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Using Forums in Viral Marketing

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.

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