

Start up your own business on the Web



John Deans

With weekly government bailouts of failing businesses, consumer confidence at an all time low, and the world economy crashing who the heck would start a new company in today's faltering market?

One man's trash can be another man's treasure and a faltering economy for many can reveal new opportunities for others.

In July gasoline rose to over \$4 a gallon which drove yahoos like me to hunt down and pay full sticker price for hard to find hybrid vehicles. Now that gas is a \$1.50, I've been driving my truck again a couple of times a week.

My new car dealerships have been hurting for months, but many vehicle repair businesses are booming because people want their existing cars and trucks to last longer. Non-essential goods are not selling well but online MRE (meals-ready-to-eat) businesses and ammunition companies are selling out since early November.

While some people are buying beans and bullets, others are stockpiling their gas and cash to prepare for a rough year in 2009. Whatever happens this next year, commerce will be conducted at some level. Since most of us must earn to eat, services and products will have to be sold and therefore they must be advertised in some media.

Advertising for our new busi-

ness, Brenham Home Rental, was crucial to put renters in the homes quickly. We used a shotgun approach utilizing the rental sheet at the Washington Chamber of Commerce, a classified ad in *The Banner-Press*. For Rent signs in the front

yards, a mass e-mailing to clients and friends, word-of-mouth efforts, and finally a strong Web site based advertising campaign.

This multi-faceted marketing approach worked well generating dozens of calls from interested potential tenants and resulted in quick placement of great sets of renters in a very short period of time.

During the advertising period I roughly tracked where the callers became aware of the available rental homes.

Turns out the best and most qualified applicants to contact us originated from our word of mouth efforts and the Web-based activities. It really helped being a Web site guy which enabled me to quickly author and activate the Web site, but I still had to get people to the site.

Once they got there they were able to see all the rental home particulars, availability dates, neighborhood maps, and even a video virtual tour via an embedded YouTube video.

For those of you out there contemplating starting a new business and setting up a Web site

to advertise your new products and service, it is simpler than you think. After you have done the hard parts like selecting the right business model and raised the start-up capital to launch it, here are some quick tips on how to successfully advertise your new venture to the right group of potential customers.

In past articles I have written about ways to create and host your new Web site through services like HomeStead.com and HostNine.com. Please refer to DeansConsulting.com to review those articles along with any others.

You can develop the coolest Web site in the world but it will do you no good unless people visit it to view and hopefully purchase your products and services. Web site marketing is a project all to itself that will require some funding.

After starting numerous business Web sites and hosting dozens of others for clients over the past eight years, by far the

best way to quickly and effectively advertise your Web site is through Google Adwords.

I have utilized this easy-to-use service for a reasonable fee to Google.com to get qualified Web site visitors who could turn into customers.

Since Google has been the top search engine in the world for almost a decade now, that is where you want to be seen. To get started go to ads.google.com and click on the Start Now button to begin the step-by-step advertising campaign configuration process.

This process includes you filling out a form to create a small ad to appear based on the searcher's specific keywords.

What you are doing here is setting up a paid advertisement in the form of search result placement either on the right under Sponsored Links or at the top of the first search result page.

You pay nothing for the display or impression, but you do pay if someone clicks on it and

then is taken to your site.

The click-through rate varies on the number of impressions Google has to display before someone clicks though to your site. In other words, you may pay only 10 cents for a single click-through if Google displays your ad 100 times or 75 cents if they have to show it 1,000 times to get that single Web visitor.

The good thing about it is you can set a monthly budget to prevent from getting hit with a huge bill from Google. For my BrenhamHomeRental.com advertising campaign, I set a budgeted maximum of only \$20 a month and I got 32 visitors from Google Adwords' 1,100 impressions of my ad, which totaled only \$11 that month.

I got numerous calls from just those 32 visitors so I know they were quality click-throughs.

Google Adwords also provides some excellent statistics and helpful analysis to help you pick and prioritize your keywords. They enable you to have

your ad seen by only people located in specific zip codes or areas you choose. You can also pause your campaign like I have now that the homes are rented until late next year.

Being able to have your Web site found on page one of a Google search can be done for free but it can take months if not years to get that kind of premium placement. Google Adwords provides you the ability to have your Web site advertised immediately at the top of peoples search results for a small fee.

Bottom line: If the time is right for you to seize the day and start up your own business on the Web, then check out Google Adwords for immediate and effective advertising on the Internet.

Next week's column: 2008 review.

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