



PaperChain[®]

LINK & LEARNSM

Tangled up in the Web

The advertising business has changed a lot in the two and a half decades I have worked in the industry. Probably the biggest change was the coming of the internet. Even the smallest local businesses are putting up websites to get information out to the consuming public. The web is new, exciting, and cheap. The news media is full of stories of internet millionaires and the web's fantastic growth. Many businesses have a "build it and they will come" mentality. They like the idea of setting up a website for a few dollars and sitting back and waiting for the customers to come rolling in. The reality is somewhat different. Here are some points to discuss with customers who tell you *"I don't need that old paper of yours anymore, I've got a website."*

Just a few years ago the best response to the website objection was to point out that most people didn't have access to the web. This is no longer an effective tool. Access to the web has grown exponentially and the majority of Americans are online. Four out of five adults in the U.S. have access to the web (80% in 2007 versus 57% in 2000). Affluent, well educated people, the most desirable customers, led the way to the internet but people of all ages, ethnicities and income levels are now online. The question is what are these people doing online? E-mail remains the "Killer App" and most people primarily use the internet for communication. Other top uses include getting news, personal and business research and downloading music and video files. Online shopping is growing rapidly but still only represents a small portion of web usage. Many people fear identity theft and other scams, so they are reluctant to shop online.

The success and growth of the internet is a double edged sword. There is simply so much information online that it is difficult to find the specific item that you want. This phenomenon lies behind the growth of sites like "Google" and other search sites. Large businesses have entire staffs dedicated to "Search Engine Marketing" (SEM). They research and write online ads and create sites to maximize the number of people who see them on these sites. Web marketing is a complex and specialized field well beyond the capabilities of most local businesses and of the "internet business" consultants selling their services to our small business clients.

Before calling on a business, I like to learn as much about them as possible. I usually begin by "googling" them. I simply type in the customer's name and community and hit search. You would assume that this would lead you directly to the client's website, but this is not the case and brings up two facts about the web:

You may download this and all issues of Link & Learn at www.paperchainnetwork.net



PaperChain[®]

LINK & LEARNSM

1. It is not called the “world-wide” web for nothing
2. The virtual world is just like the real world-you get what you pay for

I recently was researching a local carpet store and was looking for their site. I typed in my prospect’s business name along with “Pittsburgh Pa.” and clicked on search. I got a list of websites to link to and my prospect did appear on the list...they were the 10th choice offered to me. I was offered a choice of people trying to sell carpets from all over the U.S. and even overseas.

Web marketers like to talk about how the web gives buyers more choices, essentially making the world one big market. This maybe a good thing for shoppers, but it means that local businesses now have to compete with the world. Several of the sites that came up in my google search suggested that I go to my local carpet store, choose a carpet that I like, get the stock number from the roll and allow them to give me a price quote. This web marketer was letting my customer bear the costs of maintaining a showroom and assisting the shopper so they could use their volume purchasing power and low overhead to under bid him.

My customer’s name is rather unusual and I qualified it by including his community during my search so why was his site preceded by nine other links on the results page. The answer can be found in the search engines business model. These businesses make a lot of money giving away free information. So who foots the bill? Just like in our old-fashioned paper and ink world, the person who invests the most money gets the best ads and the best placement. Search engines call these “Sponsored Links” and they have made a science of matching these advertisers to the people looking for the products they sell. Their links will always appear above and bolder than your local advertiser’s link.

When a prospect tells me he is online so he doesn’t need me, I politely tell him to go “GOOGLE HIMSELF”! This is not an insult but rather a way of enlightening the customer. The customer knows his web address as well as he knows his phone number. Normally when he looks at his site he types in www.whatever.com and is taken directly to his webpage. This is not how a potential customer uses the web. They are more likely to go to a search engine and look for him and so are exposed to his competitors marketing. (It is a good idea to do this search in your office before visiting the client just to be sure.)

So what should your prospect do? Well, they could invest thousands of dollars with the search engine to get better placement or they could work with you to give their web address directly to consumers (not to mention reaching a lot of

You may download this and all issues of Link & Learn at www.paperchainnetwork.net



PaperChain[®]

LINK & LEARNSM

people who never shop the web). E-bay is arguably one of the best known sites on the web yet they spend millions of dollars a year on TV, radio and YES!!, print advertising. Their IT program (You can find "IT" on e-bay) is designed to remind people of their services and drive traffic to their site. Another internet titan, Google commissioned the research firm of Clark, Martire & Bartolomeo to study the relationship between print advertising and the web. Here is what they discovered:

- 67% of people who are interested in a product they see in print and want more information turn to the web to do research. Of these people 70% follow this research with a purchase.
- 48% of the respondents said seeing a product in print after seeing it online would make them more likely to trust the product and 52% of this group said they were more likely to purchase the item.
- 30% of internet using print readers said they have gone online to research something they saw in print.

The message here is that the internet is not the answer to all of a business's advertising marketing needs. It is a part of a marketing mix. Their website is much more like a yellow page ad which provides information to customers who already have decided to buy their product or service. The web is too large to rely on a shopper stumbling upon their site as they browse the web. Print advertising is still the best way to create interest in their products and services. It is also the most cost-effective way to drive traffic to the advertiser's website.

The web has changed the world of advertising but it is not the answer to all of your customer's problems. Our job is to show our clients how to integrate the web into their marketing plans and to use our expertise to help our clients get the most from their web and print advertising.

Link & Learn is brought to you every month as part of PaperChain's[®] mission to provide educational material to the free paper publishers. Be sure to check out www.paperchainnetwork.net for past issues, electronic ready promotional ads and much more to help you remain competitive.

You may download this and all issues of Link & Learn at www.paperchainnetwork.net