

## RE-THINKING THE CONTENT OF A ONE-UNIT, FIVE WEEK COURSE IN INTERNET MARKETING

Les Harman, School of Business, Biola University, 13800 Biola Avenue,  
La Mirada CA 90639; (562) 903-4770.

### ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1999, Biola University's School of Business introduced a new three-unit course called "Seminar in Marketing Technologies." This class, taught directly in the computer lab, was split into three separate one-unit, five week modules entitled Internet Marketing, Introduction to Graphics, and Web-page Design. The purpose of this paper is to offer specific recommendations to the teacher for the first class--the internet marketing course. The material includes a thorough examination of necessary marketing decisions prior to actually putting up a web-site. This paper will offer recommendations for six aspects of teaching an internet marketing course: evaluating web-sites, web-sites, unique benefits of internet marketing, traditional marketing, expectations of internet customer promotion--driving traffic to your web-site, and teaching

### Objectives of the Internet Marketing Course

1. At the completion of the course, students will be able to effectively communicate, in regard to creating and/or managing a web-site, with web designers, graphic designers, webmasters, management and other individuals or organizations that could be involved in the decision making regarding an organization's internet marketing strategies.
2. Understanding of the unique advantages of internet marketing.
3. Understanding of the content choices of a web-site either as an extension of current marketing strategies or as the primary marketing strategy.
4. Awareness of several creative strategies that will enhance the value of a web-site's content and design.
5. Awareness of various strategies to drive traffic to the respective web-site.

### EVALUATING WEB-SITES

Evaluating "great" and "bad" web-sites worked well as homework questions in which students were requested to "surf the net" to identify various web-sites that they believed were very well done, as well as web-sites that were poorly executed. One of the primary reasons for the success of this is the fact that in a computer lab classroom, unlike in traditional classroom settings, the computer is directly in front of them, "on-line and ready

to go." Therefore, the student has a very strong desire to use his/her computer and is not as interested in any "lecture" time that is not "hands-on" with the computer.

I would recommend creating a class web page where students can copy in URL addresses of web-sites that they have found from their homework that were either very good or very bad. This way the whole class can easily go directly from one web-site to another web-site by just clicking on the class web page. Therefore, the instructor does not have to write each entire web address on the board for the students to then copy. In addition, having three questions for homework to be very valuable? 2) What are the 3) How has the internet marketing strategy at ast.com, Tide and discussion purposes.

*E*  
*C*  
*Abstract*  
*Marketing*  
*creating web*  
*Internet -*  
*advertising tool*

- E*
- ent of creating a organization that national organization internet market-ell with teaching d in and out of ed, then immediately applied the students' web-sites. In addition, it allowed for a variety of answers for homework questions and class discussions because each student applied his/her answers to his/her unique web-site project. The following format for the final report was suggested:
- I. Briefly discuss "why" your organization needs a web-site.
  - II. Briefly discuss who your precise target market is.
  - III. Discuss how your proposed web-site will relate with the overall marketing strategies of the organization.
  - IV. Discuss primary objectives of the web-site (both qualitative & quantitative).
  - V. List out specific internet marketing strategies for your web-site with explanation and "why" for each of the following specific strategies:
    - A. Discuss strategies for how you want

to obtain information from visitors and how you will implement it.

B. Web-page content and design how does this relate to your objectives. Be sure to include domain name, and an overview of what material you specifically want on "home page."

VI. How will you "drive traffic" to your web-site?

A. Internal Strategies - within the internet

B. External Strategies - outside the internet

VII. Budget Proposal

Points were primarily based on providing specific internet marketing strategies as well as providing a defense for "why" the decision was made. Broad, all-encompassing strategies that attempt to include everything are not what the instructor desired at all.

I would definitely recommend introducing and utilizing the concept of an individual project web-site as early as possible into the class. The advantages of being able to customize homework answers to the students' specific web-sites and then being able to discuss their many different answers was very valuable. Secondly, I would suggest creating advisory teams where students are put into a groups in order to brainstorm and discuss various internet marketing strategies for their projects.

#### **UNIQUE BENEFITS OF INTERNET MARKETING VS. TRADITIONAL MARKETING**

The purpose of this material was to clearly illustrate the unique marketing tools available to the internet marketer, especially compared to other forms of traditional marketing. By assessing both the similarities and differences between internet marketing and traditional marketing, the class can easily identify the incredible capabilities that the internet provides for a wide range of marketing strategies.

An excellent way to analyze different internet marketing strategies is to examine how different types of organizations utilize their web-sites. For example, in class, compare and contrast a company that is solely web-based and has no physical storefront with organizations that have a have both a web presence and a physical storefront. It is also useful to compare internet marketing strategies of those organizations that have a physical storefront and a global presence against those organizations that have a physical storefront but are targeting a local market. Each of these examples illustrates a wide range of powerful and different internet marketing strategies.

#### **EXPECTATIONS OF INTERNET CUSTOMERS**

Internet customers, as of today, exist primarily in a narrow target market in which they have extremely high expectations for the web-sites that they selectively choose to visit and even more selectively choose to return. The reality is that these individuals value their time and know that they are in control, therefore your web-site better be fast, easy to navigate and meet their high expectations the first time and every time they visit it (Bruner, 1999). Furthermore, it must be predetermined if the target market is visitors working from business computers, which are usually faster and more powerful, or from home-based computers, which usually have smaller screens and slower modems (Bruner 1999).

One of the primary objectives of nearly every web-site is to become a bookmark of their customers; customers who they know have a choice in this extremely competitive internet marketplace. Discuss in class the concept of "why and why not" students themselves have chosen to "bookmark" a specific web-site. What are the characteristics that a web-site must provide so that it is deemed valuable enough to be one of the selected few that is bookmarked for return?

#### **PROMOTION -- DRIVING TRAFFIC TO THE WEB-SITE**

The primary purpose of this part of the course was to discuss strategies for promoting the web-site from within the internet. For example, the lecture discussed various ways to move a web-site "up higher" on various search engines (Bruner 1999). Specifically, this included discussion on choosing and registering a domain name, as well as utilization of a page name, meta-tags and keywords. In addition, the advantages and disadvantages of developing link relationships with other sites was explored. Finally, various advertising and public relation strategies were discussed, including e-mails, on-line communities and newsgroups as well as the use of various contests or sweepstakes to drive traffic to a web-site.

In order to better teach this concept, I would suggest having the students in class conduct research on the internet by using the exact same keyword or phrases in the search title, but have students use a wide range of different search engines. This will allow the students to see which web-sites make the top ten in some, all or none of the different search engines. Discussion of why this is the case is a great way of showing the value of keywords as well as illustrating the importance of the subject matter to be discussed. Furthermore, students can create and try their own keywords and phrases to

match page titles for their respective project web-sites (Methvin 1999).

In addition to discussing internal promotion strategies, I would also recommend spending equal time on promoting the web-site using external promotion strategies. This can be anything from just listing the URL and/or e-mail address on business cards to the other extreme of television commercials that push the audience to log on to their web-site. Finally, one of the best conclusions from class discussion on promotion of web-sites was to have the internet marketer ask the question, "What can we give away free so that visitors will come to our site?" This may include prizes, expert information, etc.

### TEXTBOOK?

"The rate of development in this field of study is simply overwhelming. It is an understatement to say things are moving fast. If you didn't know, in this dynamic virtual market 'space,' we have redefined time. A Web year is at most two to three months in human terms. So, my point is, it is virtually impossible to know everything that is developing on the Internet at any point in time. Rather we will learn how to keep abreast of the technology and be able to evaluate its potential as a business tool. Our goal will be to develop an awareness and understanding of relevant issues, advantages and disadvantages, and specific techniques involved in using the Internet as a marketing vehicle." (Chakraborty, Internet Marketing Syllabus, 1999).

Although the course was only five weeks, it was originally thought that a textbook for the course would work well in order to substantiate lectures as well as provide a resource for learning the material. However, given the reality that the internet has literally thousands of articles on every single internet marketing subject discussed, it is recommended not to use a textbook. I would instead recommend the Net Marketing, Strategies and Techniques for Web Marketers web-site (<http://netb2b.com/>). This web-site is designed for educational purposes and has a current accumulation of a wide range of internet marketing articles that are easily categorized by various by lecture topics. These internet marketing articles are applied to several different industries, are very practical, and cover material not found in many of the textbooks.

This author agrees and believes a textbook will never be as current and complete as the internet itself. I recommend eliminating a textbook and utilizing web-sites, like Net Marketing, to be your best source. Furthermore, conducting research on the internet to find and examine various strategies is a skill that needs to be

continually practiced. I would recommend that homework questions surrounding a specific strategy like promotion include the student going to the Net Marketing web-site and having them find and read three articles about a specific subject matter, cite the source, and then discuss what they learned in class. This will give all students in the class a wide range of practical and current perspectives of internet marketing strategies in various industries.

### CONCLUSION

Because of the reality that a "live" on-line computer is just 12 inches away, staring into the students' faces, I strongly recommend that in-class discussions utilize content from the internet. I would eliminate the textbook and have the students review articles on various internet marketing strategies. The project web-site served its purpose and the more specific the requested content of the sections, the better the result. In conclusion, this class served well as an opportunity to examine the "pregame strategies" to having a web presence. Furthermore, this works well since the next two five-week courses in "Seminar in Marketing Technologies" deal specifically with the more technical issues of graphics and web-page implementation and design.

### REFERENCES

- Bass, Steve (1999). Setting Up Shop ONLINE. PC World. (May): pp. 181-192.
- Bruner, Rick E. & US WEB (1998). Net Results - Web Marketing That Works. Indianapolis, IN: Hayden Publishing.
- Direct Marketing Association (1999). Faculty Notebook of Direct Marketing Resources from Direct Marketing Association Internet Conference, Los Angeles, CA.
- Chakraborty, Goutam (1999). Oklahoma State University. Internet Marketing Syllabus.
- Chase, Larry (1998). Internet World - Essential Business Tactics for the Net. New York, NY: Wiley Computer Publishing.
- Methvin, David W. (1999). Succeed in Business. Windows Magazine. (August): pp. 99-105.