

Ten Ways to Use Internet Marketing as a Business Intelligence Tool to Build your Marketing Strategy

In the "Good old days" marketing departments had the luxury of detailed research, testing, surveying and analysis prior to developing and launching products and services. Those days are long gone. The rate of change in the competitive landscape, rapidly changing technology and globalization of markets have forced companies to change their go-to-market approach. Emphasis is now placed on speed and customer-centric iteration. Some companies waste a lot of time and valuable resources with a "ready-shoot-aim" approach. Fortunately, there is a better way to closely coordinate strategy and tactics to optimize results. Internet Marketing provides a way for companies to do primary research in real-time and let the market vote with their mouse for the best targeting, positioning, messaging, offer and even the best sales model to use to address a given market with your product or service.

Following are ten ways to use the Internet with readily available tools and techniques to build an effective marketing strategy.

1. Research On-line articles and analyst reports for market sizing - In the past, paying for secondary research was a significant line item in the marketing budget. Today, whatever doesn't directly contribute to the bottom line is considered a luxury. Use search engines and industry portals to search for data on market size, trends, and issues. Consultants and analysts often provide abstracts of research or are quoted in the press, while papers and presentations from industry conferences and academic symposiums are often published online. A quick search and documented follow-up will unearth a wealth of data from a variety of sources at no cost to you.

2. Community and portal analysis to estimate market maturity - During your research, make note of industry portals and communities, which are online gathering places of interest to your prospects, partners and competitors. If you are in a mature market, there will be a large number of well-developed online resources. Even for new products and services, there is a lot to learn about key industry influencers, buying language/process and barriers to market entry.

3. Key word analysis to gauge market demand - How many people are looking for information about the product or service you will launch, based on the number of search engine queries? Is the trend increasing? What words do buyers use to describe what they are looking for? This valuable information will help you structure your messages to meet the buyers' "sweet spot."

4. Key word analysis to measure competition - When executing a search, how many competitors appear in search results? Which ones are active in online communities? If there are few competitors, is it because you made a poor choice of key words? Or is the market immature and wide-open to your entry?

5. Market entry cost estimate based on Paid-placement analysis - What is the price of top paid search engine listings? How many companies have paid listings? Who is buying their way to the top of various search engines for keywords important to you? How much would you have to pay to get high visibility? The cost of paid-placements is a good indicator of the how much it will cost to do one-to-one branding.

6. Competitive business model analysis - Analyze competitors' web sites for partner and customer listings to gauge market penetration and determine channel strategy. View backward/inbound links to measure the link-popularity challenge, as as to learn more about their

channel strategy. A large quantity of inbound links helps build traffic and increases search engine visibility.

7. Competitive market share - Based on assessment of competitive web site effectiveness and market sizing, estimate market share and penetration rate. Key word search trend analysis will also indicate rate of market growth. The combination of buyer demand and competitive presence is invaluable to estimating market entry costs.

8. Business potential - Analysis of preceding factors will help you to estimate market demand and growth, as well as help estimate cost and resource required to take market share from competitors. Most importantly, it will uncover market segments not addressed by your competitors that present an opportunity for high-efficiency revenue growth.

9. Direct email to test messages and validate demand - Once you have scoped the market opportunity and made preliminary decisions about buying language and process, it is time to do real-time test marketing. Structure a direct email subject, message and offer that appears to meet buying criteria you have uncovered in your research. Do short-run testing and measure effectiveness. Change each element (subject, message, offer) to measure effectiveness and discover the right combination to get the best rate of click-through from email to your web site.

10. Your web site as a virtual survey/testing mechanism - Your web site content must quickly prove your credibility and build interest and present an offer valued by prospects. To tune and optimize your web site you will be testing effectiveness of three things: the message for each market sub-segment, web site content effectiveness, and conversion rate from looker to buyer. Develop three or four web pages with alternative messaging. Land the prospect on differently worded content pages and measure message effectiveness. Which content makes them go further into your web site? Which doesn't? Finally, test different offers to understand what target buyers value. Rotate inbound access from Paid-placement search engine ads and direct email to your marketing database and measure conversion results. The market will tell you quickly which messages resonate and which are duds.

Market-Vantage LLC specializes in Integrated Web Marketing, helping companies develop and implement effective Internet marketing strategies for positive impact on business. Please call us at 603-888-5600 or email us at info@market-vantage.com for a free initial consultation to discuss your specific situation in confidence.