

## Online Marketing: 5 Principles that help you succeed NOW

By Stephanie Diamond

I have been working for Internet companies since 1994. First at America Online and now in my own marketing and design business. The only online marketing rule I adhere to is that things are constantly changing. That could make marketing difficult. To keep moving forward, I use the following five principles:

### 1. Ask the right questions

Unless you ask the right marketing questions, you will waste a lot of your valuable time on things that don't matter. Abraham Lincoln was quoted as saying, "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax." Gather the people you trust to work on business problems and ask them to make a list of the three main problems your customers have identified for you. Then analyze those problems to see what marketing questions you should be asking. Instead of asking how to increase revenue, perhaps you should be asking how to make it easier for your customers to check out using your shopping cart. Continue to drill down and simplify until you have a list of very specific questions and set about to answer those.

### 2. 'Think Big; Act Small'

This principle captures what I think is imperative for anyone marketing online today. Jason Jennings' book 'Think Big Act Small' details how companies succeed by maintaining a small business attitude. Embrace the qualities that 'smallness' provides- quick improvements, employees that are close to the problem and the ability to connect with your customers. I've worked with companies that assume their competitors are better because they have deeper pockets. The notion that more marketing dollars ensure success is misguided at best. Look at your product or service and continue to improve it. Online buyers want quality and service. That part never changes.

### 3. Search for what's different and strive to understand it

The popularity of online marketing tactics go up and down like the stock market. Pop-ups, podcasts, ezines and blogs are all effective if applied to the right audience at the right time. The key is to continually ask yourself, "what's different today?" Are customers suddenly responding to something you don't highlight? Are they bored with your current promotion? Read everything you can about new ideas and cultural trends. You don't have to try to apply every one of them, but you do need to know what your customer knows. Keying into changes on a weekly basis ensures that you won't suddenly find yourself with an outdated marketing strategy and no customers.

### 4. If you're not the customer, ask her!

Don't spend your time debating with other staffers about what you 'think' your customer wants. Unless you ARE the target customer, you don't really know. I have listened to endless debates about customer needs based on no actual customer data.

Ask your customers. They will be happy to tell you what they think. If you don't want to hear what they think, you've got a different problem.

#### 5. Do what's difficult

I find that this principle separates the wannabes from the real innovators. If you know what tactics need to be applied to make a difference, but you are too lazy or disinterested to try them then stop reading now. Nothing you do will make a difference until you tackle the hard work necessary to grow. If you need a better designed website, a new database or an easier shopping cart, you need to do that, NOW.

About Digital Media Works Digital Media Works, Inc. is an Internet marketing and design firm that specializes in solutions for e-commerce companies. . A seasoned 25+ year management/marketing professional, founder Stephanie Diamond is experienced in building profits in a broad range of product and services businesses. As Marketing Director at AOL, she created a highly successful line of multimedia software products that sold millions of copies.

Digital Media Works, Inc.(<http://www.DigMediaWorks.com> ) is an Internet marketing and design firm. A seasoned 25+ year management/marketing professional, founder Stephanie Diamond, former AOL Marketing Director, is experienced in building profits.