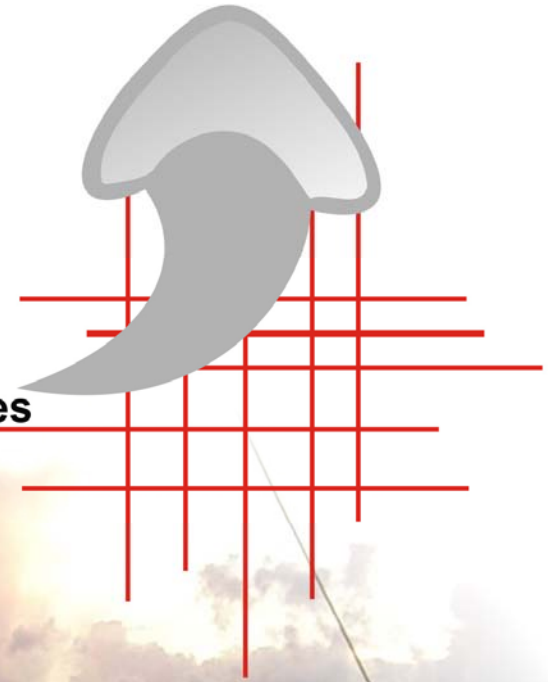


2010 *Recession* MARKETING Blueprint

Buoy Your Business Through Tough Times
With a Roadmap that Drives New Leads and Sales



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INTRODUCTION

It is beyond dispute that the current economic recession has taken its toll. Even still many companies are thriving...how does this happen? This special report for Gainesville area small businesses will outline how you can leverage the tremendous power of the internet to sell more products, generate more leads and increase your profits - even during unstable economic conditions.

Impact of Recession on Small Businesses Strategy

The present economic recession is bad. Tightening our belts is mandatory and when the economy is choking down your customer base the initial reaction of many businesses is to scream "**DOWNSIZE!**" It's easy to see why - "recession depression" is being felt by the entire world. Expenses like gas and other commodities are up while lending and credit are down.

More importantly, there are fewer new customers, especially for small businesses. Retail customers are buying less and are hunting for bargains. Business purchasing managers are dealing with smaller budgets by changing their buying habits. Studies show that they are gathering a lot of information on you, your prices and your competitors before your sales team ever know they are interested. A MarketingSherpa survey from their *Business Technology Benchmark Guide 2008* stated that **44% of decision makers use ONLINE COMMUNITIES** to research products and services compared to 40% who stated that they used a vendor's sales rep.

We have to adapt in order to grow. Changes are mandatory not only to survive the recession, but to create **stronger business performance** so that when the tides turn you are prepared to capitalize. This is true whether you are a 5,000 employee Bio-Tech company or a 2 person Commercial Landscaping team. Always remember, recession is much more than a threat...it's also an opportunity to grow your business!

Explosive Growth Through Online Marketing

"Cut Costs!" –This is the business owner's first reaction. Marketing is widely considered "discretionary spending" and is often one of the first budgetary line items that hit the chopping block. But... think about it: **A recession is the worst time to pull back marketing efforts.**

Owners that push the marketing "pedal to the metal", especially during the tough times, are often the ones positioned to thrive when the economy improves.

To beat the recession, **you need a clear recession marketing plan.** This Blueprint will help.



Now here are a few things that **you won't need**:

1. A Big Marketing Budget - with the right tools, you can get a whole lot accomplished for free or at little expense.
2. A Fancy website with all the bells and whistles - see #1 above
3. Marketing programs that are hard or impossible to measure - billboards, radio, yellow pages, etc. might be a perfect fit for some businesses but if you can't measure your return-on-investment (ROI) then forget about them
4. A fancy degree in web design or programming - most small businesses can get started with limited knowledge of the internet. What you **NEED** to get a grip on is **HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS THINK!**

Effective marketing is even more powerful today and here is why I say that: Your competitors, at least some of them, are probably in the "knee jerk" cost cutting state right now! As they free up potential marketing channels, you have an opportunity to explode your business without much of the "noise" that was present when your market was in high growth phase. **YOU** will be visible, attractive and gaining market share while your competitors are cutting costs.

The 3 Big Benefits of Online Marketing

Despite bankruptcies, foreclosures, layoffs, bailouts and a stagnant stock market, internet marketers are reaping big benefits by turning profits quickly and without much of the big media expense. Marketing your business online gives you three big benefits that truly change the game:

1. **Your Sales Can Grow Quickly.** Do you need new leads ASAP? Many marketing opportunities can be activated quickly and you can literally generate sales leads or new website visitors within 48 hours.
2. **You Can Track Every Penny.** Most online activity is measurable. Say "goodbye" to the old days when you had that sick feeling in your stomach as you reviewed your annual marketing costs and wondered "What did we ever get from any of this?" Within minutes you can track exactly how many visitors saw your products or services, who purchased and where those sales came from. Just as importantly, you have a clear picture of how much you spent for those sales.
3. **Your Playing Field has Been Leveled.** Author Thomas Friedman in his international bestselling book *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* discusses this concept at great length. Companies of any size can leverage the power of the internet to compete for customers all over the world. If you make a better saltwater fly fishing reel out of your small shop here in Gainesville, you can compete with companies like Penn and Shimano for customers all over the world. Fifteen years ago, those same fishermen would never have known your company existed.



SO...let's get to the good stuff. Here's your Blue Print:



STEP 1: Traffic Generation

To build your brand and generate new leads and sales it's vital to get visitors to your business website and/or blog. You have a number of tactics to help you and we will start with the most important: Search Engine Optimization. Why? Because visitors from organic search listings often have a higher lifetime value...much higher than other traffic sources.



Tactic #1 - Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization is how you tweak, change, and enhance various pages of your website to improve your search positioning. And improving your positioning is truly the big key here. Research and eye-mapping studies show that people that scan search engines generally look from top to bottom and left to right, similar to reading a book or magazine. *This is why it's so powerful to have your website listed as close to the top as possible in these searches.*

Google is the undisputed leader of the search engines... it controls nearly 70% of the market. Fittingly, it should be the focal point of your SEO strategy.

Here are recent statistics as provided by www.seomoz.org on search engine providers:


Top 10 Search Providers for December 2009, Ranked by Searches (U.S.)			
Rank	Provider	Searches	Share of Searches
	All Search	9,945,576	100.00%
1	Google Search	6,697,223	67.30%
2	Yahoo! Search	1,434,866	14.40%
3	MSN/Bing Search	986,247	9.90%
4	AOL Search	247,421	2.50%
5	Ask.com Search	168,674	1.70%
6	My Web Search	99,474	1.00%
7	Comcast Search	50,325	0.50%
8	NexTag Search	41,393	0.40%
9	BizRate Search	31,612	0.30%
10	Yellow Pages Search	27,914	0.30%

What You Need to Know: If your website isn't optimized for **Google** searches then you could be missing your customers!

So how do you optimize your site? Generally speaking, optimization for search engines is broken down into two key areas:

1. **On page Optimization** – the tweaks you make to your website's html, the written content, the links and even your images.
2. **Off page Optimization** – this is where most of your SEO factors come from. Google is constantly adjusting their search algorithm to make sure they provide the highest quality search results. Currently they place a premium value on INBOUND LINKS. Both the quality and the quantity of these links are important. The more inbound links a website has the more authoritative and relevant it appears to Google.

Note: for FREE tutorials on how to optimize your website visit our website here: www.gainesville-marketing.com/free-tips



There is a very important PRELIMINARY step before starting any SEO and that is the actual **keyword research**. You must have an understanding of the keywords that your customers will be searching for.

There are many tools that you can use for keyword research. For the sake of simplicity I recommend starting with the [Google Keyword Tool](#). This powerful freebie will give you insight into how many people are searching for your key terms and what synonyms you might consider. It also provides valuable information on how competitive the advertising landscape is for your keywords.

Tactic #2 – Pay-Per-Click Advertising

Most business owners I talk to break out in sweats at the mention of PPC advertising. I get questions like:

“Can’t you lose a TON of money with PPC advertising?”

“Isn’t it easy for your competitors to cheat you and click on your ads?”

“What if people from other countries or states click on my ads? I only serve the local community?”

Obviously, **there is a lot of confusion about PPC advertising** - savvy marketers can take advantage of this fact! PPC advertising, like any other form of advertising, can be lucrative if done right.

What You Need to Know: it’s important for each business owner to have a strong understanding of how much they can afford to pay for each new lead or sale. If you need help figuring out how to determine this all important number, [contact me](#) and I will help you using a simple formula.

Google again leads the pack when it comes to PPC advertising opportunities. A whopping 95% of Google’s profits come from **Adwords**, their paid advertising program. This is why Google provides you, the advertiser, with powerful tools to help you turn your ads into new customers and generate more profits.



Tactic #3– Social Media

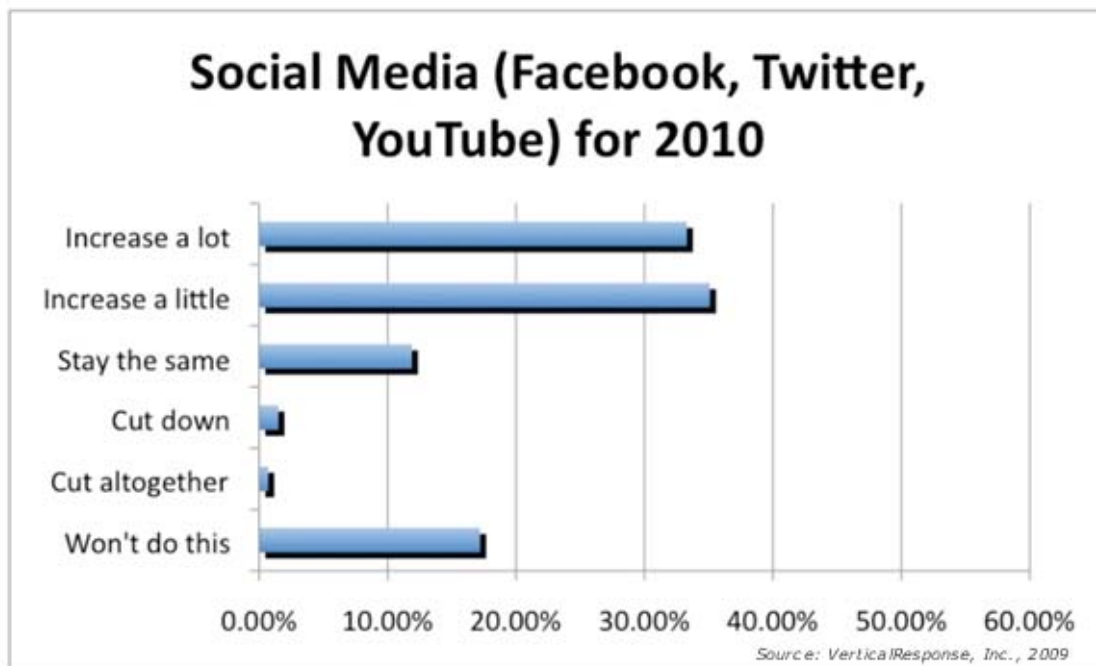
Social Media is a big term but its essence is simply **USER Generated Content**. So, any platform that helps you generate and exchange content can be considered social media. Some of the most popular platforms are:

- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Flickr



Blogging is also a powerful form of social media and can become a MASSIVE traffic source. Tools such as the word press blog platform make it easy to setup a blog and establish your “brand”.

Recent research by Vertical Response Inc., a leading provider of email marketing solutions, indicated that small businesses plan on increasing their social media budgets in 2010:



The key to effectively using any form of social media is to **PROVIDE VALUE**. If your blog posts, YouTube videos or twitter “tweets” provide your customer niche with value then they will tune in, subscribe and follow you.

What You Need to Know: all forms of social media can and should be linked back to your website. You can drive explosive traffic this way.



STEP 2: List Building

List Building is the process of acquiring email addresses, names and other customer information for follow up marketing. This is vitally important for both B2B companies as well as E-commerce. While list building can also be applied to blog readership and other forms of social media, I will be focusing specifically on email lists.

If you are trying to sell products or services to another organization, how long is your sales cycle?

3 months? 6 months? 18 months?

By constantly focusing on growing your email lists and then segmenting those lists, you create a valuable opportunity to present content throughout that sales cycle that **CONNECTS** with prospects and customers.


How does this apply to e-commerce companies with short sales cycles?

Here is an example of how an e-commerce company might use their email list to drive targeted sales:

Todd visits your pet supply website where he reads about your monthly e-newsletter that promises money-saving discounts as well as pet ownership tips and stories from customers. He signs up. Three months later, you offer a free report to this newsletter list entitled "*The Aquarium Owner's Handbook: Tips for Healthier, Happier Fish*". You notice that Todd downloads the guide. He also clicks on the "new aquariums" menu link in your newsletter which you know features the most recent aquariums that have been added to your website catalog.

Armed with this information, you can send a targeted promotional offer to Todd that resonates with HIS interest – fish. You can save the special offers on flea medication or catnip for another customer list.

By building lists, you have the opportunity to take a one-time website visitor and turn them into someone that visits your website hundreds or even thousands of times. **Each time they visit, it is a vote for the authority and value they give your organization.**



The very same research by Vertical Response Inc., mentioned above for social media also concluded that 74% of small businesses plan to increase their email marketing expenditures in 2010. This directly correlates to the power of list building – email marketing provides tremendous ROI!

So HOW do you effectively build lists that will convert to new customers? For the sake of brevity, I will focus on two main factors for effective list building:

Tactic #1 – Offer Amazing Value

Today's internet users are a savvy bunch and they are increasingly aware that they have many options to choose from, regardless of the products or services. Every single one of your website visitors has value and that value increases **significantly** when they raise their hand and say "COMMUNICATE WITH ME!"

The key to effectively converting your site visitors depends on how well your INCENTIVES resonate with them. If you can answer a question, solve a problem or provide an education resource then you have a real opportunity to begin building lists of targeted leads or prospects. Here are some examples of incentives that I have been successful with:

- Contests – "join our mailing list for a chance to win XYZ product"
- Free Reports, Guides & White Papers
- Free Services – free consultations, analysis or problem "fixes"
- Webinars – live teaching sessions often appeal to people much more than reports or white papers.

What You Need to Know: Building a profile of your "Ideal Customer" is critical. Take time to research your ideal customer – dig down deep and develop an understanding of the emotional motivators that are driving them to search for your products or services. Armed with that knowledge, you will create powerful incentives that will convert anonymous website visitors to email subscribers.

Tactic #2 – Optimize Your Offer Pages

I have seen many offers with strong incentives but the offer page itself was weak and did a poor job of signing up the site visitors who were interested. How can you avoid this problem?

First, you need to know how to measure conversion % and carefully track it over time. Conversion % is measured by simply dividing the # of new names added to your list by the total number of visitors to your offer page. Multiply this number by 100 and you have your conversion %.



Here is an example:

Key Metrics for Conversion	Jan	Feb	Mar	April
# of unique visitors	1100	1179	1138	1432
# of new subscribers	39	57	66	89
conversion %	3.55%	4.83%	5.80%	6.22%

As you can see, this particular offer page is continuously improving which means that changes made to the “control” or original offer did help.*

* *note: this isn't always the case, sometimes your original offer page will outperform new versions that you test!*

“**Conversion occurs in the mind of the visitor**” is a well used axiom in internet marketing circles. Your offer pages AND your incentives must be strong enough to overcome the **anxiety, fear and worry** that people experience when you ask them for their personal information. Even the smallest one-field form will cause anxiety. If your incentives don't outweigh that anxiety on your visitor's “mental scales” then your offer pages simply won't convert.

Luckily we have many tools that can help us overcome fear and anxiety. Make it a point to ensure that your offer pages clearly articulate the value of your incentive. Make sure that there is NO confusion caused by the statements made on the pages that led your visitors to the offer page.

What You Need to Know: Offer (or Landing) page optimization gives you a huge return for your investment. I have free landing page optimization tutorials available here: www.gainesville-marketing.com/free-marketing-help that will help you create offer pages that convert well.



STEP 3: Retention and Lead Nurturing

How do you build your BRAND? How do you build TRUST?

One way is by helping buyers in the early stage of the buying cycle with their research. This makes you a trusted advisor and your daily, weekly or monthly e-mails or blog posts a valuable resource. This in turn puts your company in a position of “thought leadership” and increases the power of future communications.

Stepping out into a position of thought leadership puts your company into the limelight and gives potential customers an opportunity to become familiar with you. Like any relationship, this familiarity will eventually build trust.

I am going to touch on two separate topics here and I will start by defining each:


Retention: is defined here as “the condition of keeping something”. List retention is a valuable metric because the longer someone subscribes to your email newsletter or blog speaks to the value of your content. Strong retention is an indication that the reader trusts you.

Lead Nurturing: my friend Brian Carroll wrote the book “*Lead Generation for the Complex Sale*”. I love his definition of lead nurturing as “having **consistent** and **meaningful communications** with viable customers regardless of their time to purchase”.

Important Note: When establishing trust, credibility and thought leadership, make it PERSONAL. Tie your lead nurturing efforts into one another and make them flow in the same way that your sales cycle flows. Avoid herky-jerky, confusing communications that are all over the place. Avoid sending the same offers multiple times as you can erode confidence that your email is indeed valuable.

Your e-newsletter is a valuable retention tool. Focusing on key areas of interest, current and relevant events and tips that your readers can use are all great examples of content that succeeds in email marketing. As you are building out e-news content, put yourself in your subscriber’s shoes:

- What are they most concerned about?
- What problems are they facing?
- How do their problems tie into your products or services?



Think about how YOU check your email. What is your attitude as you quickly scan your inbox? How much time do you generally give an email before you hit the “delete” button? Generally speaking, you want to create a subject line and email header that will grab your readers’ attention within 5-8 seconds. That’s not a lot of time!

You have to quickly and clearly show your readers the value of your email. Take the time to provide tremendous value in every email. Over time the trust you build will bear fruit for your business in the form of new sales, repeat customers and increased up sells/cross sells.

Lead Nurturing extends well beyond the email box. As prospects join your email list and reply to specific articles or offerings you present, you can begin to build an understanding of where they are in the sales cycle. You can then begin to offer specific pieces of information designed to help move them down your sales funnel.

Here are a few examples:

1. Email auto responders – auto responders are simply a triggered set of pre-written email messages that you can use to continuously nurture leads. An example would be a music store that used a weekly “guitar lessons for beginners” auto responder to build interest in its own personal guitar-coaching program.
2. 3rd Party Information – show your prospects that you have a grasp of your industry and their needs by sharing any research that might pertain to their decision making process. This qualifies you as someone to trust and really opens up an opportunity for a personal touch when this type of information is shared directly.
3. Webinars – are powerful in that often times they draw decision makers over influencers and therefore give you a stronger opportunity to move the prospects through the sales cycle. Featuring industry analysts or experts helps establish the credibility of your brand and will help ensure strong registration numbers.
4. Outbound Calls – as these prospects continue to engage, you can reach out to them and deepen the relationship by answering any questions related to recently read or viewed content. This illustrates a level of personalization and helps move the prospect through the sales cycle.

What You Need to Know: Every single touch is an important opportunity to build your brand and establish trust! Take the time to think carefully about how you can segment your email lists, track their activity and deliver content that they find extremely valuable.



Recession Marketing Blueprint - Summary

Now is the time to position your business for growth and increased profitability.

1. **Traffic Generation**
2. **List Building**
3. **Retention and Lead Nurturing**

These three powerful strategies can literally buoy your business through the toughest of times. And, when the market rebounds, they can ensure that your brand is positioned for growth and dominance.

While there are many tactics and specific tools that were not mentioned, a little research will go along way as you develop your internet marketing. My team and I are passionate about seeing small businesses thrive – don't hesitate to contact me with questions. You can email me personally at:

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or call my direct line **352.234.4372**

I look forward to helping you achieve your goals.

About the Author:

*Herb Jones is the founder of **Online Potential inc.** a Gainesville, FL based Internet marketing group focused on lead generation and optimizing ROI. He has over 13 years of “bleeding edge” experience with companies such as MarketingSherpa.com, MarketingExperiments.com, MojoInteractive.com and various internet startups. He is passionate about helping business owners harness the power of the internet to increase profitability and achieve their personal growth goals.*