



Book Do It Wrong Quickly

How the Web Changes the Old Marketing Rules

Mike Moran
IBM Press, 2007
[Listen now](#)

- [play](#)
- [pause](#)

00:00
00:00

Recommendation

Your company’s new Web site is a thing of beauty. Your creative department labored diligently to design a colorful, eye-catching site with fancy drop-down menus, sophisticated graphics and cool icons. You’re happy and your employees are justifiably proud of their work, but unless it generates business, your site is virtually worthless. Connecting with the consumer is the core of Internet marketing. In this age of multiple media outlets and short attention spans, says author Mike Moran, successful marketing depends on speed and refinement. Gone are the days when businesses could afford protracted strategy sessions and elaborate advertising campaigns. The Internet gives consumers infinite options, so your company must make an impression – right now. Moran covers a mind-boggling amount of territory, from detailed technical advice to general marketing principles. While acknowledging that the new Internet marketing rules can be intimidating, Moran’s message is clear: You may fail, but this new age offers unlimited opportunities to try until you get it right. *BooksInShort* believes you can avoid many Web marketing mistakes by heeding his sage advice.

Take-Aways

- The Web is the greatest direct-marketing phenomenon in history.
- Your online marketing must be “relevant, real and responsive.”
- Building relationships with your customers is your top priority. Listen to them carefully.
- Use metrics to measure your customers’ response to your Web site.
- Interpret your findings to target and cultivate your best customers.
- Don’t be afraid to “do it wrong quickly.” Web marketing is fluid and experiments are very instructive.
- Your Web pages must make an immediate impact since consumers decide in a split second whether to investigate a site.
- Deliberation and indecisiveness have no place in online marketing.
- If your managers and colleagues resist change, explain that online marketing is so flexible that no decision is irreversible.
- Every mistake moves you one step closer to success.

Summary

How the Internet Changes Basic Marketing Concepts

The Internet is having an enormous impact on marketing. In fact, marketers who cling to traditional strategies instead of embracing change and taking advantage of the online realm are sabotaging themselves. More and more people are turning to the Web as their primary source of information. Newspaper circulation has been in

decline for years. Regulations and technology impede phone solicitation. Cable and satellite TV have taken advertising dollars away from commercial television. Remote controls and TiVo devices allow viewers to fast forward commercials or skip them altogether.

“The Web is the biggest direct marketing opportunity to ever come along.”

People have shorter attention spans for ads because they are exposed to more sources of advertising. Thus marketers must work harder to get their messages across. Consumers surfing the Web can skip your ad easily. So rather than bombarding people with information, the challenge is to entice them to pay attention to your message. You want to be informative, reputable and approachable. Make no mistake – the consumer is in control now. Your customers want to know that you are responsive, and open to their suggestions and feedback. Consumer bloggers can give you positive or negative publicity. If your company runs afoul of the law or issues a faulty product, people will find out. The Web has leveled the playing field and rendered monopolies obsolete. Competition is fierce; companies that aren’t relevant to consumers are likely to fail.

“You don’t target markets anymore; you target individuals personally, using technology to do it.”

Speed is of the essence. Traditional advertising campaigns took weeks – or months – to design and execute, and frequently required several levels of executive approval. You couldn’t afford to make a mistake. Failed advertising was costly and making corrections required a cumbersome process of literally returning to the drawing board. But the Web has revolutionized all that. You can change copy or photos in minutes, or even take down a Web page and replace it. You can have a different home page every week, if you wish. You can test multiple alternatives by experimenting, measuring the results and learning from them. You don’t have to be perfect the first time or every time. The Web enables you to manipulate your message until it works.

Attention, Please

Bombarded by sales pitches, people can choose to ignore your ad easily. To hold their attention, base your online marketing and advertising on the “three Rs.” Make it:

1. **“Relevant”** – People use search engines to locate sites that relate specifically to their needs. Shoppers expect good prices, not promises and promotions. They want to do business “now,” –so you must deliver without delay.
2. **“Real”** – Consumers have become increasingly suspicious of hype. They are smarter, better informed and more cynical. They have little tolerance for dishonesty or unethical behavior. You must be authentic, accountable and receptive. Tell the truth and correct your mistakes. Credibility creates customer loyalty.
3. **“Responsive”** – You can’t ignore product complaints or bad publicity. Be proactive. Johnson & Johnson turned a potential PR disaster into a marketing triumph in the 1980s by recalling all Tylenol products after “tainted” pills killed several people. The firm was not at fault (someone had tampered with their medication), and it was not obliged to recall every pill, inspect its factories or issue new “tamper-resistant” packaging, but it did – and its bold actions impressed consumers.

Be Seen and Heard

Under the old marketing rules, a company such as Ford would roll out an ad campaign for a particular automobile, then sit back and evaluate the sales numbers. Such passivity doesn’t work these days. Whether you’re a giant corporation or a fledgling business, you must establish visibility. Your Web address (URL) should be on every piece of correspondence and stationery. Put it on signs outside your building. Promote your business via message boards and directories, and establish links that will drive traffic to your site. Make sure your URL isn’t long and cumbersome. You may need to launch an e-mail campaign or conduct other outreach activities to pique public curiosity, but once consumers visit your Web site, it must captivate them.

“Marketing changes whenever people change – which is often.”

Consumers enjoy Web sites that encourage participation. Invite them to blog, offer suggestions and review your products. Encourage your executives and front-line employees to be interactive. Consumers appreciate the personal touch and it helps them feel more vested in your organization.

Be conscious of establishing and protecting your reputation. Fake Web sites and misleading links can destroy your credibility. Spam almost never works since it’s synonymous with deceit and misrepresentation. Provide legitimate contact data. Listen to customers’ needs. If something isn’t working, try another tactic. “Doing it wrong quickly” requires experimentation and revision.

Measure for Measure

To count customer activity on your site accurately, you must develop the right metrics. That boils down to assessing three factors:

1. **“Impression”** – Did consumers view your marketing message? Did they see your banner ad, blog, e-mail or promotion?
2. **“Selection”** – Did consumers investigate further by clicking on your message?
3. **“Conversion”** – Did consumers react as you wanted by taking action, that is, by purchasing something, completing a survey or calling your office?

“Your marketing program is probably not in crisis at the moment – but it will be if you ignore the changes that the Internet has caused.”

If your primary objective is online sales, measuring results is relatively simple. But measuring your site’s effectiveness when your consumers learn about your product or service online, but buy offline is more challenging. You may want to ask customers to order over the phone using an exclusive number on your Web site. The number of calls you receive will indicate who visited your site and reacted. You also can offer a special coupon customers can print and use offline.

“Take a shot. That’s the essence of ‘do it wrong quickly’.”

You need software that tracks activity on your site, but interpreting the numbers is as important as collecting them. Work closely with the metrics analyst in your information technology department. Explain that you want impression, selection and conversion numbers, not just “clicks.” While such metrics aren’t totally foolproof,

they will ultimately help you govern your strategy.

“The Web allows an accelerated pace of experimentation.”

As your online presence grows, you’ll need increasingly sophisticated metrics, but certain simple tests are easy to execute. If you have two designs for a banner ad, run one version for a week, then switch to the other. Determine which one generates the most traffic. Don’t get bogged down with testing, though. Move quickly. Be daring. Take chances. Make mistakes. History’s greatest inventors believed that every failure moved them one step closer to success.

Make a Good Impression

Your home, or landing, page must make an immediate, attractive impression. Consumers decide in a split second whether to click deeper into a site. Make it simple and intuitive for customers to navigate. Your site should be user-friendly, that is “straightforward, predictable and unremarkable.” Innovation only works if it enhances the customer’s experience. Consider these design elements:

- **Visual** – Your use of color, white space, pictures and fonts set the general tone. Do you want to be serious or playful? Vivid colors and an unconventional typeface probably won’t work for a funeral home. But, vibrant colors and exciting graphics might capture the fun mood of a water park.
- **Navigation** – Customers do not want to embark on a treasure hunt. They want a trouble-free experience and instant information. People who navigate your site should feel that they are following a logical pattern. The key is getting them to the next page. Give people a reliable way to contact you with problems or questions.
- **Copy** – Like a newspaper story, your written content must be concise, understandable and error-free. Avoid long, gray type blocks. Break your copy up with paragraphs and subheads. Experiment with highlighted text. Use bullet points and subheads.

“The project doesn’t end when you launch. In many ways, that’s when it begins. Launch is not the finish line – it’s the starting line.”

Successful businesses depend on repeat customers. Your marketing efforts must target the right audience so you can cultivate a following and develop a loyal consumer base. To identify your best patrons, track the three metrics that make up the “RFM rating:”

- **“Recency”** – Consumers who recently purchased your product, asked you for more information or navigated your Web site are most likely to repeat their actions.
- **“Frequency”** – The person who visited your site for four consecutive days is probably going to return tomorrow. The customer who made four purchases last month is likely to buy something this month.
- **“Monetary”** – Your biggest buyers will tend to repurchase. The customer who invests in one of your premium services will visit your Web site again and again.

“If your customers find your pages easy to scan to find what they are looking for, it’s in part because your designer thought through how that page should be laid out and how to visually separate its parts.”

While these indicators do not always play out, RFM is a solid formula for targeting prime customers and trying to create an experience for them. For instance, if they provide e-mail addresses, you can send special offers.

The Pace of Change

Online marketing has numerous variables and the landscape changes constantly. Determining with complete certainty what strategies will succeed is impossible. Until you get your Web site online, you don’t know if it will resonate with customers. But you’re guaranteed to fail if you sit on the sidelines. Start somewhere. You’ll have ample opportunity to adjust, fiddle, fine-tune, revamp and revise. Do-overs are expected.

“Make every conversation the beginning of a relationship instead of just a quick sale.”

If you don’t have a Web site, begin by starting a blog. Then, when you’re ready to launch a site, find a knowledgeable, affordable specialist. Don’t feel compelled to hire an expensive, top-of-the-line professional. To improve an existing site, change specific pieces instead of undertaking a costly redesign. Measure the result of each change and react accordingly. If you alter the background color on your home page and your customers react negatively, switch back.

“Blogs are more credible than press releases in part because your customers can comment on what you say, so that keeps you honest.”

Most people are uncomfortable with change, particularly when things appear to be running smoothly. Many companies value quiet consistency and steady performance. Often, decision makers are reluctant to act quickly. They don’t like pressure and would rather discuss and deliberate. In online marketing, though, that conservative approach can knock your company off the pace. Help hesitant colleagues understand that no online marketing decision is irreversible, Web sites are fluid, and experimentation with new ideas – or reworked old ideas – is worthwhile.

“Some people – maybe even you – are more comfortable with deliberation. But it’s important in the world of the Internet that you make choices as quickly as you can.”

If the idea of remaking your Web site seems overwhelming, break it down into smaller tasks. Change can be incremental. Look at one page at a time. Your decisions will add up quickly to give you a rewarding result. Don’t allow fear to block you. Surprisingly, many successful entrepreneurs have self-confidence issues. But they take risks anyway – and are willing to make mistakes – because the payoffs can be enormous. With online marketing, not changing puts you at greater risk.

“People don’t always follow the person who is the boss, but often the person they do follow becomes the new boss.”

One of the biggest roadblocks to innovation is convincing others to join you. Unless you’re a one-person operation, successful change requires the help of your bosses and co-workers. Whether your company is a family shop or a huge corporation, begin the process of innovative marketing by identifying pivotal decision makers who

are receptive to change. Pick one issue (fewer consumers are clicking onto your banner ads, for instance) and ask if you can test it. Hopefully, you'll discover the problem and more people will click on the ads. Then you can share your success to help bring about a culture of change.

About the Author

Mike Moran, co-author of *Search Engine Marketing, Inc.*, has worked on the Web since its earliest days, in both marketing and technical roles, including eight years on IBM's customer-facing Web site.
