

From the Editors at MarketingSherpa

**Top 10 Biggest Online &
Email Marketing Mistakes
(Everyone Makes at Least One of Them)**

*Plus: 41 Online Marketers Share
Their Own Biggest Mistakes*

Table of Contents

Mistakes:

#1 Forgetting to Measure Results (or to Test).....	Page 4
#2 Vanity Content & Navigation	Page 7
#3 Email Subject Lines	Page 9
#4 Landing Pages That Don't Convert.....	Page 11
#5 Expecting Responses with Branding Creative	Page 13
#6 Hiding (or Forgetting) the Opt-In	Page 14
#7 Sales Copy Without Benefits.....	Page 17
#8 Search Engine Optimization & Positioning.....	Page 19
#9 Untargeted Media Buys.....	Page 20
#10 Getting in Trouble with Email.....	Page 21
* *41 Experts Reveal their own real-life mistakes.....	Page 23

About MarketingSherpa

MarketingSherpa is a publishing company serving the knowledge needs of professional marketers.

The Economist, Harvard Business School, Tenagra Awards, and Entrepreneur.com have all named MarketingSherpa as one of "*The Best Online Marketing Publications.*"

Every week MarketingSherpa's reporters and editors call marketing professionals at medium-large companies across America to ask them, "What's working for you online?" Then we share their useful advice and Case Studies with you.

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- The Buyer's Guide to Search Engine Marketing Firms
- Selling Subscriptions to Internet Content
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MarketingSherpa, Inc.
1791 Lanier PI NW #5
Washington DC 20009
202.232.6830
support@shepastore.com

#1 Forgetting to Measure Results

Why do so many marketers forget to measure Internet marketing results?

Two reasons: first of all almost every type of Internet marketing is measurable ... unlike most other media. Unless a marketer has a direct marketing background, they may have never had to rigorously report on results before. Also, unless the company they are working for is a direct response-based organization, they may not have the basic database marketing systems in place measure results easily. So, easy measurement becomes not so easy.

Unless you come from a direct response background (and less than half of marketers do), measurement may not be second nature to you.

The second reason is speed. The Internet makes campaigns possible at a speed almost never before heard of. You can create and launch an email or online advertising campaign in a fraction of the time it would take to print and mail a direct mail campaign, or place a space ad in a magazine, or shoot and edit the average TV spot. And, just as with modern life, as your ability to move faster increases, so do the pressures to do so even more quickly. Trouble is, planning tests and measurement still takes forethought -- which is hard to come by when you're rushing to today's campaigns out the door.

What should you be measuring?

At minimum, here are the top seven metrics, in order from most to least important:

1. Conversion (Note that click-through is NOT number one!)

This is the percent of the people your marketing to who convert into entering a relationship with your company. This relationship can range from signing up for a newsletter or white paper to placing an order. It depends on what your goal is.

Start counting your conversions from the end of the media you pay from -- if you are paying CPM (cost per thousand) for online media, then you'll want to know what percent of the thousands who view your ads convert. If you're paying CPC (cost per click) then you'll need to know what percent of clicks convert. If you're paying CPA, you'll probably want to keep an eye on both so you can help your marketing partners improve their conversion rates and sales.

In addition, you need to do the math from the other end of the spectrum: from actual cost per sale. For example, if you spend \$10 CPM for 100,000 ads and wind up with 10 converted sales, each sale cost you \$100 in advertising (plus any additional conversion costs.) These numbers can put your click throughs into profound perspective. If your average sale is well over \$100, then you have done well even if your click rate was low. If your average sale is less than \$100, you'd better adjust your marketing plans immediately to compensate.

2. *Media*

Your media or list buy determines up to 70% of your success rate. Online media buying is complicated, so many marketers are tempted to leave it up to their brokers. The online ad networks increase that temptation by talking about "optimization" in scientific terms, saying that their technology can do a better job picking the right media than you can. When you are busy and overstretched, that's awfully tempting.

But we've heard from marketer after marketer, that you need to get hands-on with your buy. Sure, allow your broker to make suggestions and offer input. Yes, test optimized ad networks. But don't get lazy and assume everything is best because they say it is.

Too much of your campaign's success is at stake. Truly successful campaigns are run by marketers who constantly measure, judge and test media buys.

3. *Offer*

After media, your offer is the next most sensitive metric in your campaign. Offers vary between the extremes of "hard" (as in an offer to buy now) and "soft" (as in a free, no obligation-to-buy, offer.)

Some offer tactics are proven "Best Practices" by years of testing already -- these include 100% money-back guarantees, privacy statements near email address requests, anything "free", and limited time offers. If you're not using, and measuring the results of the tactics that are applicable to you, then you are missing out on higher conversions.

Even if you are not a direct response or direct sales company, you should have an offer to test and measure. Perhaps it's an email newsletter versus a white paper. Perhaps it's an online RFP or a printable retail coupon. Perhaps it's a contest or an ecard visitors can send to their friends. No matter what, if your site (or campaign landing page) doesn't have an offer and/or you're not testing and measuring different offers, you are missing out on gathering data that could make you far more profitable in the long run.

4. *Creative*

For many marketers the creative is the "fun" part; so, it's easy to ignore conversion rates, media tests and offers. If you love to fiddle with headline copy or hang out with the art director designing your new ad, you may be guilty of focusing too much energy on creative.

80% of people don't read past a headline or subject line. So that's the critical creative to test. It will make a bigger difference than all the fiddling and tweaking with body copy you ever do. Plus, since offer and conversion are so important, be sure to test and measure your call to action. Test how you can vary your creative treatment to make that "click here" or "go to this URL" become more compelling to the right people -- people who are most likely to convert.

5. *Lifetime value*

Even the online marketers who are great at measuring initial conversion often fall down when it comes to measuring lifetime value. However, this is where the true profits come in. It's expensive to get new customers -- it's cheap to retain them.

You'll want to measure lifetime value in two ways: both from the view of the initial campaign that brought in the customer (we know of companies that routinely measure as far as three-to-five years out and adjust their new customer acquisition campaigns accordingly) and from the view of the renewal, retention or upselling campaigns you conducted to that customer thereafter.

Aside from media, offer must also be taken into consideration. For example if a customer came in on a sweepstakes offer, you may have to run another sweepstakes to get them to buy again. Or they may have a lower lifetime value than a customer who came in on a hard offer.

6. *Click through*

Unless the only thing you care about is sending indiscriminate traffic to your site, clicks are relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of things. Campaigns that get high clicks with a low conversion rate can end up being less profitable than campaigns that get lower clicks that convert at a higher rate. It's amazing what you can learn about the value of clicks once you have the other elements above on a spreadsheet!

This is why you should never, ever pay for a CPC campaign unless you have already measured the other elements beforehand, or you are limiting your risk with a small test. Many marketers we know of have gotten carried away at pay-per-click search engine auctions and lived to rue the day when they saw what their actual conversion costs and losses were.

7. *"View throughs" (aka "Delayed Clicks" or "Latent Clicks")*

If you are counting clicks as a decisive success factor, and your campaign creative includes your brand name and/or URL, then you must also count view throughs. These are people who noticed your campaign but didn't click at the time it was presented to them. Instead they may have gone to your site some time later on. According to studies from AdKnowledge they can represent a sizeable 30% or more chunk of your results, and these people are more likely to convert than regular clickers.

All major online ad networks include view through tracking at this time. It can cost between \$.50 - \$1 CPM for the traffic that's counted.

Mistake #2 Vanity Content & Navigation

Most companies claim to be customer focused -- but often their Web sites prove otherwise. Fact is, companies are just as self-centered as regular people are. Companies are worried about their sales, their product lines, their interdepartmental disputes, etc. Sometimes customers' concerns can come far down the line ... and site visitors' even further.

How can you tell if your site is self-centered versus visitor centered?

There are two basic signs:

1. Vanity Navigation

Check your site's visitor logs to find out how many pages the average visitor looks at. Chances are they only view about two pages, and then they are gone. So you need to make sure they can find what they need within two pages. In fact, the more quickly they can find it, the more likely they are to do business with you. If they can't find something quickly, they'll just get fed up and leave.

However, many companies' navigation is all about themselves, rather than about their visitors. If your home page and navigation is organized by either your own product lines or by your internal departments and divisions, then your site is about you rather than your visitors. Visitors don't care much about what you do or what each division does. They care about how you can solve their problems or make their lives happier.

Therefore your site navigation should be determined by type of visitor and then by their top interests. If you have more than one audience (for example IT guys and CFOs) then clearly indicate through your navigation which path each should take. If your audience has more than one keen interest they visit your site to learn more about (for example easier networking and saving money on PCs) then allow them to navigate by that interest as well.

The three best ways to find out what your visitors are looking for are to ask them with an online survey; to study your site traffic logs to learn which pages are the most popular; and to track the terms visitors type into your site "search" box if you have one.

CASE STUDY: How FairMeasures.Com Grew Content and Training Sales by Changing Its Home Page

Goal: FairMeasures.com, an already successful content-rich site featuring "everything you ever want to know about employment law issues" wanted to increase for-fee content sales and site-generated sales leads for their \$3,000+ training seminars.

Campaign: The site hired outside expert, Philippa Gamse of Cyberspeaker.com to help them redesign the topmost pages most visitors entered by. "The previous version was a typical publisher site -- the home page said this is who we are, this is what we do, we train your managers, we have a newsletter, we sell books and tapes, etc. But your web site should be your market, not about you.

There are two sets of people in the site's market, employers and employees. So, now instead of talking about itself, the homepage is split in two parts to match these markets' interests.

On the employer side it says, 'Prevent law suits' and on the employee side it says, 'Know Your Rights.' The content is exactly

2. *Vanity Content*

The actual words you use on your site also reveal if you are really customer-focused or not. Do you say, "Our" and "We" or do you say, "Your" and "You"? (MarketingSherpa's favorite illustration of this is the number of sites that say, "We are customer-focused" in their "About Us" section and then never say a word about their customers.)

Although it's a bit simplistic, checking your site's use of the "we" versus "you" words is a great place to start thinking about writing copy that's truly customer-centric. You'll find a handy, free tool to help you check your site's language at:

The Customer Focus Calculator (free)
<http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewe.htm>

the same underneath these pages, but it's repositioned on top to be about them, not us."

Gamse stresses, "The redesign is absolutely not an end, it's a beginning. Now we look over visitor logs constantly to find out what is appealing to them and how we can continue to make the site better.

Results: Before the redesign the site attracted about 14,000 monthly unique visitors with an average visit of 12 minutes (note, this is very good for a privately-run niche site without a huge marketing budget.) After launching the redesign, "within the first week the site had more sales response than it did in the entire previous year" and a BusinessWeek editor wrote a rave review of the site.

FairMeasures.com: <http://www.fairmeasures.com>

Philippa Gamse: <http://www.CyberSpeaker.com>

Mistake # 3: Email Subject Lines

Frankly we at MarketingSherpa are just plain dumbfounded by the enormous number of spam-like or just plain boring email subject lines we receive from otherwise smart marketers.

Everyone gets too much email these days (and too much spam) to read every note. Most people skim through their email in-box looking for a reason to delete messages before they open them. Email newsletter publishers count themselves very fortunate if more than 50% of the messages they send to opt-in subscribers get opened. Promotional emailers often have much lower open rates.

Your subject line is your most important weapon in the battle to get your emailed promotions, newsletters and customer communications opened and read. Here are the four key steps to making sure it's effective:

1. Don't be boring

Even big, famous brand name companies who should know better than to make this mistake. Typical boring subject lines give the reader no real reason to open your email -- especially if they are busy with other things. Worst offenders, companies that send out "News From CompanyName" emails on a regular basis.

- Don't waste valuable subject line real estate with your company name. That should be in the "from" field (if it's not, then the person's name in the from field ought to be very famous indeed -- someone who all recipients would recognize instantly.)

- Don't tell them the date. Recipients know what day it is. The fact that this is your August newsletter or 10/27/01 Update is not going to make anyone rush to click faster. (And no one cares which issue or volume number it is either.) Instead, give a reason to read that particular communication. Perhaps share a glimpse at your most enticing headline or offer.

- Don't use the same subject line for messages you send on a regular basis. For example, one site sends us an email with the exact same subject line every week. The first week or two we opened it. Now we just hit delete.

Note: While avoiding being boring, you can go too far in the other direction. All caps, exclamation points, and other "shouting"-style subjects can look like spam. Our best advice is to stick with a straightforward, descriptive subject line that lets the recipient know what to expect if they open your message.

2. Avoid looking like a spammer

This is very difficult and growing more so every day. Spammers are clever marketers. They know their only chance of making money is to get people to open their email. So, they are constantly testing and refining subject lines.

Spammers use blank subject lines, personal names in subject lines and pseudo-order numbers in subject lines to get that click. Smart marketers watch their in-boxes looking for spam subject line trends so they can avoid them.

3. Test subject lines

Most email list brokers are secretly shocked about one thing -- the high number of marketers who send messages to rented lists without testing subject lines.

It's not hard to test a subject line. Just ask your broker to split out a test cell for you. Your test cell should be identical to another part of the list you mail without the test line. That way you'll be able to compare results scientifically. (No, testing different subject lines with different lists isn't the same, because the list can affect results.) Test cells should be big enough to produce a reasonable number of responses. Many marketers consider 500 clicks enough.

4. Collect samples of subject lines that work

Smart marketers keep a "swipe file" with samples of campaigns that might prove inspirational the next time they have to copywrite something. Definitely start a special folder in your email for samples of emails that made you click. Also, ask your co-workers (especially those who match your target demographic and are not in marketing positions) to forward you their favorite emails.

One note of caution: some marketers assume that because their competition is doing something, it must be a good idea to swipe. This puts you in danger not only of producing "me-too" messages that don't clearly elucidate your brand, but also in danger of spending good money on campaigns that aren't working. Unless you are absolutely sure that your competitors measure their results like hawks and adjust campaigns accordingly, you have no idea whether their campaigns are successful or not. (And, in fact they might not be.)

Instead, look for subject lines that are compelling from both within and outside your industry. You may be inspired by a subject line from a company that's very far removed from your sphere.

Mistake #4 Landing Pages That Don't Convert

Out of all the hundreds of marketers we've interviewed for stories in MarketingSherpa, we've only come across two that make testing their landing page a key part of their weekly marketing tactics. (That's not to say other folks don't do this too, just that they didn't mention it to us as a mission-critical part of their ongoing operation.)

Both eBags and eDiets routinely split traffic coming into their Web sites to determine which site design tactics convert more visitors into buyers. Each test tells them a bit more about what works online. Each test may raise sales by just a tiny increment, but over time that increment grows to make a powerful impact on your bottom line.

Five key design elements you should test are:

1. Where your action items are on the page:

Do you want people to subscribe to your newsletter? Buy a product? Register for a white paper? Forward your information to a friend? Whatever that action-item is, you need to test its placement on the page. Should it be to the right or the left? On top or below? In one place, or in several? (For example, Dr Ralph Wilson of Wilson Internet Services has found he gets a higher visitor-to-subscriber conversion rate by placing offers at the top and bottom of each page.)

2. Text versus graphics

Is your action item highlighted with a graphic? Try removing the graphic and using text instead. Sometimes this can boost response rates unexpectedly higher, because people read text while their eyes skip over graphics.

3. Size graphics

If a graphic is critical to your sale (for example at a clothing retailer) then you're probably engaged in the ever-ongoing battle of weighing graphic-size versus page load speed. Big graphics are more enticing to buyers. Slow page loads turn buyers off. Some companies, such as Norm Thompson, get around this by making sure the most critical graphics load first. So a potential customer can start being sold while they're waiting for the rest of the images to load.

4. Length of landing page

It seems obvious that the less scrolling visitors have to do to read your sales pitch, the more likely they are to convert. Except that's not always true. Some highly successful landing pages print out to 4, 10, or even more pages. So test length, even when you think you know the "right" answer beforehand.

5. Multiple versus singular paths of action

How many ways can your visitor move from your landing page to take action? If your landing page includes your regular site navigation, they can probably move too many places, and forget to take action on the particular offer that drew them to the page in the first place. That's why most experts highly

recommend that you strip your regular navigation off campaign landing pages so visitors don't go wandering off to non-action item pages.

If you do decide to allow visitors more than one place to click through on your landing page, then you need to make sure each one of those also represents a direct path to your desired action item. For example, NASA allows visitors to its NASA Technology landing page to choose between opting in to receive a free magazine, or opting in to receive specific information about a particular technology.

BTW: One last note -- never, ever use your regular home page as your hotlink in a marketing campaign for a specific offer unless you have done three things:

- a. Ensured the link is trackable so you know which visitors arrived due to your campaign and which would have visited anyway.
- b. Designed your home page so it contains a big, obvious reference to your campaign offer right smack dab in the middle.
- c. Tested your home page against a more traditional landing page (without your regular site navigation) to see which converts the most visitors.

Mistake #5 Expecting Clicks with Branding Creative

There's no reason why you shouldn't conduct branding campaigns on the Internet. Online advertising can be less costly and easier to target than almost any other kind of advertising around. Branding online is smart -- as long as that's what you mean to be doing.

Branding and direct response marketing (aka marketing for clicks) nearly always require different creative approaches. The goal of a branding campaign is to get your target audience to remember your name and its key attribute. Then when they come across your brand again in another context (perhaps offline) they are more likely to react in a certain way to it, and they may not even remember why at the time.

The goal of a direct response campaign is to get someone to take action immediately or almost immediately in regards to your ad while they are online. You want them to click and convert. (Or to convert within your ad if the creative allows it.)

Creative that tries to achieve both goals nearly always fails at both.

Just because an online campaign is often "clickable" doesn't mean you should measure your success based on clicks. For a branding campaign, clicks can be beside the point. (For this reason, Web sites will usually reject advertisers who try to buy space on a CPC or CPA basis for a branding campaign.) Instead you may want to measure by doing online and offline awareness surveys, or by using other typical brand strength measurement techniques.

Yes, brand marketers can conduct direct response campaigns online. For example a shampoo brand might conduct a campaign to collect permission to email consumers in their target demographic, or they might offer discount coupons online that are redeemable at offline retail locations, etc. In the case of these campaigns, the creative used should focus on the offer -- the reason to click or take action -- rather than trying to also educate consumers about the brand itself.

Exclusive Interview: Charlie Buchwalter of AdRelevance

Excerpt from 12/18/2000 Interview

Charlie Buchwalter, VP for online ad measurement service AdRelevance, has spent the past year watching B2B online advertising statistics very carefully. We called him to get an overview of what's up with B2B banners in this year when the media trumpeted, "The Banner is Dead" but business marketers continued heavy online spending.

Q: What trends do you see in terms of the creative or campaign offers being made in typical banners?

Buchwalter: We've come up with a taxonomy that says there are two kinds of ads on the Web -- branding ads and direct response ads

We've found that although most people believe the Web is a direct response vehicle for click throughs, it turns out a large percent of ads are branding ads.

Overall [B2C and B2B] we're seeing 63% of all ads are branding ads. The majority for B2B alone is a bit more skewed towards direct response. 54% of B2B ads are direct response ads, most of it geared toward driving traffic. So 46% are branding ads.

Q: How do you define the difference between branding and direct response banner creative?

Buchwalter: We break branding ads into three categories
 1) Awareness ads to educate people -- 'Ooh look what we're doing!'
 2) Positioning statements -- 'Our company does this!'
 3) Features and benefits -- 'We have these capabilities'

Direct response ads either drive traffic with a large 'Click here to go to this site!' or they consummate the sale immediately, 'Click here and if you buy we'll give you a special deal which expires tomorrow.'

Q: Do you think marketers are getting confused about what a branding ad is versus what a direct response ad is? Because so many of them seem to be measuring success solely by click throughs....

Buchwalter: There could be some who thought their branding ad did such a great job that people would click and go to the site. Some marketers could very well be intending to do something but accomplishing something else.

Mistake #6 Hiding (or Forgetting) Your Invitation

"Brochureware" is a term used to describe Web sites that replicate the function of a printed brochure. While these sites may offer visitors useful information about a company, they are notable for what they don't do. They don't feature an obvious invitation for visitors to interact with them -- to join in a relationship with them.

This interaction can be as simple as getting someone to enter their email address if they'd like to learn more about you, or as complex as conducting an online sale.

Many sites' marketers think their sites are interactive when they are not. That's because they hide the invitation. If a visitor has to look carefully for your invitation (for example, if they have to click on a small link to get to the opt-in form for your newsletter), then your site is brochureware. Building in interactivity doesn't count if visitors don't notice it.

1. Basic contact information

The most important invitation every site should routinely include is the invitation for visitors to contact you by email and/or phone. (You would be surprised to learn how many sites forget this simple information.) Be sure this information is included on every page they might print out for future referral. Be sure the email is an actual address, rather than a line that causes an email box to open when it's clicked on. (People can't click from a print out!) Many companies also include a snail mail address in fine print at the bottom of every page to enhance their virtual-world credibility.

2. An email opt-in form (not just a link to a form)

If you collect email addresses for any purpose (and we can't imagine why you waste the opportunity to) then put a simple form on every public page of your site. Some experts say it works better on the upper-middle right side, so that placement is worth a test.

Don't just put a link to an opt-in box without an extremely good reason, because you will definitely obtain dramatically lower results if you force visitors to click to another page to enter. If you want to gather more information than a simple box can collect, you can always ask for it on your confirmation page. You can also use surveys after the fact.

Two other keys to success with opt-in forms -- always include a link to your privacy policy as near to the "join" button as possible. Very few people will ever click on it, but it will make them feel safer about giving you their address, so your response rates will go up. Also, if you plan to use the emails collected for more than one purpose (such as a newsletter and sales announcements) you'll need to include a check box for each different item, or risk being labeled a spammer.

3. Invitations to special audiences

Your site may have more than one audience. For example, journalists, industry analysts, potential partners, returning customers and investors. In each case, be sure to include contact information for

their specific needs, as well as other types of opt-in invitations, on the sections of your site dedicated to them. These visitors, in particular, dislike being given obviously form emails to use -- such as partners@companyname.com or pr@companyname. Generally they don't trust that an actual human being will return their emailed request quickly, or address their needs properly. Begin your relationship with these special audiences by offering them a real person's name to contact. It's ok if that person then funnels leads over to other members of a larger department.

4. Requested calling

Several B2B sites we know of (including parts of IBM) have had great success by offering visitors a way to request a phone call. Why would a visitor ask you to call them at a specific time, instead of picking up their phone and calling you themselves? Because of modern phone systems. Many people fear that if they call your number they will have to deal with annoying automated menus, long hold times and/or playing voicemail ping-pong. Make your prospects and customers lives easier by offering them the chance to schedule phone calls.

5. Live chat

Both business-to-consumer and business-to-business sites can improve online sales, lower returns and satisfy customers more quickly by adding live chat to their site. Once you make the decision to test it, your next decision will be which pages to add chat to. If your site is in a highly targeted niche, and customer service is important to convert sales, then you may want to add it to highly trafficked pages. If you have a very broad, self-explanatory site, you may not want to incur extra customer service staffing costs by promoting live chat where it's not necessary.

Why would consumers prefer chat to picking up the phone themselves? Often folks at home only have one phone line, so they may not be able to surf your site and talk at the same time. Businesspeople may not want to deal with the modern phone annoyances described above. And certain populations -- such as teens -- may use instant messaging as their preferred method of communication.

6. Request for an RFP

Almost every type of business-to-business site can definitely garner RFPs from qualified visitors. The key is in making the request form as easy as possible to fill out. Many marketers automatically ask for complete name, address, phone, email and fax numbers. This is a big mistake.

Only ask for the precise information you absolutely need to begin the RFP relationship. Your sales rep doesn't need postal mail or fax (or even phone sometimes) to begin with. So don't ask for it and risk losing great leads due to annoying people. If you want to ask for more information in order to pre-qualify or sort leads, make those questions non-required. You'll get a lot more qualified leads that way.

7. Gift in exchange for opt-in

Many sites offer sweeps entries, white papers, free eourses, newsletters, software downloads, coupons, you name it, in exchange for gathering visitors' names and some data on them. In this in-

stance, the key to success is in being very, very clear about what you are planning to do with the data you collect -- especially email names.

Just because someone gives you their email address on a form to enter your sweepstakes, or download a white paper, doesn't mean you have permission to email them about anything besides that white paper or sweepstakes. So, be sure to add extra check boxes if you'd also like to contact them about your sales, send them your newsletter, etc.

Two further tips: people prefer to enter sweeps and contests with more, lower value prizes than with one big prize. They just don't believe they'll get the big prize, so why bother? Also, free newsletters are not seen as the exciting gift they used to be. People's inboxes are just too full. So you'll want to spell out a couple of benefits they'll get in the newsletter (such as "New case Studies".) We've also heard that adding a link to a newsletter sample can raise results.

Mistake #7 Sales Copy Without Benefits

Many Internet marketers excel at detailing the facts about the products and services they are selling. Features such as size, color, technical specs and price are spelled out perfectly.

But very few shoppers buy based on features alone. They also buy based on benefits -- how will this product or service make their jobs easier, lives happier, thighs thinner, kids smarter, etc. Benefit copy does not need to be long or wordy. It does need to speak directly to the heart of the reader. Which makes benefit copy much more difficult to write. It's easy to state facts and pop up a graphic. It's hard to craft compelling benefits.

If you're a marketer for an online store with hundreds or thousands of SKUs, or if you're a marketer who's used to creating basic support materials to accompany persuasive in-person sales reps, writing benefit copy for your Web site can be quite a challenge.

Our favorite inspirational site for copywriters -- SolutionsCatalog.com. Every product is listed with a highly compelling benefit statement. Here are some samples:

"Tuck this tiny travel clock in your purse and never rely on a hotel wake-up call, or struggle to read a map or menu again."

"**Gently remove facial hair.** If you're tired of tweezing and bleaching, here's an easier way to get rid of unwanted facial hair."

"**Floral dust cover hides a computer in plain sight.** Unlike typical plastic computer covers, this **Solutions' exclusive** is a rich linen fabric with a floral motif that complements your decor instead of letting your computer detract from it. Ideal for computers kept in the guest room or family room. Just slip it on for a quick and easy change!"

More tips:

- Instead of just accepting whatever marketing copy manufacturers give you to put on your site, select out your top performing SKUs for a copy makeover.
- Your customer service department is on the front line of dealing with the public. Visit them and ask for input on what types of benefits customers most frequently ask for.
- Conduct a customer survey to find out how they are using your product or service, and how it's helping them. Answers saying, "It's great!" are not useful. Answers such as, "I was worried about my child's grades, but now they are going up" practically hand you compelling sales copy on a silver platter. (In fact surveys are also a great source of testimonials.)
- Get rid of wording on your site that is meant to be "Impressive" rather than one-to-one beneficial. Business marketers are often the worst at this, either because their product is so technical that they

themselves don't quite understand the end-user's benefits, or because they are trying to write copy that will impress VCs, board members and Wall Street, rather than an actual customer.

How do you know if you are wasting valuable (and short lived) visitor attention on "Impressive" words that really sell no one? Here are three tips:

1. Is your product, service or company described with bragging words such as "The Leading" or "The Best"? Visitors are well aware that anyone can claim to be these things. It's your job to give them a true, useful reason why they should engage in business with you. "The leading" or "The best" is just puffery.
2. Does your site include words and/or phrases that are infamous buzzwords? Often these are fancy words that could be replaced with far simpler ones. You're not being impressive; you're risking being confusing. Use the Buzzwacker.com or Buzzkiller.net sites to figure out how much of the fancy verbiage (aka big words) on your site should be replaced with ordinary English. No, it's not that your target market is stupid, it's just that they don't have the time or patience to translate whatever your "ebusiness solution" is into real English to see if it fits their needs.
3. If you asked an actual customer to describe what they buy from you, would their description of your product or services match yours? Or if you are in a social setting, can you quickly describe exactly what it is that you do to the people you meet, even if they are not in your industry? Does that description vary tremendously from the fancy words on your Web site? Time to make a change.

Straight-forward, benefit-focused, "plain English" writing wins every time.

Mistake #8 Amateur Search Engine Optimization & Positioning

According to new research from CyberAtlas, 80% of companies make this mistake -- instead of hiring an expert, they take care of search engine optimization and positioning (SEOP) "in-house" or they let their Web developer toss it in with the rest of the package.

Why is this so wrong? Because, although it was both possible and normal for amateurs to handle SEOP in-house in the early days of the Web, it's a lot more complicated now. If you don't have an SEOP expert on staff who spends a great deal of her time researching the topic and perfecting her SEOP skills, she may be making mistakes that can easily hurt your rankings and cost you traffic.

And you don't want to miss search engine traffic. According to the aforementioned study, more than 75% of the average site's traffic can come from search engines. Plus, according to MarketingSherpa Case Studies, visitors who find your site through search engines are actually equally (or even more) valuable to you than visitors who learn about your site from any other method whatsoever.

You probably wouldn't consider letting someone without proper training or expert supervision handle your media buys or campaign creative. You shouldn't let a non-expert handle your SEOP either. There's too much at stake.

Luckily, hiring an expert SEOP firm is one of the least expensive online marketing investments you'll make. Costs range from less than \$5000 to more than \$200,000 based on how many products and pages you need optimized. For that investment, you'll get a guaranteed payback of far more visitors than you would ever get from a banner or email marketing campaign.

So, before you spend one more dime on online marketing campaigns, first make sure your SEOP is taken care of.

BTW: When is the best time to hire an SEOP firm? Before you launch or revise your site. Most marketers wait until their site is "finished" and then they bring in the expert. That's a big mistake because your expert will suggest changes to your visible site such as copywriting that visitors see, which can help your rankings. SEOP goes hand-in-hand with the Web design process.

Mistake #9 Untargeted or Untested Media Buys

While we approve of all the companies that are launching their first major online marketing campaigns these days, we're often stunned to learn how many decide to plunge in whole hog without testing beforehand.

Marketers approve media plans requiring millions of banner impressions and hundreds of thousands of broadcast emails without ever having run small tests on the media involved beforehand. This is partly because of the pressure to get a campaign out. Investors, board members, presidents and bosses want orders coming in and they want them now. Withstanding the pressure to make sales today, in order to launch small test campaigns and wait for results prior to rolling out bigger campaigns, is difficult.

However, hasty media buys can burn you. As we noted above in "Mistake #1" your media buy decisions are far more critical to your campaign's success (and your bottom line) than your creative will ever be. You should invest far more of your time and attention accordingly.

You will be urged by both your agency and other online media brokers to relax and let them do the driving. While you should definitely seek their input -- they may be able to get better prices than you can alone, and they may have results data on various media that you don't have experience with yet -- you should not leave the decisions entirely in their hands.

Marketers in every single industry, both business-to-business and business-to-consumer, have told us it's worth the time to focus on media buying decisions in-house. Visit the sites your ad will appear on. Never allow your ad to run on a network if you are not absolutely sure you know exactly which specific sites are in that network.

When you've identified your top performing media buys, spend more time on your creative for them specifically. Ask your creative department to take a look at those sites (or newsletters) and come up with ads that work best with them. Chat with the Web producers and media sales reps at your top 10 performing media buys. Find out if anything tends to work better at their site. It could be anything from the color of a banner to a type of offer. You'll never know unless you ask.

Next, start to negotiate for special "favors" from your top performing buys in exchange for a deepening relationship that both sides can count on. Perhaps they will allow you to run in newsletters at a special price if you also buy the opt-in list. Perhaps they will be willing to review your product in their editorial section. Perhaps you can run a special this-site-only offer to their members for increased impact.

Meanwhile, continue running small tests on other media. New newsletters and sites are still being launched frequently. Other sites which might not have worked before, are repositioning to take advantage of marketplace trends.

Your end goal is to identify and build a mutually profitable relationship with a group of highly targeted Internet media properties (Web sites, wireless networks, email newsletters, opt-in rental lists, etc.) which consistently perform the best for you.

Mistake #10 Getting in Trouble with Email

If you make a mistake with email, it can spiral out of your control because bad email can be just as "viral" as great marketing. Three leading culprits cause the majority of email trouble. Although only one of them is the marketing department, you still may have to pick up the pieces from the other two.

Culprit #1: Over-Eager Marketers Seeking Opt-Ins

Every day marketers hear more and more about the benefits of email marketing to an in-house list. Gathering such a list is hard work. You have to use every marketing tactic you know, both online and off, to convince customers and prospects that they should raise their hands to be added to your email list.

Many marketers already have a lot of email addresses in their databases. These might be customers, people whose badges you scanned at trade shows, or information requesters. However, chances are when you first collected those email addresses nobody asked them for specific permission to send them marketing materials or newsletters. So, those email addresses are, in effect, useless for ongoing, broadcast email marketing campaigns.

It's incredibly painful to have your hands on a list, and then not be able to use it. Understandably many marketers yield to that temptation. "I'll just send one broadcast," they think, "just one to ask them if we can have their permission to email them again."

There's another name for sending that first non-requested broadcast email. It's called spam.

Want more information on privacy and spam laws, best practices and policies? Check out the privacy section on MarketingSherpa's site. You'll find a useful 21-page report there that's free for download.

Culprit #2: Overeager Sales Reps Trolling for Prospects

Even when the marketing department has done everything they can to avoid email mistakes -- including writing a great privacy policy and double-checking rental lists to make sure they are truly opt-in -- overeager sales reps can trip you up with their own spamming operations. (We've seen it happen frequently to great companies, where we know the marketers know better.)

Here's the typical scenario: sales reps aren't satisfied with the sales leads on their plates so they decide to go dig up their own. They begin by surfing the Net looking at their target market's Web sites and by joining related email discussion groups. Then one day they get the bright idea, "why not strip off the email addresses on these sites and send them a sales letter?" A spammer is born.

Often marketers at these companies have no idea members of their sales team are doing this. And, often the sales team members have no idea they are doing anything wrong. They figure if the email address is in public domain, or if they've had some type of contact with the person in the past (no matter

what it was), or if they "personalize" their standard pitch letter by sticking the prospect's name in the salutation, then they can go ahead and email their hearts out!

Which, of course, leaves a nasty taste in the mouths of sales prospects that you are trying to woo on their behalf with your carefully crafted marketing campaigns.

Culprit #3 Your CEO or President Spouts Off

This mistake often falls under the heading of "corporate communications" or "PR," but since marketing is directly affected during damage control campaigns, you should be aware of it too.

Company leaders are used to being able to communicate in their own style, without asking anyone for permission first. If they want to dash off a memo, or jot a note, they'll go right ahead and do so. Unfortunately now that email has made communication much easier, it's also made communication more dangerous.

Potentially embarrassing internal CEO emails on topics such as layoffs, budgets and sales are routinely leaked to public Web sites such as [F---dCompany.com](#), and to key journalists who cover your industry. We've seen plenty of leaked memos that start with words to the effect of, "Attention: nobody is allowed to share this memo with anyone outside the company." Sorry, doesn't work.

Sometimes emailed notes that CEOs intentionally send to the outside world can prove embarrassing as well. One well-known Internet CEO dashed off an angry email in the heat of the moment after an unfavorable story appeared about his company in the press. The editor who received it promptly made the note public, setting off a storm of secondary articles in related publications. Suddenly the company found itself in full crisis communication mode. Another CEO sent a derisory note to the author of a posting that he disagreed with on a large email discussion group that was packed with sales prospects. Unfortunately the CEO forgot to check the address on his email, so his rudely worded note went to all 10,000+ members of the list rather than just to its intended recipient.

Don't forget that CEOs are also people in private life too. As such, they may post personal notes and comments to Internet bulletin boards and discussion lists just like the rest of us. Unfortunately the Web has a long memory, and it's often eminently searchable. One high profile CEO was embarrassed when highly personal posts he'd made on public bulletin boards years before attaining his current position, were dug up and reported on by the media.

Your best line of defense in all three of these cases -- eager marketers, eager sales reps and careless CEOs -- is education and lots of it. Schedule regular meetings to discuss what's spam and how to handle email. Plus, make sure you have a contingency plan in case something bad happens. At the very least someone in the company should be prepared to dash off a note to any and all spam complaints within an hour of receipt.

Good luck!

41 Online Marketers Share Their Own Biggest Mistakes

1.

Mark Jarvis

SVP & Chief Marketing Officer

Oracle Corporation

<http://www.oracle.com>

"We ran a banner ad campaign for 18 months that we knew would fail because when it fails you learn more. It's human nature when you succeed to think, 'Ok that was great, what to do next?' But when that was a disaster, you think 'Let's work out how this failed so we can learn something about it.'

We generated 1.3 million clicks on that ad. There were two ways people could go once they clicked to the arrival page. One was to go through Flash and the other was instant gratification of the offer. It showed us if you spend a lot of time doing large amounts of graphics and makes pages load slowly, you'll lose all your customers.

We discovered if it's not loaded with 43 seconds you lose everybody. More importantly, if it's not showing signs of a relatively good-looking page within seven seconds of clicking, you'll lose people again. There has to be good stuff within seven seconds."

2.

Michele Bennett

Vice President of Technology

Roska Direct

www.roskadirect.com

"Interestingly, it's not a matter of making a strategic mistake or tactical error that is our biggest obstacle. Rather, we deal with the constant challenge of maintaining momentum on all of our accounts on the client side.

When you're dealing with big brands, you experience nearly constant turnover on the client-side; it's the nature of their business. Often, brand managers are getting promoted or hopping to new, evolving brands. But time is of the essence when you're building out a tech component for a client. Relevance is paramount, and obsolescence due to a slowed timeline is the ultimate danger.

To keep velocity on a project, we manage aggressively and proactively on the agency side. When a new manager on the client side comes into the fold, their top-line knowledge of strategy will suffice while they close the gap on their learning curve, because our team keeps moving forward, keeps to strategy, and vigorously pursues the granular details. We just don't allow for a honeymoon period because we simply don't have the time.

We've found this strategy works. Where once our agency would have lost valuable days waiting for new players to get up to speed, we now carry on. We set the pace."

3.**Simone Paddock****Online Evangelist****O'Reilly & Associates****[http://www.oreilly.com // evangelists.oreilly.com](http://www.oreilly.com//evangelists.oreilly.com)**

" Be personal, be honest, and respect your audience's right to their privacy.

From the very first moment marketing folks discovered the Internet as a comparably cheap, quick and easy tool to advertise to an ever growing audience, they flooded the digital space with their enthusiastic messages: CHECK OUT THIS GREAT DEAL, GET INSTANT CREDIT, or even better, FULFILL YOUR DREAMS!

While I first thought that in order to reach the masses you have to scream that loud (or louder) to be heard over the rest of the marketing noise, I soon discovered that a mere whisper in the ear, a gentle tap on the shoulder, or a simple gesture of honesty are a much more effective approach to getting your message across and getting yourself permanently on someone's radar.

Although the Net seems to foster impersonal approaches, you should never forget that at the other end of the wire, behind that screen, keyboard and humming CPU, still sits a real-life person with feelings, a sense of humor - and the potential to get really pissed off if continuously bombarded with the noise that is your obnoxious marketing message.

So first rule of internet marketing should always be: remember that you're talking to human beings, not some faceless mass called 'the audience.'

And treat them as such in your messages. Imagine, you'd be pitching that product to your best friend, and use a tone of voice that reflects exactly that. They just might be refreshed by your attitude, and lean in a bit more closely to listen to what you have to say - and tell their friends about it later.

In that same sense, respect your customers right to privacy. If they tell you to back off and take them off your email list, don't just say you will - make sure it's done. You'll gain that person's trust and respect in the long haul, and even if they'll never buy another one of your products again, at least they won't tell their friends that you keep annoying them with unsolicited messages.

I've found that a personal one-on-one connection with a lesser amount of people in the end bears better and longer-lasting fruit, than trying to reach a hundred times the amount of people with one mindless message blast.

Sometimes less really is more."

4.

Craig Sherman

Chief Revenue and Marketing Officer

MyFamily.com, Inc.

<http://www.myfamily.com> / <http://www.ancestry.com>

"We don't need to do deals for deals' sake. Last year, we signed partnership deals with the big portals. They generated a lot of customers but the Cost Per Acquisition was cost prohibitive. This year, we're still excited to do distribution deals, but only if they are at a guaranteed CPA below our maximum threshold."

5.

Philip K. Akalp, Esq.

CEO / Co-Founder

MyCorporation.com

<http://www.mycorporation.com>

"When my wife and I first started this business from our two-bedroom apartment, the Internet was a scary, unknown, fast-moving vehicle to riches. I was sincerely afraid that I would awaken one day and, as one of our customers had stated it, 'all the money would be gone!' Thus, the cornerstone of our philosophy (at that time) was to 'Get It Out There...worry about the problems & details later!'

The main benefit from this philosophy is that capital is suddenly and quickly generated. Afte all, most business startups don't have the capital, for example, to have every product, service, slogan, trademark, document, etc... examined by a licensed attorney before launching and marketing their products. Attorney review can be quite costly, not only in the fees paid to the attorneys, but in the time that your product's release is delayed while the attorneys pick everything apart (take my word on this point, I'm a licensed attorney!).

Fortunately, while your company is small, not too many people are eager to invest dollars in their legal teams to put you out of business. Unless your marketing a soft drink in a red can that you decided to call 'Cola-Coca,' [intentional misspelling] few people will target you with their legal attack dogs. If your product or website is in fact infringing on the legal rights of another, it is far more likely that you'll receive a strongly-worded letter requesting that you "Cease and Desist" from engaging in the offending activity than it is you'll receive a subpoena demanding \$1 million in statutory damages.

Once your company becomes successful, however, it is much LESS likely that you'll escape with a mere "slap on the hands" whenever you've been negligent or mistakenly infringed upon the rights of another. Suddenly, like the high-school tattle tale that we all remember, your competitors will scrutinize your marketing activities looking for ways to place you in legal jeopardy. Perhaps the claim you are making sounds too good to be true! Perhaps the music in the background of your radio commercial sounded a little too much like "Livin' La Vida Loca!" Although you may have hired a private musician to play the background music in your radio advertisement, your competitor is still going to drop the dime on you and tattle tale to Ricky Martin about how

you are infringing the copyright of Mr. Martin's song.

Then, suddenly, someone will appear from nowhere claiming that the song in your radio advertisement caused him to swerve while driving, thus resulting in the death of a prize cow named "Millie" whose estimated value exceeds \$1 million. The worst part, however, is that the driver's "Uncle Harry" is an attorney who is out of work and has decided to dedicate his life to this case ... even if it means fighting you all the way to the Supreme Court!

While most of the claims are in fact frivolous, the time required to defend yourself in a legal battle can grow to be quite costly. Regardless of how "Right" you feel your position may be, principles and values somehow carry a lot less weight when you are faced with the potential loss of \$1 million ...PLUS the legal fees required to fight the battle ... PLUS the heartache and consternation you feel when you go to bed at night because you wish you would have done things differently.

Today, our company, MyCorporation.com, holds a very tight leash on our marketing activities. However, to retain our success and good fortune, we are well aware that we must remain in the fast track of the decision-making process. If each decision to market a product, execute a specific contract, authorize the use of specific artwork for an advertising campaign, or terminate an employee required 2 weeks for an attorney to review and assess the situation, we'd be out of business.

So, what's the moral of the story? 'Get It Out There!...but CREATE the time (and the budget) for legal review!!!'

6.

Cliff Kurtzman

President and CEO

The Tenagra Corporation

<http://www.tenagra.com/>

"I've learned that it is very difficult to get people to come to your web site the first time, and that once you do get them there, you have no way to get them back unless they give you permission to contact them. The fact is that while they might not be interested in buying your product or service when they visit your site the first time, they might be interested in doing so at a later date. So it is an important objective to get your web site visitors to give you their email address with permission to e-mail them with information that will keep you in their mind in the future.

We always recommend to our clients that publish a email newsletter and offer it to visitors on their web site for free. We recommend that they put significant time and effort into determining what information they can offer that will have real value to their site visitors. Then we recommend that they include a newsletter sign-up on every page of their web site. We also recommend that they don't scare the visitor off by asking for too much information when they sign up. Ask just for their email address on the first page of the sign up. Then (once you've got them) you can give them a second page asking for additional optional demographic information if you wish."

7.

Jon Reinemann

Business Development Director

InsureZone

<http://www.insurezone.com>

"Always follow up on all email inquiries and treat each one with equal importance, no matter how many leads flood your email inbox.

Almost two years ago, an internet bank, backed by some ex-executives of one of the five largest banks in the US, was in the start-up phase. As they were looking for products, they used a 'dummy' domain address as the bank's domain to throw people off of the real name. They sent us an email inquiry with the dummy domain address, which we almost dismissed. We investigated and found out how important the lead was, but we were too late and lost the business."

8.

Thomas Korte

Director of Marketing

Moreover.com

<http://www.moreover.com>

Mistake: 'Quantity over Quality'

In early 2000, we launched an affiliate program to increase the number of signups to a free webmaster product we used to offer. During the program's launch, we tried to determine what would dictate the success or failure of the program -- the clear answer: 'X thousand signups in X months.' But how would we get there? Easy answer: 'Thousands of affiliates will refer thousands of signups!' - WRONG. We spent considerable time and money in promoting the program to a large webmaster audience. We got listed in affiliate directories, bought affiliate announcement mailing lists, etc. We built an affiliate base of almost 12,000 websites that promoted our product.

A few months into the program we evaluated our affiliate base and found that only a fraction of the affiliates actually performed. Most sites referred us a couple of signups per month - only about 40 (forty!) affiliates were responsible for the majority of the signups.

Lesson learned:

Quantity does not override quality - the time and effort required to market to a large affiliate base is much better spent devoted to a handful of selected partners, with the goal of building more selective, in-depth relationships. As a result of our experience, we shifted strategies and searched for 'quality, high-traffic sites'.

Within months we were operating with minimal cost and effort, and with much better results. I believe that this rule is applicable to most online marketing efforts: Clicks vs. qualified clicks, website traffic vs. quality visitors, etc. - qualified and quality always win out in the long run. Good luck with your efforts."

9.**Jerry Rendich****Vice President****BB&R Marketing, Inc.****E-mail: bbrdirect@aol.com**

"You asked what lessons we learned from our Web conference campaign on behalf of Software AG...

Bearing in mind that the objective of this campaign was to identify, reach, motivate, and persuade senior-level executives to give up an hour of their time to take part in a Web conference, there were two tactics that didn't work.

1. Cold telemarketing (to the same lists as were actually mailed): pretty much bombed. No surprises here, we'd anticipated as much but our client wanted to give it a shot anyway and we'd set the strategy to be able to pull the plug before tons of money flew out the window. Lesson learned: Cold telemarketing still doesn't work with high-level audiences
2. Repromotion of an archived version of the Web conference (again, mailing to cross-sections of the same lists that we mailed previously): Probably turned a profit, (we can't tell for certain at this point). But overall response rates were disappointing. Lesson learned: Promoting a Web-based conference as a live 'must-be-there' event rather than 'information-that-you-can-access-anywhere-anytime' was the right way to go."

10.**Anthony Muller****President & Chief Search Engine Optimization Consultant****Zen Hits****<http://www.zenhits.com>**

"My biggest Internet marketing lesson learned as an SEO was realizing that bringing a horse to water didn't necessarily mean that it would drink. Early on I used to focus solely on getting my clients top ranking for well-researched keywords on the major search engines. Then came along the one client whose case shook up everything I knew.

This particular client was receiving very large amounts of traffic to his optimized pages and his website, but the ratio between hits and actual sales or captured leads was pitiful. Needless to say that this client was very unhappy even though his keywords were ranked on top of all the major search engines. The client was offering a service that was in high demand so the only other explanation was the pages themselves.

After some deep thought and research on converting traffic into sales (conversion rates), I detected this particular website's main trouble areas. The pages designed to capture leads were too confusing to the average web surfer, the form had too many fields and it took 3 clicks to get to the form. The website's main problem was that even though it was very cutting-edge and fancy, it took surfers with a 56k modem 29 seconds to fully load

it.

With the client's okay I decided to use his site as a proverbial lab rat. I applied all the case studies I have researched as well as incorporating a few other techniques I had thought up. Having a strong background in psychology and research helped the process tremendously.

After all the techniques were applied we eagerly watched for results. Within one week of the conversion rate redesign we saw immediate results. The client went from 2 captured leads a week to 15 per week with the same amount of traffic. The client was very happy and he lived happily ever after.

Now, with every optimization client, I employ the same basic conversion rate techniques. There is no better way to keeping or creating a long- term client than to give him a quick return on his investment and keeping his business thriving."

11.

Karen Lake

eStrategy Expert

<http://www.StrategyWeek.com>

"Function not Form:

Three years ago I launched StrategyWeek.com, an online resource presenting case studies in eBusiness. At first I was overly concerned about the aesthetics of the site. I wanted everything to look professional and beautiful. However, I have since learned through our own CEO case studies and more importantly, in the management of the site, that functionality and usability are EVERYTHING!

I have found that just by listening to your customers, you can learn so much about what they find intuitive. Try talking to customers on the phone and give them an online tour. By doing this simple exercise, you will instantly find out what works and what doesn't. Listen to your customers. They will never lead you astray on functionality or usability. And remember, function is more important than form in the new world of eBusiness."

12.

Brent Otto

Vice President

Interactive Marketing

U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray

<http://www.gotoanalysts.com>

"I learned early on that content is king - good and up-to-date content. Posting headlines without details or stale information will not attract and keep viewers."

13.**Dennis James****Main Dude****dennis@dennisjames.com****<http://dennisjames.com>**

"RIDE YOUR BEST HORSE. Here's what I mean by that. I used to divide all my marketing bucks equally into all my products. Eventually one (or more) would really outpace the others and I would thin the marketing bucks on those products and move it to the slower-rising products to get them up to speed.

My thinking is that by putting more money on the slow horses, they would run with the others.

Guess what? That's **WRONG!** If you are going to do anything, **TEST** and move your bucks to your best horses. If the slower-running products have had the same bucks and they are still not delivering, that should be a signal -- your customers have spoken! What they are saying is that you have found the right combination of product, price, and advertising targets to get your **BEST HORSES** moving without spending another buck.

Now, I know that there are all these great stories about products that failed when they were first brought out (kleenx was a sheet for removing makeup, post-it notes was considered a failure because the glue on the sheet wouldn't hold, etc.), but don't let that keep you from doing what's right. What's right is that you get as much money as you can as quickly as you can while keeping your costs down."

14.**Philippa Gamse****CyberSpeaker****<http://www.CyberSpeaker.com>**

"One thing that I have changed very much is my attitude to, and use of paid search engines mostly I've used Goto).

At first, I thought this was a great idea, and wonderful that you could pay to guarantee position, and calculate the exact cost of obtaining a visitor, etc. I bid my clients into top place for their keywords, and lost a ton of money for them, with pretty limited success ;-(

What I've since realized is that the quality of traffic from these engines can be fairly low, and it gets lower as your keywords get more generic. Also, it became clear very quickly that bidding on the #1 spot often just resulted in a bidding war which essentially put money in the search engine owner's pockets, not ours.

So now, I only pay for keywords that are very specific - e.g. 'jet lag remedy' as opposed to 'travel tips', and only for those keywords that lead directly to a product or service outcome that my client sells, where we have very clear calls to action on the site (remember that getting traffic in is only part of what you have to do).

And, I won't usually bid for #1 spot - I find that #2 or #3 works just as well, and keeps us out of that fruitless, but expensive piggy-backing."

15.

Eric Mayberry

Director of New Business, The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily News

<http://www.phillynews.com>

Co-Founder and CEO of Athletic Showcase, Inc

<http://www.hsrecruiters.com>

"We launched HSrecruiters.com to help high school athletes find college scholarships. We assumed that they would beat down the door to get to us and register. Our initial marketing campaign included posters for coaches to hang in the high schools directing high school kids to our site. We also assumed that the coaches themselves would register deserving students.

We made several mistakes: The first was assuming that high school coaches were wired. The second mistake was assuming that a high school kid would see the value in pulling out a piece of paper, writing down our URL and then remembering to pull it out at home and take the time to register themselves....we just did not estimate how big of commitment that is to them.

We corrected our mistakes by conducting focus groups with high school kids asking them what it will take to get them to register. We are using partnerships to gain access to our demographic groups and we are using a more 'grass roots' approach to registering athletes. Tough lesson, but fortunately we learned early and at little expense."

16.

Michael Della Penna

VP, Marketing

Bigfoot Interactive

<http://www.bigfootinteractive.com>

"Forget about more page views may I have your email address?"

Over the years I've had the pleasure of witnessing the power of email at one of the world's leading technology destinations. By far my most loyal, profitable and active customers were my active email subscribers. Creating value for these users and using every single touch point, Web page and interaction to capture email addresses can build real competitive advantage.

Also critical to this process was understanding and aligning my various marketing touch points and backend processes and systems. In fact, integrating these systems is as important as integrating the front end marketing efforts themselves. It enables you to move towards creating a comprehensive view of your best customers and prospects, which ultimately helps create more relevant, personalized communications, which builds an ongoing profitable relationships.

While, I've moved on I haven't forgotten what I've witnessed first hand. Email is Essential!"

17.

Damian Bazadona

President

Situation Marketing

<http://www.situationmarketing.com>

"My biggest Internet marketing lesson learned is that 'marketers' not 'developers' need to be the driving force behind the initial website development.

In the past, I have kept a loose grip on site development issues and, as a result, technology would make a huge impact in our defined marketing strategy. 'No, we can't do that' or 'This platform will not allow us to support that' are just some of the responses I have heard in the past.

In short, technology should NEVER limit or direct the course of a website development project. The way I look at it is, "We will either find a way, or we will make one." Your marketing strategy must serve as 'law' and everything else, including technology, must conform to it. What I'm doing differently now is making my point VERY clear from the beginning."

18.

David R. Yale, Direct Marketer

Editor, "Yale's DM Breakthrough Tips" (free bi-weekly e-letter)

www.controlbeaters.com

"Even though the Internet is an information-based medium, emotions are still the basis of making the sale. You have to get inside the heads of your prospects and customers, find out what really matters to them, and use that insight to develop copy that grabs them.

The prime emotions to harness are fear, greed, and anger.

How do you know what your prospects and customers feel? You already have at least one resource in your organization that can tell you a lot about your customers' and prospects' fear, anger and greed.

This may sound simple, but most organizations overlook it: ask your customer service representatives. And ask your sales staff, too. They're in daily contact with your customers. And they know what keeps your customers up at night.

The first step is to ask your CSRs and Reps in an unstructured way. Get their overall impressions, and let them amble on. This will give you a feeling of the lay of the land.

Based on this information, you can then develop an ongoing (and ever-changing) questionnaire for your CSRs and Reps that helps them structure their observations on an ongoing basis.

If you have the budget, you can -- and should -- augment these observations with market research. But the observations should come first, because they'll help you set up more accurate marketing research sessions.

Once you have this information, what do you do with it? Well, you turn it over to your creative people. You give them the raw information, as well as your conclusions. And you make sure they use it!

How do I know this works? Well, when we changed the creative platform for a newsletter for business travelers, the results blew the doors off!

We had been using a simple, factual appeal. We changed that to 'They get gourmet meals during airport delays. They get private offices during airport delays. Why not you?? Get revenge now!'

The response rate far outdistanced every previous effort for this product.

How did I cook up this strategy? Well, I'll admit it. It's an old direct marketing trick, from the good old days of direct mail. The Internet may be a new media. But the 'old-fashioned' strategies still work."

19.

Jason Kassel

Founding Partner

InternetVIZ

<http://www.internetviz.com/sherpa.htm>

"The biggest marketing lesson I've learned is to be sure to capture email addresses. When I first started out trying to sell on the Internet, I didn't do anything to capture the email addresses of people who visited my site. This was a big mistake.

Having an email address enables you to stay in touch with them and send them messages so, when they are ready to buy, they will return to the site and make a purchase. It is a difficult task to get people to visit your site even once, and if you don't do everything you can to get them to leave an email address, all of that effort is wasted.

Today, I do a lot of things differently. Our company's website, InternetVIZ.com, provides the visitor with multiple reasons for leaving an email address. We offer a free white paper, a free subscription to a weekly newsletter, and a free trial of our services. All of this has helped turn our marketing program into a lead-generating tool."

20.

Eytan Urbas

Vice President, Marketing

Mailshell.com

<http://www.mailshell.com>

"Users' permission and trust are best when offered, not purchased."

We've tested various ways of 'buying' permission-oriented relationships through sponsorships, promotions and incentive marketing. While those activities generate trial and usage in the short term, we've learned that our best, most active and loyal users are ones who are self-referred and not incented by anything other than their desire to try our service. These users are more willing to share their personal information, upgrade their accounts and try new features. Since long-term, loyal users are most valuable, we now tailor our marketing strategies, tactics and budget to focus on these users."

21.

Moira Vetter

President

Moxie Marketing

<http://www.moxie-marketing.com>

"The biggest Internet marketing lesson I've learned is that not every company needs its own outbound e-letter. In the old days (what...1993?) many companies got onboard with print newsletters to customers. Back in those days, before everyone had daily email contact, it was an excellent way to stay in touch and build a dialogue with your customers and prospects. Fast forward to 2001 and many print newsletters have moved online. It was my first impulse to recommend that all my new customers plan an outbound e-letter for prospects and customers.

I've stopped doing that for a few reasons:

1. **People have too much email.** Only select, content-heavy, unbiased e-letters grab people's attention. Let the MarketingSherpa's of the world compel the individual to read the e-letter.
2. **People pull the content they want to them and rely on a few large, credible sources for "pushed" content.** Before everyone had access to databases and password protected research sites, people were starved for specific information. When you pushed this information to them, however biased or one-sided it may have been (what...marketing biased?), they were thrilled to get it. People don't want anything "pushed" anymore. We have arrived at the 'opt-in' or 'pull' era.
3. **Some products do not require much education or discussion.** I spent years promoting enterprise-wide automation systems and shop floor measurement applications. Much education was required. The simpler and more object-oriented that technology gets, the less education like that contained in a 'useletter' that is needed to make a purchase decision.

Now I spend time finding the best places online, and the best e-letter that already exist, for promoting my clients. Plenty of people got to the top on the coat tails of others. E-marketing offers a similar opportunity."

22.

Bill Dunlap

CEO

Global Reach

<http://glreach.com>

"When I heard about the Internet revolutionizing business in 1995, I decided to turn my entire business into an Internet business. At the time, I had been an international marketing consultant since the early '80s, and the more I thought about it, it seemed that using the Internet to expand international sales would be a natural winner for eBusiness. After I explored several business opportunities, I decided to orient my business towards Web promotion, since it seemed to be the most important thing for a Website: building traffic.

Back in 1995, hardly any company except IBM and the like had multilingual sites (actually, most of them did not have a Website at all). I thought that I would position my business in front of the globalization wave, so we would be ready for clients when it hit. What I did not realize is how long it would take for globalization to occur. Before 2000, most companies were investing heavily in Y2K solutions, and I thought that once Jan. 1, 2000 was behind us, the next important item on the agenda would be globalization. This has not proved to be true.

My take on the focus of my business -- globalizing eBusiness -- is that it will take perhaps a decade or two before the world is as unified a market as the U.S. is one single market composed of many regions. After my two decades in international marketing, my conclusion is that there still remains much inertia to be overcome within most companies. Also, with the economic downturn of the last year, most companies are simply afraid to invest in globalizing their business. It is a black box with a big question mark on it.

This fear of foreign investment can also be a business opportunity. This month I am initiating a new area of business centered around international strategic research, management and planning. When companies can know what to expect in advance about launching sales and marketing in other countries, they will not be so afraid of investing in foreign markets."

23.

Bill Hunt

Executive Vice President, Strategic Services

Outrider North America, Inc.

<http://www.outrider.com>

The biggest lesson that I learned is to always use the most effective and relevant channel or medium for marketing clients online.

During the “great old days” of the Internet, we let a few of our former clients steamroll us into deals with the large portals that included multiple placements, many of which bearing little or no relevance to their target audience.

Today, I recognize the necessity to structure such deals to make sense from the following perspectives:

1. Is this placement and message consistent with the "interest" and "relevance" of the browser?
2. Am I engaging the visitor to give me permission to contact them at a later date if they do not feel compelled to act today?
3. It is assumed that the creative and placement will offer branding opportunities, but are they fully realized if the individual is on a quest for something else?

We no longer just purchase a placement nor develop creative for the cool factor or because the numbers look good. We take a good hard look at all of the aspects that motivated the user to be on that site to begin with and then maximize those contributing factors to compel them to visit and convert.

If more campaigns were structured in this manner, I think it would drive a number of changes in the marketplace and consequently result in many more successful campaigns."

24.

John Katnic

Publisher

SAM Magazine

Marketing Bulletin Board

<http://www.sammag.com>

"One of our more memorable marketing miscalculations was in launching a direct mail lead-generating card deck targeting Internet World Magazine subscribers a couple years back. On paper, the venture looked like a 'can't miss' opportunity... the magazine's circulation (and Internet use in general) was soaring, co-op card decks were the most seasoned and cost-efficient medium for website promotion, and our Internet World Deck was to be the only game in town.

Unfortunately, we failed to follow one of the key rules of advertising, which is to reach your target audience with their preferred medium of choice. In other words, the best way to communicate with Internet users is, duh, via the Internet; not necessarily through direct mail. In fact, we painfully discovered that early web users of the late 90's were adverse to 'snail mail' offers. The result: we threw a great party that no one but our similarly disappointed advertisers showed up for. Ouch."

25.

Steve Jones

Vice President, Marketing

Norm Thompson Outfitters

<http://www.normthompson.com>

"At the end of the day, you have many channels, but one brand. The Internet is not something in addition to your brand, it is an expression of your brand. Choose your message carefully.

We sent a postcard to customers directing them to our website for a special sale on select products, testing the concept of a web-driver postcard. We received some pretty negative feedback from customers, unhappy that the price on the Internet was lower than in the catalog. That wasn't the case, as we're a one-price company. However, every product we've ever sold can't be included in every catalog we publish. We can show a lot more product on our site. If the customer calls into our call center for one of those items, they get the same price as offered on the Internet, but the wording on the postcard led some people to think otherwise.

We could have done a better job of ensuring that messaging in one channel didn't lead to a misperception about another of our channels. We're more clear in our wording now."

26.

Fred Langa

Publisher

The LangaList

<http://www.langa.com>

People **will** pay for content, if it's done right. For too long, I assumed (like everyone else) that I had to give my content away and get by on advertising revenue. But when the Dot-Com bubble burst, and ads dried up, I explained the situation to readers and asked if they'd pay a modest amount--- \$10 per year--- for an ad-free, enhanced version of my newsletter. Six months later, I've converted about 10% of my 'free' (ad-based) subscriber list to the paid version, and that 10% of my subscribers will generate some three times as much bottom-line revenue for me as the other 90%, and with far less hassle. It's wonderful to be able to concentrate on content instead of worrying about where the next ad will come from.

I wish I'd known all this sooner; I would have offered a paid-subscription model from day one! <g>"

27.

Hollis Thomases

Founder & President

WebAdvantage.net

<http://www.webadvantage.net>

"One regret is our .net domain name. When we were a print-only company, our domain name would have been in print in every single ad, so promoting the right url would not have been a problem. Now that we're not involved in print, our .net url has been a major thorn in my side. We've done a great job of marketing ourselves and getting publicity as an emarketing agency, but countless times publications print our name as 'www.webadvantage.com' -- even our own customers use the .com url instead our own .net!! It's extremely frustrating, and I can't imagine how much free traffic the .com domain name owners must receive as a result.

Unlike big, well-funded companies that can afford the cost of a name change, we cannot. We've spent three years building up our brand, and I'm not ready to trash it right now over this. Instead, I've registered the 'Trading As' name officially as 'WebAdvantage.net,' and we all now make a point of using this as the company name instead of just Web Ad.vantage. It has helped somewhat when it comes to the press, but I think it'll always be a sore spot. "

28.

Robert Rosenthal

President

Passaic Parc

<http://www.passaicparc.com>

"Biggest regret? Making the first rich media email ad we created -- a self-promotion for our agency -- too lengthy. Now we're treating rich media email ads we do for clients as fast-running TV-style commercials. Our first one had a running time of one minute; our most recent one ran in 39 seconds.

So far, shorter rich media email seems to do better."

29.

Asad Haroon

Director of Business Development

Liquidation

<http://www.liquidation.com>

"One of the things we learnt is to never make a large commitment to a vehicle you have not tested. What we did for example is try a variety of search engines/portals for key words. We started with a campaign to buy keywords on eight or nine search engines/portals and then cut down that list to four after three months of testing."

30.

Mark Joyner

Founder and CEO

Aesop.com

<http://www.aesop.com>

"At Aesop.com, we test and track everything meticulously. Early on, I was a bit more freewheeling with my testing, but quickly learned the value of being more specific with my testing.

Here's what I mean by that. We released a new software product and ran a split between two totally different Internet sales letters. One sales letter outpulled the other by about 246%. Great, right! Well, in the short term, we had a clear winner, but we learned absolutely nothing about better copywriting. That is, since the two sales letters were so different, there was no way for us to know what it was about the winner that caused it to out-pull the loser.

We had not implemented a testing system that allowed us to learn why one letter worked where another didn't. Now, whenever we do split run tests, it is to compare variations of a very specific aspect of the information being sent. For example, length of guarantee, length of special offer, one word in the headline, etc."

31.

Lou Betancourt**CEO****<http://www.BullMarket.com>**

"We have learned a few things ... 1. Advertising will not sustain a small publisher such as the BullMarket.com. 2. In order to survive we had to take control of our destiny by developing a proactive marketing model to generate trials and paid subscriptions. And, 3. we learned that many of the same the direct marketing strategies that work for offline publisher have been equally effective online. We develop strong creative, strong offers and an effective multi-effort trial-to-paid conversion series. We test on an on-going basis and use similar metrics to evaluating results -- ROI and customer lifetime values."

32.

John A. Scammon**Executive Vice President****Database Marketing Associates, Inc.****<http://www.b2bmarketing.com>**

"My biggest Internet marketing lesson learned (and what I'm doing differently) is not to underestimate the need to state your offer and give the reader a link to your client's landing page IMMEDIATELY, even if it means employing what we as direct marketing copy writers might feel is somewhat awkward construction. I've learned to forgo clever opening lines, good transitions and clear, logical copy in favor of brevity and quickly providing a link.

Here's a sample of a recent e-mail message developed for our client, TouchScape.

Add Email Marketing Capability To Your Website In 48 Hours Or Less

How Are You Doing Email Marketing Today? Get TouchScape's email marketing solution up and running in 48 hours or less. Click

<http://www.touchscape.com/gur> to view a self-guided tour of the email marketing solution that received a 4-star rating from PC Magazine.

[copy continues]

The response to this e-mail blast was good - about 3% response and 1% registrations, which is more than we hoped for."

33.

Philip Mowris

Principal

The Mowris Group

<http://www.mowris.com>

"Here's a story from some earlier days on the Web, 1998 to be exact. The lesson learned is that just about anything can be done on the Web; but just because it can, does not mean it should be done. The Web is about creative use, creative application, not about creative production - of the sort that typify the best creative agencies in the world (at least not yet).

I am working with a traditional advertising agency, and they own the client relationship. The new campaign is changing everything, 'rebranding' the company. The Web site must dovetail with the new ads and collateral pieces. We did it. We made it look good, function well, and it perfectly matched the brochure. It was also one of the most complicated sites I have ever produced (especially for brochure-ware), and the customers did not use it. The site was company focused, not customer focused.

The client would have been better off spending the money on attracting visitors to the previous site. With only a bit more investment, the client could have provided a significant service to their customer, quickly establishing the benchmark for their category. Bear in mind that this was a bricks and mortar business in a mature category."

34.

Donald Skarzenski

VP, Marketing

Energy Exchange

www.enex.com

"My biggest Internet marketing lesson learned (and what I'm doing differently now):

Last year, I was tasked with driving traffic to a financial services web site. The campaign got the highest response in the industry, according to Nielsen NetRatings. But conversion was below expectations. What I learned -- from a ValueClick sales rep -- was that the banners were "tricking" people into clicking. The banners were the familiar "fake" Windows message bar and "fake" search engine input boxes -- "Click here to find the highest interest!" We switched to more specific, benefits-based banners, with no tricks or fakery. And CTR went UP.

Lesson learned: You can sometimes fool people into visiting your site, but you can't fool them into taking any action. Traffic is easy; conversions take a lot more work. What am I doing differently? Focusing tightly on learning my target users' needs, wants and FEARS. Then creating messages that focus on benefits that address those needs, wants and fears. Gimmicks don't make it."

35.

Seth Godin [Author, Speaker, Agent of Change]

Do You Zoom, Inc.

<http://www.ideavirus.com>

"I let potential advertisers drive us to make mistakes, forgetting that many marketing managers don't want stuff that works, they want stuff that the boss likes or that doesn't rock the boat or that gets them promoted. Satisfying this urge is beneficial in the short run, but in the long run, it's a path to doom.

Marketers are often shortsighted. I'm trying to do the opposite."

36.

Peter Cobb

eBags

VP Marketing and Co-founder

www.ebags.com

"Early on, eBags tended to outsource some of our projects thinking that we could save resources and time. What we found was that oftentimes we spent so much time explaining the job specs and handling the project management that it was faster and cheaper to do it ourselves. Plus, we could improve the quality by handling it inhouse.

For example, we had an outside firm handle our My eBags program assisting in the creation and distribution of our emails. When we were smaller, it worked well (eBags won Best email Marketer of the Year in 2000).

As we successfully grew our database (to just under one million records) we found that it didn't make economic sense to continue to pay someone to distribute emails when we had the capability inhouse.

Our IT team convinced us that they could take on our entire email distribution program with no increase in human resources and our current batch of servers could handle the load. eBags decided to bring the email capability inhouse. Not only did eBags save a half million dollars per year but we have improved the quality control and our email team has more ownership.

The ironic part is that we are discussing with other sites about handling their email campaigns for them. This will enable us to cover some of our overhead through this additional revenue stream plus we will get free placements in each of the emails we distribute. A good deal for all."

37.

Michael Herman

Project & Promotion Manager, Internet Research & Development

Christianity Today International

www.ChristianityToday.com

"When I began to work with GoTo.com's pay-per-click (PPC) model, I saw how much money we could save in comparison to banner advertising (which we, fortunately, had not done a lot of up to that point). So, the natural reaction, or at least my reaction, was to load-up and get the top spots in a dozen or more different keywords. Bad move. We spent, and truly wasted a lot of money very quickly. Money was being saved in comparison to dumping it into banner ads, but money was also being lost because I knew nothing about getting the most for our money in the PPC environment.

The need to develop a PPC strategy came out of necessity, or else my monthly budget would be blown in the first half of that period.

I realized, through a lot of trial and error, that getting in the top three listings is key for the areas of our site I really wanted to give a traffic pump. But all of my keywords didn't need to constantly and simultaneously be top dogs.

Putting more of my budget into our e-card and greeting card keywords around holiday really paid off, and the viral marketing that followed help sustain traffic growth for that area long after the holiday had passed.

Finding the "gaps" in PPC search engines are key. I learned that after blowing hundreds of dollars trying to be "just one spot higher." The gaps are the places where you can move one rank down and save \$.05, \$.10, \$.15 or more per click. Many times, the sites above us saw the money we were saving. Their bids came down, and I was able to move up and for just a few more cents per click and get great promotion in the top three spots. Manipulation of the keyword bidding is possible, and it has saved us quite a bit of money.

I work for a site that "preaches" the Crawl, Walk, Run mentality, and I entered the PPC game with some of that funky-looking speed-walking too quickly. I needed to crawl. I know better and should've known better at the time. Education beforehand and developing a strategy from the beginning is essential.

We've seen our cost-per-click rate drop dramatically, our click-throughs have increased, and we're spending much less money overall. It's a GREAT promotional tool for us NOW. Because of the lessoned learned, we're now using that same strategy with other PPC search engines.

I wish I could do it all over again."

38.

Neil Griffin

President

JAM Communications

www.jamagency.com

" My biggest Internet marketing mistake was Making a 'free jam basket' offer to anyone who comes by our web site and requests more information. Our cute little jam premium got picked up on numerous consumer "Coupon sites" like freebies.com and Mycoupons.com and we got bombarded by requests for the our \$5 basket by people who would never become clients. (One morning we had over 3,000 requests for the basket.) We quickly pulled down the offer and refined the copy to state the restriction applied and that the offer was for qualified businesses only."

39.

Brad Aronson

President

i-FRONTIER, Interactive Advertising

<http://www.i-frontier.com>

"Giving something away for free to generate leads is a bad idea unless you have an extremely broad target audience or the giveaway is very relevant. In the beginning of 1996 we wanted to encourage registration at a client site by offering a free vacation. Unfortunately, this contest somehow made its way around the net and we had numerous unqualified visitors coming to our client's site and entering the contest -- diluting our database. Now, we are certain to make offers as relevant as possible. For example, a good giveaway for a pharmaceutical brand could be a trip to the Mayo Clinic to get your condition checked by the best physicians in the world. This is of high interest to people suffering from a condition, and wouldn't encourage non-sufferers to register."

40.

Hans Peter Brondmo

Author and Entrepreneur

www.engagedcustomer.com

"I founded Post Communications [now part of Netcentives] in 1996 in order to help companies use email to establish a dialogue with their customers. My biggest mistake has been to underestimate how difficult it is to change the way that established organizations work. While it often seems like the technology part of an email marketing solution would be the most difficult part to get right, the place I have fallen flat on my face more than once, is in underestimating the complexity of the processes and procedures that a company must adopt in order to use email as an effective marketing tool."

41.

Jim Sterne

Author, Speaker, Consultant

<http://www.targeting.com>

"A couple of years ago I had to return a client's check. I'd been paying close attention to all-things-Internet for six years already and I handed out some bum advice.

The company helped people find jobs. Not the automated database type of site you'd expect, but a whole job-finding program. The site had a bunch of navigational flaws (they all do) but the thing that flashed a great big red light at me was the lack of credit card processing.

The buyer had to print out the form, fill it out by hand, and mail it back with a check. Sheesh!

One month after they implemented their new buy-online ability, they e-mailed to say that sales had dropped by 25%.

Had they changed anything else on the site? No.

Had they stopped advertising somewhere? No.

Had they changed their offer? No.

I asked the usual 20 questions and finally decided to test it empirically. "Change it back!"

Within two days, their sales were right back up where they previously were. After an hour on the phone we could only surmise that people needed time to make up their minds.

With the form sitting on the table in front of them for a couple of days, it only took one moment of weakness for them to send in a check. But when faced with an immediate decision to plunk down their credit cards, they demurred.

I mailed back the check for my fees.

Think about the type of product or service you sell and don't assume that everybody is going to be as enthusiastic as you."