

A GUIDE TO INCREASING YOUR ONLINE ADVERTISING ROI

New Jersey has the highest online presence of any state in the nation. How is your company taking advantage of this advertising medium?

OPTIMIZING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

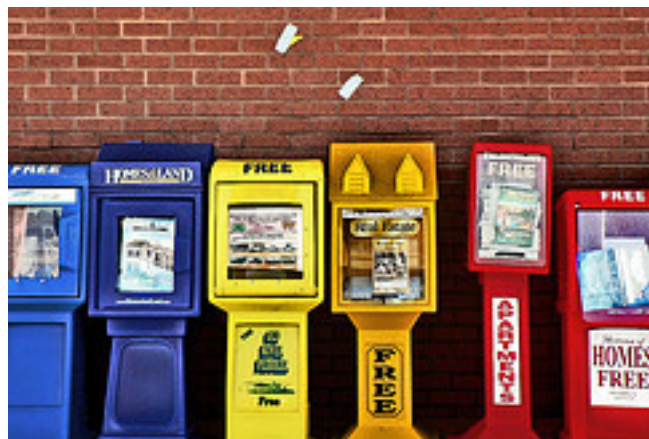
A vibrant, multi-colored nebula (space cloud) with a grid overlay, suggesting a digital or data visualization theme. The colors range from deep reds and oranges to bright blues and whites. A white rectangular box with the text "you are here" is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the nebula.

you are here



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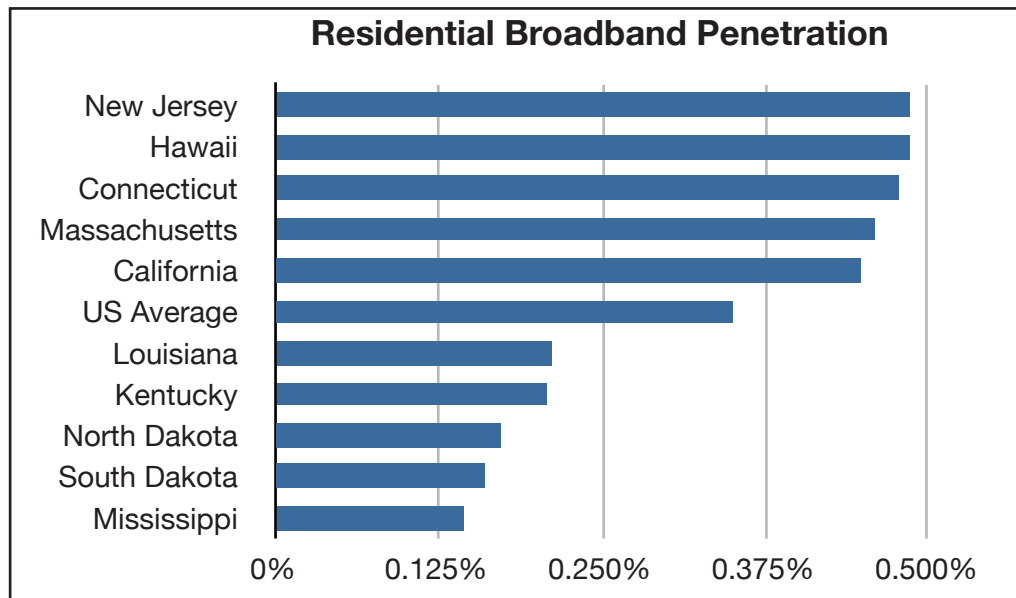
Your brand is defined by people's perception



This help guide was put together by Robert Ivan and Metaprinter Inc. to be used by small, local New Jersey businesses in their quest for success. Robert Ivan has many years experience working in the newspaper industry for The Wall Street Journal, The Newark Star Ledger, and The Washington Post. He is the owner of Metaprinter Inc.

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Why is online so important?



“power users” 2006 market study by MORI

- New Jersey has the highest residential broadband penetration of any state in the nation and it is growing.
- 82% of users buy products online
- 76% browse for sales online
- 43% download coupons
- 78% check store hours and locations
- mean age is 39
- mean income is \$73,200
- 52% have college degrees

What are you trying to accomplish with your website?

You should be drawing the consumer into an environment you control where there is an opportunity to turn a one time purchaser into a repeat purchaser, to up-sell, to reinforce the consumer's favorable perception of your brand, to survey the consumer about the product, the packaging, the pricing or the Web site itself or to start regular communications with the consumer via permission e-mail.

Branding Branding Branding Branding Branding Branding

Use the website to bring your brand online. Do you have an existing color scheme? Use it. I don't care if you sell car parts or Italian food, you have a brand. Your brand is what people perceive you to be. Use the internet to positively influence your customers and non customers alike.

What else can be accomplished?

Engage visitors with loyalty programs. Tell them why your product or service is better than the competition's. Show them how your products or services can be used in various iterations.

Whether you are a plumber, lawyer, pizza shop owner, or bank, the ultimate goal is to drive up repeat business and develop a loyalty to your brand.

Most websites blow it.

You finally get someone there and it is meaningless. Have a clear call to action on your website ("call now", "free consultation", "contact us for anything").

Optimizing your site:

- First and foremost make sure the site is clean and uncluttered.
- Do not have music playing in the background.
- Make sure everything is spelled correctly.
- Ask yourself what you want the site to do, then investigate whether it accomplishes your goals.
- Claim your business listing everywhere you can find it. Common sites are Yahoo Local, Yellow Pages, Google Maps, City Search and Angie's List.
- Persuade customers to leave comments on these sites. Users migrate to company listings with lots of customer reviews.
- Start a blog or forum and offer customers an incentive to visit, like sales announcements or podcasts.
- Gather email information from site visitors and in store customers to offer repeat customers incentives.

Keeping Yahoo and Google in mind: These sites use factors such as unique keywords relevant to your business, photos, videos, in-bound links, and pages of content.

- Ensure that keywords unique to your company, product, or service are repeated throughout all pages on your site.
- Work with a web designer to ensure that all fields are optimized to be mined by search engines.
- Use photos and videos that are tagged with alternative text.
- The use of in-bound links weighs heavily on page rank when someone searches your keywords. The way to get more in-bound links is to comment on other sites, forums, and business lists within your industry and link back to your site.

Best and worst online tactics

Behavioral targeting, search engine optimization (SEO), and direct email using house lists are the best-performing tactics in online marketing, according to MarketingSherpa's annual survey of ad:tech attendees.

Marketers also report strong ROI from paid search and direct email from rented lists, albeit less so than last year.

Top (and Bottom) Online Performers

- SEO is gaining in popularity among marketers: 57% of those surveyed in 2007 said it outperforms other tactics ("great ROI - outperforms other tactics"), compared with 45% in 2006.
- Email marketing from house lists, a top tactic of 47% of marketers in 2006, was cited by 42% in 2007.
- Behavioral targeting offers a stronger ROI than contextual targeting, marketers again said - but in greater proportions: 44% said so (up 10 percentage points from 2006), while 21% cited contextual advertising (down 8 points).
- Paid search remains a strong money maker for 34% of those surveyed, but that's down from 49% in 2006, likely due to increased competition that raised keyword prices and lowered ROI.
- Among the ad types rated by marketers as having the lowest ROI in 2007 were rich media ads (only 7% said it delivered a strong ROI), banner ads (cited by 10%), and pop-ups and pop-unders - awarded the "worst Web ad of 2007."

What is important to note here is that SEO and the content of your website are by far the most critical factors to increasing your ROI. Optimizing your website layout and online presence ensure that your content is continuously mined by search engines and engages your customers and non-customers alike to create a positive experience.

Outside your website

You may not even know it but your business is already online! Google and Yahoo have bought up yellow page information and integrated the information into their local listings and maps features. Many of these listings go unclaimed by their owners. Unclaimed listings look unprofessional and stagnant, chasing away potential customers. Here are the most popular.

Yahoo! Local:

Allows business owners to upload pictures and additional business information. The listing also allows users to leave reviews and rate the company using a star rating.

Google Local Business Center:

Reach new customers on Google Maps and Google.com

Local customers are already searching for the products and services you offer. Why not make it easy for them to find you on Google search and on Google Maps? The Local Business Center is the place to start.

Whether you run a single dentist's office or dozens of coffee shops, manage all your listings from a single account.

Use the Local Business Center to edit your listing whenever and however you like. Your Google Maps results will be updated in a few weeks, not next year.

Google printable coupons are a free and easy way to bring in more business. You decide what your coupons should say, then customers print them out and bring them to your store.

Angie's List:

Is a word-of-mouth network for homeowners with more than 600,000 members nationwide. Angie's List members rate and review the service companies they've hired in more than 250 different categories. These homeowners pay a membership fee to access the ratings and information on Angie's List. They receive over 400,000 inquiries on companies and more than 15,000 reports from their members each month. When those members need service, they check Angie's List via the magazine, website and call center to find out which companies are doing the best work based on the feedback of other homeowners in their area.

Outside your website continued...

The rise of social media as a means of connecting to customers and noncustomers alike.

MySpace:

MySpace is very big for musicians and performing artists. The calendar feature allows these artists to promote themselves across the globe for NO monetary investment. The features on MySpace allow people to follow you and your events easily. Remember to link back to your website and post songs, and movies you wish to promote.

Facebook:

Facebook is a little more serious than MySpace. Users here tend to be older (mid twenties to mid thirties). The potential for exposure and interaction is great here as well. Remember to link back to your website.

YouTube:

If you are an aspiring journalist, comedian, actor, director, etc... Youtube is a great venue to get your name out there and stir interest in your brand (you are your brand).

LinkedIn:

LinkedIn is a social networking site for business professionals. Post your resume here and use the connections and features to expand your business network. The Q & A section allows you to post questions to your network and LinkedIn members and get qualified responses from business professionals. Another great thing about LinkedIn is that Google heavily searches it. This makes it easy for people to find you and your business. Link back to your website from your LinkedIn profile.

Twitter:

Can't shut up? Think everyone needs to know what you are doing all the time? Want to text sales to your customers? This is what twitter can do. It is micro blogging from text message to text message.

Delicious:

Delicious is a social bookmarking service that allows users to tag, save, manage and share web pages from a centralized source. With emphasis on the power of the community, Delicious greatly improves how people discover, remember and share on the Internet. Use it to share info with your customers and noncustomers alike.

Budgeting your advertising

Below is a formula to follow when considering how much money to spend on your advertising budget. The below example is for January.

1. your store's actual square footage
 x sales per square foot
 forecasted annual sales
2. forecasted annual sales
 x monthly (January) percentage of annual sales
 forecasted January sales
3. forecasted January sales
 x ad to sales ratio for your business
 January sales budget

The ad to sales ratios are available through Schonfeld & Associates Inc. The report is called, **Advertising Ratios & Budgets**. The report costs \$395 however those unwilling to pay for the report can substitute 3% as their ad to sales ratio. If you are a new company though, that number needs to be higher, perhaps even double.

The purpose of this budget is to keep your advertising budget in line with sales.

Summary:

This guide will help smaller local New Jersey businesses increase the success of their online advertising campaigns by raising awareness of how search engines and online marketing work.

New Jersey has the highest residential broadband penetration of any state in the nation. Use this to your advantage by promoting your company online. Remember too that the internet is still in its infancy. If you plan on running your business for awhile, the investment you make now will pay dividends in the long run.

I urge everyone to claim their business listings on Yahoo and Google, this is free and by far the most common interaction you will have with new customers and first impressions are important.

If you do have a company website make sure it is serving the needs of your operation and generating at least enough revenue to sustain itself.

Optimally the site should be growing your repeat customer base and introducing new customers to your work.

Create an advertising budget and stick to it. Your expenditures should closely follow your sales from month to month.

“KNOW WHERE YOUR CUSTOMER IS GOING AND BECOME THE CHANGE AGENT TO HELP THEM GET THERE”.

NOTES

www.metaprinter.com

Metaprinter Inc.
402 Wellington Place
Matawan, NJ 07747

Contact Robert:
732.947.1256
robert@metaprinter.com