



Best Practices for Marketing Success

Creative strategies and communications for business-to-business marketing

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Building Website Conversions

An effective email marketing campaign is a powerful tool to drive additional traffic to your website. Establishing your credibility as an expert, highlighting your great prices and value, etc. can all be accomplished via email, and can create a click. However, many companies fall short once that click is made.

The idea, surely, is to encourage the site visitor to take some further action. Measuring the number of those 'actions' is your 'conversion rate'.

The foundation of your strategy to convert website visitors to leads/sales should be rooted in two key elements: your specific goals, and your understanding of the target audience.

It's funny, but many of the companies I talk to have developed a website for no real purpose. Sure, at the time there was some sort of rationale - "you need one these days, don't you?" or "our competition has one, so we must keep up". Unfortunately these reasons provide no guideline for the creation of a site. Nor do they contain any criteria for measuring success.

To compound the problem, they give no real consideration to the needs, desires, and characteristics of their target audience. In my opinion, this has led to the plethora of un-navigable, poor content, zero conversion websites that seems to be the standard for corporate America. Harsh? Maybe. But if you fall into this category, you'd better do something about it ASAP because the web is here to stay.

So what do you do?

First, I'd suggest that you carefully consider and write down your specific goals for your website. These should be written remembering that your site is a corporate resource that must provide an ROI, just like any other corporate resource. To simplify matters, there are 3 common goals that you might want to consider:

- To generate leads
- To generate on-line sales
- To generate qualified referrals

Now stop for a moment. Was your current site built based on any of these objectives? How is it performing? (Just FYI, the typical (poor performing) website has a 1-3% conversion rate of visits to action, whereas successful sites convert 20- 30% of their traffic.)

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Typical secondary goals include:

- Building credibility
- Establishing expertise within a certain industry
- Projecting a credible image
- Building your database of newsletter, or other, email subscribers

You can also use the Web to provide cost effective customer service (through the use of knowledge bases), create communities (such as chat rooms and forums), and as a delivery method for what used to be printed material (say goodbye to Kinko's).

With a clear understanding of your primary and secondary goals, you are ready to consider what you know of your target audience. Consider demographic information - sex, age, etc. But also think about their needs and desires. You'll use this information to craft emotional calls-to-action, and provide compelling offers.

Hopefully, your target audience is somewhat homogenous. This leads to the creation of a highly targeting (and highly converting) website. If your target group is diverse, you might want to consider creating multiple websites - especially if you have different products that attract different groups. At first glance, this option might seem cost-prohibitive, but we have found that the difference between a 3% conversion rate, and a 25% conversion rate can often justify the extra expense of creating multiple sites, and provides a return-on-investment after just a few months.

With a well-understood target audience, you can go about creating a look and feel, messaging, calls-to- action, and offers that are comfortable and compelling.