

## **CNET Networks**

### **Make It Interactive! After All, It Is The Internet!**

People watch television. People read magazines. But people use the Internet. Although this seems obvious, many marketers continue to miss the point by using only interruptive ads to get customers' attention rather than develop tools that leverage the interactivity of the Internet – and help customers achieve what they set out to do.

According to Dan Springer, Managing Director of Modem Media's San Francisco's office, people use the Internet for two reasons – to be entertained or to accomplish a task. "People respond to advertising very differently on the Internet than any other medium. The best way marketers can build a relationship with a customer on the Internet is by helping them accomplish something."

#### **Consumer Vs Business Marketing**

Springer says it's important for tech marketers to understand the difference between consumer and business marketing. "The companies doing consumer marketing online should focus on e-commerce and branding with their advertising dollars. There are a lot of great examples of companies – such as Dell – who are doing a great job of impulse marketing."

However, while this can be affective with consumers, business-to-business Internet marketing is a much longer process and more information is needed to make an informed decision – not to mention higher dollars are at stake. Because business users come to the Internet for very specific reasons, marketers may not want to push for a direct sale. Instead business marketing should harness the interactive nature of the Internet to deliver in-depth information to help users accomplish their goals.

#### **Helping Users Get Work Done Faster**

Springer, who was recognized in 1999 as one of the 20 Leading Interactive Industry Marketers by Advertising Age, believes that business users look for relationships with companies that will provide tools to help them get work done faster.

"Those companies that provide thoughtful influence to customers through interactive tools and useful information, leave those customers with a positive association of their brand. Successfully done, this tells customers that your company is a thought leader and someone worth partnering with."

An example of thoughtful influence is Hewlett-Packard's CIO Briefcase, which Modem Media helped design. "CIO Briefcase targets CIO's and senior IT professionals, providing the latest information, edited by industry experts. It includes white papers, product evaluations, and industry perspectives – all addressing key issues facing CIOs. It's interactive, targeted and highly relevant, which provides value for customers while building positive association with HP as an advisor and thought leader. This is what we call *value exchange*."

Another great resource that companies can provide over the Internet to build relationships with customers is interactive tools that demonstrate a company's capabilities. "This gives a customer a deeper understanding of the usefulness of a company's product – in an interactive setting – to help them achieve results. Cisco is a great example of a company that does this very effectively and 90% of its business is done over the Internet. No other medium can match this."

#### **Five Principles for Successful Interactive Marketing**

Given its 15 years of interactive marketing experience, it's no wonder that Modem Media has identified 5 fundamental principles to online marketing success.

##### **1. Create a Mutual Value Exchange**

Remember, the person who controls the mouse, controls the interaction and the relationship. When the customer dictates the rules, companies can only earn value to the extent they deliver value to that customer. Many interactive marketing initiatives – not to mention entire Internet businesses – have failed because of no compelling value exchange.

## **2. Experiences Replace Messages**

People measure the Internet's value by what it empowers them to do. It also enables marketers to initiate dialogues and provide experiences between customers and their brands. Done well, it delivers immediate proof behind a brand's promise. Done poorly, it erodes a relationship faster than traditional media.

## **3. Detach & Distribute**

Getting information and services in the hands of the right customers at the right time and in the right place is critical to interactive marketing success. The key is to distribute experiences to intersect with your customers whenever and wherever they are, and enable customers to detach information from your site and send to whomever they please.

## **4. "Always-On" Optimization**

Interactive marketing is more than implementing innovative strategies that meet customer needs. It's also about continuously measuring and improving results for customers *and* your business. "Always-On Optimization" helps companies constantly improve their ability to enable customers to complete important tasks in increasingly quick, convenient and pleasant environments.

## **5. The New Integration**

Gone are the days when consistent "look and feel" were benchmarks of a successfully coordinated marketing campaign. Effective interactive marketing integrates processes and systems across the entire enterprise and distributes experiences across touch points. In short, if you don't integrate in new ways, you can't effectively execute on the first four principles.

Taken separately, these principles may appear obvious or overly simplistic. But Springer says that putting them to use simultaneously and across the enterprise has been a rare and difficult endeavor for companies. "If you look at the most successful Interactive Marketers, you'll discover they have committed their energies to all five."

## **Steps You Can Take Now**

While interactive marketing demands a new way of thinking for many marketers, there are ways to get started. First, understand your goals for interactive marketing and see if they fully leverage the interactive space. Most media campaigns are too shortsighted and underutilize the interactivity of the Internet. Second, ensure that your marketing is either entertaining or informing. Customers are online to get something done and they need a valuable reason to focus on your advertising. Third, provide a value exchange for your customers that benefit them and your business. And fourth, develop metrics and optimize them against your business results in your online marketing.

## **Never Having to Say Goodbye**

Successful Internet marketing today is all about enabling customers to 'never have to say goodbye'. Your success at interactive marketing will hinge on how well you connect with your customers. Springer believes the test will be if customers embrace marketer's attempts as welcomed services or reject them as intrusive annoyances. He adds, "Remember, it's very difficult to annoy a customer into liking you – and that's the path that many companies are still on. If your marketing is only focused on being interruptive, it might be doing more harm than good." Instead, companies should leverage the benefits of interactive marketing to drive acquisition, loyalty, service and business efficiencies. After all – it is the Internet.