

Marketing an Alpaca Business Online

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Introduction

There are so many ways to market a business today that it sometimes boggles the mind when trying to decide where to put your resources, money, time and effort and get the best 'bang for your buck' when faced with the challenge at hand. The challenge is how to get your name/brand out to the world and not go broke or crazy in the process.

The world is so rapidly changing, keeping up seems impossible at times. There are so many types of advertising, choosing the medium that serves you best is indeed a personal choice. Should you go with Direct Marketing, Online Marketing or a combination of both? They both are effective, require time and effort and have costs involved.

Direct Marketing Advantages

Direct Marketing is addressed directly to the target audience/customers, seeks to drive a specific "call to action and emphasizes track able and measurable responses, regardless of the medium. The most common forms of Direct Marketing are:

- Direct Mail
- Print
- Television
- Radio
- Telemarketing
- Voicemail Marketing
- Faxing
- Couponing
- Insert Media
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Direct Selling
- Out-of-home
- Mobile
- Grassroots/Community Marketing
- Online Tools

Online Marketing Advantages

Online Marketing/Internet Marketing utilizes the Internet and takes on many forms

Below are listed three of many online articles addressing the advantages of Online Marketing. There are many more sites that offer articles, advice and services. Simply Google "Online Marketing Advantages" to delve into this topic further.

10 Advantages of Online Marketing Vs. Traditional Media

1. Reduced Cost
2. Everything Is Measurable
3. Brand Engagement
4. Demographic Targeting
5. Real-Time Results
6. Easily Refine Your Strategy
7. Long-Term Exposure
8. Product Information
9. Less Intrusive
10. Holds Their Attention

Six Benefits of Internet Marketing

- Convenience
- Reach
- Cost
- Personalization
- Relationships
- Social

Explore the Benefits of Marketing Online

- You can make changes on the fly
- You can track real-time results
- You can target specific demographics in your advertising
- Variety of methods in marketing online including email, audio, video, blog, social media and newsletters
- Instant Conversion Ability

Types of Online Marketing

- **Website - Advantages**
 - a. Gain a larger clientele base
 - b. Educate consumers about your business
 - c. Increase customer confidence
 - d. Cost effective promotion and marketing
 - e. 24 hour global presence
 - f. Keep your clients updated
 - g. Improve communication with customers
 - h. Keep the edge on competitors
 - i. Provide convenient support for your customers
 - j. Improve business to customer relationships
 - k. Diversify revenue streams
 - l. Promote your brick and mortar
 - m. Cheap market research
- **Website - Design and Maintenance**

The choices are endless, but really boil down to 2 options. Hire it done, or do it yourself. Both have costs involved, but unless you are seriously wealthy, the advantages of DIY far outweigh farming it out. The word CONTROL here comes to mind. When you choose to do it yourself, you are exercising the most powerful tool in your arsenal - you. You are in control of your own destiny here, so the amount of time and effort put into your site will directly reflect on your results. If you choose to have someone else work on your website but wish to reduce the cost, be creative about your options – have a company only do part of the work, hire a college student who is working toward a degree in a related field, hire a virtual assistant (virtual assistants work on a contract basis and often have lower rates than a conventional company) The top contenders for DIY'ers are: [AlpacaNation](#), [AlpacaStreet](#) and [Openherd](#). Once again, your choice here is personal preference. Some folks in the alpaca industry use all three, while others have a personal affection for just one or two. There is no right or wrong answer here. What works for you is more important. Remember though that just as you may have a personal preference for one or two of these sites so may some of your potential clients. Ideally if you can afford to do so, you should utilize all three of these sites.
- **SEO, or Search Engine Optimization** is an important component of your website. Good SEO can leverage your website among your competitors. You can either learn as much as you can on SEO

and manage it yourself, or pay a company to do so. Be sure to research any company you plan on using for SEO as there are many companies who boast about their success rate with SEO but who don't really generate results.

- **Blogs** - Creating and maintaining a blog is an excellent way to promote your alpaca business. Originally, blogging was created to give users a place to express themselves online, a journal or diary of sorts. It has emerged as a most powerful way to express one's thoughts, ideas, opinions and offers on the Internet. It is an industry in itself. Some of the best and most popular blogging platforms are: [Blogger](#), [Tumblr](#), [WordPress](#) and [SquareSpace](#). Openherd has a blogging feature built into their platform. It is less flexible than the other blogging platforms and does have some restrictions upon the content you can add, but if you are unable to use one of the other blogging platforms it can be a good choice. A well written and well managed blog can attract visitors using search engines and can help drive traffic to your website through the use of keywords. Make sure you create a page on your website that is linked to your blog.
- **Social Media** - If you are not using Social Media to promote your business, you are missing the boat. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Google+ and at least 335 other sites offer an endless array of venues to get your message out to the world. You may not be keen on any of these sites for your personal use, but for your business it is now almost essential to have an effective Social Media presence.

Erin Murphy, who played Tabitha on the TV show Bewitched and is also an avid alpaca owner and promoter says it best in this short YouTube video: [Erin Murphy On How To Promote A Small Business](#)

Below are links to articles discussing the ins and outs, advantages and disadvantages and tips regarding the use of Social Media in your marketing plan.

[Firmology - Setting Up a Successful Social Media Marketing Plan of Attack for Your Small Business](#)

[TechRepublic - 10 things you should consider before launching a social media marketing campaign](#)

[Google - Social Media to Promote Business](#)

[Queensland Government - Using social media to market your business: the basics](#)

[Reader's Digest - How To Use Social Media to Promote Your Business](#)

[Social Media Examiner - 26 Tips to Create a Strong Social Media Content Strategy](#)

[Forbes - How To Use Social Media To Promote Your Small Business](#)

[For Dummies - Using Social Media to Promote Your Business](#)

[Facebook - Promote Your Business Using Social Media](#)

There are literally thousands of articles on the Internet regarding Social Media marketing and how to engage them in your marketing plan.

- **Email** – used appropriately, Email marketing can generate a decent ROI and allows the user the better target prospective and existing customers. Google “Advantages of email marketing” and then “Best email marketing services” for further information.
- **Press Releases** – another excellent vehicle for advertising is also available online. There are many sites offering both paid and free sites. Once again, Google “Online press releases” and research the possibilities.
- **Classified Ads** – one more effective avenue of exposing the public to your brand. Google “Online classified ads” to find what will work best for you. Remember, FREE is good.

Marketing your alpaca business is one of the most important things you can do contribute to the success of your business. Here are ten things to keep in mind as you work on marketing your business.

- ❖ Have a marketing plan; it will help you stay on track and within your budget.
- ❖ Keep the information on your sites as current as possible. In these days of fast media communication people tend to be impatient and like things to be up to date. Old information is a big turn off to prospective clients.
- ❖ Remember that many people now view online content via a tablet or smart phone. Make sure that your online presence is easily viewed using these platforms as well as the various web browsers used on desktop and laptop computers.
- ❖ Be mindful of what you post on your social media sites. Everything you post can be perceived as a reflection of your business, and there are ways that people can access posts even if they are not directly connected to your social media page. You might love to share what you had for dinner last night or strong political opinions but remember a prospective client might end up seeing that information too. Only post what you would be comfortable having a prospective client see.
- ❖ Do something every day to market your business. Be it a blog post, adding or updating an alpaca, adding a picture - those small changes will keep people interested in your business and can also help with your search engine ratings.
- ❖ Alpacas are very photogenic and engaging. Use this to your advantage. Remember to use photography and video to help promote your business.
- ❖ You are marketing yourself as much as your alpacas. Network with other alpaca breeders, local and national organizations (both alpaca related and other) and allow your prospective customers to get a good feel for your business identity and ethics. Prospective customers need to get a true and comfortable feeling about your business.
- ❖ Find balance between the time you spend on marketing and other areas of your business that need attention. It's a tricky balancing act but it is very easy to lose sight of the big picture and managing and marketing an alpaca business is a big picture. The internet can be a big time vacuum, if necessary use a timer to monitor the time you spend online. You can also use programs such as Hootsuite that will coordinate your social media posts.
- ❖ Don't be embarrassed to seek help with marketing your business. There are many people who will give you guidance and advice, and you always have the option of engaging someone to do your marketing for you. Using someone else to do your marketing will cost you, but it is most likely a wise investment if you are not doing any marketing at all.
- ❖ Market your business over and over and over again. It takes many, many, many times of seeing your business name for people to remember and take action on it. Be patient and persistent and never believe you have done everything to market your business, there is always more you can do.