonly associated with web-based (html and e-mail) systems, so we would be remiss not to comment on other alternatives where you can focus your efforts to drive your message home to consumers.