

CASE STUDY – TRAINING AND PUBLISHING

Our long standing client is a training company, a publisher of books, CDs/DVDs, pamphlets and – yes – sermons. It is best described as a religious publisher but one that promulgates a particular ethos, a way of organising church activities in order to produce a healthy church and one that will grow. So whilst, from a marketing point of view, the company has plenty of products to offer, it is more accurately described as a service provider. Promulgating the philosophy is more important than selling support materials or training courses.

The marketing task is made more difficult by severe budget limitations as the company is effectively a not-for-profit organisation. That doesn't mean it wishes to make a loss but break even would be the ultimate goal.

An Internet solution

The attraction of the Internet is obvious in such a situation: mass marketing without the associated costs. But life is not that simple in a market which has low internet usage. The answer lay in hard headed segmentation of the market and deliberately excluding those who were not willing to embrace new technology although it was done so with regret. Focussing on a smaller sub section of the market meant that efforts and costs were more concentrated and more could be done with the available funds.

Whilst investment in the web site was restricted it did mean that more could be done to mass market to the known target audience using bulk e-mailing. A number of 'friends' groups were established to provide input as to messages and products in the form of training course that were suitable at different types of year. A newsletter was introduced as a regular reminder and a vehicle for case studies and success stories.

Social marketing could be considered a boon to a business such as this but as always,

there are too many demands on time for any of the mainly unpaid volunteers to keep up with the demands of such technology. A Blog proved successful with a team of contributors taking responsibility for daily monitoring and response although it is always a challenge to keep the Blog fresh, relevant and up to date.

A common problem with companies in this situation is the proliferation of databases. Most companies will have an accounts database, a web site opt-in database and contact management system (CRM) database. One is ideal, three is two too many! Plus you may even need a third system for bulk e-mails due to the lack of capacity on many computer systems to batch large numbers of mail merge e-mails. There seems to be no solution to this without investing in a combined web site, database marketing system where the web site database is the default contact management system replacing mail systems such as Outlook.

Horses for courses

A different solution was necessary for another training company which was mainly selling into local authorities. Here a direct approach proved more acceptable with appointments being made with the person responsible for training within each local authority personnel and care services department. Bought-in mailing lists proved, as so often is the case, to be inadequate and the database had to be built largely from scratch using internet sources as the basis with qualification by telephone.

Once the ball was rolling word-of-mouth snowballed the offer amongst a number of similar departments in a tight geographical area.

Our client had neglected to provide hard copy evidence that could be left with the potential customer: a web presence is rarely enough especially in an environment where the web is of low importance.