

Other Viral techniques

In the world of internet marketing, the more people who go to a website theoretically have an upper hand in getting more revenue, recognition, and maybe even a lot of friends.

Traditionally, this would take a lot of marketing capital to pull off. Large companies with a huge war chest would have the advantage, overwhelming the market by sheer repetition. What's important was that the message came across. With more people connecting online, however, the rules changed dramatically.

Thinking out of the box, some companies started taking advantage of people who manage to "infect" other people by word of mouth. If the next people like the message, then they pass it on to "infect" others as well. Growth of the "virus" becomes exponential, infecting others with the message in epidemic proportions, until everyone has caught the bug.

Something we commonly do when we see a good movie, tasted good food, and read a good book has finally been adopted by the advertising industry for its own purposes.

What's important now is that the message comes across enough to be passed on. This marketing technique is called viral marketing.

Done right, viral marketing, multiplies the marketing budget of a company many times more. It's method is offbeat and, as mentioned above, takes advantage of our irresistible urge to tell somebody about a good experience.

The usual viral methods involve the use of these forms of electronic media:

1. Online. Recipients are encouraged to fill a form on the company website with more contact information. The web page may usually contain useful information such as a feature article or news. Included at the bottom would be a link to send these items to a friend.
2. Email. One of the most common mediums available for information dissemination. One click of the mouse sends the same message to a batch of contacts.
3. Instant Messenger. Currently the fastest spreaders of information available. This even can manage to bypass the "junk mail" stigma of emails as the messages sent by IM are sent from a recognized source, which instantly appears on the recipient's screen prompting a more immediate response.

With a little out-of-the-box imagination, a great number of ideas can be generated in these methods to encourage users to patronize a site or a product online, all at an economical but highly effective standpoint.

Some suggestions would include:

1. Free newsletters with incentives. Users who seek information can get it in an electronic newsletter format. Depending on solicitations from affiliate companies or from the host company itself, a slew of promotions or incentives to participate can be inserted along with the articles in the newsletter, encouraging users to pass it along, etc.
2. Free web space. For the price of personal information and valid referrals, users can receive some web real estate to set up shop. Condition can be made with the host company that it can place adverts in strategic areas of the site or encourage the user to create a site in line with host's policy for free.
3. Free autoresponder service. This encourages users to use the company's service for the ease it will give the user to follow up on their referrals. The system it uses automatically generates a set of responses to the user's message cascades, leaving the user with less work to do distributing his messages. The host can benefit by piggybacking some adverts or promotions along with the responded or sent messages.
4. Free email accounts. The most used and abused viral technique that still works. Users are invited by friends, family and acquaintances to join the email service as its feature ensure better service, storage, or retrieval than other companies in the market. In exchange the host company may collect data on its users and can create profiles for future marketing purposes, depending on the responses of its campaigns.
5. Free e-cards. Some companies offer customizable cards that appeal to the user and encourages them to send as many e-cards as possible to friends and other contacts. Attached to the e-card are encouragements for other users to join the network to be able to send the attractive e-cards to others as well or to provide referrals in exchange for points.
6. Shareware. Users are offered shareware in exchange for referrals or feedback. Depending on the software's usefulness to the user, its popularity can skyrocket to the most number of people at the most economical means possible. Evidence also shows that some people who use the software send feedback that can pave the way for a quicker release of a newer version of the software, decreasing debugging time because of added manpower.