



Lee's Ferry, Arizona

How to Develop an Interactive Marketing Strategy

The internet has provided the global audience instant information, broad connections to billions and a revolutionary form of communication. However, for all of this seemingly effortless access to consumers, the internet has traditionally been a complex problem for marketers. Numerous organizations either do not have or maintain an appropriate interactive / internet marketing plan. More still simply include an isolated online component, typically a banner advertising campaign, in an overall marketing plan. And those organizations with an interactive marketing plan often face the challenge of new technology, new opportunities and campaign measurement.

How do you build an interactive marketing strategy? What are the key building blocks that should be included? This toolkit, How to Develop an Interactive Marketing Strategy, will describe the basic pieces and steps that are commonly utilized when creating an interactive / internet marketing plan. To ensure that this toolkit is beneficial to a wide range of marketers, this process has been divided into four steps: Plan, Accumulate, Activate and Measure. In addition, the toolkit contains several resources, including an interactive dictionary, tips, best practices, helpful websites and recommended books.

While this toolkit provides a wealth of information, it should be used as a basic outline for approaching an interactive marketing plan, rather than an exact method to use in every campaign. Keep in mind that the advantage and challenge of internet marketing is that no two campaigns are exactly alike.

Interactive Marketing vs. Internet Marketing

As with all terminology, the descriptive words 'interactive' and 'internet' mean two, slightly different things when applied in a marketing sense. Before we review the fundamental processes and techniques within interactive marketing, let's review what these two terms mean.

Interactive Marketing

Interactive Marketing refers to the evolving trend in marketing whereby marketing has moved from a transaction-based effort to a conversation.

The definition of interactive marketing comes from John Deighton at Harvard, who says interactive marketing is the ability to address the customer, remember what the customer says and address the customer again in a way that illustrates that we remember what the customer has told us.



Interactive marketing is not synonymous with internet marketing, although interactive marketing processes are facilitated by internet technology. The ability to remember what the customer has said is made easier when we can collect customer information online and we can communicate with our customer more easily using the speed of the internet.

Internet Marketing

Internet marketing, also referred to as online marketing or Emarketing, is marketing that uses the Internet. The interactive nature of Internet media, both in terms of instant response, and in eliciting response at all, are both unique qualities of Internet marketing.

Internet marketing ties together creative and technical aspects of the internet, including design, development, advertising and sales. Internet marketing methods include search engine marketing, display advertising, email marketing, affiliate marketing, interactive advertising, blog marketing, and viral marketing.

Internet Marketing's Basic Form



Fundamental Interactive / Internet Marketing Terms¹

Affiliate Marketing – Affiliate marketing is a method of promoting web businesses (merchants/advertisers) in which an affiliate (publisher) is rewarded for every visitor, subscriber, customer, and/or sale provided through his/her efforts.

Banner Ad (Display Ads) – A web banner or banner ad is a form of advertising on the internet. This form of internet advertising entails embedding an advertisement into a web page. It is intended to attract traffic to a website by linking them to the web site of the advertiser.

The advertisement is constructed from an image (GIF, JPEG, PNG), JavaScript program or multimedia object employing technologies such as Java, Shockwave or Flash, often employing animation or sound to maximize presence. Images are usually in a high-aspect ratio shape (i.e. either wide and short, or tall and narrow) hence the reference to banners.

Blog – A blog (a portmanteau of web log) is a website where entries are written in chronological order and commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.

Contextual Advertising - Contextual advertising is the term applied to advertisements appearing on websites or other media, such as content displayed in mobile phones, where the advertisements are selected and served by automated systems based on the content displayed by the user.

Cost Per Action (CPA) - CPA is considered the optimal form of buying online advertising from a direct response advertiser's point of view. An advertiser only pays for the ad when an action has occurred. An action can be a product being purchased, a form being filled, etc.

Cost Per Impression - A phrase often used in online advertising and marketing related to web traffic. It is used for measuring the worth and cost of a specific e-marketing campaign. This technique is applied with web banners, text links, e-mail spam, and opt-in e-mail advertising, although opt-in e-mail advertising is more commonly charged on a Cost Per Action (CPA) basis.

Email Marketing – Email marketing is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic mail as a means of communicating commercial or fundraising messages to an audience. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered email marketing.

The term is also used to refer to:

- Sending emails with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or old customers and to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business.
- Sending emails with the purpose of acquiring new customers or convincing old customers to buy something immediately.
- Adding advertisements in emails sent by other companies to their customers.

HTML – Hypertext Markup Language is the predominant markup language for web pages.

Landing Page - Sometimes known as a lead capture page, is the page that appears when a potential customer clicks on an advertisement or a search-engine result link. The page will usually display content that is a logical extension of the advertisement or link, and that is optimized to feature specific keywords or phrases for indexing by search engines.

In pay per click (PPC) campaigns, the landing page will also be customized to measure the effectiveness of different advertisements. By adding a parameter to the linking URL, marketers can measure advertisement effectiveness based on relative click-through rates.

PPC - Pay per click (PPC) is an advertising model used on search engines, advertising networks, and content websites/blogs, where advertisers only pay when a user actually clicks on an ad to visit the advertiser's website.

Reciprocal Link - A reciprocal link is a mutual link between two objects, commonly between two websites in order to ensure mutual traffic. Example: Alice and Bob have websites. If Bob's website links to Alice's website, and Alice's website links to Bob's website, the websites are reciprocally linked.

RSS Feed – Really Simple Syndication (RSS 2.0) is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines or podcasts. An RSS document, which is called a “feed,” “web feed,” or “channel,” contains either a summary of content from an associated web site or the full text. RSS makes it possible for people to keep up with their favorite web sites in an automated manner that's easier than checking them manually.

SEM – Search Engine Marketing is a form of Internet Marketing that seeks increase a websites visibility in the Search Engine result pages using the practice of buying paid search listings.

SEO – Search engine optimization is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via “natural” (“organic” or “algorithmic”) search results. Usually, the earlier a site is presented in the search results or the higher it “ranks”, the more searchers will visit that site.

Search Engine – (Web) search engines provide an interface to search for information on the World Wide Web. Information may consist of web pages, images and other types of files. Some search engines also mine data available in newsgroups, databases, or open directories. Google, Yahoo! Search and Ask.com are well-known examples of search engines.

Site Map - A site map (or sitemap) is a graphical representation of the architecture of a web site. [1] It can be either a document in any form used as a planning tool for web design, or a web page that lists the pages on a web site, typically organized in hierarchical fashion. This helps visitors and search engine bots find pages on the site.

Spam - Spamming is the abuse of electronic messaging systems to indiscriminately send unsolicited bulk messages. While the most widely recognized form of spam is e-mail spam, the term is applied to similar abuses in other media: instant messaging spam, Usenet newsgroup spam, Web search engine spam, and spam in blogs.

Viral Marketing – Viral marketing and viral advertising refers to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness, through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. It can be word-of-mouth delivered or enhanced by the network effects of the Internet.

Viral marketing is a marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message voluntarily. Viral promotions may take the form of funny video clips, interactive Flash games, advergames, images, or even text messages.

Website – A website is a collection of Web pages, images, videos or other digital assets that is hosted on one or several Web server(s), usually accessible via the Internet or cell phone. A Web page is a document, typically written in HTML.

1 Source: Wikipedia

Creating an Interactive / Internet Marketing Plan

Interactive / Internet Marketing is constantly evolving and growing at an extremely rapid pace. New opportunities and methods are being developed on an almost daily basis, which would appear to make it increasingly difficult to stay up-to-date on the latest trends. While it is important to stay nimble within an interactive marketing plan, a well-planned and focused strategy, using the most appropriate and relevant placements will ensure a successful campaign regardless of the latest marketing fads.

The key to success is following a simple formula: Plan, Accumulate, Activate and Measure.



Plan

The planning stage of an effective Interactive / Internet marketing plan is a crucial, but often ignored, step to ensuring the desired outcome.

For example a typical scenario might go something like this; an organization completes and implements a standard (offline) marketing plan including a reasonable purchase of banner advertising on related websites. A brochure is printed, a magazine/newspaper ad is created and at some point, someone says, 'just scale down the print ad to a banner ad and run with that' on the local newspaper site. Then, at the completion of the campaign, a click-thru report is delivered showing that 358 people clicked your banner on the local

newspaper site.

But wait, we purchased 27,000 banner impressions? And how many of those people ordered a visitor guide? Do we know if any of them signed up for our email?

Due to the nature and pace of interactive marketing, these important questions are often overlooked until the completion of campaign. And even then, most marketing professionals do not have enough time to analyze review the results, they simply include the same banner advertising promotion in next year's marketing plan.

The key to preventing this monotonous cycle of online advertising is to establish the objectives and goals of an interactive marketing strategy prior to launching the campaign.

Ask the Right Questions

While most organizations and businesses typically already promote and maintain a website for interactive marketing campaigns, it is possible to find the need to create a new website for a campaign or promotion. With that in mind, how should you begin to build or update your website in preparation for an interactive marketing campaign?

Start by asking a few basic, but important, questions:

- What is the goal of the campaign?
- What is the objective of the website?
- Who is the website for?
- Why do we want people to visit it?
- What do we want people to do on the website?

Grand Canyon National Park



- What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT Analysis) associated with the current website?
- How are we going to measure success on our website?
- What are the Key Performance Indicators?
- What statistics or research supports our goals / objectives?

Objectives / Goals

What is the goal of the website / campaign? Are you trying to encourage people to visit a website, or is the goal to have them order and receive, for example, a visitor guide? Or, are you trying to increase ticket sales to an attraction or event?

Each example is a common goal, however the execution of an interactive / internet marketing campaign for these goals could be vastly different. One goal may require an extensive pay per click campaign, while another goal may require the sponsorship of a local newspaper's calendar of events section.

A common way to measure objectives and goals is with Key Performance Indicators or KPIs. KPIs help an organization to measure progress towards their organizational goals, which can differ depending on the nature of the organization and its strategy.

Whether a KPI method or other technique is implemented for your campaign, establishing objectives and goals for an interactive marketing plan is the first step to determine the marketing vehicles and placements, the creative execution and the measurement of success for the campaign.

Accumulate

Now that the objective and goals of the interactive marketing plan have been established, the next step is the accumulation of materials and content for the campaign.

A commonly undervalued area of an interactive marketing plan, the content that you deliver to the consumer is one of the only things which will distinguish your website (and campaign) from countless others.

Approach the creation of content by assuming these three points:

- Consumers either do not know or do not care where they receive content / information from.



Monument Valley National Monument

- There are hundreds of other websites that offer the same or similar content as your site.

- Create valuable and interesting content for your audience.

Once you understand these ideas you can begin to determine what content will distinguish your website in the consumer's mind. The goal of content creation is to develop so called 'sticky' content, which is information or features on a website that provides users a compelling reason to visit it frequently.

Listen

To borrow a quote from Geoff Ramsey of eMarketer, 'Listening means that marketers set aside their ingrained "command-and-control" style of delivering messages on a one-way path, and instead open their senses to what consumers are saying, doing, feeling and thinking. While the connectivity and immediacy of the internet has challenged marketers to create more effective messages, those same attributes have also opened up a vast depository of consumer thoughts, behaviors and interests.'

Take the time to read and explore blogs about the travel industry or your destination. Find out what people are talking about, what they are asking each other about and what they are most interested in. If the majority of people on a specific blog are asking other people for a map of a local shopping area, then create and post that content, in this case a map, on your website. Then, let everyone know about that map and that your site is a great resource for information about that subject. Use the interactivity and honesty of blogs to your advantage.

Another way to listen to the consumer is by exploring social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Yahoo! Travel and TripAdvisor. What are people talking about? What are they reviewing favorably? What are people reviewing unfavorably?

Additionally, more traditional research methods such as focus groups and surveys can provide valuable insight into your consumer's wants and needs.

The advent of social networking technology has allowed millions of people to tell the world about what they are interested in, as a marketer, you just have to take the time to listen.

Content Plan

Once the type of content has been determined, an evaluation of where that content will come from is the next step. Decide if the content already exists in some form or if you need to have content created for the campaign.

The type of content selected for the campaign depends on the research and planning that you have accomplished in the previous steps. Go back to the question 'What is the goal?' and 'Why do we want people to visit it (the site)?' If you are creating a campaign to promote a shopping district within your destination, perhaps you have learned that users are most interested in a list of stores, directions, maps and coupons. Take those insights and create a list of what content is the most desirable.

Most Important Content

Important Content

Standard Content

Less Important Content

Unimportant Content

As you start to develop your website or splash page, refer back to this content chart for direction on what content to place on a page and where to place it. Make sure that the most important content is easy to find and understand, while at the same time placing the unimportant content in an unobtrusive location or removing it from the website entirely.

In most cases the content on a website will consist of a majority of copy (text) and images. It is important to consider the length of the copy at this point. The majority of users do not like to read large blocks of copy online, so try to keep the text in a short, memo-style format. Making text easy to read is the key to offering great online copy. At the same time, ensure that the images you are presenting with the copy are relevant and exciting.

While copy and images make up the bulk of a website's content, specific rich media pieces such as audio files (podcasts), videos, interactive maps and slideshows provide a smaller, but equally important source of material. Prior to launching a campaign, develop these rich media components so that interested consumers are presented with an in-depth catalog of additional content.

Activate

With a marketing plan in place and the content for the campaign completed, the next step is to activate or promote the campaign to the consumer. Again, by reviewing the original goals for the campaign you can start to determine what forms of marketing and promotion offer the most beneficial results.

Choosing an Online Marketing Vehicle

Because there are so many ways to advertise and market online, choosing the correct marketing vehicle can be a daunting challenge. Should the campaign consist of all banner advertising or should we run a search engine marketing (SEM) campaign? What about podcasting and video? Do we need to create a MySpace page too?

While there is no exact template or plan for selecting online marketing vehicles, it can be generally assumed that a diversified strategy will provide the best opportunity for success, especially if the campaign is in its first year.

Common Online Marketing Components

Below are some of the more common and latest marketing vehicles available to advertisers. While this list provides a brief introduction to each opportunity, it does not represent the hundreds of marketing placements that could be used in an interactive marketing campaign.

Banner Advertising

Perhaps the most common and well-known form of online advertising, banner advertising or banner ads allow the marketer to purchase 'online billboards' on popular or relevant sites in order to show a promotional message.

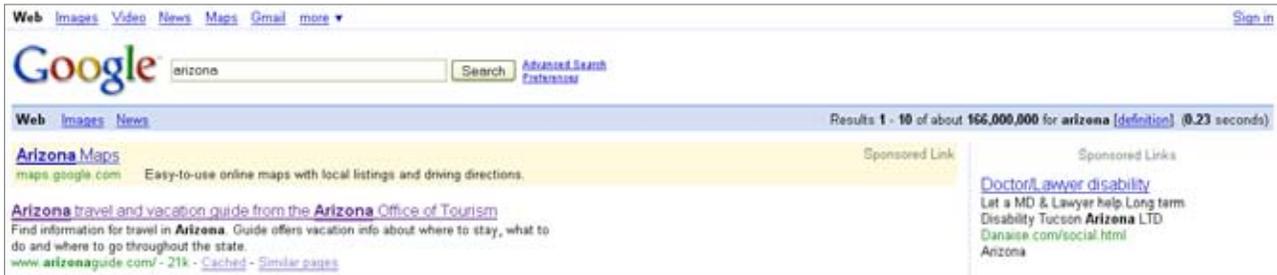
The ads are typically a standard size, contain text and images and are presented in a jpeg, gif or Flash format.

The main challenge associated with banner advertising is a low response rate to the advertisement. Because the majority of sites feature several banner ads on a single page, attracting a consumer's attention and initiating a click can be a difficult process. Recently, enhanced targeting methods have begun to improve the low click thru rates (CTRs) typical of banner ads. Refer to the next section for more information on targeting.



SEM

Search engine marketing or SEM, is another popular form of online advertising that involves purchasing sponsored links for certain search engine keywords. As a user searches for a purchased keyword or phrase, an additional listing displaying a marketing message is displayed above or to the side of the regular or natural search results.



Part of the benefit of SEM is that the consumer is actively searching for your keyword and in theory, is already interested in your product or location.

While a SEM advertising campaign does feature several benefits, it can be an expensive and time-consuming project for a small marketing budget. Additionally, businesses should focus on optimizing their search engine optimization (SEO) campaign to enhance rankings in natural search results, rather than rely solely on SEM.

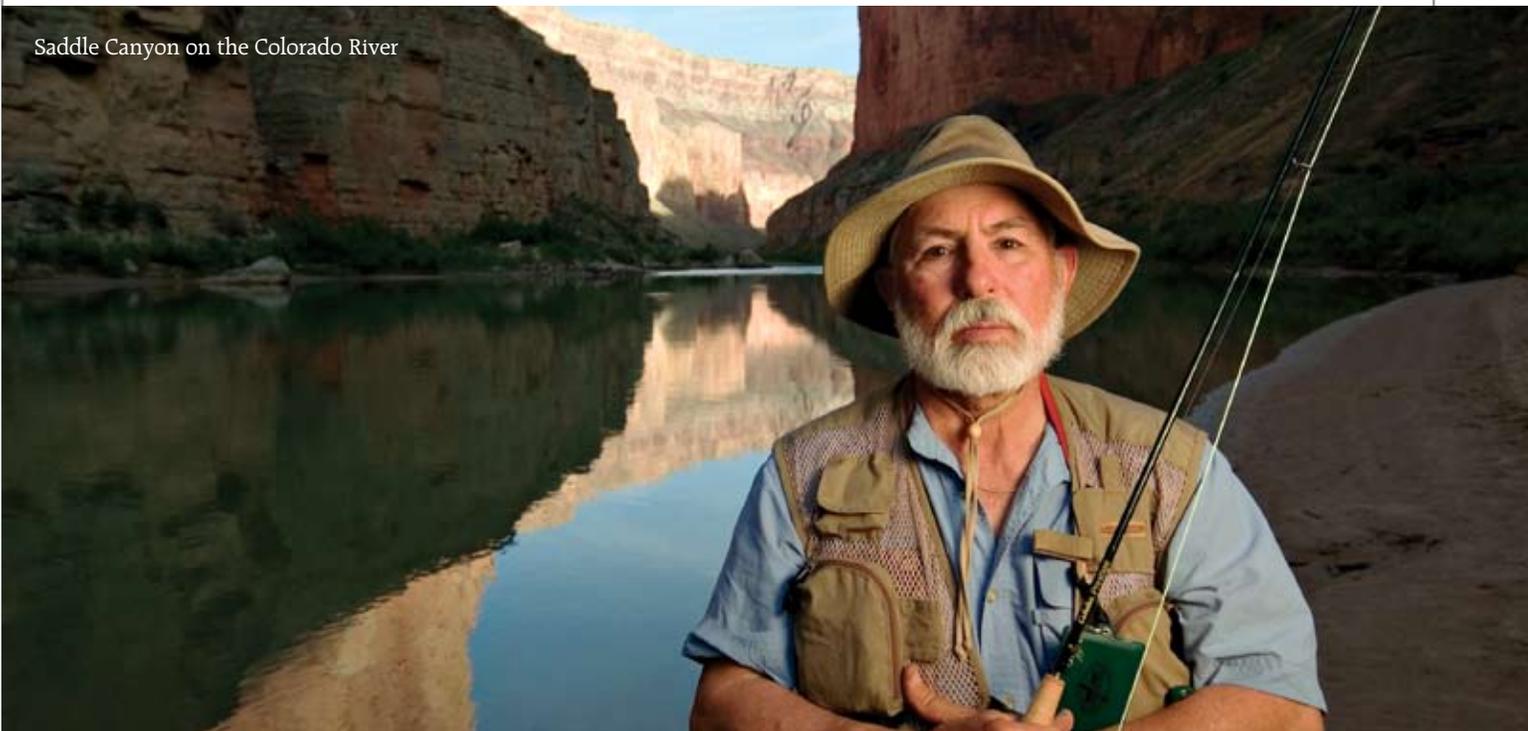
Email Marketing

An email marketing campaign is a cost-effective and direct way to market and communicate with consumers who have already shown an interest in your product or location.

Building an email database including users who have agreed and expressly consented to receiving your marketing messages is not only a solid approach, but it is also a requirement of federal law under the CAN-SPAM act.

When creating an email marketing campaign pay close attention to the design, distribution and effectiveness of each email.

Saddle Canyon on the Colorado River



Sponsorships

Similar to, and in most cases including, banner advertising, online sponsorships commonly offer the ability to integrate your content or marketing message into another website.

A typical sponsorship package could include several banners, locations for copy inclusion and links to the marketer's website. For example, a local CVB could sponsor the weather section of a local newspaper's website in exchange for banner ad placement and the opportunity to talk about (through copy) what local attractions you can experience during sunny days.

Advanced Online Marketing Components

Blogs

Since blogs are also a different form of websites, they do offer some of the same basic advertising opportunities as most websites, including banner advertising and sponsorships. Beyond basic advertising, marketers can also create blogs to further enhance SEO programs, public relations initiatives, email databases and communication outlets.

Some companies, including Southwest Airlines and General Motors have begun to use blogs to not only promote their products and services, but also to open a new line of communication (a new way to listen) with the consumer.

However, the same openness and communication that make blogs so beneficial is also the same challenges that many companies grapple with while running a blog. Upset consumers and instant communication do make blogs a very labor intensive marketing vehicle.

Podcasting

A commonly misused marketing term, podcasting (in the truest sense of the word) refers to the distribution of audio or video shows via Apple's iTunes store which are available for viewing on a portable media player (mp3 player) or iPod. Due to the popularity of the iPod and podcasting, the term is often used to refer to any type of regularly distributed audio or video show that is viewed on a portable media player.

In most cases, podcasting offers the producer(s) a cost-effective way to distribute information to a large audience. Typically, podcasts are structured in a form similar to a traditional television or radio show.

Using podcasting as marketing vehicles does present some challenges, including a limited audience, content creation and delivering a relevant message.

Widgets

Widgets, or gadgets, are split into two types: desktop widgets and web widgets. In either case, widgets are usually a small application that displays a form of content to a user. Common widgets could show the local weather forecast, news, images or a snapshot of your email inbox.





Barbequing on the Colorado River in Grand Canyon



Blacktail Canyon in Grand Canyon

The difference between desktop widgets and web widgets is simply the location where they are being displayed.

Desktop widgets usually require the download of a special application to run the widgets on your desktop; however the new Microsoft Vista operating system already includes this feature. By using desktop widgets a user could have a variety of information displayed without the use of a web browser.

Web widgets are widgets that remain online, but can be placed on a variety of sites such as a MySpace page or blog. Conventional versions of web widgets include photo slideshows, audio players and video players. Because these widgets can be easily moved from one site to another by simply copying the source code (which runs the widget), a viral marketing effect commonly occurs with the most popular widgets.

Due to the distribution of widgets, many marketers face the challenge of creating compelling content that users want to see on a daily basis. Successful widgets usually offer a service or content that the user wants, rather than a standard marketing message or commercial.

Social Networking

Websites such as MySpace, Facebook and TripAdvisor have created communities of users with common interests and relationships. These social networking sites not only offer banner advertising and sponsorship opportunities, but also the ability to harness the collective power of these relationships to promote and inform consumers about your product.

A typical execution using a social networking site would involve an organization setting up a profile and creating a page on the site. Then, the organization would use the page to promote a particular product, connect with users who like that specific product and gather additional information from those users.

While using social networking sites sounds easy, like blogs, marketers should be aware of the challenges that accompany consumer opinions and instant communication. Many social networking users do not respond favorably to the proliferation of advertisers on these sites. Before using social networking a component to an interactive marketing plan, research any potential opposition to your organization on these sites. Then, create valuable and relevant content for the social networking site.

Targeting

While the internet has offered marketers several ways to target specific consumers, for example by advertising on a website with related content to a product, recent advancements in technology have enhanced the targeting of online advertising. Two of the more

well-known online targeting methods are contextual and behavioral targeting.

Commonly used in conjunction with banner advertisements, contextual targeting ensures that a banner ad is only shown on pages with related content. For example, if you have an advertisement about hotels in Flagstaff and a user is reading a story about a new hotel being constructed in Sedona; contextual targeting would display your banner ad because of the relationship of the word 'hotel.'

Rather than target the content, behavioral targeting presents your message to the consumer regardless of what website they are on. Behavioral targeting gathers the preferences of a consumer as they browse the web, building a profile of that person's interests. The advertising network uses that information to present your ad to a targeted consumer, regardless of what website they are currently browsing.

While both forms of targeting do raise some concerns, specifically privacy of information, they offer a proven way to present a marketing message to a specific section of consumers.

Offline Activation

Including steps to promote your interactive marketing plan offline may seem ironic; however offline activation is another important piece of creating a successful campaign. Using a call to action with a specific URL or web address in print ads, radio ads and television spots is a common way to increase traffic to your interactive campaign.

Be sure to also consider the other offline locations that could benefit your online campaign such as including a URL or web address on business cards, letterhead, collateral materials and promotional materials.

Measure

Once your interactive marketing plan has been launched, it is essential that the campaign be tested, measured and optimized. Without a comprehensive measurement plan even the best interactive marketing plans will not deliver the necessary results.

Establish Measurements

One of the benefits of online advertising is the vast amount of tracking and statistics that are available. Determining which statistics to track and report on depends upon the original goals of the campaign.

If the goal of the interactive marketing plan is to further the branding message of your organization a possible measurement would be time spent and the click thru rate from the banner advertising. If the goal of a campaign is to fulfill a certain number of brochures, then downloads and brochure orders would be a standard measurement.

Interactive measurements commonly include:

- Unique Visitors
- Page Views
- Click Thru Rate
- Unique Clicks
- States / Countries of Visitors
- Day/Week Traffic
- Search Engine Keywords
- Time Spent (on site)
- Interaction Rate

- Email Response Rates

Conversion measurements commonly include:

- Downloads
- Products Orders
- Products Sold
- Email Sign-ups

Tracking Tools

Now that measurement metrics have been established, make sure that the proper tracking tools are in place to record the data. Tracking tools for websites and banner advertisements are common tools available for monitoring interactive marketing campaigns.

Website tracking software should be a standard piece of any website development project. While such website statistics tools vary in price, service and tracking techniques any of the major website statistics companies such as WebTrends, HBX Analytics or Google Analytics are widely accepted. Data collected by a website statistics tool is typically reporting in the form of web traffic report. These web traffic reports are then compared against the goals or key performance indicators that were previously established.

In addition to website statistics tools, banner ad networks also record data from a banner advertising campaign. These reports are typically sent on a weekly or monthly basis and, in combination with website statistics tools, can provide valuable insight into the success of a banner advertising campaign.

While these reports will provide a good amount of data, additional tracking tools such as unique URLs and landing pages, can impart even more detailed information about a campaign. Unique URLs could be as simple as a different domain name or as complex as a unique URL string, both of which will provide statistics on the effectiveness of a specific advertising execution. The use of landing pages or splash pages is another technique that can differentiate the amount of advertising-specific traffic versus normal website traffic.

Testing

By using a variety of tracking tools, an organization can start to develop a robust understanding of how an interactive marketing campaign is performing. Using this data, tests can be performed on specific creative, copy or emails to determine what best combination of elements returns the highest ROI, click thru rate or time spent. The most common testing technique is multivariate or A/B testing, which compares to slightly different versions of a website or email.

Tips

Now that an interactive marketing plan has been developed, take a moment to review these tips and best practices for websites, search engine marketing, email marketing

Websites

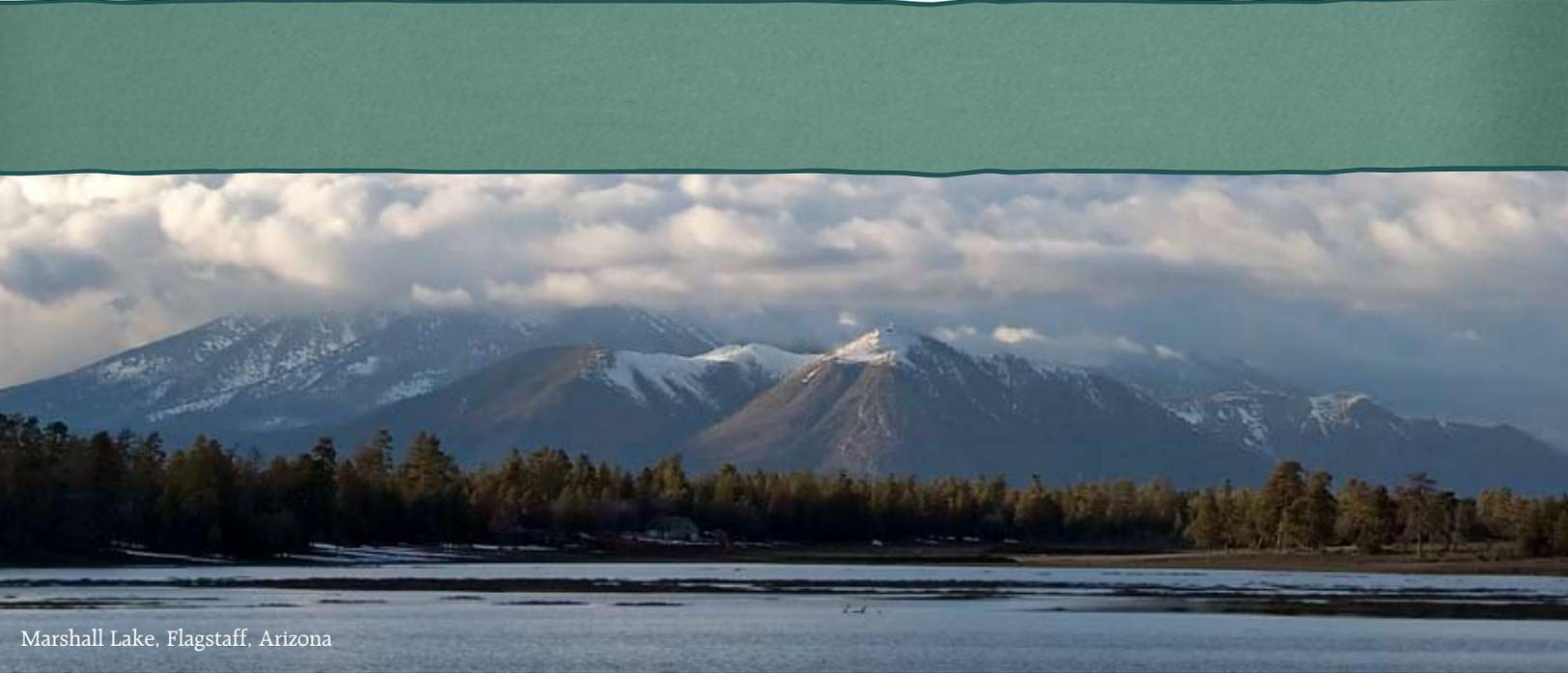
- Place the organization's or website's logo at the top (usually top-left) of every page and link the logo back to the homepage of the site.
- Use clear and descriptive text when links to other pages or websites, rather than 'click here.' Not only will this provide a clear path

Descriptive Text

Check out our [calendar of events](#), [travel deals](#) and [interactive map](#).

Non-Descriptive Text

For calendar of events [click here](#). For travel deals [click here](#). For interactive map [click here](#).



Marshall Lake, Flagstaff, Arizona

for navigating a website, it will also enhance SEO or search engine optimization efforts.

- Do not use 'under construction' or 'coming soon' pages. They send a message that a site is incomplete. Only post content once it has been fully developed.
- Avoid using 'mystery meat navigation' or icon-based navigation. Navigation that is composed of a series of symbols or images is usually difficult for users to understand.
- The majority of web browsers in use are already sufficient to view the latest web designs therefore links to download the latest browser versions are not always necessary. Avoid making users download a new browser version before visiting a site by ensuring the site is accessible to the largest audience possible.
- Distinguish links that require a file download, such as a PDF or Word document file, by including identifying text such as 'This is a .PDF file.'
- Avoid mixing too many font typefaces, sizes and colors. The right amount of variety can create a good visual distinction, but too much can create confusion.
- Avoid using blinking text, scrolling text or sounds on the homepage; these can be more of a distraction than an enhancement.
- Create copy in short, easy-to-read segments. Avoid creating blocks of copy that are too long or too wide. Users typically scan pages, therefore pages with too much, unreadable content are usually skipped.
- Place descriptive alt tags on all images, which will provide additional information to website visitors as well as visitors who are using text only browsers.

Search Engine Optimization

- Create a comprehensive site map for the website and link to it from every page.
- Use the same site map structure to create a XML site map specifically for search engines.
- Create your content for your customers, rather than for search engines.
- Use the title tag to explain exactly what content is contained on the page. Be careful not to use the same exact title tag on each page, search engines may assume that all of the pages contain the same content.
- Avoid using link-farms and link pages to boost search engine rankings.

Email Marketing

- Use your organization or brand name in the "from" line, which tells recipients who sent the email.
- Keep subject lines short...8 words or less is considered ideal.
- Avoid using superfluous images, graphics, sound or video within emails. Many ISP and email client spam filters will block messages containing these elements.
- Test each email message before you send it. Use different browsers such as Internet Explorer, Firefox and Opera as well as different clients such as Outlook, AOL, Gmail and Yahoo!.
- Help readers manage and connect with your messages. Include forward-to-a-friend links and printer-friendly options that are clearly labeled.

Resources

Websites / Design Resources

World Wide Web Consortium
<http://www.w3.org/>

Google Webmaster Central
<http://www.google.com/webmasters/>

Web Pages That Suck
<http://www.webpagethatsuck.com/>

Killer Sites
<http://www.killersites.com/>

Color Scheme Creator
<http://www.wellstyled.com/tools/colorscheme2/index-en.html>

Banner Advertising

Interactive Advertising Bureau
<http://www.iab.net/>

Email Marketing

EmailLabs
<http://www.emaillabs.com/>

Constant Contact
<http://www.constantcontact.com/learning-center/index.jsp>

Podcasting

Apple
<http://www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcasts.html>

Research / Measurement

Pew / Internet
<http://www.pewinternet.org/>

iMedia Connection
<http://www.imediainconnection.com/>

WebTrends
<http://www.webtrends.com/>

Blogs

Seth Godin
<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>

Center for Media Research
<http://www.centerformediaresearch.com/>

SearchEngineLand
<http://searchengineland.com/>

Books

Visual Quickstart Guide - HTML, XHTML, and CSS, Sixth Edition

by Elizabeth Castro
One of the best HTML guides on the market.

Web Design For Dummies, 2nd Edition

by Lisa Lopuck
An easy-to-read book with quick, simple and actionable website design tips.

The Dip: A Little Book That Teaches You When to Quit (and When to Stick)

by Seth Godin
Seth Godin discusses how you too can gain the courage to quit unsuccessful projects.

Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers Into Friends And Friends Into Customers

by Seth Godin
Widely regarded as one of the best books on interactive marketing.

Street Smart Internet Marketing

by Justin Michie
A good book for the interactive marketing beginner.

Effective E-Mail Marketing

by Herschell Gordon Lewis
Real-world examples and helpful tips for email marketing.

Web Analytics Demystified

by Eric Peterson
Understand the various approaches to analytics, including the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Web Analytics For Dummies

by Pedro Sostre and Jennifer LeClaire
Another easy-to-read and understand book for marketers just beginning to examine web analytics.

Google Analytics 2.0

by Jerri L. Ledford and Mary E. Tyler
A useful guide for anyone who uses the Google Analytics tool.