

Digital Six-pack

Six Methods For Increasing Sales Offline and Online



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If you're like most marketers you have found that the traditional methods for contacting prospects and turning them into customers have changed. Prospects are very difficult if not impossible to get on the phone, they do not respond to direct mail as they once did, and many offline industry events are just people trying to sell to each other.

This means you must find new tools to connect and stay connected with prospects and customers. No one expects marketers to abandon the old methods. And they should not; at least until they have proven to themselves that the new methods work better. They should, however, try these new methods to determine how they work in their market.

In all cases, the information you are conveying must be highly targeted and very relevant to that audience if it is going to work, new media or not.

The following are six online methods you should include in your experimentation.

Search Engine Marketing

I am not talking about search engine optimization, but rather contextual advertising on search engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN. So far, Google is by far the leader. You have seen these ads; they come up on the right side of the page when you make a Google search.

The ads are displayed when a searcher includes a key word or phrase that matches keywords or phrases that you selected to be associated with your ad. You get a top position by bidding more money for click throughs and you only pay for clicks, not for impressions. You may also limit the amount you are willing to pay on a daily basis. The ads can be regionalized to specific cities (the ads will only be seen by people making searches in those cities), or countries. You can also choose to do site-specific ads on sites that have signed up to be part of Google's network (AdSense).

While much of what you will see is consumer-oriented, many business-to-business organizations are experiencing good results from Search Engine Marketing. Because of the reasonable cost, search engines are an ideal testing ground for new products and new marketing message strategies.

Email Marketing

Even with the onslaught of spam and non-targeted messaging, email marketing is still the leader in generating new leads and sales. For sure, response rates have gone down since the early days of the Internet but you can still expect read rates of 20-60%. Responses will, of course, vary depending on the message and the offer.

Mass emails are inexpensive to send, making it easy to increase the frequency of your messages. Good systems will track how many and who opened your emails and also who clicked on embedded links. This makes mass email marketing ideal for culling out interested parties and targeting them for similar messages. This segmentation can lead to much higher read rates and sales.

Email as a prospecting tool is also far superior to cold calling. You have a much better chance of getting your message across via email and you can track if it has been opened and, with the advent of new online services, even track if the readers visited your web site and what they looked at when they were there. This is a valuable marketing and sales tool.

Lead Nurturing

Note: My white paper on [Lead Nurturing](#) covers the next three items: [Lead Nurturing](#), [White Paper Marketing](#) and [Blog Marketing](#). If you would like a copy of the [Lead Nurturing](#) white paper, please send me an email at harry@hallman.com or visit my web site www.hallman.com. The following are excerpts from that white paper.

Attracting quality leads is just the beginning of the marketing/sales process. Those leads need nurturing. Here are several steps to attract the prospects you want, and then nurture them into becoming customers.

Target. Determine which companies and people would benefit most from your offering. Really target. Don't just decide that the target is any company with sales in excess of \$500 million. Make a "hot list" of the companies that could most use your products or services, which person in the company is most likely responsible for making the purchase, and who else influences that decision.

Research. Conduct research to determine the "hot buttons" of your target prospects as a group and as individuals. Don't look just at their websites; find out who their competitors and vendors are, read their press releases for nuggets that will help you create a relevant message, and dig as deep as possible to find the companies' "pain points."

Be Relevant. Create messaging that is relevant and beneficial to your prospects. "Relevant" is not a matter of how great your product and company are; it is the key benefits that help your prospect solve their problems by using your product or services.

Deliver. Look beyond the traditional methods of communication for new and more effective media. Don't forgo traditional methods; just complement them with the new ones.

Nurture. A prospect is not a sale, and a lead is not necessarily ready for the sales team until it meets certain qualification criteria. Depending on your product or service, you have

to decide what qualifications a lead must meet. Why waste precious selling time on leads that are not very far along the sales process? I believe it is marketing's job to deliver to the sales team a prospect that is as qualified as possible. That is accomplished by nurturing the prospect by providing relevant information in a low-pressure sales manner—but always with a call to action.

Integrate these methods into your marketing program to both attract and nurture your prospects and customers.

White Paper Marketing

I am using “white paper” as a generic reference not only to white papers but also to reports, studies, cases, and E-books. The common thread is that all of these sources are customer education materials—or should be. If they are not, then they are just brochures.

White papers should contain the relevant and beneficial information needed to attract your target prospects. Once prospects have asked for a white paper, they step up one notch on the qualification ladder. White papers can also be used to ensure repeat business from customers.

When you provide a constant stream of useful ideas, you become trusted and valued by the prospect. As you already know, trust and value are two of the most important steps to successful selling.

Blog Marketing

The value of a blog—short for “weblog”—is that you can create a continuous stream of your own valuable information and of useful non-competitive information. You also have the benefit of receiving input from readers.

Business blogs should convey information that is relevant to the target prospects and customers. If you have several products or services with different targets, create a blog for each.

Again, you can use ads, direct mail, e-mail and even search engine marketing to get the word out. Invite the sales team to send personal e-mails to their prospects and customers that highlight specific information in the blog.

Web Site Analytics

With 73% of American adults using the Internet (Pew Internet Report) it is imperative that a company web site's content and image reflect the strategic direction of the company itself. It is also important to research how people use your web site and if your strategic goals for the web site are being met.

Without this information you will not know how to “tweak” the design and messaging to enhance web site performance. Most people who use the Internet will visit your web site to check out your services or products before they contact you. So optimizing a web site from a marketing perspective is critical, unless, of course, you have no competition.

There is no excuse for not using Web Analytics since Google started to provide this as a FREE service. I did say “free.” At this moment you can set up 1 to 10 web sites on Google’s free service and the information you get is outstanding. It includes content performance, technical performance and marketing performance. You can track a visitor to a goal you set up (visiting contact page, for instance) and you can see which sites are referring visitors to you.

You may need the help of a consultant (a plug for me) to help you get set up and teach you to interpret the information you receive. In the end this is money well spent,

Here is one more digital tool for good measure....

Social Network Marketing

Note: I also wrote a white paper on Branded or Sponsored Social Networks. If you would like a copy please send me an email harry@hallman.com or visit my web site www.hallman.com. The following is an excerpt from that white paper plus a section on popular social network enablers such as Myspace.

In my white paper [Solving the Wanamaker Problem](#) I mentioned that many companies are becoming disenchanted with media advertising expenditures that cannot be traced to actual sales. With increased competition and the ever- growing number of advertising media outlets it is imperative to be able to identify which types of advertising work best and then invest more heavily in them. One way to solve this problem is to create branded or sponsor your own online social network (community).

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, describes a social network as

“a social structure made of nodes which are generally individuals or organizations. It indicates the ways in which they are connected through various social familiarities ranging from casual acquaintance to close familial bonds.”

To marketers, a social network is much more. It is an opportunity to connect with a network of like-minded people, tell a story, and have it spread through the network and beyond. Since most people belong to a number of social networks the story finds its way into those networks as well. It is an efficient and effective way to spread the word and to attract new customers.

Many companies, especially quick serve restaurants, have VIP clubs which are really just a way to get email addresses and distribute discounted coupons. This is certainly a valuable tool, however since it is based solely on discounts this benefit becomes expected and in some cases it is similar to just lowering prices. The addition of more relevant and valuable information would keep people

coming back and give a higher sense of the value of the club. If for instance your target was families with children you could offer free downloads of coloring books, and set up a way for parents to share information.

The most well known social network is Myspace.com. Myspace.com is not so much a social network itself but a social network expeditor where the average citizen can create his or her own social network. It was an incredible idea and one that netted the originators over \$500 million when they sold. While it is a great place to advertise it doesn't give you the same benefits of your own social network.

Friendster.com allows you to hook up with other people who share your likes and dislikes, for romantic or just social purposes, and also to form your own social network. The focus here is on individuals within your network. Dogster.com and Catster.com do the same for pet owners. Again these concepts are great for advertising but do not provide any more measurements or information than an ad on Google. Dogster.com and Catster.com, with some modifications, would make great sponsored sites for companies targeting pet lovers.

One social network, UMIX.net, targets trend setters in major urban markets and comes closer to what a branded or sponsored social network should be. It caters to a specific vertical market, it communicates weekly with its members, provides information of value, facilitates communication among members (forums) and with a unique twist, Umix.net gives points to members for clicking on ads, making purchases through affiliates, providing input and taking surveys. These points are redeemable for gifts.

Myspace.com and More

Myspace.com, Friendster.com, Dogster.com and Youtube.com represent social networks where people with something in common get together to share ideas. LinkedIn.com is a general business-to-business social network, as is Marketingprofs.com for marketers and Rainmaker.com for consultants.

If a network fits your target, it is a great place to advertise or sponsor. In the case of Myspace you can set up your own site and attract a following. Many of the larger consumer companies targeting the 16-30 year old market have official Myspace sites and many have unofficial sites created by their fans.

Whichever Digital Marketing Six-pack (and one thrown in for good measure) you use, it is essential for it to be highly targeted and to provide information that is of interest or that helps to solve the target's problem.



VISION

GOALS

ACTION



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White Paper

About Hallman & Assoc.

Hallman & Assoc. brings you an outside, objective viewpoint of your marketing efforts. We develop a strategy that incorporates creative concepts for the use of interactive and online media to energize those efforts and deliver measurable results.

Should you want more information, please contact me.

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