

Maximizing Your Marketing Dollars in a Recession



The economic downturn is the reason why nearly 70% of B2B marketers reduced or froze their [marketing budgets for 2009](#). Reacting to the global economic climate, B2B companies are spending their budgets more cautiously and paying closer attention to both metrics and results. Marketing and sales departments are under increasing pressure to deliver more for less, and there is little to no room for error.

The data shows that of the companies that have chosen to increase their marketing spend, 74% are increasing the amount spent on online strategies. Only 27.5% are decreasing online spending in the face of cuts, compared to the 58% of companies choosing to decrease print spending. [Forrester's also released statistics](#) showing that the budget for online marketing initiatives is being migrated from traditional marketing, with direct mail, newspapers, and magazines taking the biggest hits at 40%, 35% and 28% respectively.

These figures show that in times of need, digital initiatives have become the go-to answer for budget-strapped marketers to get the most out of their campaigns.

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HTC has a few helpful tips for those companies seeking to scale back on costly traditional media and invest in cost-effective Web strategies in the following areas:

1. Email Marketing
2. Online Automation
3. Search Marketing & Search Engine Optimization
4. Content Generation & Social Media
5. Vendor Consolidation

1. Email Marketing

When used properly, Email marketing with tools like IgnitionWeb's Mailing List Manager can help channel leads generated through your website into the sales phase, and drip marketing can push them further along. "Drip marketing," says Freddy Davy, Account Director at HTC, "is a way of sending frequent, useful content and reminders to prospects and clients. This can be in the form of emails, newsletters or surveys and can be integrated with direct mail initiatives." How effective

your site and email marketing initiatives are at achieving good conversion rates are easily measured by statistics. "The great thing about email marketing," adds Liesl Barrell, Project Coordinator, "is that you can analyze the data in real time, which gives you plenty of leeway to experiment with profiling, targeting, and personalization to get optimal results."



Pay special attention to:



The subject line: this is the first thing the recipient sees, and helps them decide whether or not to open the message.



The "from" address: will your email be more effective coming from "Bob Smith <bob.smith@acme.org>" or from "Sales Department <sales@acme.org>"? Trial and error, as well as intuition, will help you make these calls.



Break up the text: bullet points, headings, quotes, subheads and short lists help give a nice balance between white space and content.



The P.S.: we have all adapted to scan things on our screens, and a short P.S. line catches our eye, especially if the body of the email fits well in one screenful.

2. Online Automation

Your website can be customized to reduce manual tasks required of your sales, support and administrative teams. "You'd be surprised at how effectively your site can be used to reduce costs," states Davy. "In fact, some tasks can be almost entirely shifted online. This gets your clients to do 90% of the work for you and helps to keep your staff off the phones."



Examples of online automation include:



Mailings: using a tool like [IgnitionWeb's Mailing List Manager](#) can help create automated, personalized mailings that can be set up and left to run. You can follow statistical data to track open and click-through rates and tweak the campaign strategy accordingly as weeks and months go by.



Forms: here is a list of the kinds of forms that can increase productivity through automation:

- **Application forms:** clients or prospects can apply for services online, or apply to access a password-protected community or e-commerce-enabled portion of your site.
- **Quote Requests:** prospects can request quotes for different products and/or services directly through the site.
- **Feedback:** clients can offer feedback directly through your website.
- **Support:** clients can report issues or ask questions about a product or service using a support form.
- **Surveys:** clients can fill out details about their experience with your company and rate their level of satisfaction using your products and services.
- **Join a Mailing List:** clients, prospects, investors, and/or job seekers can opt-in to mailing lists and profile questions can be customized to identify useful targeting criteria.
- **Job Applications:** job seekers can fill out applications for specific positions directly through the site, which can then be sorted and rated by HR with minimal effort.
- **Event Registration:** clients and prospects can register for events and activities online, and the planning team can view and process registrations per event.
- **Polls:** site visitors can vote for Administrator-defined responses to poll questions, and the statistics can be used to improve strategy.



e-Commerce: shifting to an ERP-integrated e-Commerce solution (or creating a new one based on a tool like [IgnitionWeb's Boutique Manager](#)) can significantly reduce support and sales costs by allowing clients to place/track orders online and pay directly through your website.

3. Search Marketing & Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

"A little Google goes a long way," says Barrell. "An AdWords campaign is a great place to start in these times because you can easily set a fixed budget. And unlike social media, like Facebook ads that are more useful for B2C right now, keywords can be more easily targeted specifically to reach potential customers seeking B2B vendors." If committing to an AdWords campaign is a little bigger than you want to go, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tactics are an easy way to improve search engine rankings and more successfully positioning your offering. Effective SEO makes your site easier to index by search engines like Google, and easier for potential customers to find. The easier it is to search for your offering and/or company, the more leads your site will generate.



Pay attention to:



Page Titles: your browser page title is what will often appear in search results as the link to that page. Google and other search engines pay special attention to page titles, so make sure each page has its own and the nomenclature is consistent (e.g. "ACME: About Us-President's Message" or "President's message: ACME")



Meta Descriptions: while keywords are no longer as important to ensure good SEO (misuse has led many engines to ignore them), meta descriptions are still very useful and will often appear as the page description under the link in search results.



Links: the more sites that link to you, the better. If you have multiple divisions, or different sites for international branches, get them all to link to your site. Likewise, if you are affiliated with any organizations, regulatory bodies, charities or sister companies, offer to link to them if they'll link back to you. Search engines are getting better and better at understanding the relationships between different sites, and the more of a presence you build, the better your rankings. Notes Davy, "This is especially helpful for companies with relatively common names, as it can help inch you on to that all-important first results page." The general rule for link behaviour is for external links (going to another site) to open in a new window/tab and internal links (going to another page within the current site) to open in the same window/tab.

4. Content Generation & Social Media

“Another important factor in SEO is the frequency, quantity and quality of your site content,” Barrell points out. A good Content Management System (CMS) like [IgnitionWeb](#) can help get non-technical staff to contribute dynamic content to your site and publish on a variety of topics and in a wide range of styles. “Think of Google as a goldfish that needs to be fed,” says Davy. “You don’t want to overfeed it, but just the right amount will keep it happy.” Additional tactics include



interviewing key personnel to increase their exposure when prospects search their names and keeping entries short and easy-to-read to help users scan it quickly. Depending on your industry, social media can also be used to leverage extra value from your site: maybe one of your engineers blogs about valves or a sales representative twitters about the distribution business. “A lot of companies are hesitant to latch on to social media,” adds Barrell, “and it may not be the best thing for all CEOs to start blogging, but in some instances it can add a lot of value if the content is appropriate, well-written and a little addictive.”

Do’s and don’ts:



PDFs: if you use a lot of PDF documentation, always indicate that it’s a PDF in the link text or with a PDF icon. Users do not like being surprised by a PDF document.



Schedule: committing to a publishing schedule can help investors know that you post a press release every Wednesday, or clients know that you update your blog every day, etc. Helping your dynamic content fit into someone’s routine gets users more inclined to pursue it every day/week/month and can establish a predictable traffic rhythm that you can use to your advantage when making important announcements.

Examples of dynamic content:

- News & newsletters
- White Papers
- Articles & interviews
- FAQs, tips & troubleshooting guides
- Events & post-event write-ups/photos
- Case studies
- Reports & analyses
- Blog postings & tweets

5. Vendor Consolidation

Another way to save on marketing costs is to seek out a vendor that can handle all your needs. When multiple projects are handled in-house it can minimize the discovery and analysis phases, reduce aggregate communication time, and allow for more careful budgeting and greater accountability. "Getting all your marketing and communications needs met by one vendor can help get the most out of your budget," says Davy. "At HTC, for example, we routinely handle integrated solutions, where our clients come to us with a variety of media requirements and we put together an integrated marketing communications program." Watch out for vendor outsourcing, which can sometimes be counter-productive to this goal. "There are plenty of shops who'll take on a Web project they don't have the brawn to deliver themselves," agrees Barrell. "And the extra communication costs related to middleman agencies sub-contracting development can be significant."



With some careful planning and research, marketers can weather the storm and still get results by adopting some of these simple methods to leverage the full potential of their digital assets.

For more information on how to get the most out of your website or how to transition from print to Web strategies, contact:

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