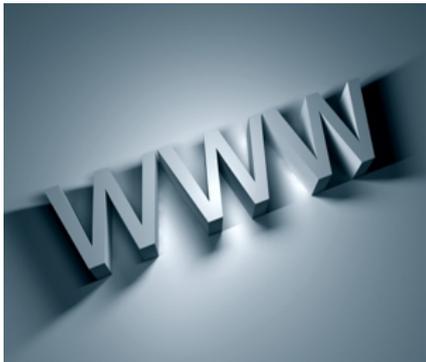


## The 'Net Effect' of Advertising

Written by Ambika Indira

Tuesday, 17 August 2010 12:36 -

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These days when people watch a nice movie, eat out at a fine restaurant, or buy something cool, they jump on to Facebook, Twitter or any such social networking sites and post their reviews to tell their friends and relatives how much they liked the product and services. This is the new wave 'word of mouth' advertising that can do wonders to your business.

Through updates and reviews, your patrons can give your brand greater exposure. This kind of exposure is valuable to small business precisely because of two reasons:

- 1) It's cheaper
- 2) People are hearing about your business from a trusted source.

If your patrons can help you create a buzz about your brand just through updates and reviews, why not use social media to advertise your products and services? Though many online marketing and media professionals have differing opinions about social media, there is no denying that social media websites have made huge strides on the web. An easily accessible platform to anyone with internet access, it serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organisations to implement marketing campaigns.

Some of the most popular social networking sites where you can promote your business includes Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, Orkut and more. Now that online marketers can build a profile, continuously grow a network and strategically contact target audience with updates about the company and products themselves, the medium can be used as an effective tool to market your small business.

### Things to consider

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If you are going for social media advertising, remember that visitors mainly go to such sites to socialise, not to read advertisements in the traditional sense. So a one-size-fits-all advertising approach will not yield great results.

### **Identifying the target audience**

To make your social media advertising campaigns effective and successful, you should know who is using which social media. This will help you identify your target audience and the appropriate site to advertise your products and services. For example it is said that Facebook users are more matured lot than Orkut, so advertising about financing solutions might not be appropriate for Orkut.

### **Place contextually relevant message**

Once you found out the right site, place your message in contextually relevant environment. Particularly in niche social media sites, advertising should be integrated with the site's content to be relevant. Contextually relevant contents give users value and an incentive to engage, and enables the marketer to be visible and actively participate in the forums.

### **Active participation**

If you want to attract new visitors to your site and persuade them to buy your product and services, you have to actually participate and become involved in communities and forums. If you begin your campaign pushing only your content and disregarding the community, you will be dead on arrival, so acknowledge others in the community. Using social media forums wisely you can put your business in contact with prospects at critical purchase points and help extend customer knowledge.

### **Set goals**

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Without clear goals and objectives, your campaigns will fail. So you must set short term, medium term and long term targets for you campaigns.

### **Social Media Advertising Metrics**

Marketers can asses their performance through a wide variety of measures. Traffic and sales leads give you an understanding of the number of people who interact with your product/ services or brand. Click-through and conversion rates show how many prospects take an action to the next step in the process. Conversion rates clearly point out how many of those prospects ultimately buy from your firm. Costs are another important determinant of marketing effectiveness and need to be tracked so they can be compared to benefits. Customer interactions indicators can also shed light on how prospects feel about your product and competitive products. Track the number of threads and the number of posts referencing your product, brand, and/or company.