

20 Internet Marketing Mistakes To Avoid



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Introduction

The new frontier for marketing is no longer traditional media of print and television, more and more people are moving online in attempts to the next new thing online. Unlike traditional marketing the barrier to entry online are very small, start-ups often take this route as it is much more cost-effective and really the new in thing. There are many different strategies that you can follow for a successful marketing campaign depending on your niche, budget, and time frame but there are some universal truths that you need to follow.

Marketing is about creativity and figuring out new and exciting ways to get your message across. What we are trying to do here is help you avoid the most common and typical mistakes people make. Internet Marketing is constantly evolving but one thing that you need to know it is marketing, which mean the basic principles of marketing are the same. The only difference is that the internet has provided such a different channel in which your company can express itself that sometimes people consider a whole different discipline.

What this article is about are the 20 basic mistakes internet marketers need to avoid, be they newbies or veterans they need to take heed and follow this advice. Some may seem obvious but that doesn't mean that people follow it so let's start with number 1:

Mistake #1: Excessive Humility

Being humble is fine if you are a monk or teacher but it is a definite no-no if you are in sales. At the end of the day Internet Marketing is all about sales, and great sales people are not humble. Perhaps you are one of those people who don't really like to announce to the world that you are the best or that your product is number one and think that the product will sell on its own merits. Well, you need to find someone to be your cheerleader.

As someone who owns their own company they need to live and breathe their product. They need to be their own best advocates or their product apostles. Marketing is all about self-promotion and promoting yourself is the heart of internet marketing.

Now that we have the right attitude we can look at different ways of self promotion later in this article. The average customer might not even know about your product so aggressive marketing is all about telling everyone about yourself.

Mistake #2: Having no vision and mission

Most big companies have a mission and vision statement. It clearly states the goal of the company, for example this one from Apple Computers “Apple is committed to bringing the best personal computing experience to students, educators, creative professionals and consumers around the world through its innovative hardware, software and Internet offerings.” Apple’s innovations such as the iPhone and iPad make use of this particular statement as the driving force behind their success.

No you probably think your small company isn’t nearly the size of Apple. You have to remember that even Apple was just an operation in Steve Job’s garage at some point in time. So best to start things right by making a strong mission and vision statement.. You need to have a strong foundation in order to grow.

You probably asking how this helps with your online strategy and marketing, well if you got the right vision than it sets the right foundation that you can build around, if you don’t have this you will have a very hard time fixing the next 18 mistakes.

Mistake #3: The Pay Wall

What is a pay wall? Well it is when you can't access content unless you pay. An example of this is the Financial Times, they give you a short preview of the article and if you want to continue reading it you will have to pay an amount for access to the website. Now, a company like the financial times can get away with that kind of marketing can but an average internet start-up can't. This kind of strategy will really slow down the adoption of your product and technology and only really works with already established and powerful brands.

A better strategy would be to allow limited access. Some companies like Google's Gmail and Facebook use add revenue and sell targeted advertising. The gist of the message is that people are used to everything on the internet being free or at least partly free and doing the whole pay before you try will not work unless your brand is already established.

So take a look at your customer acquisition strategy, and how you are currently positioned in the market. Take a look at your revenue streams and see if you really do make a lot of money from subscriptions or what not. The Pay Wall might be preventing you from getting more people to adopt your product and because of this you are not able to take off and attain the critical mass needed to succeed.

Mistake #4: Not understanding SEO

What is SEO? SEO is search engine optimization a crazy arms race between the website owner and the search engine algorithms. The SEO's goal is to ensure that you come out on top in the search field of your particular key word. Problem is that the algorithm is also adapting to make sure you cannot take advantage of any loop-holes. So should you just ignore the whole problem? Not care about SEO at all?

That would be a disaster! SEO is all about optimizing your website. So how will the SEO benefit you? The SEO will optimize your website so that when the search engine web crawlers come along and search your website they will do so on a perfectly optimized site. Gone are the days that you could use a 250 page article and the magic of SEO to bump up your website to the number one hit on a particular keyword. These days it all about content, so you could actually say content is king!

You also need to understand and utilize keywords. This touches back on mistake number 1. If you don't tell people about them won't know about your product. However it's important on how you tell people about it and that is where the SEO is able to help you.

So consider this, how much more traffic can you generate if you are the number one hit on your chosen key word. Googling something is almost second nature and the average person will only take a look at the first couple of links. So not investing in a SEO person is a mistake, if you can't afford one consider becoming one yourself.

Mistake #5: Not blogging about your business

“Well I already have a website so why do I need to blog about my product?” Blogs are an extension of someone’s influence on-line. Some blogs can make and break products because of their reviews. Some blogs like Perez Hilton and Huffington Post have made internet celebrities out of their creators. So do not discount the power of the blog.

When someone is looking for what’s in and what’s not in fashion they read the fashion blog. When people want to know where the new hot destination is they read a travel blog. If they want to see what the hottest new mobile phone is they read a tech blog. In fact, they probably look at your website first than when they see a product they like they look at the blogs to see the reviews.

So you need to get your voice heard, you need to be the advocate and push the message you want out to everyone. My product is here and one of the best platforms to do that is through your blog. In the blog you can become one of the influencers out there.

However make sure you do a few things first, make sure that your blog is hosted on the same site as your domain. That way they know it is an official blog. If you are blogging about a certain niche like technology you cannot sound like one big advertisement what you need to do is really spend time writing about things that people want to hear about. You also need to interact with your bloggers so when they comment make sure that you respond to them. That means that you need to respond to both negative and positive comments. Often you will get internet trolls who do nothing but

bash your product on your comments but what you need to realize that it will be even more damaging than engaging and responding maturely.

Mistake #6: Lacking the personal touch

What is the personal touch? Well have you noticed that Google and Facebook are now able to target people by very specific criteria? That means that they can target you by your sex, age, location and even by your likes and dislikes. This may seem quite creepy but you can use this to your advantage by targeting your audience at the local level. This is one of the reasons that spam doesn't really work, if you try a scatter shot strategy you might end up damaging the reputation of your website and then the reputation of your product.

Don't forget to make sure that you focus on a local search. Which means that if you have a restaurant in Coral Gables make sure when people search for restaurants in Coral Gables that your name shows up in the results? This is especially appropriate if your business is located in the mall. This means that if you are in the mall that you will benefit from the traffic and search of the location that you are located in. So what does this mean? It means that local business can leverage the internet to get their products out there with a personal touch, so that the locals can find their way there.

Sending out personalized emails or even actually corresponding to customers can help you build loyalty. Some of the biggest complaints out there is that in some companies it's impossible to talk to a real person. So be that real person and add the personal touch to the company.

Mistake #7: Not being social enough

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Google + are all social networks which are great places to do your marketing. Some people feel that Social Networks are a waste of company time when they think of social media they are thinking of ways to block it and increase worker productivity. What you can do is tap social media to rapidly expand your internet footprint without spending too much money.

It's important to invest in good social marketing as they can be a big driver of traffic to your site. Some of the more savvy companies have started to even address their customer service concerns on social media sites. Creating an online community where people who enjoy your product can come together is also a big win. Creating fan pages, linked in accounts or even tweeting on a regular basis shows that you are connected to your clientele and that you are hip and modern company.

The best part about this is it is mostly free, none of the major social media sites will charge you to create a site even if it is commercial in nature. You can also build your profile quickly with a minimum of investment and even use graphics that you have already created for you website. What you would have to budget is having the social media sites drive traffic to your fan page or company profile. This is a relatively new development and something that companies should definitely incorporate into their marketing strategies.

One of the downsides is that you need to invest on staff to monitor your social media as you cannot really just leave it alone like a static website. On top of that you also need to ensure that your staff is up to date with the new developments in the company as this where people will often go looking for news. Consider creating a corporate communications function and depending on the size of your company make it a department or a single person.

Often you have to address concerns on the social media sites and it is also a good place to check on feedback for your company. So learn to use social media to gauge where you are in the market and what do people really think about your company.

Social media is one of the hot new trends of 2014 along with mobile computing so this is not something that you can afford to ignore. So if you don't already have a person doing it at least make sure that you read up on the topic.

Mistake #8: Not cross promoting with other sites

Once you have built up a reputation for yourself or one of your staff has done it for you then you should really take a look at into cross posting or guest authoring with another blog with a similar related product. Remember that your reputation is a resource and that cross pollinating ideas is a good way to grow your network.

Sites that may not be your direct competitor but is in the same industry would be a good target. Also review sites or blogs that might be on your area of expertise might also be a good option. But whatever the case it's important that you utilize this opportunity.

One thing that this helps develop is name recognition not only of your product but also of yourself. So you should always consider your knowledge as a resource and make sure that you share it with as many people as possible.

Another benefit is that you can link back to your site which also increases the relevance and reputation of your site especially if the site that linked to you is older or more established than your website.

The downside to this is that you actually have to be a pretty good writer and write about relevant things. So you can't just pump out a 250 word article that just summarizes other articles. Most reputable site wouldn't take them and those that do will give very little benefit to your marketing strategy. It might even have a negative effect and should be avoided.

Mistake #9: Not creating customer advocates

There are happy customers and there are customer advocates. Can you make a customer so happy that they will be an advocate? What is an advocate? It's a customer who generates excitement and sales for your company. This is probably one of the most single important transformations you can have in a customer, instead of having him just happy you actually have him out there doing your job for you and pushing your product.

The best way to do this is a testimonial page on your blog or website. It's a perfect opportunity for the company to leverage on the good will of the customers by having them post their good experience on your website. Even better is that they submit positive reviews on your business on third party sites. For example, someone is so happy with your product that they put a 5 star rating on Amazon. What this means is that whoever sees that becomes curious and might even try your product.

These customer advocates might even create blogs about your products and create a loyal following. Customers who love your product are the best ambassadors as they will refer their friends and family to your product. The most important thing about this is that they are doing this because they are truly happy about their product and they are doing it for free.

So make sure that you create more customer advocates, as they are free and their word will really help convince people to visit your site and try your product. But the question is where all these customer advocates come from. That means that at one point in time they were all "Newbies".

Mistake #10: Not paying enough attention to the “Newbies”

Some companies try to cultivate an elitist mentality. Perhaps your company is selling software and your blog and website are overly technical and can only be understood by engineers. Elitism is often used as a marketing strategy because they feel that the masses will follow the elite. Of course this can work in certain situations especially with the designer fashion houses.

What we need to take a look at is the grass roots growth of your customer base. Your website should have articles or blogs about introduction to your product or industry. It's important that you cultivate and grow your customer base as that is the only way to really drive traffic and people to your site. Consider creating “How to” articles so that people interested in things like programming will end up at your site. After explaining the basics you can then sell them related products.

Making your site more beginner friendly would be a great help. Even building a welcoming online community through a message board or forum would be great. These small steps would help people that might be intimidated into joining your product community.

It is also important to remember that a lot of these newbies might become your customer advocates. Developing and maintaining your customers is important in creating a strong marketing strategy.

Mistake #11: Ignoring the real world

Sometimes you think that you can do everything from behind the computer screen. I mean it is online marketing right? Well, you cannot ignore the real world, meaning that you need to also drive traffic to your site using off-line methods.

One of the easiest ways to generate traffic is joining a conference; you can either be a speaker or even just a participant. However, if you get your business card in circulation with your web address on it than you have just generated traffic with people who are specifically interested in your kind of product. I mean they did attend the same conference as you didn't they? Networking and meeting the right people in the industry also help you with other things like guest blogging that we discussed earlier and forming strategic partnerships between different people in the same industry. Real world connections translate into strong connections on-line too.

You can also become a guest writer on print media like a magazine or newspaper. Just getting your information and links out there will generate huge traffic especially if you are trying to target a specific market or geographic location. For example, someone into fitness writes a guest article on Men's Health and on this article he can plug his blog. If the article is well thought out people will look for more.

Even simple flier with your website can generate traffic. As long as you can get the customer interested in your product leaving the link will lure them into coming to your site where you can then close the deal.

Mistake #12: Not creating an affiliate network

How does affiliate marketing work? It is an alternative to the regular supply chain. So the way it works is that for a small business that doesn't have access to the bigger markets sacrifice their profit margins and have another third party sell their products. In other ways think of it as performance based marketing.

One of the most famous companies able to pull this off is Groupon, they had one of the best affiliate marketing strategies on the net and contribute to their explosive growth from 2008 – 2010. So you can totally build your own affiliate network either through your own website or using a third party affiliate marketer.

This is an opportunity that you do not miss. This is one of the best ways to expand if you are cash poor company or newly started.

Another kind of affiliate network you can join is an advertising one. You can pay commission on any traffic sent to you site that results in sales. The key thing about affiliate marketing is the low set up cost, since the affiliate is shouldering most of the marketing cost you are really in a low risk venture.

Mistake #13: Not making the right friends in the right places

Sometimes people say it is not what you know but who you know. Many events give you the opportunity to meet the right people in your industry and build on relationships that might have been started online.

Meeting the right people is especially true in start-up industries. The person that you had lunch with today could become the next Mark Zuckerberg and when he does you can tap him as someone you know. Business is a lot more relationship driven than people realize, a lot deals come from referrals of people that you worked with or former bosses or clients.

That's why it is important never to burn bridges, you never know where and who you will be with in the future. Keeping the right friends and acquaintances is a huge plus for future business, especially with social media platforms like Linked in and Facebook allowing you to keep in touch with these people a lot easier than it would have been in the past.

Knowing the right people might give you the impression that you know the right people and improve your reputation in the industry. If you are considered an industry expert than that in itself will increase the traffic of your website.

You can also end up meeting new employees who can help your company grow. Networking can help you create a team of great marketing executives. So consider that not only do you need to know the right people

above you who can pull you up, you also need to know the right people
below you who can push you up.

Mistake #14: Not spreading your opinion enough

People often think that your opinion isn't worth much but commenting on blogs can drive traffic on your site. Of course when you comment it needs to be well thought out, structured, and needs to contribute something to the discussion. That means you should not say something like wow this is great take a look at my site. What you need to do is make detailed and insightful comments that will draw people to read more of your writing. So when people read the comment they will follow the link and go to your blog and poof you have a new visitor to your sight.

Also writing opinion pieces in blog or forums would bring attention to you and your website. Writing well thought out and informed opinion can spark a debate on a topic where you can weigh in on your opinion. There are several ways to leverage this into better traffic to your site, one is to pitch a product that you believe in and also happen to sell. The other is to sell yourself, as you show your expertise people might hire as one of their consultants.

So spend as little as 10 minutes a day making these comments to help build a reputation and drive more traffic to your site. Even if they don't result in sales you will be able to build experience on the subject and become a subject matter expert.

Once you are a subject matter expert this ties into the next subject which is Mistake #14.

Mistake #15: Not hanging out in the message boards

Many people think that people don't really use message boards anymore but they can be surprisingly robust and large communities. The first reaction to a question is to Google the answer. Yes you probably will find a result but did you know that most of the time the result is the answer to a question asked in a forum or message board. This is especially important when the forum is on specific subject that your business is particularly interested in.

An example of this is someone who loves to play World of War craft a MMORPG, and often asks questions about how to do this and that on the game. If you are able to answer his questions he will probably click on the link to your website or blog where he can then become a potential customer of our product. The other thing that could happen is that once you become a recognized subject matter expert then you will be hired to do consulting gigs.

Start by identifying the forums and message boards where your potential clients and customers would frequent. You can start by posting interesting topics or answering some of the questions that get asked on the forum. So set goals on the amount that you want to post and make sure that you do it as a consistent strategy to generate leads.

Hanging out in forums is about building your online persona, its not something that happens overnight. So expect to invest a few weeks to a

months in becoming someone. A few hours a week could produce results that are disproportionate to the effort so get on that keyboard and start typing away.

Mistake #16: Having no referral program

When you have a customer who is happy the first thing you have to think about is who does he know that will also enjoy your product. Sometimes the customer offers to introduce you to his friends and family and boom you have a customer advocate. Sometimes you need to ask the customer if he has referrals.

When a customer either receives the product or service he should be given a questionnaire to fill out and ask if there is anyone that they can introduce you to. This can be sent by email, web form or done through social media. In most cases if the customer was happy with the service or product he would be happy to introduce it to his circle of friends and family.

Do you sell a product you feel wouldn't work with a referral program? Something like food? Well, the thing is everything works with a referral program. For example on the restaurant you can say that for every new customer you bring in you can eat for free. Creativity is the key.

So make sure that happy customers have a system where they can easily refer new clients to the company. You can even reward them with incentives but either way referrals are a great way to improve lead flow.

Mistake #17: Not using YouTube

In Hollywood it becomes really popular to create viral campaigns before the release of a big movie or a in corporate America to launch a new product through guerilla marketing. One of the key ingredients is using the video sharing site you-tube. Surprisingly few people realize the potential that you tube has. You have to remember that Justin Bieber was discovered on YouTube and many of its videos can reach up to 3 million hits. So why don't people use YouTube more often? Most likely because the people equate video with traditional advertising and well they are on the internet.

Creating a awesome video with something interesting than it could probably go viral. One of the most famous examples of that is the iPhone, when videos of the iPhone were leaked onto YouTube the world went insane and people kept taking a look at it. The video went viral and iPhone had one of the most successful product launches ever.

Mistake #18: Not going on sale

Notice how people look forward to sales like Black Friday? Or how that store goes on sale when they open to attract customers. You cannot ignore that strategy just because you are online. What you need to do is slashing prices to bring in new customers. Once they like your product than they are more likely to come back and become customer advocates.

One way to do this is through the group discount site Groupon, where you can attract new customers who are looking for savings. Now, if for example you are a restaurant and people try it because the food was discounted but love the food than they will come back and eat there at regular price. The discount is just about attracting the initial customer.

Going on-sale also creates a buzz on the online community. When your product is highly anticipated you slash the price on the first 100 units to ensure that they fly off the shelves. Remember that sales are not just for the end of shopping seasons, you can use them to push your products and help with the exposure of your new products.

It is also important to realize that sites like Living Social and GroupOn can generate a lot of exposure since a lot people regularly search the site for best deals. The growth of these websites are good for local business as now the can get exposure especially if they are new.

Sales are a great way to bring in customers. All you need to do is make sure you time them right and that you don't break the bank.

Mistake #19: Having bad customer service

A lot of companies spend all their money on developing the right product. Yes, having an awesome product and marketing will sell but having terrible service will almost guarantee that you won't get repeat customers. Not only that but each unhappy customer will tell three other potential customers about their bad experience and make it even harder to expand your market.

Great customer service might even cover up for an average product. You need to have multi-channel customer service and a thriving online community with people willing to help. For example, you would need someone to answer calls, answer emails, answer chats and answer questions posted on the forum. Covering all these channels is only the beginning. You now need to ensure that the service is excellent.

If your company cannot afford to have its own in house customer service center they have several options. Some companies create user driven forums where the customers help each other, this is great at building a community but eventually you would need to add more channels to handle high volume questions. The other is outsourcing, you can do it onshore or off shore with a myriad of different option available at relatively cheap prices.

As a company your customer service is a reflection of who the company is. Just by adjusting the company to be more customers centric you should be able to improve the customer experience and make sure that people come

back for more. Don't forget one of the biggest costs is acquiring customers. So once you have customers why lose them?

Customer service is integral to your business. Your sales team can keep making sales but your customer churn will be really high and they might not even be unhappy with the product, it is probably your service. That's why such a high premium is put on service, and if the customer demands great service you should step up to the plate and provide it for them.

Mistake #20: Not getting enough publicity

Why is it that people often equate fame to money? It is because they usually come hand and hand, publicity is easily monetized and as business owner you should definitely take advantage of this. You can do this using traditional media, that is TV, Magazines and newspapers or the internet blogs, websites, and you tube. So what you want is publicity for your product.

So if you have an awesome product does the press come knocking on the door? No, that rarely happens you need to work to get publicity on your products. There was a restaurant with good food, problem was no one was really familiar with it, it had a bad location and was really new. So they had a party where they invited all the food bloggers in the area. It was a huge hit, the bloggers loved it so they posted it on the blog and next came all the foodies who raved about it some more. Eventually the local press caught wind and sales sky rocketed. Publicity can help you overcome things like poor location and it doesn't always mean you have to spend a load of cash to get it.

It is much easier to get the attention of local new and press than national ones so that where you need to focus. Try having an event or sponsoring a charity that will bring the people out to your place. This also works if you company is online. Having big shot names pointing links to your site will not only increase your Google ranking it will also bring in loads of customers.

Don't forget that you can also get interviewed in the local press or even the national press. It's a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Try

being proactive about it, remember don't be afraid of rejection nobody ever became rich without a little rejection.

2014 trends

Online marketers need to start shifting away from a focus on their websites and need to start at looking at multi-platform functionality. Which means that website need to be accessible from mobile devices and since many more people are not more comfortable doing their shopping from said device it needs to have full functionality.

2014 shows that the new Google algorithms are much more content driven, and this is changing the landscape of the SEO community. Where before you could get away with a 250 word rehashed article and somehow still manage to get it ranked high in the post hummingbird world that is a thing of the past. Websites need to be much more content driven and need to have new and interesting information to top the web search returns.

2014 is also Internationalization, gone are the days when the website would focus on just one market, the North American one, we now see that they are trying to enter into the rapidly expanding East Asian and South East Asian markets. As technology progresses and globalization increases we see that marketers are becoming much more personalized than they were before. This is due to the advent of many new technologies spearheaded by Facebook and Google that allow these sites to profile and target advertising to you.

Also look into creating your own app or online game. This strategy allows you to engage your customer in a different platform and is something new

and fresh. Some games might even outperform your product so look into all the avenues that you can reach your customer.

Also expect more mobile friendly design as almost everyone has a smart phone which they use to access the internet. Just look at your online friends on Facebook and don't you notice a large chunk of them say on mobile device.

It's just the beginning

Marketing can be hard work, it can cost money, it can take a lot of time. However, if you avoid these 20 potential pit-falls you it doesn't have to be hard nor does it have to be expensive. What you need to have is the drive, the inspiration, and the creativity to think outside the box and create something new that people flock to.

Your business cannot succeed without marketing, so it is important that you invest time and money. Products just don't become huge hits, it may seem that way but behind every big success was an even more successful marketing campaign.

Every year technology advances and things change and marketing has to adjust. Just make sure that you keep your head on straight and that you follow common sense.

Make sure you avoid the obvious pit-falls. There are a lot of hidden pit-falls which you need which time and experience will help you avoid. Remember marketing needs to be done; it needs to be done well so take out your thinking hat and start thinking of what your next marketing plan is.