



## BUILDING A GENERAL E-MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDELINES

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### ABSTRACT

Digital marketing is an important issue. No doubt that most companies are moving towards digital marketing or e-marketing. Most companies try to acquire customer loyalty by delivering high quality products/services with competitive cost. At the present time any marketing strategy must take in consideration a lot of issues which can't be ignored. Any strategy marketing plan must reflect short term and long term issues. In the end, the aim of any strategy marketing plan is to attract customers and acquire their loyalty by building and adapting excellent methodologies and techniques. In this research authors try to build strategy e-marketing guidelines which could be used for most organizations. The General E-Marketing Strategy Guidelines developed here are consisted of several sequential steps. Our guidelines take in consideration most issues which may be faced by and company.

### INTRODUCTION

E-Marketing, digital marketing, online marketing are several terms used to refer for only one purpose which is promotion of products and/or services over digital technology. E-marketing refers to all forms of digital marketing which includes marketing via e-mail, wireless media. (*wikipedia.org*). E-marketing is very important when implemented correctly, the return on investment (ROI) beat that of traditional marketing. Marketing over internet is a force that cannot be disregarded. Since it means that you can reach and deal with millions of customers every year (*quirk.biz*) (Harridge S.,2002).

Digital technology recently has become the dominant in advertising and marketing since using E-marketing can offer many benefits such as increasing revenues, reducing costs and increasing the size of the company market. The Internet provides companies with an extraordinary ability to communicate directly with customers. Also new technologies allow all businesses of all sizes to have the opportunity to build competitive advantages. No doubt that internet is assumed to be an excellent channel for marketing and selling products and services. Companies use internet as a media for selling their products for several reasons, one of the main reasons is the cost-effectiveness and the convenience for customers. Another reason for using internet is that companies can reach customers than ever before. Beside that internet allows companies to locate customers where ever they are, identify their needs precisely, communicate with them, deliver their products and services with relatively low costs. (Paulo Rita, 2003)(Chakraborty, 2002).

Companies which desire to acquire loyalty of their customers by delivering high quality products with competitive prices must begin with an excellent marketing strategy. Nowadays; any marketing strategy must do more than telling a story of novel technology which will be used to attract users. It must do more than creating and developing information technology aimed to attract visitors. So companies need an efficient marketing strategy that quantifies goals and provides measurable impacts.

In this research authors try to build guidelines which can be used for most organizations to identify their e-marketing strategy. These guidelines are built in a general form which can be adapted and customized to be suitable to any type of e-marketing.

The rest of this paper is organized as follow. In the next section, we demonstrate some previous related studies, and then we focus on e-marketing strategy; section four is on building successful E-Marketing strategy guidelines. The last segment of this paper presents our conclusion.

### PREVIOUS STUDIES

Miles and Snow's (1978) demonstrate a strategy framework uses strategy, structure and process variables to make a distinction between four generic strategies based on how companies respond to environmental changes. The four generic strategies are distinguished as Prospectors, Defenders, Analyzers and Reactors.

(Carmen Lages, 2004) in his research proposes a conceptual framework. His framework links five factors: internal forces, external forces, past web and firm performance, current web and firm performance, and e-marketing strategy in terms of the strategy defined for the 4Ws (Web-Design, Web-Promotion, Web-Price, and Web-CRM).

(Rutihinda,2004) in his study explores the competitive strategies of foreign ventures in underdeveloped countries with the particular case study of Tanzania. In his research Factor analysis was used to identify measures of marketing strategies and the environment facing foreign ventures in Tanzania. He says that successful firms were found to be quite independent from the control of their parent company. They were also found to offer highly differentiated products at premium prices with more emphasis on promotions and distribution. He also says that unsuccessful firms were found to be highly controlled by their parent companies with a tendency to offer lower prices with less emphasis on promotion.

(Bicknell, 2001) proposes a strategy in his paper which should provide a guideline for companies to develop their E-commerce strategy. Bicknell model has been compiled by the author's training and experience of both management and technical issues. Nowadays his set of guidelines has been developed into a decision pack and has been disseminated to some local companies for use as a guide for producing a well defined strategy.

(Othman Aman, 2010) concentrates on the barriers doing online business by Akapiman Enterprise. The case study indicates that the 4Ps ((Price, products, place and promotion) are significant elements in marketing. The result in his study shows that the weakness of promotion as part of 4Ps plays an important function in business flow. The failure of promotion especially for the new competitor will also affect the overall business cycle. It is important for the entrepreneur to realize that the promotion is a fundamental element to expose the company to the customers.

(Richard C. Becherer,2004) The investigation attempts to understand the characteristics, attitudes, and strategies of online auction sellers and should help future theory building by providing researchers with a foundation for hypothesis development. The exploratory research results presented here suggest several new areas of investigation. Firstly, online auction sellers must be further analyzed and classified with respect to various business characteristics. Secondly, internet auction sales clearly represent a distinct and important distribution channel for internet marketers, with over 71% of the sellers in this study reporting that auctions account for over half of their annual sales volume.

### E-MARKETING STRATEGY

Today, the internet is a public, cooperative and self sustaining facility accessible to hundreds of millions of people worldwide. (Turban E.,Leidner D., Mclean E., Wetherbe J. 2006). Every company identifies its own strategy based on information collected from its environment.



Strategy as a general direction of the company, reflects its response based on information from the environment (Jennings and Zandbergen, 1995).

Companies try to build their positions in markets through adapting specific strategies. Those strategies reflect the firm's short-term and long-term responses to challenges and opportunities posed by the business environment. Also companies' strategies refer to how companies deal with their suppliers, competitors, and customers. The ultimate goal on any e-marketing strategy is to attract customers and acquire their loyalty. This can't be done without building a strong and flexible long term strategy which can be adapted to reflect customers' need (Lages,2002). Digital marketing can affects traditional marketing in two ways. First, it increases efficiency in creating marketing functions. Second, the technology used in e-marketing can increase company profitability (Strauss and Frost, 2001).

E-marketing is now considered as a fact for many businesses. The direct benefits, in terms of cost savings, enhanced profitability and efficiencies are clear at every stage in the process. Adopting e-business is no longer a competitive advantage, but a normal business process, without which an enterprise is improbable to sustain and survive in the new era (Dave Hobart, 2001)(Anckar B,2002).

There are statistics in 2001 show that the number of users of internet amount to approximately 151 million, whereas by 2005, users were around the number 231 million (August , 2004 by PriceWaterHouseCoopers; 2001). Also there is a new statistics show that the current internet users in March 31, 2011 are 2,095,006,005. (internetworldstats.com, 2011).This number of users will surely increase year by year according to the low price of personal computer and laptop in the market.

As a result; Executives of successful E-marketing companies need to be talent people and strategic thinkers focusing on customers, markets, products, promotion and competitive positioning, as well as on internal operations. Identifying a suitable E- marketing strategy begins with identification of the opportunities, risks, customers, products, and promotions.

### E-MARKETING STRATEGY GUIDELINES

In this section authors try to build their e-marketing strategy guidelines (Figure 1) which could be used for most organizations to build its own strategies. Our guidelines are built to be general, can be adapted and customized to be more suitable to any firm depending on their size and type.

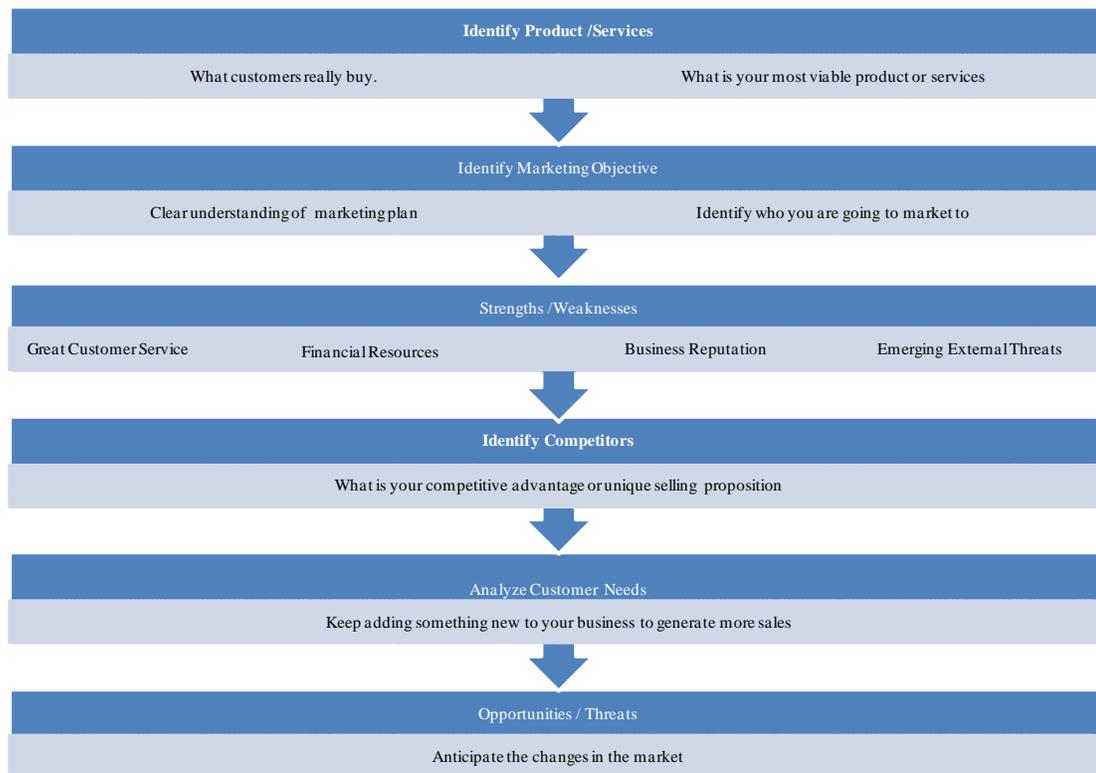


Figure 1 E-Marketing Strategy Guidelines

The first step is identifying product/services. This means that strategy builders must have a clear understanding of what they want from their strategy. Strategy builders must identify what is the company most viable product/service. Also strategy builders must know which products and/or services that customers frequently buy. If customers are searching for high quality products regardless of the cost then your marketing strategy should point out the high quality services or products.

The second step is identifying marketing objective. This step involves identifying your ideal customers. This requires answering several questions such as who deserves to spend on your time and money to promote? Also which types of customers will get the company the most profit? In addition strategy builders have to know exactly who they are going to market. Answering all those types of questions allow strategy builders to identify exactly their marketing objectives.

The third step is identifying strength and weakness points. Strength points such as introducing unusual customer services, producing unique products or having special services characteristics and reducing the costs or delivery time. Weakness points could be like limiting financial resources, unknown reputation, difficulties in delivering products and services.



The fourth step is identifying competitors. Identifying your competitors is very important since it means that you can identify competitor advantages or unique proposition which they offer to customers. This allows strategy builders to put their strategy to target all types of customers and offer them promotions which some competitors offer. One important question which strategy builders must answer is that why should the potential customer spend his or her money with you instead of your competitors?

The fifth step is analyzing customers' needs. This step allows strategy builders to continuously identify their customers' needs and put their tactical and operational plans to respond to their needs. This requires some procedures to collect information from customers and identify their needs. The result of this step is always adding new things to your promotion and services or products.

The last step is identifying opportunities and threats. This means that strategy builders must anticipate the changes in the market. Also their strategy must be flexible enough to accommodate changes. If the strategy used can anticipate opportunities and threats this means that this strategy will sustain and survive. No doubt that to anticipate opportunities and threats several methods and tools are required which must be considered when developing the strategy plan.

## CONCLUSIONS

If companies try to create an important position in markets this requires that the companies' strategy must reflect short term and long term responses to challenges and opportunities. In this research authors create e-strategy marketing guidelines. These guidelines are very important. Authors think that if these guidelines are used in proper way the result will be an effective strategy plan which can be adapted and responds to most emergent issues. Our guidelines consist of six sequential steps. The first step is identifying products and services which means in summary that strategy builders must have a clear understanding of what they want from their strategy. The second step is identifying market objectives which means in summary identifying ideal customers. The third step is identifying strength / weakness points of services/products characteristics. The fourth step is identifying competitors which allows company to identify the characteristics of products and/or services which the competitors offer. The fifth step is analyzing customers' needs which allow companies to identify exactly customers' needs and respond to them. The last step is identifying opportunities and threats which means that monitoring all changes in market and responding to them.

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