INTERNET BUSINESS CONCEPTS

WEEK #7:

PROMOTING & GETTING VISIBILITY FOR YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS

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YOUR ONLINE DOORS ARE OPEN…WHERE ARE THE CUSTOMERS?

Building your website/online business was just the start. Now comes another hard part: attracting visibility & customers.

Online businesses approach this problem in different ways. We'll examine some of the more popular ones (and some of the more unusual ones.)

THE SEARCH ENGINES

We've already talked a bit about SEO & keyword searches.

- 10 years ago you needed to tell a search engine that your website existed (ping it). Now, they'll find out it's online.

- But, if you want to speed things up, Google "search engine submission"

- Still, I don't think this is something you need to worry that much about.

WHAT ABOUT BACKLINKS?

We've talked about this too & how important they are for SEO, right?

- By all means, try to get backlinks from websites that make sense to link to yours. (For example: an article about mortgages or houses links to a mortgage broker's website.)

- Should you pay for links? No. You're smarter than that.

A GOOD WAY TO TRY & GET LINKS

- Open up Excel.

- Go to Google and search for websites that TALK about your product or service (Example: if you sell women's shoes, find a blog/website about women's fashion, or better yet, shoes)

- Make note of the websites that seem like a good match for your site's subject matter.

- Contact the website & pitch them a story idea

- No response? Follow up. Rince. Repeat.

AN EXAMPLE QUERY:

Dear Owner of JustLadiesShoes.com,

Great site! I found it while doing research on my product line. Hey, I've got a question to ask you:

Would your readership be interested in <this product>? It appeals to people like also like <something on your website>. Plus, I'm a bit of an expert about it because <I make/sell/create this product>.

I know that you're busy, so thanks for your time. Let me know what you think of my idea!

ACTUAL EMAIL I RECEIVED:

Hi Patrick,

Hope you're well! I'm just writing to see if you would be interested in a review copy of our new book The Art and Making of The Peanuts Movie, which is out with Titan on October 27th.

In November 2015, Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the rest of the Peanuts gang make their big-screen debut, in state of the art 3D animation. Go behind the scenes for an in-depth look at the animated movie-making process, to see how the timeless Peanuts style has been lovingly translated for the big screen. Full of development art, Peanuts comic strip material, and production insight, this is a treat every Peanuts fan will treasure.

Let me know if this would interest you at all, and I'd be happy to send you a copy!

All the best,
Chris

BUT WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A PRODUCT OR SERVICE THAT I CAN GIVE AWAY FOR "FREE" EXPOSURE?

Alternative ideas:

- Writing guest blog posts – Identify a blog whose audience is beneficial to yours. Pitch some ideas for writing content.

- Interviews – Why not pitch "a day in the life of" someone in your industry and of interest to the site's readers?

- Think outside the box – Maybe you don't need to find "apples to apples" websites to approach. Maybe you need to pitch a tech blog, or an eComm site, or a gadget site, or a lifestyle blog….

CONTESTS & GIVEAWAYS:

People love free stuff:

- Approach online influencers in your niche – Pitch them the idea for a giveaway. In exchange, write about your business & give you a "follow" link.

- Spin around the idea of a contest – Why not give funds to a charity that aligns with your business?

- Social – Get people to tweet your link & a hashtag so you can track entries.

DO PRESS RELEASES STILL WORK?

Not really.

- Media outlets are deluged with PRs every day. Does your announcement make news or is different/unique?

- What about online PR sites? Expect to pay $125 - $250. You'll get 1 or 2 links from PR sites, that's all.

- Instead of paying for a PR, write an email to/tweet at a reporter. Still hard to flag their interest, but it's worked more often for me than sending out a PR.

INGREDIENTS OF A PRESS RELEASE

- Keep it to ONE page

- DATE at the top, followed by TITLE

- Stick to the BASIC FACTS

- Include a QUOTE from you (you're writing in 3rd person)

- At bottom: CONTACT INFO – website URL, email or phone number, Twitter handle

- You can always attach your PR to any email queries that you send off.

BUYING ONLINE ADVERTISING

- You can approach websites & buy advertising on them. Find out if they have a RATE CARD for advertising.

- The more targeted the website, usually the better chance of having the CLICK-THRUS convert.

- Costs: anywhere from $15 - $250 for a banner ad/month.

- BuySellAds, Adengage, AdShareMarket, many others.

- You can also contact the website's owner directly.

OTHER LOW COST METHODS

- **Forums:** Find message forums about your topic, or where your audience hangs out. Post & engage with people by contributing to the conversation. Leave a URL in your signature.

- **Twitter, Instagram & Pinterest:** Identify INFLUENCERS. Follow them. Engage by @, start a dialogue.

- **Newsletter Ads:** Ask site owners with large followers if they will send out an eblast/newsletter about your website/offering. Costs could be negotiated/bartered.

OTHER LOW COST METHODS

- **Facebook:** Find pages about your subject matter or where your audience has interest. Ask them for links to your website. Might be open for advertising/bartering deal.

- **Google AdWords:** Can usually get $100 - $300 in free ads. Be very careful to not go over this budget. Better conversions will happen through experience.

- **StumbleUpon:** Free to use, just select the field of interest that's applicable to your website's subject matter.

OTHER LOW COST METHODS

- Reddit: Find sub-reddit communities and engage with them. Be careful: this community is very anti-spamming. Add value before asking for anything in return.

- Slideshare: Free to use. Create your slideshow, upload it. Leave URLs to send people back to your site.

- Medium: Write an article for this high traffic website. The site gives no-follow links, but it's highly read.

CREATING VIRAL CONTENT

This can be a huge win for your online business – but it's difficult to do.

Places to visit to see online business owners & startups trying new things to attract eyeballs:

Product Hunt
Medium

GROWTH HACKING ... WAIT, WHAT?

Coined in 2011, it's a term used by startups to use sneaky ways to gain customers & audience rapidly.

Growth hacking can work, but it requires 3 things for you to do:

BE CREATIVE – try new ideas & generate more ALL THE TIME
BE ANALYTICAL – keep track of the results & compare them ALL THE TIME
BE PERSEVERANT – you'll fail more often than succeed

Growth hacking is a very big, wide subject. If you're interested in reading about some "hacks", check out Search Engine Journal's List of 100 Growth Hacks

MARKETING VS GROWTH HACKING

VIRAL LOOPS… WHAT ARE THEY?

This is a way that your business markets itself without you needing to do it. Essentially, your customers create new customers.

Online businesses & products that have very successful viral loops:

HOW VIRAL LOOPS EXPLODE YOUR VISIBILITY

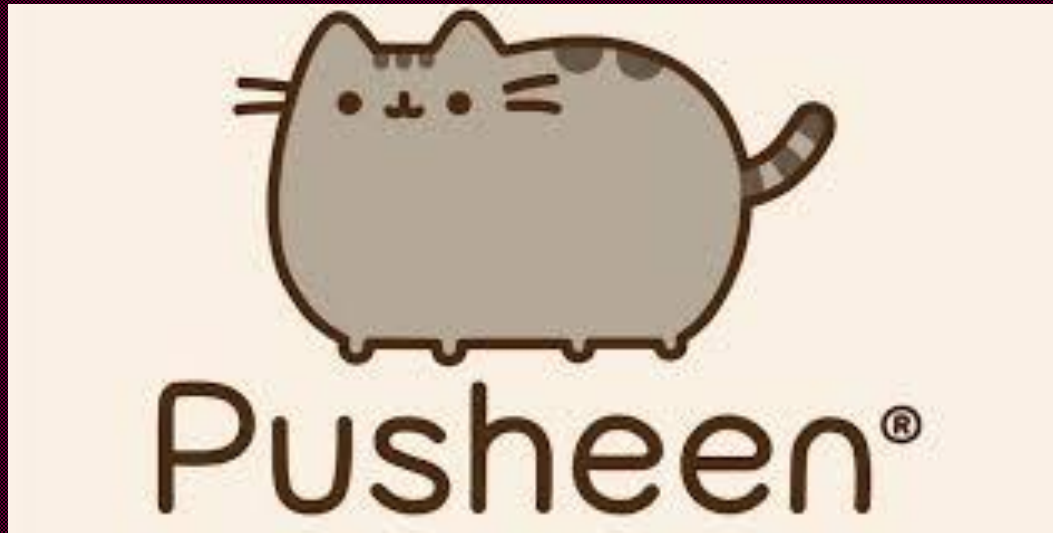You will want to develop a **high viral coefficient number**

Example: If you have a viral coefficient of 1, that means that on average, each customer gets one more person to also become a customer.

Essentially, your customers are spreading **word of mouth** about your business.

VIRAL LOOPS: YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A BIG BUSINESS TO BE A BIG SUCCESS

Case in point: Pusheen the Cat

PUSHEEN'S TIMELINE:

2010: Created by artist Claire Belton in a series of web comics

2011: Claire creates a Tumblr blog for Pusheen

Mid-2011: Her blog now has 10,000 followers
She starts selling handmade items.

2013: Facebook contacts Claire about creating digital stickers of the cat

2016: More than 40 Pusheen licenses exist

LESSONS LEARNED

Experiment with ideas: Pusheen was 1 character created in a series of online comics. People responded the most strongly to the cat.

Create products people want: Pusheen's creator created tshirts, stuffies & items to test audience demand further.

Keep looking for opportunities: Before Facebook came along, Pusheen was a successful small business. Facebook blew it up to a whole new level.

Never stop marketing: Always be building your brand.

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