

Where to Get Inspiration to Be a Great Online Marketer

By Aaron Kahlow, ClickZ, Nov 12, 2009

A confluence of events over a recent 48-hour period provided me with inspiration in a challenging routine for marketing and online professionals. And inspiration is where good marketing becomes great.

It started last Friday during a meeting with the team responsible for our new event Web site, Online Marketing Summit. We were walking through usability research, as well as putting it through a few use cases. Then, came the first flash of light. What took me so long to go to users and actually do some testing? Had I totally lost my way? Was I really so busy that I couldn't have done this sooner? Then, 12 hours later, I turned my blog network team loose on getting into why we didn't have stronger engagement on the beta site. And bam! Again, right in my face: why had I struggled so long to figure out some of those answers, when what I had to do was get a few users to break it down? And with such powerful clarity, the answers came.

And then, two nights later. After reading a recent post in the social media category on that same blog network, a blogger recanted the famous Zig Ziglar quote, "You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want." And in that blog, it mentioned my good friend Rand Fishkin using the quote, and it really hit me -- life is as simple as asking. And marketing is no more challenging.

We all get so busy cranking out campaigns, offers, and lead scoring, that we miss the whole point. Just ask your customers what they want, give it to them, and the rest will come easily. Social media is the ultimate victim of marketers asking, "How do I use Facebook to get my message out." When what we should be asking is, "How do my customers want to use Facebook to enhance their everyday lives, and is there a way I can help?" The foundation of good social media strategy and any online marketing plan is content. We need to ask: what content do my constituents want, how do they want it, and why? If you nail these questions down, you start helping others, and the rest will be history.

So, let's get down to business. Here are the five things I started doing after my realization, that I believe have given me the inspiration to be a great online marketer again:

1. I have created a 10 question task-based usability study for my blog network, and asked five employees to ask a friend/spouse to spend 20 minutes going through that study with them.
2. I have launched a survey to intercept users on the Online Marketing Summit Web site to offer them free tickets to the event, if they're willing to give me more information about their content needs.
3. I have recommitted myself to helping my peers and contacts. When I get a LinkedIn request for a job or with a question, I do my best to connect that person to someone who can help.
4. I have started using Twitter again, to add value to the community and aggregate top Twitter trends in online marketing.
5. Lastly, I have started listening more, asking questions, and learning. I have tried to do less strategizing in my own head or with business partners, and more out in the field, listening to people's needs and wants, as they relate to where I can help.

In such, I will eat my own dog food, as I have heard folks say, "Aaron, it would be nice if your columns could be a bit more succinct and to the point." So with that, I say adieu.

Provided by:

AUBURN PRINTERS 13020 Earhart Ave • Auburn • CA 95602
integrated marketing 888-282-8764 • fax 530-885-6517
www.AuburnPrinters.com • print@AuburnPrinters.com