

INTERNET INCOME

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USING BROWSERS

ANALYZING INTERNET TRAFFIC

MARKETING FORCES IN HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

Similar to how the forces of nature and geological history determined where rivers flow across the earth's surface, the history and forces of the Internet have shaped how Internet traffic flows across the wires and ether. People connect to the Internet now through many types of devices. Traditionally the connection was made through a home personal computer or a computer networked at work. Now, with the proliferation of high-speed Internet and wireless networks, people use phones, tablets, pads and pods as well as smart televisions to make the connection. To view the World Wide Web on any device, you need an app or software called an Internet browser. The connecting device and the particular browser used are the first opportunities for anyone to get your attention in Cyberspace. Your device or your browser on a particular device can guide you upon your initial connection to the Internet toward the sites they favor.

Browsers have three features that control Internet traffic. Those three features are "Home Page," "Favorites" (a/k/a "Bookmarks") and "History." The Home Page is all important. This is the first page you see when you open your browser. You see this page over and over on a daily basis. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) (which at the time of this writing are now mostly the major telecoms and satellite or cable providers), use software which sets the ISP's page as the subscribers' home page and even pre-sets some of their 'favorites' (or 'bookmarks'). Even though many subscribers may eventually change their home page, ISPs, by their very nature, have a natural tap into much of the Internet's traffic. ISPs that provide an expansive and encyclopedic digital environment along with their access

really have a tap into the traffic. Software companies that make browsers can have pre-set bookmarks.

The History feature of a browser, on the other hand, just makes it more likely that you will return to a page once you have been there before. This, in addition to the other features, makes it more likely that pages with traffic will gain even more traffic.

Other types of software-based online marketing include software that resides on your screen independent of a Web browser and displays ads while you surf or send instant messages.

THE ROLE OF CONSUMER CHOICE

Once a user gets beyond these built-in features vying for his or her attention, it becomes more a matter of choice. The Internet user can type in a URL and go to Web pages that have come to the user's attention through word of mouth or some other media. From there, the user is likely to follow links to other similar pages. As memories may fail, typing errors may occur and links may be outdated; this process only takes the user so far. The next thing a user looks for on the Web is a way to directly find things of interest to him or her. Search engines fulfill that function and have been the most popular sites on the Web.

Yahoo! was the original Web search engine and thus was, for a while, one of the most popular sites on the Web. Today, Google, the most popular search engine, is the third most popular site on the Internet. (Facebook and Twitter, the most popular social media sites, have the first and second place.) Because search engines exist, the choice and interests of the user are a strong factor, dispersing Internet traffic according to demographics. That is, unlike the traditional broadcast media, traffic branches off to different sites according to people's interests. (Even searches are affected by some 'push', however. Search engine 'auto-complete' features also guide Internet traffic. Suggestions for your search phrase begin to be made as soon as you start typing. Thus, options for searches that will lead to selected sites can be controlled by the suggestions made from various letters typed.)

A newer factor coming into play recently are the personalized ads that appear on your search engine visits and your social media visits. These ads are delivered to you dynamically based upon information that has been obtained about you from your activity on the search engines and social media sites. Social media sites are able to obtain a great deal of information about your personal preferences by noting the types of posts you respond to with 'likes' or comments. Search engines keep track of the things for which you search and on which you click. With this information, they deliver ads to you based upon your perceived specific interests.

THE ROLE OF YOUR FRIENDS AND CONNECTIONS

The top two sites on the Internet at the time of this writing are Facebook and Twitter. While these two sites may fade in popularity over time--or may not--their rise in the rankings above Google is significant. That they pushed ahead of Google (the former most popular site on the Internet) reveals an important principle; one not likely to go away anytime soon. The lasting principle we can derive from this occurrence is the impact of social media on Internet traffic flow. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, extend the functionality of the Internet. These sites take the Internet to a new level. (In the original course and later in this revised course, we will discuss how these sites build a new layered network on top of the Internet and how Network Science explains why that is so successful.)

When we are wearing our Internet browsing cap, we know that we like social media. We may not fully understand why, but we know that we keep going back to it day after day – getting totally immersed in it at times. We do this because it connects us to our friends and family on a daily basis, regardless of the physical distance between us. We do this because it allows us to make new friends. We do this primarily, though, because it allows us to share our thoughts and experiences with others--fulfilling the basic human need to be heard – helping us to feel less alone in the world, allowing us to see there are people in the world, beyond the ones we come into personal contact with daily, who think like we do and like what we think.

The people we chose to connect with on Facebook, Twitter and other social media will affect what we see and where we go on the Internet. They will

influence us and we will influence them to become interested in certain topics and visit certain sites. Thus, connections in social media are becoming a strong factor affecting the flow of Internet traffic.

UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

Stepping back and thinking objectively about why people enjoy the Internet and social media helps us to understand how we can approach Internet Marketing. Most successful affiliates will advise that you put yourself in the position of the persons you are trying to recruit. Think from their perspective rather than your own. This, of course, is excellent advice! People on the Web are looking for content. People using social media are seeking acknowledgment and affirmation. When on the Web, people seek contact and information applicable to their particular immediate needs. Those needs vary from person to person and from time to time.

To be a successful Internet marketer, you must take time to think about how and why people use the Internet. Many people now begin their day on social media. After catching up there, they go on to explore the Web for information and perhaps products or services of interest to them at the moment. Although social media is now considered very fertile ground for getting someone's attention and, thus, social media needs to be carefully studied, let's look first at how Internet marketing worked before the days of social media, smart phones, tablets and smart TVs. Then, we will turn our attention back to social media.

When staring at their Web browser on their personal PC, people had these choices (before social media): They could type in a URL that someone told them about, they could read their home page and follow links from it, they could look at a page in their history or in their favorites, they could go to one of the very popular sites and follow links, or they could go to a search engine and follow links or compose a search phrase. They still have these choices, of course, even though they now spend a great deal of time of social media as well.

Before social media, the goal was to have a Website through which you could interact with potential customers. Once you had this Website, your goal became obtaining a good ranking in the search engines and accumulating many links from other Websites to your site. This is still the

ultimate goal of an Internet marketer. The addition of social media just gave us more tools to help in reaching this goal. And, importantly, the addition of social media changed to some extent the way Internet traffic flows. More on that later...

A good search ranking and a large number of links to your site are not likely to happen--and essentially useless even if somehow acquired--if your Website is not effective. We need to use our understanding of how Internet traffic flows... and we need to use our understanding of how people approach the Internet... in order to create an effective Website.

TWO IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES FOR YOUR WEB PRESENCE: VALUE AND FLOW

The first principle illuminating how people use the Web is that it takes value for a Website to be "sticky." Web surfers are constantly making a judgment about continuing to visit a Website or exiting the site. These judgments are the harshest within the first 10 seconds of the visit. Studies show that if a user perceives that the page has no value, they will be gone in 10 seconds or less. If they are still there after the first 10 seconds, they will make another quick assessment within the next 10 seconds. If the user stays longer than 20 seconds, they will usually stay on the page long enough to allow for some chance of hooking their interest in what you have to offer. Thus, you have to design your page so the value is demonstrated within the first 10 seconds--and reinforced within the next 10 seconds.

Two factors are involved in the users' speedy initial appraisal of your site: 1) the value of the current page, and 2) the promise of value in future site pages. That is, even if the current page has a low perceived value, if there is an indication that the quality of pages may improve, users will stay on the site for another page or two more. But if they find no value, they will leave the site. This is why we hear so often that "content is king." When they leave for lack of value, they are never coming back.

The second principle illuminating how people use the Web is that there must be a balance between the difficulty of using a Website and the rewards the user obtains from the Website. The term "flow" has been used to describe what occurs when a user loses himself in a Website. Flow

occurs when the user becomes so absorbed that time and task temporarily become unimportant. Whatever the user started out to do online gets temporarily forgotten while they enjoy your site. When flow occurs; direction, inhibitions, and caution give way to impulse; and the user is much more likely to join or buy something promoted on the site. The site must be both interesting and easy to navigate for this to occur. Most importantly, the interest must outweigh any difficulty of navigation.

Flow is also a concept that applies to movement from one Website to another. Banners or textual links must be in context and create a smooth transition from one site to another to be effective. Otherwise, the flow is broken and interest is lost.

TRAFFIC BUILDING

Once you have planned a Website that has value and creates flow, you need to direct traffic to your site. In our first version of this course, we stated four goals of traffic building. In this version of the course, due to the rise of social media, we add a fifth goal. The five goals are:

- 1) utilizing effective branding,
- 2) obtaining good publicity, including links to your site from popular pages,
- 3) obtaining an effective search engine presence,
- 4) utilizing and maintaining flow in the placement of your Internet ads, and
- 5) maintaining an effective social media presence.

We will discuss these traffic building goals in detail in future lessons. For now, note that the term 'flow' is used again in Goal 4 'utilizing and maintaining flow in the placement of your Internet ads'. "Flow" is an important concept to Internet Marketing. Understanding how traffic flows across the Internet is important to your success in Internet marketing.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW (AT THE TIME OF THIS WRITING)

"Net Neutrality" is a big issue in the United States at the time of this writing. The erosion of Net Neutrality has the potential of greatly altering the flow of Internet traffic. This issue will soon be coming to a head. Major

providers have asked the FCC for permission to 'favor' certain traffic through their routers and networks based on fees they would charge content providers. Many consumers feel this would destroy the real value of the Internet, turning it back into a traditional broadcast system that 'pushed' content on the consumers rather than giving the consumers the choice of 'pulling' the content that they desired. The amount of official comments made to the FCC concerning this issue is the largest number of comments ever received by that agency on any one issue. The current deadline for comments is September 15, 2014. We should see how this issue plays out in a few weeks.

Net Neutrality is important for the reasons stated above. It is also extremely important to Internet marketers. If certain content is accelerated in speed of delivery while other content is delivered much more slowly, it will affect the ease of use of our Websites. The end of Net Neutrality would be a benefit to the large media corporations, but it would be a great disadvantage to independent Internet Marketers. In an earlier lesson, we discussed how the Internet leveled the playing field for individuals in the competition with the big players. The erosion of Net Neutrality will greatly warp that playing field back in the favor of the large, 'push' media conglomerates who can afford to pay for traffic.

CONCLUSION

To be an effective Internet marketer, you need to analyze and understand Internet traffic and, very importantly, you must understand that the "traffic" consists of human beings with unique feelings and interests and desires. You must understand that they are looking for what they want to find--not what you want them to find. You must understand that they will get there through their methods--not the methods you may prefer for them to use. The old broadcast media methods of controlling attention do not work so well on the Internet.

It's a new game. You must use valuable content and ease of use to create flow. You must properly position your site within the flow of Internet traffic. Once you get this right (and you will), you are on the road to becoming a very successful Internet entrepreneur.