

## Websites, eMarketing – All hyped out or coming of age?

Let's be clear, best practice marketing is not something dreamt up in business school or for that matter anywhere else in academia. It comes from real people trying things, working at ideas and testing concepts and finding what works best. Then refining and refining until the concept, approach or idea has a repeatable predictable outcome.

Marketing and marketing concepts work like anything else in business. Someone has a great idea, someone else adds their input and value, the "early adopters" jump in with both feet and the risk averse wait for everyone else to fall flat on their face before getting involved.

Someone very clever called it the "hype cycle" and all ideas and technologies go through it.

### **So what of marketing techniques, and most specifically the Web and eMarketing?**

The core of the business community, investment community and marketing (let's call them the establishment) is fundamentally risk averse. Quite right too. As shareholders, employees and customers we want our suppliers to be profitable, make sensible measured decisions and to be there tomorrow. We tried embracing risk about 10 years ago and the dot com bubble burst and we all fell down, so it will be some time before we try anything that risky again. The Internet is just another channel to your customers, not a business model in its own right.

However, what the Establishment eventually end up adopting as best practice is first pioneered, then refined by the risk takers, the entrepreneurs and the market makers.

The Internet and eMarketing are now part of the Establishment, an accepted part of the business vocabulary and the Marketeer's toolkit. How has that happened and what does it mean?

Everyone (just about everyone) uses the Internet. On the whole we see its advantages as hugely liberating to both our business and personal lives and we accept its "evils" as a necessary part of the process. Broadband has spanned the divide between our professional and our personal lives meaning we now all see the Internet as integral to our daily existence.

Businesses have moved through the hype cycle and are now moving into and embracing the Customer Engagement Age (see The Ascent of the Website). Websites and Internet technology in general are now becoming integrated into our sales and marketing strategies rather than being seen as an "add on". And the business is seeing that the technology can be used to reduce cost, share information and increase the bottom line.

For eMarketing the road has been shorter but no less bumpy.

We started with Spammers and Spyware and everything else we all despise.

We legislated (sensibly in the UK in my view) and Filtered and Blocked and Quarantined in reaction, until we realised that this would just start the cold callers all over again. Then we found a middle ground.

The purveyors of eMailing designed ever more impressive tools to throw out vast volumes on an unsuspecting audience and even the big CRM (Customer Relationship Management – but that's a different story!) and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) vendors got in on the act by adding on eMailing modules in an "anyone can stick out an email" kind of way.

Some companies made huge piles of cash in virtually no time at all by selling arbitrary "access" to vast pools of "opt-in" email addresses via their own tools. A raft of unsuspecting SMEs bought in and very quickly bought out (I hope before the offending companies were).

Meantime, real marketers and marketing organisations, those who still stand today, continued to espouse the real value in building intelligent dialogues and driving people to and through the target website.

Today, the spammers are failing and the bulk eMailers are falling on their swords as they fight each other to the death for a share of the fraction-of-a-pence per email send commodity environment they set out to create. The CRM and ERP vendors meantime are doing what they always do, which is a lot of things, averagely well.

**So where is this all heading?** Into the Establishment, refined from its origins as maverick and adolescent, to earn its place as part of Best Practice just like Direct Mail, Telemarketing and the Internet before it.

So, eMail becomes eMarketing as it becomes an accepted part of the process. We're filtering out the opportunists and the low-brow "pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap" merchants and as a result we ascend into accepted best practice.

And so, eMarketing, just like the Internet, has come of age. Those who know how to use eMail in an integrated and intelligent way will **continue** to see staggering returns from it. Those who go further and integrate it with Internet technologies **will continue** to shorten their sales cycles and deliver results more rapidly and more profitably to the bottom line.

No longer the preserve of the early adopting pioneer then, the Internet and the intelligent engagement of eMarketing have earned their place as credible contributors to the overall marketing mix.

The only challenge left now then for the Establishment is to work out how to make them work best in their particular business, market or industry.

Give us a call on 01525 288828 and we'll tell you how to do it, or you can reply by email using the email address below.

This document forms part of a series – the others can be accessed via the Documents page of our website.

1. Websites - The Ascent of the Website
2. Customer Engagement
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**Best practice is something that should be shared, not sold.**

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