



Riding The Waves in Today's Economy May Require New Approaches To Marketing

How To Make The Transition To Online Marketing Using Web 2.0, Blogging and Internet Advertising

by Gregory Johnson
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As a business owner, manager or Marketing VP you may feel frustrated with the growing complexity of digital marketing. With so many new Web based applications and strategies, it can be difficult to know where to begin. You may find yourself camped on the threshold of change, with important questions on how to make the right online marketing decisions.



This may be a great time to reexamine your business and restart your marketing in a more innovative direction.

As you think about developing a unified strategy for Internet marketing, you will discover many points of creative fusion between your traditional advertising program and the emerging possibilities online. As you get underway please remember the first two cardinal rules of online marketing:

1. Simply building a website won't grow your business.
2. You'll need an effective strategy to be successful online.

Many marketers fail to realize their website is just the beginning of a larger process. The overall purpose and depth of content within your domain may suggest a compelling strategy. Indeed, it's important to have a sense of where the latent energy of your site is going, i.e., to substantiate your credentials, tell a product story, generate leads, or provide direct e-commerce sales. The Web offers so many interesting strategies it's quite natural to feel overwhelmed by the possibilities.

Start By Looking At Your Industry With Fresh Eyes

Over the past few years we have assisted our clients in making the transition to online marketing, which is a natural fit since it has always been our business to synthesize information and provide helpful guidance. However, with the impressive surge in Web 2.0 applications, we also know how important it is to look at a particular business or industry with fresh eyes in order to set the stage for appropriate innovations.

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The term Web 2.0 emerged in 2004. It is a popular label for the “participatory web” now so prevalent in the use of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and other social media. Additionally, Web 2.0 encompasses the blogosphere and the ever increasing number of hosted applications that run through web browsers and allow users to own and control their own information. This architecture of online participation, and its emerging popularity, has changed the face of marketing.

Maintaining a Web 2.0 presence allows customers, prospects and outside experts to interact with you online. But, a command and control management style can impede the process. That’s why you’ll need to spend time thinking “outside the box” on a host of new questions:

- Are you ready to provide useful, compelling content for your company website, blog, or social network on a regular basis?
- Have you been taking the time to understand what your industry competitors are doing?
- Are you ready to respond helpfully and quickly to customer feedback and other input you may receive from the blogosphere?
- Does the new paradigm fit your company culture?
- Do you have a strategy for online marketing?

Finding The Right Balance Between Traditional Marketing And Online Media



A look at these numbers tells us how critical it is to be found online.

There’s so much occurring with Web 2.0 applications it is virtually impossible for a smaller company to stay abreast of everything. Digital marketing presents a confusing abundance of choices, a fact which can dampen one’s enthusiasm. Yet, the emergence of Web 2.0 also represents positive game changing possibilities. Our solution is to adhere to the principle of simplicity

(without becoming simplistic) in seeking original ways to categorize or map the world of online marketing and to break out the fundamental action steps a potential client might use to prioritize their investment.

For example, we have seen clients who think a blog is a static thing, similar to a website. Or who think their social content should mimic their traditional advertising and marketing, not fully realizing they may need to completely retool their approach. We hear a lot about social marketing from customers who seem unwilling to try it. They think it may become a huge drain on their time and resources, which is a very legitimate concern.

The question of how to transition to online marketing using Web 2.0 looms large as you gain perspective and come closer to making a decision. You’ll want to establish a strategy, especially if you’re thinking about social media, or maintaining a blog, or engaging in search engine optimization (SEO)... not to mention Internet advertising and the ongoing need for effective landing pages, or appropriate testing using site conversion data through online analytics. Additionally, you’ll want to find the right balance between your traditional marketing programs and the new initiatives you’ll be engaging online.

Push Strategy: Using the Traditional Sales Funnel

In the Traditional Sales Funnel the marketer targets a “universe” of people through demographic and psychological profiling and sends out branded messages through advertising campaigns, public relations, direct response, sales promotion, trade shows and other tactics. In simple terms this is known as a *push strategy*. The marketer pushes his message out to a targeted population, hoping to inform, persuade, remind and influence their purchasing behavior.



As you'll note in the illustration, nestled nicely under the target universe is a funnel which represents the collective efforts of the company's sales department. Essentially, the marketer is looking to generate “precipitation” from their advertising in the form of sales leads, retail traffic, bounce back cards and other prospect behavior. The company seeks to control the funnel as their sales people work to convert their prospects into customers.

Pull Strategy: Using the Internet Sales Funnel

Now, let's take a look at an Internet Sales Funnel, which is considerably different from the traditional one. Here the entire world sits on top of the Web. By virtue of the sheer mass of Internet activity, for business, education, shopping, and entertainment, etc., a natural funneling process takes place based on the stuff people are doing online. This natural funneling occurs every minute of each day as people search for a digital camera, or advice on photography, or photographic supplies, or a professional photographer. Each user finding appropriate sites and information without any third party controlling their quest for information.



As a marketer you are never going to control this funnel. The Web offers a very different user experience when compared with the world of conventional advertising.

Instead of pushing a message through to a targeted online audience, you will engage in a *pull strategy* to capture a share of traffic from the people who are looking for your service or product in real time on the Web. After all, every day *people are looking for you*. They begin their shopping online while finding the information they need to make decisions. They're already funneled into hundreds, if not thousands, of discrete points of interest. Your task is to pull Web traffic to your landing page by being in the right online place at the right time with a profitable click through rate (CRT).

As good as this sounds, there's a catch: it's not enough to have a good website; people need to find your website as well. You can build it... but they *won't come*... unless you also make it easy for them to find you. Just look at the number of websites that exist today, and the number of users currently surfing the Web (see illustration on page 2).

Introducing The Online Marketing Awareness Map

We'll admit there's no single easy answer to the plethora of choices. Marketing has never been easy. Web 2.0 is often called the participatory Web. A place where blogs, social networking sites and media sharing sites have transformed the world of marketing. We developed the **Online Marketing Awareness Map** as an early step in creating a visual tool for discussion. Let's tour the Map, taking each circled area of activity as it occurs.



Area 1: Websites

Key thought: Your website is an important base station for your online marketing program.

Many clients fail to realize their website is just the beginning of their online marketing program. Yes, your site must provide good content, usability, optimization and branding. It is indeed the base station for a more comprehensive program. Yet, for most business websites the base station needs work. There's much to be done in bringing real excitement, traffic and new results. Often the goal is to transform a static asset into a compelling and effective online program. Think of your site as the first step. The overall purpose and depth of content in your domain, the latent energy in your site, may provide the key to a successful strategy for online marketing.

Area 2: Online Advertising

Key thought: Using your advertising dollars to build traffic and conversion.

Few of us are strangers to online advertising. By online advertising we refer to:

1. Sponsored search listings on Google, Yahoo! and other search engines (left).
2. Web based display ads such as banners, tiles, or widget ads (top of page 5).

The first category includes sponsored search listings which emulate the search characteristics of organic listings in everything but price, since you must



Sponsored listings emulate the characteristics of organic listings



pay for them, typically using a Pay Per Click (PPC) model, or pull strategy. With the second category: banners, tiles and other online

display ads you're looking at a *push strategy* similar to offline advertising, where you pay for exposure based on a cost per thousand impressions (CPM). Both categories require a direct monetary investment since you're exchanging dollars for traffic.

For many marketers this is as far as it goes: they build a website and buy online ads linked to specified landing pages. An e-commerce site with branded items or specialty merchandise coupled with good prices can do this pretty well, especially if they have done a good job of providing the right products and customer service in a niche market.

Area 3: Content Marketing

Key Thought: Blogs build traffic, credibility and reputation — nice things to have for one's professional life or brand.

We see content marketing as well written articles or blog posts designed to display thought leadership with high "favorables" for search engines. This means having a well developed website, microsite (a.k.a. niche site), blog, or any combination of website and blog. Blogging adds fresh content, and a new page to your domain, with every post. You can attract visitors and their comments as your blogging activity builds inbound links, another natural Search Engine Optimization (SEO) benefit. Blogs build traffic, credibility and reputation — nice things to have for one's professional life or brand.



Building inbound links improves your natural search engine ranking

A good approach to blogging may require originality, or an "outside the box" approach to a niche topic. But it doesn't have to be creative per se. Start by:



The point is to join the discussion taking place online

- Solving a problem your audience cares about
- Find a voice
- Build trust, confidence, desire
- Be engaging
- Don't oversell

In effect, you may want to begin by commenting on something that others in your industry are saying. When you begin blogging, you should read other blogs and make appropriate comments. The point is to join the discussion taking place online. Just don't be too obvious about selling or

becoming a shill for your product. Think of yourself as attending a business reception. Show a sincere interest in something someone else has said or written. That's a good way to obtain natural reciprocity in return visits to your blog. Blogs humanize a brand, which is a very special thing.

Who's blogging these days? Organizations and individuals involved in virtually every business and profession, from software development, training and freelance specialists, to product manufacturers, distributors, wineries, galleries and travel destinations, etc. As with everything else, you'll want to open yourself and your business to further innovation. Think of it as a creative fusion between the offline marketing you may be accustomed to and the new digital marketing you're seeking to engage.

Area 4: Social Networking



Key Thought: Make sure your customers are engaged in social networking before you take the time to engage it.

Though there's an abundance of new applications to choose from, including (but not limited to) **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr**. The growth rate of these applications has literally defined the participatory Web as a place where

users access free utilities which give them the ability to upload and control their own content. Social networking allows millions of users to join online communities, share content, links, ideas, rediscover old friends and new online relationships. It's fitting to mention that Twitter enjoyed a 93% growth rate in 2009. Additionally, there are more Facebook users worldwide than people in the U.S. It seems hard to believe that Facebook was a mere start up company in 2004. However, today Myspace is worth substantially less than the \$770 Million that Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation paid for it in 2005. Perhaps the shakeout in Social Media is still in the making?

As a result of these and other stories related to Social Media, many established marketers, especially smaller companies accustomed to traditional marketing, are moving slowly to embrace it. Some national brands have been monitoring their online reputations by responding quickly to social marketing users — a natural arena for public relations.

What has most impressed us about Social Networking is its popularity. People simply want to socialize and share links. A fact that seems to underscore a basic human need for connection. Additionally, these sites have been referred to as *digital campfires*. The fast penetration of social media into popular consciousness is very significant. Apart from online security or privacy concerns, socializing online is here to stay.



So why not indulge yourself and jump right in? According to Larry Brauner at Online-Social-Networking.com the social media curve is very steep. His Top 10 social media challenges include the following list of concerns:

- Results aren't achieved nearly as quickly with social media
- It's easy to spin wheels and waste lots of time
- Social media is still evolving rapidly and tends to be a moving target

To this last point we might add: make sure your customers are engaged in social networking *before* you take the time to engage it.

Despite these caveats, there are compelling reasons to engage social networking. Just make sure to continue with your traditional direct marketing, in-house sales efforts and direct marketing as you explore new possibilities with internet advertising and web 2.0 applications.

Area 5: Webinars, Videos & Email Newsletters



Think of it as a special gift to your visitors or customers

Key thought: Think of webinars, videos and email newsletters as contributing to a larger cycle of persuasion that builds over time, across many different types of interests.

Webinars have been surging in popularity. Content marketers often have them in mind when they begin blogging or building their website. And, if it's not a webinar per se, it may be that a mix of content from online videos, photography and email newsletters will drive increased interest, online visits and

customer loyalty. Think of this activity area as a special gift to your visitors or customers. A Webinar is a controlled educational experience. With online videos you lead them through an important subject where you:

- Consolidate important blog posts
- Turn your PowerPoint presentations into effective webinars
- Entertain, teach, surprise, astonish
- Provide tutorials, manifestos, viral videos and exotic demonstrations

Additionally, email marketing has also continued to grow. However, it's important to follow best practices in using double opt-in subscription and build your list organically (stay away from list rentals). With a quality email newsletter you can enjoy seamless communications with your best prospects and customers, while building these relationships with an average open rate of 30% or higher, and a click through rate of 10% or more.

Area 6: Landing Pages/Analytics

Key Thought: Build confidence, desire, trust. Remember, selling is an art.

Remember to keep in mind that landing pages for each campaign should mirror the advertisements that bring traffic to your site. If the wording changes abruptly, or the visual themes don't match, your bounce rate, or time spent on the all-important landing page will fall off disappointingly. This is the place where it's okay to do explicit selling. The visitor clicked on an ad that represents their interest in your product. Be sure to give them succinct copy loaded with benefits and maintain a warm, friendly tone of voice with a good call to action. Build confidence, desire, trust. Remember, selling is an art.



This is the place where it's okay to do explicit selling

Regarding the subject of Analytics, the Web Analytics Association has come up with a common definition:

“Web Analytics is the objective tracking, collection, measurement, reporting and analysis of quantitative Internet data to optimize websites and web marketing initiatives.”

This is the part where clients really begin to see and feel some of the unique benefits to online marketing. Google Analytics is a very popular utility, that gives you the ability to see fresh data from your website domains and online advertising campaigns. It is a very important area for any online marketer.

One book we advise you to read if you wish to become more deeply involved in this subject is: “Web Analytics, An Hour A Day,” by Avinash Kaushik

That pretty much sums up (in short space) a complex and challenging set of disciplines contained within our **Online Marketing Awareness Map**.

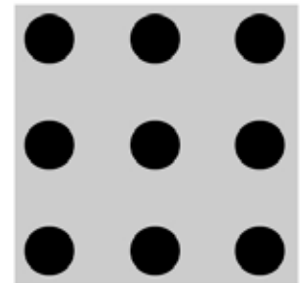
Innovation As Strategy

Once again, let me suggest an important reminder: in this White Paper we’ve been striving to keep things simple (not simplistic) to help you in framing your initial thoughts. Here’s where it gets interesting, and potentially exciting, if you choose to emphasize a new online marketing strategy.

Let’s start with an essential ingredient: the Web is all about innovation. It allows us to do things we could only dream about a few short years ago. Yet, our assumed approach to innovation requires us to *think outside the box* (see puzzle at right). This should be an explicit part of your strategy. New competitors are rapidly emerging, while many traditional business models are forced to adapt and evolve. Many marketers have discovered that the Internet has changed their industry, just when it has become nearly too late for them to take appropriate action.

Here are three examples where innovation has made a particular business or individual, write their own success story:

1. If you check out wootwine.com you’ll be looking at a special sale, for one day only. “Woot” is a domain that specializes in daily deals, one item at a time at discounted prices. We learned of them in a recent issue of Inc. Magazine. They build their customer relationships via Twitter. What’s interesting is the simplicity of the business model: one sale, every day, on one select item. A strategy that would be nearly impossible in the traditional retail world.
2. Kogi Korean BBQ, a company with just a little over one year of operations, serves Korean style meat in Mexican-style flatbread (an innovative idea!) in Los Angeles. Kogi designed its delivery system using Twitter to inform customers where their delivery truck is headed during the course of the day, so impassioned customers can enjoy their Korean fast food fix (see kogibbq.com). This is a Web 2.0 recipe for success. Could you be doing something like this for your industry?



Can You Think Outside The Box?
*Link all 9 dots using four straight lines or less, without lifting the pen.
(puzzle answer: next page)*

- Ms. Brigitte Dale won Yahoo!'s Best Internet Personality 2008 for her distinctive video blog posts. These charming online videos feature sharp scripts, self-produced on a shoe string with surprising sophistication. Her approach may be unsuitable for many established firms (a little too quirky perhaps?), but they're definitely fun. Here's a recent post on [YouTube](#).

Bottom line: most people think creativity has more to do with art, music and literature and less to do with business, science and engineering. But that's not the case!

- Creativity is the act of producing new ideas, approaches and actions.
- Innovation is the process of generating and applying ideas in a specific manner and context.
- Both can work for you, especially if you're planning to leverage Web 2.0.

Making Good Use Of Tactical Advantages

Successful strategy is often built from tactical advantages. Whether to build up slowly with a focus on Content Marketing, or more quickly with Online Advertising, may depend on specific marketing needs and goals. For example...

An e-commerce site dealing in branded items sold at discount might focus on:

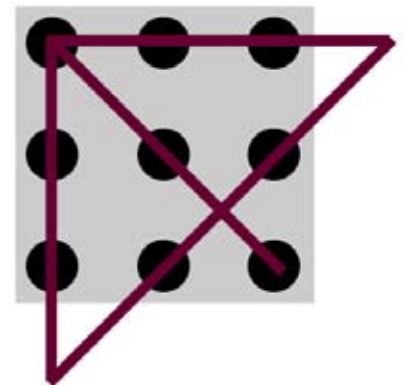
- Area 1: Websites;
- Area 2: Online Advertising;
- Area 6: Landing Pages, Analytics & Conversion.

Whereas a manufacturer or B2B services firm might focus on:

- Continued direct mail and inside sales in conjunction with...
- Area 3: Content Marketing or Blogging
- Area 5: Online Video
- Area 6: Landing Pages, Analytics & Conversion

Of course, it helps if you have a strategy. But if you don't have one, or if it's just too confusing, you'll benefit by taking smaller tactical steps. It is hard to go wrong with good landing pages and well designed content featuring important keyword groups and site analytics. Pilot programs make sense. Add a company blog to the mix, or perhaps a Google Adwords campaign. Adwords can work quickly, which is one reason why sponsored search listings are so popular.

Yet, the whole point of your program should be *strategic* in nature. You'll want to be organized in your approach. A hasty campaign cobbled together with little planning is unlikely to work well, unless you're very lucky! False starts can be demoralizing, and damaging as well due to the possibility of a poor Quality Score from Google, which can take months to overcome. Better to work deliberately and strategically if you can, even with a small beginning. Content marketing, especially from blogging, is designed to build up carefully over time.



Answer

According to Wikipedia.com the Nine Dot Puzzle, first published in 1914 and rediscovered by a management consulting firm in the 1980's, provided the original inspiration for the phrase, "to think outside the box."



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Once again, let me suggest an important reminder: What's right for you will depend on your product and the unique vision you may have for your business or enterprise.

The Internet Is All About Innovation

The architecture of online participation, and its emerging popularity, has changed the face of marketing. There is no end to the combinations one can use in making the online transition. New products and marketing methods can provide a new beginning for simple and effective strategies.

This may be a great time for you to reexamine your business and restart your marketing in a more innovative direction.

Questions? Please contact me for further information or specific ideas for your company's online marketing program.

Thank you for taking the time to read this White Paper.

Sincerely,

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See Also:

- [*What Is Creative Marketing and Why Do I Need It?*](#)
- [*Five Good Reasons to Hire Us for Creative Marketing Services*](#)
- [*About Us*](#)