



The Antiques Dealers Guide to Internet Marketing

By Evan Mangan

The world of marketing is vastly different than it was just 10 years ago. Gone are the days when antiques dealers were unable to reach mass audiences because they couldn't afford TV, press or radio advertising. Thanks to internet marketing or e-marketing, antiques business owners can now spend very little to reach potential customers.

What is e-marketing anyway? E-marketing is using the power of the Internet to reach both potential and current customers using email, search engine marketing, e-zines, blogging, online articles, online PR or social book marking to drive traffic to your website. Compared to traditional direct mail and print advertising, it is often a low cost alternative that has a much higher rate of return.

So, ready to jump in? You can use some of these tips to get started:

- **Ensure your site has attractive content:** Make your customers *want* to come to your website. Offer them an incentive, such as free email valuations if they email photos of an antique. Keep a library of these on your site as other antiques buyers would find this interesting. Write articles on the aspect of antiques you specialize in or are passionate about. Regularly post informative articles on your site that will help them solve problems such as how to restore minor damage to furniture or the top three tips when try to repair a clock. The more they visit your site, the more your antiques website will be in the back of their mind. They'll look at you as someone they know and trust, which is vital.
- **Publish an e-newsletter:** If you're not collecting the email addresses of your current customers, start now. These people have already visited your

antiques site or antiques shop and are probably willing to visit again. Publishing a monthly or quarterly e-newsletter full of interesting, helpful articles will give you more of that invaluable “top of mind” advertising. Using willingly supplied emails from your customers is also called “permission-based marketing”. You can have a sign-up field on your website and start collecting those valuable email addresses immediately. Remember that this is the web, so keep articles to no more than 700-800 words.

- **Use email to promote offers:** You know those email addresses you’re now collecting for your e-newsletters? You can use those to promote any offers and discounts you are running on your antiques stock. People love reading email, and since they willingly gave you their address, it’s not considered “SPAM”. Make the tone helpful and informative, with a catchy title in the subject line.
- **Online PR:** You can issue a press release which will be distributed to hundreds of media sites across the net and will also appear in Google News and Yahoo News. This greatly increases the chances of antiques related journalists picking up your release and writing an online article on your story, which will in turn drive traffic to your site.
- **Blogging:** Blogs are more like a scrolling, online journal. These can be an effective way to subtly market your antiques site, if they’re interesting and well-written. Many bloggers have become almost like celebrities, and if you can start a following with word-of-mouth about your antiques site, it can spread like wildfire. You have the option of starting your own blog or you can also arrange for popular bloggers to promote your website for a fee.
- **Search Engine Marketing:** Ensuring that you appear in search results for key antiques terms that your potential customers are searching for is the single biggest activity that will drive traffic to your website. Firstly, submit your website to search engines. This might help your visibility on the web and drive more traffic to your site. Search engines like Google, Yahoo, and MSN all have submissions pages available:

Google: <http://www.google.com/addurl>

Yahoo: <http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

MSN: <http://beta.search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx>

However, simply submitting your URL to search engines won't be a miracle cure. To appear in natural search results, you need plenty of keyword-rich content that can be picked up by search engines and these keywords will need to appear in the meta tags of your site. It's also important to keep your content fresh. Search engines like big, fresh sites, so constantly updating your site and keeping the information current will go a long way towards increasing your visibility. To increase your search engine ranking, it is also important to get many other antiques related sites to link to yours. Appearing in natural search results requires Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on your site. You can read a detailed Marketing Guide on SEO in the Marketing Guides Section of www.MarketingAntiques.com

You can also pay to appear on the first page of search engine results. These are called adword campaigns and you pay each time someone clicks on your ad. You can set up a campaign on Google or Yahoo or a marketing agency can set up and run the campaign for you.

- **Article Marketing:** This is a great way to promote your antiques site. Writing articles and publishing them on other websites, e-zines, and e-newsletters will help drive traffic to your antiques site. Make sure that you put a short bio of yourself and, even more importantly, your web address at the end of each article. If you're not much of a writer, don't worry. You can hire a professional writer to ghostwrite the article for you or www.MarketingAntiques.com can have your articles professionally researched and written.
- **Social book marking:** There is a new generation of internet sites called social network sites. Examples include www.stumbleupon.com, www.del.icio.us, www.digg.com and huge communities bookmark websites that they like and in so doing, recommend them to thousands of other members of the network who share the same interest. You can generate a lot of traffic to your site by making it easy on your site for people to bookmark the sites by having "book mark link". Or on stumbleupon.com, you can pay to have your antiques site promoted to the network of users interested in antiques and if they bookmark it, many other members of the network will see your site.

Utilizing the Internet to create a buzz about your antiques site can be an easy thing to do. Most of these options are low cost. As widely used as the Internet is today, it's vital that you have a presence online if you want your antiques site to be successful. Fortunately, with a little research, it doesn't take long to get a

campaign going, and you can be on the road to increased sales in no time.

About The Author

Evan Mangan is a former Head of European Marketing for Yahoo! Mobile and was Head of International Operational Marketing for Orange. He is founder and Managing Director of The Marketing Crowd (www.TheMarketingCrowd.com) and Marketing Antiques - a full service marketing agency which makes the marketing techniques employed by major brands available and affordable to antiques businesses.

More Information:

- To receive a monthly e-Zine full of Marketing tips and links to new Antiques Marketing Guides, simply send an email to ezine@MarketingAntiques.com
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