

# Marketing online

## CASE STUDY

Small investment, big result: website rises to top of local search results with smart online marketing strategies

**SITUATION** KeyLargo Fitness and Tanning Club in Columbia, MO, had an outdated website that was difficult to edit. Acting primarily as an online brochure, the website was not attracting new customers, and it did not appear in the top 50 local search results.

By using just a few simple and smart online marketing strategies, Key Largo Fitness and Tanning Club quickly transformed its visibility and customer base, both online and offline.

To bring the website up to date, Key Largo tore it down to the studs and rebuilt it using WordPress.com Thesis theme — one widely

chosen by small businesses for its flexibility, ease and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) advantages. Once the website was live, Key Largo hired a programmer to optimize it for SEO and then launched an email newsletter campaign.

**RESULT** Within a month of its launch, the new website ranked first and second in two different types of Google search results. An immediate stream of new customer inquiries from Google and Yahoo searches yielded 261 new newsletter subscribers as well as a surge in foot traffic to the club — with steady growth since then.

Photo source: Veer® stock photos.

Photo does not represent KeyLargo Fitness and Tanning Club or any related associates or products.



# Know your marketing online options

Today, researching products and services online is a common part of the purchasing process for a great number of consumers — regardless of where the purchases are actually made. With nearly three quarters of our population online, it is critical that your business meet them there and deliver the information they are seeking. Consider these options:

- **Website.** The objective of any and all online marketing efforts should be an easy-to-find and easy-to-use website. Available 24/7, a website can help take your brand online, generate leads, sell products or services and recruit new employees. All other online marketing should direct customers and prospects to your website, where they can learn more, buy and take any other actions you'd like them to take.
- **Email marketing.** Inexpensively create and send highly targeted email campaigns and e-newsletters to people who have signed up to receive them. Share brief information that is of benefit to readers, such as updates on products and services, upcoming events, industry news and special offers. This can help reinforce your expertise and leadership in your field as you drive traffic to your website by giving people what they want — and then making it easy for them to buy.
- **Banner ads.** Appearing on websites where you expect your customers and prospects to visit, banner ads provide brief, promotional information about your offerings. When people click on the ads, this can help create name recognition for your business, drive traffic to your website and generate new business.
- **Consider search engine marketing (SEM).** Want to make sure your business information appears when specific search terms are used? Choose the word or phrase that best reflects what you offer, place an ad in a results page for this search term — one that is dedicated to paid listings — and then pay only when it is clicked. These are also called Pay Per Click (PPC) ads.
- **Use blogs to drive traffic and grow an audience.** Consumers expect fresh and engaging information on a regular basis. Because blogs make it easy to instantly publish and share content, videos, audio recordings, photos and links, they offer a simple way to satisfy your customers and prospects while reinforcing your expertise in your field. By using

industry keywords in as many posts as appropriate, you will also boost your search engine optimization (SEO) efforts, which can help your business become more visible in search engine results.

- **Offer webinars.** Demonstrate your products and services to potential clients through virtual, Web-based seminars. A webinar is a specific type of Web conference that is typically one-way from the speaker to the audience with limited audience interaction. A webinar can be collaborative and include polling and question-and-answer sessions to allow full participation between the audience and the presenter.

## How to get started

Any and all online marketing should begin with creating the most effective and visible website possible. Your budget and goals will determine how many bells and whistles you add to your website, as well as how much advertising and email marketing you use to drive viewers there. If you need to start basic, make a plan for how you will continue to develop your website, and related promotions, over time. Following is an overview of the basic building blocks to consider and tips for using them well.

### 1. Create a great website

- **Create a great user experience.** Website content should be relevant, the user experience should be engaging, and the sales experience friendly and simple.
- **Deliver content directly to readers who want it using Really Simple Syndication (RSS).** RSS is a technology that allows your readers to keep track of your website. By syndicating your website content, you'll give your readers the option of subscribing to receive an update every time you have new information or offers to share. The more they hear from you with information that is relevant to their needs, the more likely your readers are to stay engaged in your online community and eventually buy what you are offering.

- **Provide content sourced from service aggregators.** Want to regularly provide fresh content that is relevant to your audience but aren't able to write it all yourself? You can use a service aggregator such as allheadlinenews.com to provide content for your website from other online sources through an RSS feed.
- **Format for mobility.** Ensure that no viewer misses out on your online content by offering a mobility format that enables easy viewing on smartphones.
- **Input your website into online mapping websites.** Make it easy for customers to find your address, contact information, hours of operation and more by creating free business listings using tools such as Google Places.
- **Strive for search engine optimization (SEO).** The better you prepare your website with SEO, using industry keywords in your content and website code, the higher your pages will be ranked by websites like Google and the more likely your business name will come up in a search.
- **Add video content.** Video is a great way to engage online viewers and hold their attention. All you need is a handheld camcorder to create interactive product demos, provide client and prospect education, and make your business feel more personal and approachable to your customers and prospects.

## 2. Market by email

Email marketing may include direct marketing campaigns via email that are focused on creating a specific response or action and/or e-newsletters which focus more on sharing information and building credibility for your business. Both approaches to email marketing will benefit from the following strategies:

- **Subscribe to a service that makes email marketing easy.** Create an account with a service such as ConstantContact.com that lets you create customized lists, send fully designed and coded emails, and easily track campaign results. You can either provide the email marketing vendor you choose a list of customers or you can rent or buy from a third-party zip-code targeted email addresses.

# Does your online marketing:

- Reach the people who are seeking what you offer?
- Help people understand the purpose and value of your business?
- Inform and excite people about your products or services?
- Bolster your business' reputation?
- Boost sales?

If you answered "no" or "not sure" to any of these items, it's time to tap into the power of digital interaction — and use online marketing to help achieve your business goals.

## Related guides

Benefiting from Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Harnessing social media

Marketing your business offline

Measuring and monitoring marketing performance

For more detailed information about marketing online, please refer to the accompanying white paper on this topic.

- **Communicate regularly** (at the intervals you have promised) with the people who have signed up for your list about updates on products and services, upcoming events, industry news and special offers.
- **Be strategic.** Make email content brief, easy-to-read and benefit-focused for the end user. Calls to action should be clear and inspiring. There should always be at least one or two links to the place where action is easy to take — such as making a purchase at the shopping cart page of your website, or viewing the video product demo of your latest release.
- **Always give the option to unsubscribe.** Communication by email should be permission-based and respectful. Market to only the people who have invited you to communicate with them, and make sure they have the option to remove themselves from your list easily at any time. Any high-quality email marketing service will have the “unsubscribe” option built into their email templates.
- **Measure your results.** Using the simple reporting pages available through your email marketing service, evaluate each campaign to see which emails were most frequently opened, which links within those emails were clicked and evaluate how those actions track to purchases made or other actions taken on your website as a result. Over time, you’ll start to get a picture of which offers and marketing approaches are serving your business best.

### 3. Create online banners

- **Design and code a banner.** You can pay a designer to create one for you or use a number of websites to easily create an online banner at no cost.

**57% of Internet users worldwide said they are more apt to buy a product in a store after getting a marketing email.**

— *e-Dialog, “Global Perspectives: a Study of Consumer Attitudes to Digital Marketing” (2010) via EmailStatCenter.com*

- **Choose an affiliate program** that helps you match advertising with appropriate websites, place your banner(s) in those places, track results and coordinate payment. Affiliate programs are also called associate programs, reseller programs, commission or pay-per-sale, pay-per-lead, pay-per-click and click-through programs. If you set up an affiliate program, you would reward other website owners for referring customers to your website. You would only pay your affiliates for visitors that satisfied a requirement like clicking on a link, purchasing a product, filling out a survey, asking for more information or requesting a quote on a product.
- **Pay-per-click.** Generally, your business will pay a small amount (five to ten cents) each time someone clicks on your banner ad and is sent to your website.
- **Benefit from passive viewing.** Even when people are not choosing to click through to your website, they are likely to become more and more familiar with your business as they see your banner over time. This can help increase the odds of future visits to your website.
- **Use search engine marketing to boost visibility.** Optimizing your website and blog for SEO can go a long way toward ranking higher in search engine results. If you want even more control of your visibility in search engine results, you can pay to make sure your business information appears when specific search terms are used. By placing a pay-per-click ad in a results page dedicated to paid listings, you’ll ensure that your business name or offering is seen by people searching for the terms you have specified. And you’ll pay only for the number of times that people click on your ad and land at your website.

### 4. Build an audience and generate SEO with a blog

Websites are a great place to offer fresh information for your business community, but blogs are even easier — and are fast becoming a popular complement to the traditional website approach. Many businesses today are either building a blog into their website or building their websites entirely on a blog platform. Why? Because blogs are fast and easy to update with new content — and a wide range of interactive media — at any time. And this serves two critical purposes for any business.



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First, it can help keep readers engaged and interested in what you have to offer, constantly reminding them of the value of your business.

Second, a blog can go a long way toward boosting your search engine optimization (SEO) as you repeat key words and phrases (when appropriate) each time you post. A few popular blog platforms include Blogger ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)), TypePad ([www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com)) and WordPress ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)).

#### 5. Offer webinars

Demonstrate your products and services to potential clients through virtual, Web-based seminars.

#### 6. Measure your results

It is important to learn about the impact you are making with your digital marketing so you can continuously improve your results. Email marketing and blogging tools include simple, easy-to-use reporting statistics. Website traffic can be measured through reporting your ISP provides, an outside online advertising agency or a vendor such as statsaholic.com or google.com. And pay-per-click banners and ads will be reliably tracked by whoever you are purchasing them from, since reporting of click-throughs determines payment.

Use these to evaluate each campaign to see which calls to action were most taken, which links were clicked, and evaluate how those numbers track to purchases made or other actions taken on your website as a result. Over time, you'll start to get a picture of which offers and marketing approaches are serving your business best.

**67% of subscribers say they've purchased products offline as a direct result of receiving an email from a retail company.**

— Epsilon (2009)  
via EmailStatCenter.com

## Need more? We're with you.

Your community representative is always happy to help. You can count on them as a resource for compliance solutions to consider that fit your specific business needs, budget and level of expertise, as well as advice and resources on a range of small business technology issues.

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