

by Jay Conrad Levinson

The truth about marketing online is that it doesn't do a thing for you unless you understand marketing. The key to success online is to know marketing.

I am dazzled with the opportunity to market products or services online, but I realize that marketing online is only utilizing one of the weapons of guerrilla marketing. Unless it's combined with other weapons, it's going to be a techno-loser for you.

Your site must be promoted all over the place -- in the websites of others, in the mass media, in all contacts you have with others. It belongs in all your ads -- print and electronic. It should be on your stationery, business cards, envelopes, invoices, catalogs, postcards and in all directories. Include it in your newsletters, on all fliers, even in your marketing-on-hold message, in your voice-mail greeting, and on signs if you have a store or office that people visit.

If your company hasn't done much advertising, it's a good idea to advertise your Website to let the world know that they can find you online now.

Once you've got your site up and running on the Web, remember that cable modems are still not yet with us, and even though ISDN lines are becoming more popular for high speed transmission of data, people just plain hate to wait, so don't make them wait for your graphics, glitz, glamour, animation, Java or audio. The fact is that many Web users now know how to block advertising banners and turn off their computer graphics.

If your Website is new, announce it proudly to your customers and to targeted prospects. You should even consider a special mailer heralding your new site. But never do this unless your Website is up and running. It's bad PR to promote a site that's still under construction.

Think of your Website not as a thing but as a session. Every session should be different. Every session should offer abundant interactivity. Every session should be directed right at your target audience. Be certain that your Website contents connects right up to your marketing theme. Recognize that your site can serve as the voice of your company as well as a conduit for individual and extremely personalized service. Think of your business as a department store and your website as the display windows. Put new things in them constantly to motivate people to come back again and again.

Make your site simple, straightforward and easy to explore. Although I'm all for linking with many others, be careful you don't have layers and layers of links to woo people away from you. If you have a lot of text, break it up with lots of subheads. Keep your paragraphs short.

Create an Internet tip sheet for your prospects and customers. Because only a small portion of the planet is Internet savvy, there's a good chance your prospects and clients know little of the world online. Your tip sheet, mailed or put near your cash register, lets people know the basics

of being online and offers helpful information. Of course, it should also have an illustration of your site and your Web address, too.

Not linking is not thinking. Referrals are the lifeblood of many small businesses, and links are like referrals. The idea is to link with other sites of businesses that share your standards for quality and service as well as having prospects similar to yours.

On your Website, say the words, "Make this Website a bookmark." Then get it listed all over creation by submitting your Website information to other sites that will list your site for free in numerous search engines and directories: www.submit-it.com , www.netcreations.com/postmaster , and www.mgroup.com . If you pay a nominal charge, you can get your site listed in over 100 directories and search engines by contacting AAA Internet Promotions at www.websitepromote.com .

To encourage regular visits to your site, keep the content fresh, promise new and exciting things, then live up to your promises. Ask people to e-mail you, make it very easy, then respond lightning fast to those who contact you. Slow response time has murdered many an online marketer. Speed is of the essence, even on the Internet.

Ever consider giving away free mousepads or screensavers? When you're got a site, you should consider it. And be sure to put your Website address on whatever you give away.

Guerrillas spend at least an hour a week surfing the Web simply to get good ideas or discover horrid ideas that others are using. They also manage to locate several sites that will happily link to them. They get to find out what turns them on and what turns them off. The online world is a brand new world and it's just in the process of being discovered. Don't wait for others to make all the discoveries. Make a few yourself, as Isabella may or may not have told Christopher Columbus.

If you're networking online, share your Website address with your networkers. Specialized newsgroups and forums can provide a ready-made audience for your products and services. As you converse one-on-one via e-mail, make sure you attach a four-line Internet signature that includes your Website as well as your phone, fax and e-mail address. Always remember that the online market is open 24 hours a day. As you manage your employees or deal with customers in person, it's easy to forget that customers may also be waiting on the other side of your computer screen. Discipline yourself to monitor your online presence regularly. Your online customers and prospects expect speedy results, and you must be prepared to oblige them. Follow-up and consistency are even more important than they are when you're selling in person.

It's a whole new world online and the people who will thrive in it are those who pay close attention, who are constantly learning, who are always improving, and who are wise in the ways of marketing. Fifty million people are online but you'll be smart to remember that

guerrillas deal with them one at a time.