

**THE EFFICIENCY OF VIRAL MARKETING USE**  
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The key to the success of any business largely depends on the way it is promoted to a large customer base. There are many ways by which a business can be promoted, but viral marketing is considered to be one of the best methods for those who want maximum exposure but have limited resources for marketing.

Viral marketing, also known as viral advertising, is a marketing technique used to build the public awareness of one's product or company. The concept of viral marketing has been around for a long time now, even for centuries. There was just no specific name for it until 1997, when Steve Jurvetson, a venture capitalist, came up with the term 'viral marketing' to describe Hotmail's marketing practice then.

The objective of this work is to illustrate the ways of applying viral marketing strategy and to prove the efficiency of its use.

Nowadays, viral marketing has become a popular means of advertising and marketing because it can reach a huge number of people at a relatively low cost. It generally takes one of three forms: videos, e-mails and interactive games.

- Videos are the most common form of viral marketing. Videos can reach the most people and, therefore, tend to be the best at creating brand awareness.
- E-mails generally involve creating an enticing offer, the one, which people will automatically forward onto their friends. This creates a direct call to action but requires something of real value, or people simply won't forward the e-mail.
- Interactive games are excellent data collection tools. Fewer people will be reached compared to a video, but you're able to build a database that you can continue to market to. Interactive games tend to be especially effective when combined with a micro site.

Naturally, the choice of the type of viral should depend on the target audience. Younger people tend to play more games than adults generally do. Women prefer e-mails and videos, and are more likely to forward viral content to friends, especially if it includes helpful information and special offers.

There are different ways to apply viral marketing strategy:

1. Pass-along. This is the most common type of viral marketing. Web sites that ask their users to tell-a-friend about their products and services are examples of pass-along messaging. However, there is a risk of the message being labelled as 'spam' by e-mail providers. Thus, it is important that the 'form' and 'subject' lines do not contain any word that may be tagged as spam.

2. Incentivised viral. This is a marketing technique used by companies in which users are offered rewards when they refer somebody to the company. This becomes more effective when the referred person needs to take action for the reward to be given.

3. Undercover. The most difficult viral to spot, undercover marketing sends a viral message that is disguised as just an unusual page or piece of news without obvious link citations.

4. Edgy gossip or buzz marketing. This type is most common in the entertainment world. A good example is the spread of different controversies, like getting married or divorced, involving the stars of a movie that is yet to be released. This is like a word-of-mouth advertising for the movie.

The Internet viral marketing or viral marketing, in general, is one of the best, if not the best ways of marketing a certain product or service. Here are some reasons why viral marketing is the most efficient way to market:

1. First of all, it is free, and this is the best reason. One can argue that it is not totally free. However, the only costs for the Internet viral marketing are the costs associated with the Internet connection and some minor tools for getting on track. One can also do an economic valuation of the time spent for viral marketing, but every other marketing technique consumes time.

2. Availability of techniques. There are many ways of doing viral marketing, especially through the Internet. Literally, there are many different ways of spreading a marketing message through the web. The most popular way is to use affiliate programs. They give incentives for webmasters to put up one's banner. The webmasters earn some profit whenever the banner is clicked by the visitors. One can look into the option of giving away free stuff to other people to get their attention and be agents of the viral marketing endeavour. One can also give away free web space, free articles, free newsletters, free software, free graphics, free screensavers, etc.

3. Impact of viral marketing. Viral marketing, if done properly, will not only convey a marketing message, it will let the message stick to people's minds. Creativeness comes into play when using viral marketing as a strategy. Everything starts with a bright idea and this idea is then put into operation with careful planning and execution.

What concerns marketing techniques, advertisers should carefully select the most optimal that will work well for their business. Here are some popular examples:

- Articles. They can be written by an advertiser about the business, making certain the site and the advertiser's contact information will be included, and placed at the byline, and the message at the end of the article. The advantage of this technique is that people who like the articles can e-mail them to their contacts, or they can publish them on their own newsletters or web sites.

- E-books. They can be shared to others for free, enclosed with an attractive ad that showcases the most in-demand product line of the business. Recipients should be allowed to share the e-book to others.

- Software. Free software can be shared with others, be it a trial or a light version. Then include the ad complete with links to the site and contact information.

- Web hosting. An advertiser can offer free hosting services to small businesses in exchange for placement of banners that promotes the site of the advertiser.

- Awards. They can be created and given out to other web sites for any reason. For instance, the advertiser can create a good-looking button that the award recipient can attach to their web sites, and when others click on the button, it leads directly to the site of the advertiser.

- Affiliate programs. They create financial incentive for sites for linking with others. This can be created to encourage the placement of links that provides information to products and services.

- Newsletters. An advertiser can encourage users to forward a newsletter to friends. It is recommended to create a newsletter that is funny and attention-grabbing, and the links to the advertiser's site will be included in it.

In reality, the vast majority of companies can use the effectiveness of viral marketing, particularly with its relative low cost, the potential to reach a great number of people, its brand interaction value, and the way that it can be used as a data collection tool, to generate traffic or awareness. Thus, all of these things prove that viral marketing can boost the sales, promote any company or website without the hassle of doing a really hard work.