

Boost Online Campaigns with Offline Support

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Excerpt

To a results-oriented IT marketer, to what extent is the Internet effective in raising awareness and generating demand? We share 3 case studies of past experiences to show how offline tactics, executed strategically alongside online campaigns, can lend a strong boost to the creation of awareness and demand by reaching new audiences and generating buzz.

The Internet appears to be every marketer's dream medium. It has powerful capabilities, vast reach, and presents an easy way to communicate with your audience, interact, and get feedback. But to a results-oriented IT marketer, to what extent is the Internet effective in raising awareness and generating demand?

Indeed, Internet marketing makes sense in many ways. Research shows that both radio and print newspapers are continuing to lose advertising dollars to online advertising (Business Week, 2006). But while it may be tempting to consider moving your marketing budget entirely online, we recommend maintaining a good balance of offline marketing in complement to online efforts.

Offline tactics, when used strategically, can strengthen online tactics in meeting objectives of your marketing campaigns.

Online and Offline Tactics

An indicative 43% of technology marketers' online budgets are spent on advertising (MarketingSherpa, 2006). This makes up the largest share of wallet. The second largest share (29%) goes to paid search advertising.

Other online marketing tactics include holding online events such as webinars, as well as email marketing and blog marketing.

When it comes to offline marketing, tactics used are disparate. There are face-to-face events such as exhibitions, seminars and workshops. Equally popular are telemarketing, print publications and a whole range of marketing collaterals. Then there is press and analyst coverage, as well as outdoor advertising and traditional radio and TV ads – though one interesting finding shows that the majority of

tech marketers don't use TV or radio for their marketing at all (MarketingSherpa, 2006).

With this broad spectrum of online and offline marketing tactics at your disposal, how should marketing dollars be best portioned out? I'd like to share 3 case studies of past campaign experiences, where a combination of both online and offline tactics, executed strategically as part of one overarching campaign, was successful in achieving the marketing goals.

Case Study 1: Launching a Midrange Solution

Project brief: The brief was to design and execute a big bang launch for a range of new midrange solutions across several targeted markets in South East Asia. It was a market awareness and lead generation campaign. We identified two separate audiences, which called for two strategies:

1. To convince TDMs (technical decision makers) and BDMs (business decision makers) of the value and relevance of the solution, in order to drive buying decisions
2. To raise awareness among IT professionals of the technical capabilities of the solution, equipping them with information to support buying decisions of TDMs and BDMs

With these in mind, we had the opportunity to deploy a range of online and offline marketing tactics.

Online tactics: To reach the IT professionals, we designed the following online tactics:

- *Online contest:* The contest mechanism called for contestants to describe how the solution would help them in their IT

environment. The best entry would receive a prize. A contest website presented technical details of the solution, helping IT professional to imagine how the solution would be relevant to them.

- *Email series:* Over the course of three months, we sent out a series of emails at regular intervals. The call-to-action was to drive participation to the online contest.
- *Contest blog:* The best responses were regularly posted on a blog set up for the duration of the contest. It allowed other IT professionals to look at the responses. Mixed alongside these contest entries were blog entries highlighting specific features of the solution.

These online tactics worked together to pull in responses from IT professionals in the companies of customers and prospects, to strongly call out the value of the solution in their own IT environments.

Offline tactics: With the online efforts creating awareness and gathering support from IT professionals, these offline tactics were simultaneously deployed to reach TDMs and BDMs:

- *Product story:* Feature stories on the solution were written and published in our client's in-house magazine for customers. The magazines were distributed in the same timeframe as the online tactics to leverage on online/offline synergies and maximize impact.
- *Print advertisements:* These print ads in our client's customer magazine sported the same look and feel as the online material, but the messaging was tuned for a business audience.
- *Event for BDMs:* Timed after the end of the online contest, the event was an opportunity to share the contest entries with BDMs. It outlined how the solution would add value to their business environment. This would segue into presenting the business benefits of the solution and demonstrating its value.

Result: The contest entries resulted in over 20 leads generated. Contest entries included some details on the IT environments of prospective customers, providing marketers with valuable information to pursue these leads and begin a conversation with selected prospects.

Case Study 2: Launching a Campus-Wide Hosted Email Solution

Project brief: The brief was to launch a hosted email solution to the community in one

university campus. The goal was to rebrand the hosted solution and create awareness of the powerful new features in the solution.

Two strategies were required to tackle both aspects of the project:

1. Branding – To rename the solution, identify key features, craft value propositions, and design a communication template.
2. Drive Awareness – To inform and engage the campus community of the new solution and the benefits of its new features.

With branding efforts completed, we embarked on our goal of driving awareness.

Online tactics:

- *Website:* The website communicated five key features identified, and their value propositions. The feature-benefit was communicated through the use of short, compelling copy. Next, visitors were rallied to take part in an online contest to drive interactivity.
- *Online contest:* Having read the five new features, website visitors were asked to submit entries on what their favourite feature was, and why, in order to win a prize. The aim was to get the audience to try the new solution, and offer their positive feedback.
- *Email feature:* Short, succinct emails were sent every week to introduce one key feature, driving audiences to the online contest.

Offline tactics:

- *Promotional postcards:* Postcards, which could be placed around campus, were identified as a tangible takeaway for the target audience. Teaser messages were crafted about the impending launch of the new solution, as well as to promote the online contest. Leveraging the power of association, the postcards also featured the grand prize to be won, to associate our client with relevant and popular technology.
- *Giveaways to generate buzz:* The plan was to distribute free items that were related to the concept behind the new solution, at selected "hotspots" on campus. This would help generate buzz and drive further awareness of the solution as well as the contest.

Result: Both goals were reached and exceeded. The contest drew over a hundred responses, equipping our client with valuable positive feedback and customer testimonials on their experience using the solution. Our client is also geared up with a set of value propositions and copy that has received affirmation by the

community and can be repurposed for other marketing activities.

Case Study 3: Communications for Annual Forum

Project brief: To take charge of all communications, to drive attendance and support post-event communication for our client's annual knowledge sharing forum.

1. The first step was devising the messaging and design for the event.
2. Once that was finalised, all communication material that went out had the same key messages with one call-to-action – register for the event.

Online tactics:

- *Website with online registration and feedback:* An event website was set up, but more importantly, an online registration process that would automatically send confirmation emails to those who had signed up, and compile a daily list of people who registered.
- *Regular emails:* There were two set of emails – pre- and post-event. Pre-event emails went out regularly to invite customers to attend, and also to remind those who had already signed up. Post-event, the emails went out to 2 groups. Those who had registered and attended were asked to visit the website to fill in an online feedback form, download the presentations and event photos. The second group who had registered but did not turned up were pointed to the website to view presentations and event pictures.

Offline tactics:

- *Print advertisements:* To support the email invitations, full-page advertisements were published in our client's customer magazine in the lead-up to the event, pointing interested participants to the website to sign up. The magazine's C-level readers were a crucial set of targeted audience for the event. Event advertisements were meant to reinforce the email invitation.

References

Advertising Goes Off the Radio. (2006). Business Week. Retrieved on Jan 21, 2008, from http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/dec2006/tc20061207_485162.htm

MarketingSherpa's Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide (2006). 2.05 Chart: Tactical Distribution Within Online Budgets – Technology Marketers.

- *Direct mailers:* Full-colour direct mailers were sent out to selected senior decision makers, to reinforce the email invitations.

Result: The event was a success. The turnout was much larger than expected – another 200 seats were required on top of the original 500-seat arrangement.

Reflection: On hindsight, a larger goal for the event should have been – what did attendees take away from the event? Did it convince decision makers that our client's solutions were the right choice when the time came to buy? This valuable information could have been measured and tracked.

Conclusion

As shown in the three case studies, where driving awareness and generating leads are concerned, strategic execution of online and offline tactics as part of one overarching campaign can reap greater rewards than if a solely online campaign were used.

Offline tactics have an advantage in several ways. Firstly, it enables marketers to reach a different audience, as discussed in the first and third case study. Where online marketing may not prove so effective, such as when the target audience is senior decision makers, print magazines or other offline tactics may be the way to go.

Also, offline tactics such as giveaways (discussed in the second case study) help create buzz, and are especially useful where the targeted audience is a community, where information can spread very quickly through word-of-mouth.

By understanding your customers, tech marketers can now go to market in so many ways, through multiple mediums. With so many marketing tactics at your disposal, the onus is on marketers to leverage their marketing budgets for maximum effectiveness – a goal which oftentimes can only be achieved through a good mix of both online and offline tactics.