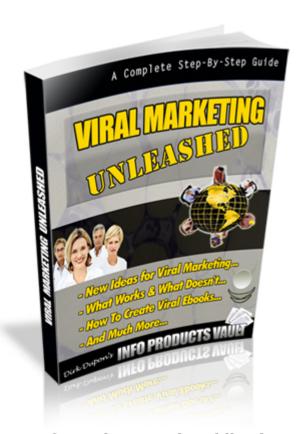# Viral Marketing Unleashed

An Info Products Vault Publication

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Why And How Viral Marketing Works

You may wonder what a virus has to do with marketing?

Well, viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence.

Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands and then to millions.

Viral Marketing sounds like something bad but it is actually something very good.

It is a powerful way to generate lots of traffic to your website or sales page.

Think about how a virus spreads from on person to another. One person gets sick and just by sneezing they can give the virus to many more people…

… those people get sick and share their germs with everyone they know and the next thing anybody knows is that there is an epidemic.

That is the very concept of viral marketing. The idea is to get everyone to spread your marketing message around because they want to.

Public health nurses offer sage advice at flu season: stay away from people who cough, wash your hands often, and don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Viruses only spread when they're easy to transmit.

Viral e-mail marketing works great on the Internet because instant communication has become so easy and inexpensive.

Digital format make copying simple. From a marketing standpoint, you must simplify your marketing message so it can be transmitted easily and without degradation.

Short is better.

Remember the K.I.S.S. standard….Keep it Simple Stupid.

The shorter and easier to remember is always better than long and complicated.

Clever viral marketing plans take advantage of common human motivations. The desire to be cool and greed drives people. So does the hunger to be popular, loved, and understood.

The resulting urge to communicate produces millions of websites and billions of e-mail messages. Most people are social. Nerdy, basement-dwelling computer science grad students are the exception.

Social scientists tell us that each person has a network of 8 to 12 people in their close network of friends, family, and associates. People on the Internet develop networks of relationships, too.

They collect e-mail addresses and favorite website URLs. Affiliate programs exploit such networks, as do permission e-mail lists. Learn to place your message into existing communications between people, and you rapidly multiply its dispersion.
If you can design a marketing strategy that builds on common motivations and behaviors for its transmission, you have a winner.

What Works & What Doesn't

Stop with the enforced e-mail forwards already!

Trying to force or bribe people to forward your info to a friends or family in order to be rewarded or win looks skanky in today's ultra-permission-based world. Especially when you tell visitors nothing about their friend's or family's privacy in the space directly next to the e-mail form.

A true viral campaign gets forwarded because consumers are compelled to do so by the glory of the content, not because you bribed them with points or something else.

What absolutely will not work:

Suggesting that e-mail recipients forward your message to their friends and family will not work. Adding a line at the bottom of your e-mail that reads "Please feel free to forward this message to a friend" is more likely to get it deleted than forwarded.

What absolutely will work:

Offering something worthy of sharing like a valuable discount, vital information or offering an incentive for sharing like additional entries into a sweepstakes or an added discount or premium service will work.

Relevant or timely information, research, or studies that are included in your e-mail might encourage the recipients to share with their family and friends.

Interactive content like a quiz or test, especially if it's fun, will inspire forwarding.

Jokes and cartoons are almost always forwarded to everybody the recipient knows.

Why?

Because they are entertaining and entertainment is meant to be shared. A really cool multimedia experience is always going to achieve a lot of pass-along.

Rich media is new and the novelty and tech factors alone are often enough to make the e-mail recipient eager to share it.

Oops! Almost forgot one really important thing….

You can craft a brilliant e-mail following all the rules, but if a consumer visits your site and has an experience less that what was promised, you are going to achieve viral marketing, alright…the bad kind.

So be certain that your product or service is ready and is as advertised.

The Many Facets of Viral Marketing

In the beginning, e-mail was the one way that viral marketing was started.

Since that long ago day, viral marketing has gone from a marketing strategy to an art form and there are many ways to accomplish the objective of creating a successful viral marketing campaign. Seven of those ways are:

1. E-mail: It was first but it is still around and still used. It is, however, getting a little harder to use as more and more government restrictions are placed on it. Still… it does work.

2. Newsletters: This is an extension of e-mail but it a very effective tool. If you include enough timely and valuable information, a good newsletter can drive up the number of visits to your website.

3. Blogging: Providing the tools on your website to enable bloggers to interact with one another is a terrific way to get the message about your product of service out there and being talked about. Bloggers have their ears to the ground for new products and services.

4. Chat Rooms: A chat room on your website can and does encourage interaction among your customers and that can't be a bad thing. Also, you can use the chat room to schedule special events like having an expert available to answer questions on a given day at a given time.

5. Tell-a-friend Script: If you add this with a statement saying that e-mail addresses supplied will never be shared with third parties, you can increase your potential customer list greatly.

6. Video Clips: Including cool video clips on your website will keep the interest up and increase traffic.

7. Flash Games: Although they are a little costly to start, they are an extremely effective tool to get your viral marketing campaign going. Once they are launched, they require nothing more from you.

Your Ebook is your Viral Salesman

Ebooks are the future and the future is now.

The printed word on paper and bound into books used to be the only way information was given and received.

They were great, you could take them with you and put them on shelves and they do still exist and will continue to for the foreseeable future but the time of the Ebook has arrived.

A marketing Ebook is a slightly different animal from just an Ebook.

Marketing Ebooks contain text, images, links to web pages and navigation controls. The marketing Ebook has become a very important part of marketing on the Internet.

With a marketing Ebook you can present your story in an effective way and include links to your web sales pages. Your Ebook can become your best salesman.

=> You can subscribe to my **4 day Ebook eCourse** (don't worry, it's free) that teaches you how to get started with writing, creating and publishing your first Ebook on the Internet.

First, your Ebook needs to be interesting and informative. It always has links back to your web site and to your sales page.

Next, be sure that you have a prominent section telling readers that they are free to give your Ebook away.

Let them know that they can post it on their site as a free download, that they can use it as a bonus, and that they can bundle it with other products.

This is the way to create viral marketing for your products or services. Remember those links back to your site contained in the Ebook?

Last but certainly not least before you send your Ebook out to the world, double check spelling and grammar and be sure that you have tested every link to verify that it goes where it is supposed to go.

Obvious errors will reflect badly on you and will not be of much value to you, it could even by damaging.

Post your Ebook to some of the Ebook directories. Many let you post it for free, or will let you post a link on their site to your Ebook.

What An Ebook Can Do For You

An Ebook that includes your marketing message and a link to your website is a proven technique in viral marketing.

This method uses the multiplication effect to "explode" the distribution of your message by willing participants.

This is the basic principle that was used by Hotmail to get established.

When the two founders set up their free email system, all the messages that were sent by subscribers had a text message at the bottom which identified Hotmail as the origin.

People who sent emails to their friends advertised the free email site. Using viral Ebooks as a marketing method is cheap.

It doesn't take long to set up and it's even quicker if you use rebrandable Ebooks that have been written by others. Just use your favorite search engine and do a web search.

You will find many rebrandable Ebooks that are available on whatever subject you are interested in and that apply to your e-business.

One method of distributing the Ebook is to offer it to visitors in exchange for subscribing to your newsletter. If they pass it on to their friends and family it will promote your business for you.

Ebooks are capable of reaching a large audience and are limited only by the enthusiasm of the participants.

Ebooks are fairly easy to create. It's possible to produce your own Ebooks by combining articles that you have written or have gotten from public domain sources, such as directories.

A common approach is to use material that has Private Label Rights, including articles and reports that have been written specifically for that purpose, for that niche.

Using a portion of a larger work that you have prepared such as the first three chapters of a large Ebook could also be used as a viral Ebook.

This Ebook is a perfect example of a viral Ebook.

When you opened this Ebook, you may have noticed that I allow you to brand my Ebook with your own affiliate link if you become a member of my **Info Products Vault** membership site (this is free to do)…

Now, when you join my membership site, you get instant access to the branding kit for this Ebook, and you can insert your own money generating affiliate link in it.

When you spread your branded copy around, and someone signs up for a free membership via your affiliate link, and purchases the One Time Offer they see after subscribing, you make a nice Clickbank commission.

And here's how the viral marketing power technique kicks in…

By doing this I encourage people to sell this Ebook (or give it away) all over the Internet, and at the same time I make backend sales and sign up new members to my membership site.

But that's not all...

… the really great thing is that new members will also distribute their own branded copy of this Ebook (to get a commission on the OTO), and automatically promote my membership site over and over again.

This is how easy, but deadly effective, viral Ebook marketing can be.

Interested in getting your own branded copy? You can still join by **clicking here**

Ebooks and Affiliate Programs

Ebooks combine very well with affiliate programs.

When the affiliate receives some extra benefit from promoting the viral message, like being able to brand your Ebook with his affiliate links, the affiliate makes a sale when a reader buys through a branded link.

You benefit from increased traffic to your website because the affiliate is willing to promote the Ebooks for you.

Be absolutely certain that your message includes a clear call to action. There shouldn't be any doubt whatsoever about what you intend recipients to do.

Make sure that the instructions are perfectly clear so that recipients know HOW to act.

The action that you require should be simple and obvious as well. Don't make things complicated or it will confuse the reader, such as by adding numerous links.

Remember the **K.I.S.S.** principle Keep It Simple Stupid!

The incentive should be clear to those you want to take an action. Readers will look at your offering for about seven seconds before they move on.

If it takes longer than that for them to figure out what it is you want them to do, they will move on. Don't make your message vague or difficult to comprehend.

If you do, chances are you will lose them. You must respect your readers enough to express your message clearly.

Once you are sure you have an Ebook that will be of value to an affiliate program, approach them with your idea and be able to show that it will be mutually beneficial.

Viral Marketing using Ebooks is one of many techniques that all together have a cumulative effect in attracting customers and subscribers to your business and in attracting targeted visitors to your website.

You will very soon find out that this is an excellent way of increasing sales, subscribers and referrals.

3 Steps to Find "Freebies" to Add to Your Ebook

Those of us who regularly shop on line are familiar with the array of free gifts, free bonuses and just plain freebies that are offered to a visitor to a website to encourage

them to buy.

How could you collect, select and offer free gifts, which will be valued as much as the original merchandise that is being purchased, put these gifts together and add them to your Ebook?

There are just three steps to do that:

1. Identify your key words in each chapter of your Ebook.

Now, type those words into your favorite search engine.

You are looking for free Ebooks on the same subject in more depth, by a greater expert than you are, or by someone who gives a new and fresh angle to the topic. Add a link to the free Ebook in each chapter of your Ebook.

2. Research the Internet for related free gifts.

Now you are looking for things that you could give as free gifts in your Ebook that will make it more appealing and give it more pass-along appeal to your readers.

For example: If you are selling gardening supplies, find a planting guide on the web that can be downloaded and include that as a gift in your Ebook.

3. Download the freebies.

Visit the freebies pages on those web sites. Most sites have freebies and encourage you to distribute them.

Other key words I searched for are freebies, free Ebooks, and free reports and then gave the key word that I wanted the free stuff for. Like… "freebies for gardeners".

Give your reader the vest that you can offer. Give them your book, additional reading material and free gifts to boot. Everybody loves a bargain!

Viral Marketing In Forums

There are different types of forums, beyond the obvious topical types, of "marketing" or "special interest", etc. "Marketing" and "special interest" are two types of what are commonly referred to as "open forums".

There are, however, business and professional forums, which do not operate under the same rules and, more often than not, disallow any and all types of advertising or self-promotion.

Forums that have been created to support the membership of a particular program are especially adamant on this topic and often demand that all members refrain from all types if advertising on their sites.

Still, even with all these hurdles, it is possible to successfully advertise in forums. In all cases a pre-requisite for success is developing a good reputation and a good relationship and maintaining both.

So, while it is true that this a form of free advertising, it does require a certain amount of investment as far as time and energy are concerned, not to mention subtly and finesse.

To successfully market on any forum, the first requirement is to take a personal interest in the main topic of the forum.

That means visiting it on a regular basis and developing a good relationship with the members and the moderators.

It, also, means taking an active roll in the conversations and being willing to help others. Of course, it goes without saying that it means abiding by any and all rules that exist.

In this way, one can develop a reputation, and business will just naturally develop because humans tend to work with people they trust.

Since the main purpose of a forum is the exchange of information and/or ideas, marketers must respect that objective and abide by it.

Marketing forums, where everyone there has something to advertise and sell, usually have even more stringent rules.

Viral Marketing Goes Mobile

Mobile devices, mobile phones and PDA's are one of the last great frontiers of viral advertisement opportunities.

However, we have become experts at filtering everything, our air and water, our e-mail and pop-ups, and our mobile devices as well. We are good at filtering.

The very idea of unwanted advertising streaming through our Blackberries is abhorrent. Mobile devices are the ultimate opt-in medium and, therefore, a great way for marketers to connect with users…if that's what the users want. "WANT" is the key word here. How should marketers approach the medium?

There are three main ways to achieve this. They are:

1. Offer exclusive content. Anyone can offer ring tones. It's the unique content, such as exclusive mobile images of new brand concepts, that drives interest and calls them out in other media like e-mail campaigns, newsletters, websites, etc. So a wireless campaign is most effective when it offers exclusive content for wireless devices.

2. Make it useful and timely. Think about what would be handy and helpful to have on a mobile device. Last year, for example, Food Network enabled Sprint customers to download shopping lists for their Thanksgiving dinners. There was a lot of "Sprint-envy" going around among non-sprint customers.

3. Clearly define objectives. Usually, one of two business objectives drives successful mobile experiences: incremental revenue of brand intimacy.

On the intimacy factor, a text message usually takes priority over almost any other form of communication.

Why? Because we haven't yet been saturated with mobile spam, and this is what causes us to prioritize wireless messaging over voice.

Mobile marketing has been out there for a while but we marketers have new territory to explore.

Video offers fantastic opportunities for engagement. Consumers already bypass their filters for highly useful or entertaining content and will do so for rich exclusive, compelling content.

Using Videos

More and more advertisers are adopting video as broadband continues to rise and ad-serving technologies become more sophisticated.

Online video advertising is really taking off.

Users' attention can be captured and ads stand out from the crowd in an increasingly ad-cluttered online environment.

It is true that video formats cost five to ten times more to serve than standard banners and they involve a lot more production and implementation work but they may well be worth all of that if they achieve greater response rates.

Where to use online video if wishing to maximize its effect, is what advertisers must carefully consider. Video to be used on the Internet should be information and

communication focused while video to be used on television should be focused on entertainment.

Like everything else, there are good ways and bad ways to use video advertising.

Right now most marketers are incorporating their audio-visual content into existing embedded ad formats like banners or over-content formats like pop-ups.

Though this could reach a potentially large audience, viewers are likely to be less captivated and more annoyed by these disruptive and distracting placements.

Cached or streaming video on a specific destination site offers the best chance of interesting consumers in brand messages, but it is not likely to reach a large audience unless it generates a viral outcome.

Whatever you come up with, don't forget to make it easy to open and distribute. File size is important, as is the media format.

If your viral video has been created for a particular type of software that not many people use, how will you get people to spread it like wildfire?

Also, if you've made a video the impact will be better if you send the clip as an attachment rather than stream it. It's cheaper and, if you're not hosting it, it's more viral, too.

Using Forums

Recently, forum marketing has been touted as a kind of free, organic, viral marketing.

But because so many marketers go into forums purely with the intention of marketing products or services, their actions and attitude unwittingly causes the exact opposite of the desired effect.

Forums aren't marketplaces but when used as such, the marketers' actions become offensive and will only inspire the wrath of fellow members and marketers, not to mention moderators who can ban them from the site with the click of their mouse.

In order to be effective, this kind of marketing carries a certain degree of commitment, responsibility and respect.

The first requirement is to take a personal interest in the main topic of the forum. Not only does that mean visiting it regularly, but it also means developing a good relationship with both other members and the moderators, as well as taking an active interest in helping others.

Of course, it also means abiding by and all rules that exist. By doing this, one can develop a reputation and, since it is human nature to work with a trusted colleague, business will naturally develop from this.

This type of marketing has already suffered some abuse and because of this, many forums have recently developed stringent rules designed to protect their members from abusive or overly-aggressive marketing tactics.

One forum grants .sig files only after a member has created one hundred valid posts and another has disallowed ads in sig files altogether.

Marketers must respect that the purpose of a forum is to be a platform to exchange ideas on a given topic. It is not there to advertise products and services.

By focusing on the topic and posting questions and answers, a marketer's reputation will grow and this creates the potential for sales naturally.

File Sharing And Viral Marketing

There are probably ten million people online, looking for downloads at any given time.

Of course, a lot of them could be looking for pornography or free software but still, reaching a minimum on a million people on any given day does offer some rather intriguing possibilities.

People like using file services to download music for two simple reasons, they're free, and there is an incredible selection. The fact is Pandora's Box has been opened.

In Napster's wake, other quasi-legal services quickly emerged… a lot of them. Even if they are closed, others will succeed them.

Major record companies would like to thing otherwise but they are never going to stop file sharing.

Net users are file sharers…plain and simple.

Long before the Internet came into being, people made cassette tapes of their favorite music for their friends…cd burners are so much easier and faster.

So how can you use this to help your viral marketing campaign along?

Think about this.

Once someone downloads your MP3 files and those files are available on that listener's hard drive, viral marketing begins. After two users start sharing your files, suddenly, your music is on the hard drive of a second computer…then a third… and on and on.

When users are searching and they find your music on a lot of different computers, they are more likely to download the files. It's just a matter of time before you'll find your files showing up in more and more places.

No matter what genre music you play…Rock and Roll, Country, Tejano, Mozart sonatas, Heavy Metal, of Brazilian Jazz, there is an audience for it somewhere.

In this new paradigm, you aren't hawking a product, you are offering free music via a medium that lets you be directly connected with your audience.

Using E-Mail to Achieve Objectives

Viral marketing is an integral part of a campaign strategy that is used to achieve objectives. It is not the objective itself.

If the main objective of an e-mail campaign is branding, in order to achieve greater branding success exposure you craft your message or offer in a way that it encourages pass-along.

Producing a message with a quality offer or an incentive for pass-along is what viral marketing is all about.

Just suggesting that e-mail recipients forward your message to their friends and relatives is not viral marketing.

A message at the bottom of your e-mail that reads "Feel free to forward this message to a friend" is nowhere close to viral marketing at its best.

On the other hand, if something worthy of sharing, such as a valuable discount, vital information, additional entries into a sweepstakes, an added discount or premium service, a joke/cartoon, or a hilarious video, is included in the e-mail, viral marketing happens naturally and quite successfully.

The bottom line is that your message must be perceived as having value. Relevant or timely information, research, or studies are all good examples of content that might be viewed as potential pass-along material.

Interactive content like a quiz or text can inspire forwarding, especially if it is fun. Personality tests, fitness quizzes, or compatibility questionnaires are all things that have

been passed on by many people many times because they are entertaining and entertainment has value.

A multimedia experience is always going to achieve some pass-along. Someone is always touting the benefits.

It is a bit more of a time and money investment but the messages have a great appeal and rich media has the advantage of being new. The tech factor alone is often enough for the message to be perceived as valuable.

Using Chat Rooms in Viral Marketing

Spamming chat rooms or instant messaging systems with undifferentiated marketing messages is certainly not a very good idea.

But if they are used the right way, these channels can be great to communicate with the market - especially to establish a dialogue with customers.

Have you ever been to a chat room and posted a message. If you have then you may learn some free web-advertising secrets on how to market your products and service in chat rooms. Chat rooms are usually broken into categories.

You will need to find the right chat room where your targeted audience would gather. If there isn't one, them you may need to create one.

It will be of no use to create one that is obviously for the sole purpose of selling your product or service.

Rather, it needs to attract people who would be interested in your product or service.

For example: If you sell garden products, your chat room should be on the subject of gardening and not the brand name of the products you sell.

Another way to use a chat room to promote your business is to include a chat room on your web site.

Host a free online seminar in your own chat room about a subject of your expertise. Use your chat room to meet with your current customers and answer any questions or address and problems they may have.

Regularly schedule free events in your chat room and be certain that your customers are made aware of when they will occur.

For example, you might have an expert in the field available to answer questions on a certain day and between certain hours.

You might, also, host other people's chat rooms as an expert yourself. You, of course, could charge for this but it might be wise to do it free to gain publicity.

Viral Marketing Example: The Subservient Chicken

Created for Miami Advertising Agency Crispin Porter and Bogusky by The Barbarian Group, the Subservient Chicken is a viral marketing promotion of Burger King's line of chicken sandwiches.

The campaign is based on a web site that features a person in a chicken costume. The actor performs a wide range of actions based on a user's input, showing pre-recorded footage and appearing like an interactive webcam. The takes literally the advertising slogan "Get chicken just the way you like it".

There are more than a hundred commands the chicken will respond to, including:

· 	Michael Jackson dance moves such as moonwalk
· 	River dance
· 	The elephant
· 	Lay an egg
· 	Walk like an Egyptian
· 	Yoga
· 	Rage
· 	Spank
· 	Taco Bell
· 	Fight

When told to do anything the Subservient Chicken thinks is offensive, like perform sex acts or take off his mask, the chicken walks up to the camera and shakes a scolding chicken finger in disappointment.

If he is told to east food from rival fast food places like McDonald's he approaches the camera and places his finger down his throat but when told to eat Burger King he has a more positive response.

The chicken responds to the command "smoke crack" by smoking but when told to "smoke a bong" he waggles his finger scoldingly.

Burger King's Chicken Fights campaign was recently introduced. The two cockfighting chicken characters are modeled off this chicken.

There seems to be no end to the variations on the theme from Burger King. There has also been a lot of criticism leveled at the chain about the Subservient Chicken but for now it looks like Burger Kind is crying all the way to the bank.

A successful viral campaign isn't always in good taste… maybe that's what makes them so tasty.

Successful Forum Viral Marketing

In order to be successful using forums to do viral marketing there are some things that are required.

Do Your Homework: Prior to joining any forum, you must do some research.

1. Join relevant forums that are in some way related to the promotion's primary sales market. For example, someone involved with a health related product, many types of forums could apply….everything from holistic medicine to stay-at-home moms.

2. Choose popular forums. There is no point in wasting your time and energy on forums that few members and few posts. Page raking and the amount of active members are two good ways to check for this.

3. Choose forums that allow sig tags. If it's possible read the rules before joining and pay attention to them. Your time is important, too. It is better to find out that a forum doesn't allow posts with sig tags before you go to the time and trouble of joining.

After You Have Joined: OK…you have chosen two or three forums that meet your requirements…now what?

1. Keep your sig tag short and update it regularly. The ideal thing is to limit yourself to one link, preferably to your main website.

2. Never create posts that are nothing more than an advertisement. This all but a universal rule and only displays the marketers lack of experience if he does so. At best this kind of post will be deleted by the monitors….at worst, it is grounds for being banned.

3. Work the room. Be an active member on the forum. Plan to spend at least an hour each day there and take the time to get to know the users. Take the time to introduce yourself with intelligent questions depending upon the forum's topic.

As a marketer becomes a regular member, they will hopefully develop a good reputation and without saying a word about their promotion, those who are interested in their product will approach them.

Start Viral Marketing Campaigns Using Ebooks

Now let's look at using an Ebook to start your viral marketing campaign.

First you create an Ebook (a really good one that has links to your website, or sales page, and affiliate links to products and services that you recommend), and you give it away to three people that you know.

Inside your book you encourage those three people to give your Ebook away to their friends and family.

Before you know it the Ebook is spreading across the Internet like wild fire.

Digital information duplicates easily and quickly so before you know it, thousands of people could be reading your free Ebook.

Make certain that you let people know that they have permission to forward the Ebook around the Internet.

When you create the Ebook, you have the right to give people certain rights. One of those rights could be that you allow them to give the book to other people. Make it clear that this book is free to give away.

You can write the Ebook yourself, use private label content or you can hire a ghostwriter to prepare the content.

There are a lot of ways to create an Ebook. Once you have your Ebook written, use software to create your Ebook.

TIP: You don't need to buy the expensive Adobe Acrobat Ebook software to create your .PDF Ebook. A copy of **eWriter Pro** will get you started fast. I have created this very own Ebook wih the simple and inexpensive software, and it's perfect to get your Ebook out quickly, even if you've never created an Ebook before.

Humor Turns E-Mail Viral

A study by Sharpe Partners, an interactive marketing agency, revealed that 89% of adult Internet users in America share content with others via e-mail.

This is excellent news for those companies who use self-propelling word-of-mouse" e-mail techniques to sell their products.

The study generated some interesting results regarding the type of content that is most often forwarded, as well. The most popular content is humorous material.

The second most popular category is news, followed by healthcare and medical information, religious and spiritual material, games, business and personal finance information and sports/hobbies… in that order.

So it is easy to see that humor is the best content for your viral e-mail campaign.

Cartoons, jokes and funny video clips are among the things that can be added to an e-mail to insure that it will go viral. People will want to pass along something that makes them laugh.

They are a lot more likely to hit the forward button and send your email to their friends and relatives if it is an "advertainment" rather than an advertisement.

Not along ago, about 35 million people got an e-mail containing a picture taken in Disneyland. It took a minute to see it but there was Donald Duck lying prone in front of the famous Cinderella Castle.

The title of the picture was "Bird Flu has hit Disneyland". It was a viral e-mail advertising Disneyland and used the edgy strategy of making light of what's serious… and it works.

I'd guess that most people who own a computer have seen that picture… and thus the advertisement for Disneyland.

The bird flu epidemic is newsworthy and has the potential to attract an enormous amount of attention to any brand that might, for whatever reason, associate itself with it.

Remember that people are much more likely to share a joke or a funny picture than anything else so you would be well advised to include humor in your e-mail campaign.

How to Get and Use E-Mail Addresses for Viral Advertising

Viral marketing has an array of possibilities and ways to achieve your overall goals.

However, just like everything else, preplanning and the right setup to create success are the things you will need to make it work for you and your e-business.

I highly recommend you to use a decent autoresponder system to send out your messages. **Aweber** is one of the best.

The first thing you want to be sure you don't do is get over-zealous.

The one thing you need to avoid at all costs is spamming. Spamming is still used widely, but with the government establishing more restrictions and fines you don't want this to be a problem for you.

The professional image of your site will also suffer if you send mail blatantly.

Spamming requires a database that contains a huge list of e-mail addresses set up so that the message can be delivered with one click.

The problem with it (aside from the governmental restrictions and associated fines) is that it irritates the recipients and kills the validity of your campaign, which in turn kills the factors that would motivate someone to refer your site.

You need to personalize by creating your website with personal appeal. You must see to it that your website makes your customers feel safe, secure and cared for.

E-mail is important, because it is going to be one of the most affordable ways to keep in touch with your customers.

The proper way to handle email permission is to first let your customer know that you will not transmit their e-mail addresses to third party companies. The next thing to do is to attach the need for their e-mail addresses to benefits they can receive.

For example: Coupons or discounts that are only available to members who receive e-mail notifications. With each e-mail you send the viral marketing effect takes place.

Houston Museum of Natural Science Went Viral

The Houston Museum of Natural Science (HMNS) was one chosen to showcase the world-famous Exhibition for the Lord of the Rings Trilogy.

HMNS quickly realized that while the exhibit was expected to generate a great deal of interest, it didn't have a lot of appeal for their core audience. The success of the exhibition, therefore, would rest in how it was marketed.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science quickly called in Spur Digital to help reach the targeted demographic audience and generate interest in the Exhibit. HMNS was, also, hoping to acquire new patrons and members to further their future revenue.

Spur digital worked with HMNS to identify the target market for the campaign and developed an integrated online media plan to reach those audiences.

The campaign featured an online contest that was marketed through targeted online media outlets including relevant Web sites, Search Engines and third party E-mail lists. Viral marketing was an important component of the campaign, so Spur developed an innovative strategy to get people to refer their friends.

Spur identified the target audience as males 18 to 34 years old who were fans of action and fantasy films, frequent video game players and movie renters, tech-savvy who generally didn't hang out at museums.

Based on this information, Spur chose search engine advertisements that would accompany specific search words, dedicated e-mail advertisements, sponsored e-mail advertisements, banner ads on web sites targeted toward the desired audience, and e-mails to the HMNS list.

Did it work? You bet! The results were excellent.

The impact of the viral marketing effort was astounding - over 23% of registrants came originated from the Tell-A-Friend feature.

The direct marketing efforts yielded impressive results as well. In total, the 12 week, locally-targeted online campaign yielded more than 2 million targeted impressions, 40,000 unique visits, almost 12,000 and 6,000 invitations sent by friends at a cost per action of less than $3.00.

These contributed to the record attendance of almost 100,000 over 3 months.

Getting a "Buzz" On

Viral marketing has matured a bit over the years. There seems to have been a shift to the web not just being seen by agencies and brands as another tick box for any ad campaign, which is significant enough, but now being the medium where a campaign is launched to create a buzz before it hits TV and print.

Even before a movie is released which used to be seen as the pre-launch buzz-generation activity. Big business "gets it".

Buzz works! It can work for small and start-up businesses, as well. The planning stage of a viral campaign will set out objectives and develop the viral theme for a buzz.

There are three core components to any viral campaign and businesses of any size can use them. They are:

1. The creative material: the viral agent that embodies the message you want to spread in a digital format (image, video, text, etc). The trick is to put together material that people will be eager to share with their family and friends and people are much more eager to share "advertainment" and advertisement.

2. Seeding: distributing and placing the agent online in places that provide the greatest potential spread. Direct viral material downloads or links on specialist viral third-party web sites in order to create awareness and spread before users get to the campaign destination site.

3. Tracking: Measuring the spread of the campaign to provide accountability and prove success. It is absolutely vital that you know what is or is not working. The only way to get that information is to track the results of your seeding.

Lessons have been learned, trends have been developed and there is definitely some science involved in creating a buzz successfully.

The buzz technique is here to stay and, if used strategically, it can make a difference to the success of your e-business.

Four Good Reasons to Use Viral Ebooks

It is a well known and widely accepted fact, that Ebooks….FREE Ebooks…are one of the best weapons in a viral marketing campaign arsenal. Here are four good reasons why this is true today and will continue to be true for the foreseeable future:

1. Ebooks are cheap to produce and don't take long to set up. If you have articles that you have already written about the subject you are promoting, you can simply combine these articles into an Ebook.

If, on the other hand, writing isn't your forte, you can use rebrandable Ebooks that have been produced by others.

Hint: I offer rebrandible Ebooks like this one in my **Info Products Vault** - for free!

You can also use your favorite search engine and do a web search for "rebrandable Ebooks".

You will get a lot of hits and have many to choose from. One way to distribute these Ebooks to visitors to your website is to give them as a free gift for subscribing to your newsletter. If your Ebook contains material that people will want to share with their friends and family, they will pass it along to them… they will pass it along to others…and you will make money.

2. Ebooks are capable of reaching a large audience. The only limiting factor is the enthusiasm or the participants.

Therefore, it is absolutely vital that your Ebook contain something that people will want to share like timely information or humor.

Remember that people like to know something that the rest of the world needs to know. They will pass along something that makes them look like they are in-the-know.

3. Ebooks are a way to sell other products other than the one you originally targeted. For example; if you are selling garden products, your customers could also be interesting in Ebooks about lawns, trees landscaping, etc.

4. Ebooks are effective in building your reputation. It is an implied recommendation if you give a quality Ebook and users willing pass on to others.

"Folksonomies" - a New Viral Marketing Tool

A new consumer phenomenon is called "tagging" or "folksonomies" (short for folks and taxonomy).

Tagging is powerful because consumers are creating an organizational structure for online content.

Folksonomies not only enable people to file away content under tags, but, even better, share it with others by filing it under a global taxonomy that they created.

Here's how tagging works. Using sites such as del.icio.us - a bookmark sharing site – and Flickr - a photo sharing site - consumers are collaborating on categorizing online content under certain keywords, or tags.

For instance, an individual can post photographs of their iPod on Flickr and file it under the tag "iPod."

These images are now not only visible under the individual user's iPod tag but also under the community iPod tag that displays all images consumers are generating and filing under the keyword.

Right now Flickr has more than 3,500 photos that are labeled "iPod."

Tagging is catching on because it is a natural complement to search. Type the word "blogs" into Google and it can't tell if you are searching for information about how to launch a blog, how to read blogs, or just what.

Large and small sites alike are already getting on to the folksonomy train. They are rolling out tag-like structures to help users more easily locate content that's relevant to them.

Although tags are far from perfect, marketers should, nevertheless, be using them to keep a finger on the pulse of the American public.

Start subscribing to RSS feeds to monitor how consumers are tagging information related to your product, service, company or space. These are living focus groups that are available for free, 24/7.

Folksonomy sites can be also be carefully used to unleash viral marketing campaigns - with a caveat. Marketers should be transparent in who they are, why they are posting the link/photos and avoid spamming the services.

B2B Marketers Do It, Too

They use viral marketing by e-mail as a marketing tool... what did you think I meant?

Viral marketing can work well for B2B providers, as long as the following is true:

1. The product or service has to add value for the sender, as well as, the receiver.

2. The offer has to be deliverable. You don't want to offer a product that you can't deliver if demand grows rapidly.

3. The offer has to be easily transferable to others. E-mail and Web pages provide the best medium to facilitate this.

4. The vest viral marketing campaigns use existing networks to move the message along.

The basis of viral marketing has been around for a long time. The idea is that you incite your customers or referral sources to pass on something about your business to their network of colleagues and friends.

Those that pass on your information get something in return. The something might be a gift or service related to your business.

Using e-mail makes it incredibly easy to pass information on to a friend or colleague, especially if it involves something fun or free.

With millions using the Internet worldwide, the potential for exponential growth is tremendous.

The great things about viral marketing are that it is free and works virtually by itself. Once you make an offer and provide the facility for referrals, viral marketing spreads like... well... a virus...but the good kind.

To implement viral marketing at your business; first, start with your customer base. Incite existing customers to refer new ones.

Second, go to your referral sources. Service providers, your outside network and colleagues can be encouraged to provide referrals that lead to business.

If your customers are stressed business owners, offer a reward that provides relaxation and leisure... like a weekend away.

6 Ideas for Viral Marketing

Here are six ideas to help you start your viral marketing campaign:

1. Purchase the branding rights to a viral Ebook. Allow people to give away your free Ebook to their visitors. Then, their visitors will also give it away. This will just continue to spread your ad all over the Internet.

2. If you have the ability to set up a forum or other bulletin board, you really have a great tool. Allow people to use your online discussion board for their own website. Some people don't have one. Just include your banner ad at the top of the board.

3. Do you have a knack for web design? Create some templates, graphics, etc. and upload them to your site. Then, allow people to give away your free web design graphics, fonts, templates, etc.

Just include your ad on them or require people to link directly to your web site. Make sure that you include a link back to your site in the copyright notice and require them to keep your copyright notice in tact.

4. Write an Ebook. Allow people to place an advertisement in your free Ebook if, in exchange, they give away the Ebook to their web visitors or E-zine subscribers.

5. Write articles that pertain to your product or service. Allow people to reprint your articles on their website, in their E-zine, newsletter, magazine or Ebooks. Include your resource box and the option for article reprints at the bottom of each article.

6. You can easily find products on the Internet that will sell you a license allowing you to distribute the product free of charge to other people. Look for those products that provide "branding rights".

That is where you can include your own name, website, and contact information.

Ok, that's it.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to read this Ebook.

If you use *any* of the mentioned techniques in this guide, you will see real results.

The formula is simple: the more viral marketing techniques you use, the more signups and sales you'll get!

To Your Viral Success,

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