



Net Gains: Going From Offline to Online With Direct Response

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Response



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Everyone in DRTV knows that the Internet is changing the direct response game. But those who aren't adapting their playbook to this specific playing field are missing out on a big win.

Sure, throwing up a Web site is a great first step. DRTVers who've done so have seen the percentage of customers responding online skyrocket. But, that's just using the Internet as a fulfillment channel for television. Online can be a major acquisition channel, as well. The way to go about it, however, is completely different.

Online direct response is similar in that it should be offer-driven and appeal to the same emotional drivers — fear, greed, guilt, exclusivity and ego. Human motivations have not changed, but the way we consume information has.

The main difference is that TV is a largely passive medium. We sit back and open ourselves up to be entertained. DRTVers take advantage of this by using storytelling and dramatics to hook their audience — and then let the pitch unfold.

By contrast, the Internet is an active medium. People go there to do stuff: check E-mail, book airline and hotel reservations, conduct research, shop and more. Given this, these consumers don't have the attention span or the patience for a long-winded pitch. They browse to glean the gist in a few seconds. And if you haven't hooked them with your offer by then — click — they're gone.

Patience Is Not a Web Surfer Virtue

One of the biggest mistakes DRTVers make when moving online is shoehorning what works on TV into a landing page. They'll throw up a several-minute-long video on auto-play and put up a flash headline that takes 30 seconds or more to get to the deal.

You think Internet surfers want to wait for you to get to the point? (Before answering, you might consider what you do when you're forced to sit through an online video.) A study of load times conducted by Marketing Experiments found that after 15 seconds, only 51 percent of users continue to wait. By 30 seconds, that number drops to 5 percent. While this study measures "page" load time, the principle holds true for "message" load time as well.

When designing your landing page, make sure it gets to the point quickly. Employ a dominating headline that clearly communicates both the product value and the deal so it can be absorbed in a matter of seconds.

Information Overload Is a Bad Thing

It's bad enough that fancy flash animations and auto-play videos take too long to get to the point. The other problem is competing — and thus confusing — messaging. How do you expect anyone to read your sales copy with a loud video playing and an animated headline flashing?

Auto-play video is a disruptive negative — and it could get people in trouble if it starts playing when they're at the office and supposed to be working. Having video on your site is great. But if lasts more than 5-10 seconds, make playing it a user option.

Drive Them to Order

The point of the landing page is to take prospects who have demonstrated interest by clicking your ad and converting them into customers. Graphics and everything else should lead the eye to the order form. But most landing pages we get from DRTVers have the order form and even the offer at the bottom of the page! Wrong. Countless landing page optimization studies prove that conversions are higher when the form starts above the fold.

Keep 'Em Captive

A landing page with a lot of navigation links is not a landing page. It's a Web site. And every one of those links is an opportunity for your prospects to get their attention diverted. You've got them in the showroom. Why are you showing them the door? Again, research proves removing navigation drives higher conversions.

There are many ways to drive higher conversions online. Remembering that surfers possess a short attention span and keeping your online efforts simple and focused on the sale equates to success.

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