

Viral Marketing Techniques

Viral marketing can be defined as any technique or a set of techniques that encourages persons to pass on marketing messages to others, which will produce exponential increase in the awareness of people towards a particular brand, enhancing the visibility and effect of the marketing message. It involves dispensing free products or services along with the advertisement, and in return, the recipients will pass the product along to other users.

This strategy is very attractive to businesses limited budget for marketing and advertising. It can deliver very desirable results with minimal cost in a short period of time. Of course, viral marketing also has its downside. There are times that messages related to viral marketing can resemble e-mail spam and this can create damage to the brand.

Some viral marketing strategies are more functional than the others. To help advertisers decide as to which ones are to be considered, here the elements of an effective marketing strategy:

1. Products and services are given away free of charge
2. Makes use of existing communication networks to the maximum
3. Takes advantage of common human behaviors and motivations
4. Has a medium that enables users to transfer the message to other people
5. Can switch from small scale to a large one
6. Utilizes the resources of others to carry their message out

Having these elements in mind, advertisers should carefully select the viral marketing technique that will work well for their business. Here are some popular examples:

1. Articles

Articles can be written by an advertiser about the business, making certain the site and the advertiser's contact information will be included, and placed at the byline, and the message at the end of the article. Permission will be granted to people who wish to print the articles, with the condition that the name of the site and contact information will remain intact on the page. The advantage of the technique is that people who like the articles can email them to their contacts, or they can publish it on their own newsletters or web sites. The exposure is a sure thing since other people will get to read the article, and recognize the marketing message along with the creator.

2. E-books

E-books can be shared to others for free, enclosed with an attractive ad that showcases the most in-demand product line of the business, of course, includes the links to the advertiser's web site and the email address. Recipients should be allowed to share the e-book to others.

3. Software

Free software can be shared with others, be it a trial or a light version. Then include the ad complete with links to the site and contact information.

4. Discussion boards

A discussion board can be created on an advertiser's web site featuring banner advertisements.

5. Web hosting

An advertiser can offer free hosting services to small businesses in exchange for placement of banners that promotes the site of the advertiser.

6. Awards

Awards can be created and given out to other web sites for any reason. For instance, the advertiser can create a good-looking button that the award recipient can attach to their web sites, and when others click on the button, it leads directly to the site of the advertiser.

7. Affiliate programs

Affiliate programs create financial incentive for sites for linking with others. This can be created to encourage the placement of links that provides information to products and services.

8. Referral program

A special referral program can be made for frequent visitors for bringing in new ones to the site. The person who refers a visitors can sign-up for the program and gets a commission from the advertiser.

9. Newsletters

An advertiser can encourage users to forward a newsletter to friends. It is recommended to create a newsletter that is funny and attention-grabbing, and the links to the advertiser's site will be included in it.

10. E-cards

Users can be permitted to post e-cards in the advertiser's web site.

By choosing and utilizing the correct type of viral marketing strategy for their business, advertisers can expect to gain rapidly from their marketing efforts in a short period of time.