

9 Myths of Internet Advertising

First, find out what you must know about advertising on the World Wide Web.

It's difficult these days to turn on the television or pick up a newspaper without hearing some discussion about the Internet. But while the "experts" are busy forecasting and debating about the Internet as a marketing tool, millions of independent thinkers have seized the unique opportunity and exposure the Internet offers, to sell everything from self-published literary works to networking opportunities and more! But there comes a time when you have to cut through the fat and gristle to get to the meat beneath. Let's look at some of the myths about Internet advertising.

Myth # 1 You need a computer to advertise on the Internet.

You don't need a computer to advertise on the Internet. The only time a computer becomes necessary is if you want to design and load your ad yourself; if you want to go online and see your home page; or if you want to make use of electronic mail to receive and respond to prospects. Internet advertising services are popping up everywhere and can relieve you of the requirement of owning a computer yourself. Advertising services can create an ad or a home page for you that can be as basic or as elaborate as your budget allows. However, you will need to do some homework to make sure you get the best value for your money when selecting which service to use to get the best results.

Myth # 2 It costs a huge amount of money to advertise on the Internet.

Perhaps at one time it did cost a lot to advertise on the Internet and no doubt there are many services still charging exorbitant rates. But it no longer costs an arm and a leg to place an ad or get a home page on the World Wide Web. Be a wise consumer, shop around, compare prices and services and be sure to ask about hidden or ongoing monthly fees. A reasonable price is about \$20 - \$50 per month.

Myth # 3 Internet advertising doesn't work.

Now is the time to get on the Internet. Particularly if you intend to market a product or service. Internet advertising does work if you have done your homework, selected the best location, and are using a marketing strategy. One of the keys is to set up your ad in a Mall or theme site where a large traffic flow has already been established, thereby increasing the "hits" or visitors to your site. Compare it to this analogy. Which do you think is going to be more profitable, setting up a store in an urban retail mall, or establishing a store on a dead end road in the outback? The Internet is a mighty big place and you can easily get lost and waste your money if you aren't wise about where and how you advertise. Of those people who say Internet advertising doesn't work, we would bet that the majority have compromised effectiveness by paying 5 bucks for a lame hodgepodge they call a "home page" without any thought whatsoever to location and promotion. In short, their page is indeed on the "Net" but no one knows it's there! In this situation it would be a miracle if it did work!

Myth # 4 All Internet Advertising Services Are Equal

With all the information floating around today, just about any one with a computer and knowledge of programming code can create a home page and put it on the Internet. Of course the old adage "you get what you pay for" applies. Determine exactly what you are you going to get with the service you select. Get the advertising service's web address and go and check out their site for yourself. Once at their site, see how the advertisers are listed, is the site organized and logical. Determine what you can do with your site once it is up, specifically; can you make changes to your page once it is up, what about graphics, color, hyperlinks, customer service, promotion of your site, registration with search engines, and on and on. If you pay \$5 for a home page you'll get (with some luck), maybe a \$5 return. It is worth your time to invest your money wisely with a service that is going to provide you something in return.

Myth # 5 If I place my ad or get a home page on the Internet's World Wide Web 50 million people will see it.

This is perhaps the biggest myth of all. Here is the reality. Yes there are an estimated 30-50 million Internet users but not all of them will see your ad. Just like running an ad in a national newspaper with a 100,000 circulation doesn't guarantee that your ad will be seen by all 100,000 readers. What it really means is that you have a potential audience of 30 - 50 million. The actual reach of your home page to all of those users is a percentage of that number and depends largely on where your site is located and how it is promoted.

Myth # 6 If I place my ad with an advertising service they will promote my home page for me and will generate traffic to my page.

Very few Internet advertising services are doing any kind of promotion of their own site and therefore their customers' home pages. The unwise or gullible consumer is easily convinced that just being on the net guarantees them an audience of 30 million. The uninformed fail to ask about web site promotion, after all aren't 30 million Internet users worldwide enough to generate a response? Wrong. If the advertising service you have selected isn't promoting their site both on and off the Internet, you will have the equivalent exposure of a lonely sign post in a vacant weedy lot.

Myth # 7 After I place my ad on the Internet my job is done.

Placing an ad on the Internet is only the beginning. For you folks who think it's as easy as placing a home page and then sitting back to collect the revenue, think again! An ad on the Internet should complement other forms of advertising that you do. Your URL (web site address) is as important as your phone number. Use it everywhere that you would use your phone number and postal address whether it be giving someone your business card, sending a sales letter or running a TV spot. Have you seen a Toyota Commercial lately or an MCI commercial? Pay attention next time one comes on the tube and you will most likely see their web address as part of their glitzy mega dollar television commercial. Now don't get defeated and jump to the conclusion that Internet advertising is not worth it for the little guy. Advertising on the Internet is an excellent way for every business, big or small, to advertise products and services. But the jig doesn't end there. You must select the right service for you by addressing the points outlined here.

Myth # 8 Search engines guarantee that my web site can be found on the Internet

Search engines are one way that prospects can find your ad or web site. There are at least 500 existing search engines, and only a dozen or so are really good. The chances of a prospect finding the right search engine where you are registered is slim. There are of course the major search engines like Yahoo and Lycos which offer you a better chance of being found. If the advertising service you are considering offers home page registration, then by all means get it done or if you can, do the registration yourself. Registration with the major search engines is a great idea, however, you can also increase the chances of your home page being found among the millions of home pages on the web through your own resources. Specifically;

1. Choose an advertising service that promotes the location where your site is located.
2. Do your own extensive promotion by including your web address on all of your existing marketing materials including direct mail pieces, package stuffers, letter head, display ads etc.
3. Post announcements to news groups related to the topic of your web site. A word of caution: be aware of what is and is not acceptable by way of postings in a specific news groups before you wade in announcing your site. Avoid blatant postings "My home page is amazing come see!" Instead try something like this "FREE 10 page report on "How To Promote Your Home Page For FREE on The Internet" to the first 100 Respondents <http://www.YOURDOMAIN.com>"

Myth # 9 The Internet is just a load of hype and will die off soon to go the way of the 8 track tape and the pet rock.

The Internet is here to stay and will continue to grow and expand. Over half of the fortune 500 hundred companies are already advertising on the Internet. According to USA Today "Every business will have a web site." Online retail sales are expected to skyrocket, "from 1995 revenues of \$300 million, online retail sales are expected to increase to more than 6 billion by 2,000 (Forrester Research). This is simply a phenomena that is not going away as businesses embrace this technology with a passion never before seen. Unique to the Internet is the fact that the small player or business person is on equal footing with the corporate giants. The mega companies with the huge advertising budgets do not have the same marketing clout on the Internet as they do in the print media. The playing floor is level and the door is open and ready for aspiring entrepreneurs.

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