

WNB Winning Strategies

Volume 1, Number 4

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Spill the Beans. Permission marketing can yield a greater return on investment than conventional interruption messaging in broadcast and print media. The trick is enticing customers to register for company news and offers by E-mail. In addition to "opt-in" links on Web site pages, many companies are using sweepstakes, direct mail, "advergaming" and blogs to secure permissions to market. [\(Read more\).](#)

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Spill The Beans

Success breeds success. So, given the increasingly high costs of traditional or interruption advertising, it's no wonder that permission marketing is becoming a priority for businesses of every size.

Permission marketing promotes cooperative interaction between companies and consumers. People are encouraged to register to receive updates and future special offers from the company by E-mail using a variety of incentives, including free information (newsletters, educational videos, CDs or DVDs, special reports), discounts, special product offers coupons, and automatic sweepstakes entries. When they register, they give companies the personal information that results in the sending of highly customized marketing materials.

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At its best, permission marketing is an enterprise-wide solution that gathers client information at every contact point and then centralizes this information to create series of individualized customer communications. Collectively, these client-specific mail and E-mail messages provide the relevance that's essential to nurturing the lifetime value of customers for the company.

Permission marketing often focuses on current customers. Why? Knowledge about buying habits and interests can facilitate powerful one-to-one marketing efforts. Also, your company's history of providing quality goods or services makes current buyers more receptive to appeals. By comparison, the option of running advertising to attract new customers is expensive, especially since average consumers need to be exposed to an advertisement 27 times before it has the desired effect.

Launching a permission marketing effort usually leverages retail location visits, Website traffic, direct mail and traditional advertising campaigns, as well as customer loyalty programs. Unsolicited E-mail distributions that are not used as SPAM complaints could cause problems with a company's E-mail service provider and with the Internet Service Providers used by millions of consumers worldwide. Here are some of the creative ways companies get permission to market:

Sweepstakes. H&R Block convinced more than 50,000 people to visit its Website to answer tax trivia questions by giving people a chance to have H&R Block pay up to \$25,000 of the sweepstake winner's taxes. During a 10-week period, sweepstakes participants learned about the firm's premium tax service and many opted in to receive more updates and special offers from the tax-preparation giant.

3-D Mail. Transcontinental, a printing company, got the attention of many business clients with its "Get the right combination" dimensional mail campaign. It delivered metallic combination lock boxes with luggage tags inviting recipients to go on-line to complete a 15-question survey. Web site visitors received the combination to open the box, each of which contained a Transcontinental pen as a gift.

Magazine Offers. MediZine, a marketer of health products and services, is one of many companies offering free publication subscriptions in exchange for returning detailed survey cards. Its REMEDY magazine and other titles including Healthy Living, Diabetes Focus, and MDminute all have large circulations that are attractive to advertisers – particularly since so much is known about the readers from survey cards.

"Advergaming." Branded online games for Jeep Compass, Chrysler Sebring, and scores of other companies are siphoning off a portion of the estimated 73 million people a year playing games over the Internet. Averaging 13 hours of online game playing each week, Internet game players spend an average of 28 minutes per gaming Web site (four times the seven-minute average for standard Web site visits) and often forward gaming links to friends. The best "advergaming" sites make it easy for players to opt in for updates and special offers.

Company blogs. Nearly 10 percent of Fortune 500 companies maintain blogs, and many entrepreneurs have embraced these online journals because sharing useful information enhances business credibility. Blog messaging should be consistent with company priorities. So, it's a best practice to have blogs written by in-the-know senior executives. This is particularly true for publicly-traded companies because of the Securities and Exchange Commission requirements for full and timely disclosure. Blog sites should ask visitors to register online for updates and special offers from the company.

When customers say "yes" to news and offers by E-mail, it's vital to deliver relevant messages. Think birthday, holiday and anniversary salutes; thank you notes for purchases; electronic coupons; sale notices; and new product launches. It's also vital to keep nurturing relationships by mail and by phone. ©NWC

Winning Web Site Traits

Famous for his dictum “Less is more” Ludwig Mies van der Rohe created lasting, neutral spaces with architecture based on material honesty and structural integrity. His renowned, simplified architecture — including the Seagram Building in New York, and both Crown Hall and Lakeshore Drive Apartments in Chicago — is a style that could serve any Webmaster well.

In fact, the cyber equivalent of his minimalist design is widely embraced by top Web sites worldwide. One need only visit www.google.com, www.ask.com, www.myspace.com, www.microsoft.com, www.ebay.com or www.amazon.com to see efficient Web offerings on neutral white backgrounds that speed loading times and make for a more reliable Web experience for visitors, regardless of operating systems (Windows, Mac, Linux), Web browsers (Internet Explorer, Netscape, Mozilla, Opera, Safari, Camino, etc.), or personal viewing preferences.

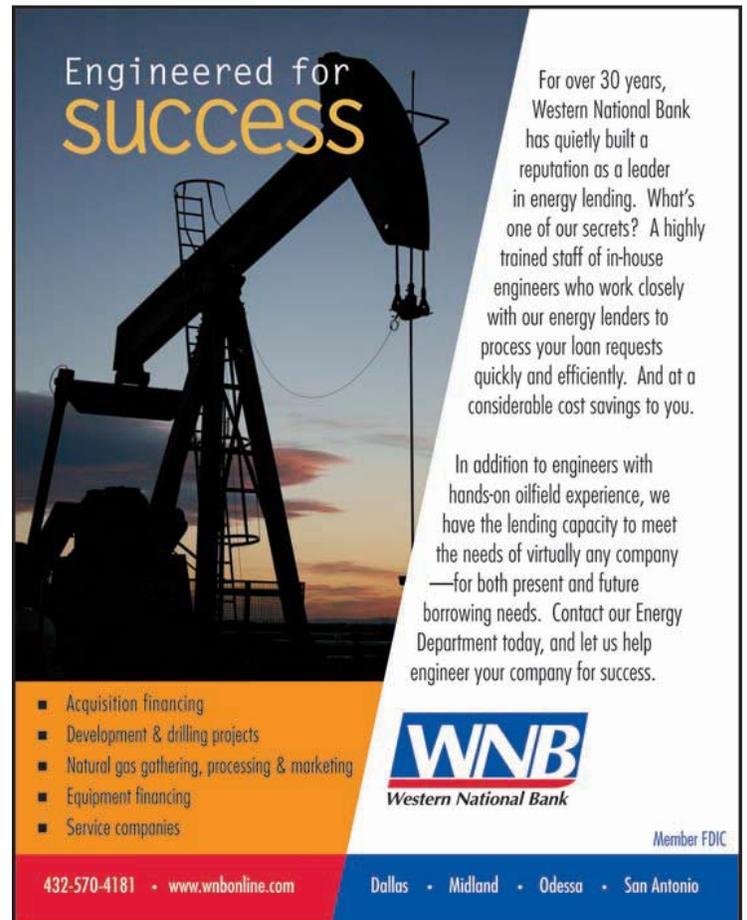
Businesses of every size should learn from these industry leaders. They should focus exclusively on presenting relevant information to visitors and use color sparingly. Studies show that Website home pages are visited for 30-seconds or less. So it is vital to hook visitors with the information they want, and without the distractions of slow loading times or shades of color that could look poor on one system and fine on another due to personal computer setting differences.

Here are more ways to please more visitors more often:

1. Create your site so it has fluid page dimensions that automatically fit whatever screen resolution the visitor is using. Or, lay out with fixed widths appropriate for worst-case screen resolutions (800 x 600 pixels or 640 x 480 pixels). Designing for higher screen resolutions means some visitors must scroll horizontally to see entire pages.
2. Establish a topical navigation bar, and make it consistent on every page of the site. Present the smallest number of meaningful topics, and also offer a site-specific search engine.
3. Reinforce your navigation bar and search engine with shortcuts to popular visitor destinations. People organize and seek information in different ways.
4. Make your navigation system usable by all visitors, and include a site map (unless your site is just a few pages).
5. Reduce the size of text blocks and add white space for readability.
6. Eliminate unnecessary design, including stand-alone splash pages, large, spinning graphics or video streams. Many Internet users have dial-up connectivity instead of the DSL, cable, T1 or T3 high-speed access. If you want movement, consider a single Flash home-page header that plays only once.
7. Avoid making your navigation menu dependent on a specific browser or feature. If you have JavaScript enabled on your site, provide an alternative facility for visitors who do not have JavaScript enabled on their computers.
8. Be sure that every page of your site has a descriptive title tag written as a sentence instead of a string of keywords. When people

review search engine results, they need to see immediate relevance.

9. Minimize visitor confusion or frustration. Keep pop-up windows off your site. Also, avoid having off-site links open in new browser windows. Many Internet users don't know how to manage more than one window at a time. Others have restricted browsers to prevent pop-ups, and still others are simply frustrated by pop-ups.
10. Keep graphic images as small as possible.
11. Give free stuff (exclusive content, E-zine subscription, resource directory, online classes, entries into a sweepstakes, software download links, services or utilities, etc.)
12. Offer printer-friendly pages throughout your site. Visitors can't enjoy printing out truncated or fractured documents.
13. Check links regularly for “Page Not Found” or 404 errors.
14. Add testimonials and success stories.
15. Update frequently, preferably with a user-friendly content-management system that allows staff to update content without burdening your Webmaster.
16. Replace any industry jargon with customer-friendly language.
17. Use Web analytics to test, measure and optimize the visitor experience. Where are people going? How long are they staying?



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Hiring Secrets

Name an outstanding professional or collegiate sports team. You likely will select one in which the excellence of starting players is reinforced by a strong bench of talented substitutes – all of whom exhibit a passion for unselfish play. Ask an accomplished team leader, like Dean Smith, the most winning college basketball coach in history, what to look for in an athlete. You likely would hear a variation of **“Recruit for attitude. Train talent for success.”**

Business executives eager to grow companies should remember this coaching priority. When making hiring decisions, they also could benefit from a variety of other strategies and tactics to get the best candidates for employment.

The minute a key employee retires, or leaves to pursue another career opportunity, it’s time to optimize the job description for the position you now want to fill. Solicit feedback from every team member who’ll interact with the new hire. Identify specific objectives and timelines for completion. Determine core strengths candidates should have to be effective in your work environment. Prioritize the required hard and soft skills that are essential (minimum qualifications). Then, describe what you want from candidates ideally.

Post the job description for internal candidates to see it, and consider advertising it on one or more Internet job sites, including Craigslist, Monster, CareerBuilder, MarketLadder, JobThread, and SimplyHired. Alternatively, or in addition, you could post the job description on industry-specific blog sites frequented by your target audience, as well as on social networking sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Bebo, and MySpace, where tens of millions visit daily. Yes, advertising job openings remains an option for those who want to reach a fraction of the professionals who may be interested in your job.

Sift through timely candidate applications, knowing that many résumés exaggerate accomplishments. Conduct interviews strategically. Get past rehearsed answers, and on to measurable results. Have a set number of questions to ask each candidate, following questions up with a free-form discussion period. Meaningful initial questions include: Why do you want the job? What makes you think you are the best person for the job? Where do you want your career to go?

Probe deeply. Use a series of related questions. For example, if we hire you, how will you bring in new business? How has that approach worked for you in the past? Tell us another way you could bring in new business? How have you adjusted your approach when initial business development efforts are not generating sufficient results?

Expect specificity in responses, and prepare questions in advance so executives involved in the hiring process do not lead candidates to desired responses.

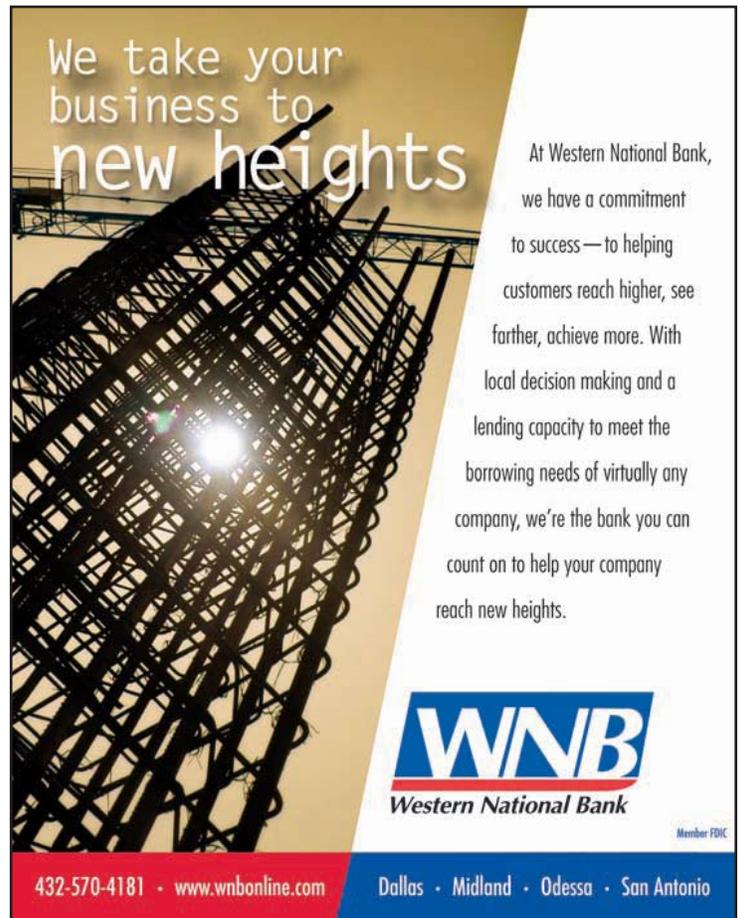
Remember, it is vital to hire only people who excite you and your colleagues. Does the candidate think well on his or her

feet? Does he or she ask intelligent questions? Regardless of qualifications, is he or she a good fit for your work environment?

Settling for someone, when you and your clients could be dazzled is a big mistake. After all, recruiting costs per hire average more than \$4,200 nationwide. Plus, terminating any bad hires, after allowing for lost productivity, training costs, additional recruiting costs, severance packages as well as legal costs can well exceed the annual salaries for those positions.

So, avoid making a quick decision. Take the time to really evaluate the most promising candidates, instead of locking in on the first person you think could do the job. It’s good to meet the best prospects more than once. It’s also good to Google job finalists, and to check social networking sites. In fact, a March Ponemon Institute survey shows **35 percent of hiring managers do online background checks using Google, and 23 percent research social networking sites. The result? About a third of their Web searches lead to rejections.**

Finally, before you extend an offer, be sure the position is challenging enough to keep the new hire energized and growing professionally. Resist the temptation to place an overqualified candidate into a less-than-challenging position. Then make sure performance bars and performance-based incentives can be raised to provide the stimulating environment top performers crave.



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At Western National Bank, we have a commitment to success—to helping customers reach higher, see farther, achieve more. With local decision making and a lending capacity to meet the borrowing needs of virtually any company, we’re the bank you can count on to help your company reach new heights.

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different angle**

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What's your best angle?



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