

Advertise, Do not Spam

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There is a fine line between advertising and spam and unfortunately many business owners do not understand the difference between the two. This is important because while a clever, well planted Internet marketing campaign can help to attract new customers and keep existing customers loyal, spam is likely to alienate both new customers and existing customers. This can be extremely damaging to profit margins for the business owners. This article will take a look at a few basic Internet marketing strategies such as banner ads, email campaign and message board posts and describe how each can quickly cross the line from clever advertising to spam.

Banner ads are one of the most popular strategies which accompany an Internet marketing plan. These ads are usually ads which appear at the top of websites and span the width of the website. It is from this appearance that they earned the name banner ads but actually banner ads can refer to ads of a variety of different sizes and shapes which appear in an array of different locations on a website. In many cases the business owner purchases advertising space on these websites but the banner ad may also be placed as part of an exchange or an affiliate marketing campaign. Banner ad exchanges are situations in which one business owner posts a banner ad on his website in exchange for another business owner posting his banner ad on the other website. These agreements may be made individually between business owners with complementary businesses or as part of exchanges facilitated by a third party. In the case of affiliate marketing, an affiliate posts and advertisement for your business in exchange for compensation when the banner ad produces a desired effect such as generating website traffic or generating a sale. The terms of these agreements are determined beforehand and are generally based on a scale of pay per impression, pay per click or pay per sale or lead.

Now that you understand what banner ads are, it is also important to understand how they can be overused and appear to be spam. Judiciously placing your banner ad on a few websites which are likely to attract an audience similar to your target audience is smart marketing, placing your banner ad on any website which will display the ad regardless of the target audience can be construed as spam. Internet users who feel as though your banner ads are everywhere they turn will not likely take your business seriously and are not likely to purchase products or services from you as a result of your banner ads.

Email campaigns can also be very useful tools in the industry of Internet marketing. These campaigns may involve sending periodic e-newsletters filled with information as well as advertisements, short, informative email courses or emails offering discounts on products and services. Loyal customers who opt into your email list will likely not view these emails as spam and may purchase additional products and services from your business as a result of this marketing strategy. Additionally, potential customers who have specifically requested additional information on your products and services will also find this type of marketing to be useful. However, email recipients who did not request information are likely to view your emails as spam. Harvesting email addresses in a deceptive manner and using these addresses to send out mass emails will likely

always be considered to be spam.

Finally, message boards provide an excellent opportunity for business owners to obtain some free advertising where it will be noticed by members of the target audience. If the products and services you offer appeal to a specific niche, it is worthwhile to join message boards and online forums related to your industry of choice. Here you will find a large population of Internet users who may have an interest in your products. You might consider including a link to your business in your signature or posting the link when it is applicable to the conversation. However, care should be taken to carefully review the message board guidelines to ensure you are not doing anything inappropriate. This technique is smart marketing. Conversely, replying to every message with a link to your website when it is not relevant to the conversation is likely to be construed as spam by other members. Once they begin to view your posts as spam, they are not likely to visit your website via the links you post.