

Online Dating Marketing Guide

First let me tell you about us. We have been selling online dating software since 2001 and were one of the first companies to offer online dating software to the general public. Not only do we sell dating software but we have in the past also run our own profitable dating sites. This guide is based on our experience gained over several years of activity in this field.

In the next few minutes you'll learn some of the secrets and tips for running a successful online dating business.

Please be aware that this document is a guide and does not offer guarantees for the performance of your business nor to the effectiveness of our suggestions. Here is the legal stuff:

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You have heard the maxim that if something sounds too good to be true then it probably is? Well it is true. Any business requires hard work and dedication to achieve success. As Thomas Jefferson aptly stated, "*I'm a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it*". Success is where hard work meets opportunity. First identify the opportunity and then work hard to achieve your success.

You have to think of the Internet in terms of a patch of fertile soil. Your site is a seed that you plant in that soil. It takes time for your site to get established on the internet, getting listed in search engines, developing relationships with other related sites, achieving some depth in your content and benefiting from word of mouth. Although it can start slowly, in time the seed will grow and establish roots - but it does take constant care and attention. My personal experience is that it can be a little like compound interest, it didn't seem much at first but after a while it grows at a very fast rate.

For most people entering the online dating market, the opportunities lie within niche dating and adult dating (or swinger) sites. Unless you have a large marketing budget or some very creative ideas you are not going to be able to compete with the larger established sites. By *niche market* I mean specific dating sites. Some examples of niche dating sites are regional dating, sites for divorcees, career related dating, specific sports communities, disabled people, over 50's and sites that are not put into the general dating category.

Niche dating sites can make money. Not as much as match.com but you can make enough to support you and your family or provide a generous second income. We have clients that are doing just that on their niche market dating sites. You only need to capture a small slice of the market to enjoy a reasonable return.

Now here are some preliminary steps to take once you have your dating site setup.

1. Content is KEY! If you don't have profiles then you're not going to make any money. Do not create fake profiles for they will just get you into trouble later on. Start it right and have friends and family put theirs on if they are interested. Once you have a profile base you can start charging for memberships. Initially it can be wise to keep the site free either by offering a free trial membership or by ad supporting the site. The more content you have, the better. Content also plays a big role in search engine optimization. With our software, you can export your members to HTML and that can be indexed legitimately by search engines. Plus, our software is SEO friendly. Search engines love content. Content can be rich keyword text from static pages to members' profiles, blogs, and forum posts etc.

2. It is important to have a nice design added to the site. One that is unique and specific to your area. As more and more potential customers are using broadband you can afford to be more creative with the design work. Web 2.0 sites tend to have a lighter design and more access to content but your design should still be attractive and above all else useable. Usability is a key phrase for modern site design and development. It should be simple for your users to navigate the site and find the information they are looking for in the shortest possible timeframe.

2. Add a link page to your site and swap links with other sites with other dating sites. Avoid link farms, auto-links and exchanging links with sites that are not related to your site as these will do you far more harm than good and can even have your site penalized. Starting a link exchange program will highly benefit your Google Page Rank. The more high ranking sites you are linked with, the better. Try to add your site to new places every day.

3. Tell your friends and tell them to tell their friends about your site. It is even better if they can put a profile up. A good way to market the site is via word of mouth. Try to build a strong community feel to your site and your customers will help you market it. Word of mouth is free and works.
4. Get your site listed with as many high page rank dating directories as you can. This is a good way to get on the search engines and get traffic and to improve linkage. Don't bother with the ones that expect a home page link but have a links page from your main page. Also look for related sites like romance, relationship advice, online greeting cards etc. to link to. Make sure you place your site in high ranking directories and sites. To find out a sites Page Rank, download the Google toolbar.
5. Go to Google.com and do a search for online dating. Then go to the top 20 sites listed and email them and get a link exchange going. Doing this for all your keywords is a good idea. These sites are at the top of Google and they can only benefit your site.
6. Do not SPAM. Use email marketing sparingly and even then only use reputable firms with clean opt-in lists. It is surprising how quickly you can become blacklisted and this is not good for business. I recommend not using any email marketing at all.
7. Once you have at least several hundred profiles then start your affiliate program and let them market your site for you. The affiliate software is included with the dating software and will help you get your site out there. Promote your affiliate program to everybody you know. The more affiliates you have marketing your site, the bigger it will become.
8. Try and get involved in related message boards or forums and post articles on these sites with your link at the bottom. Press releases and actively blogging can also keep your site in the public eye and also provide good search engine linkage. Because search engines love message boards and index all the text/links on them. Be sure to ask the site admin if this is ok first since it could be a form of spamming, they might not let you. This is free publicity and if the site has a good Page Rank then it doesn't hurt to have your URL there!
10. Get listed on DMOZ, www.dmoz.org it's free and although it has become less important in recent years it can still help boost your site ranking and visibility. Avoid the mass site submission programs. I would recommend doing manual submissions to the key sites as often they provide the core data for other search engines anyway.

Now for some basic definitions:

What is a Page Rank?

Page Rank is a numeric value that represents how important a page is on the web. Google figures that when one page links to another page, it is effectively casting a vote for the other page. The more votes that are cast for a page, the more important the page must be. Also, the importance of the page that is casting the vote determines how important the vote itself is. Google calculates a page's importance from the votes cast for it. How important each vote is taken into account when a page's Page Rank is calculated.

You can download a toolbar for Internet Explorer from <http://toolbar.google.com>. Once installed, there will be a bar graph at the top of the browser showing a version of Page Rank for the page you're browsing. When you hold the mouse over the bar, you see a number from zero to ten. (If you don't see the number, you may have an older version of the toolbar installed. You will need to completely uninstall it, reboot your computer and reinstall the latest version. Once this is done, you should be able to see the Page Rank number.) You can View Google results in a Page Rank order at Google Directory.

Search Engine Optimization:

BEWARE - No one has "Special Relationships" with search engine companies. No one can guarantee a number 1 ranking on any search engines. Beware of those who spam you with special offers to put you in the top positions. Beware of those who want to charge thousands to put you in the top. Truth is, you can do it yourself and at NO COST to you.

Affiliate Program:

Affiliate programs are a good way to market your site. Because they can improve your Page Rank and offer a no risk method of marketing.

The way it works is that someone comes to your site and clicks on Webmaster, Affiliate Program or whatever link you have that takes you to the Affiliate program and they fill out an application. Once you approve the application, they are sent a special reference code number. That number is the Affiliate Unique Refer Number. Say for example, I sign up as an Affiliate of your dating site. Then I'm sent my special Refer number of 34. That number 34 is what differentiates me from other Affiliates. I would then put that special link on my site.

Once someone comes to my site, then they click on that link, it takes them to your dating site. The dating software then records the incoming link to the appropriate Refer number. It then follows that user when they register and then go on to pay. The Affiliate Program is threefold, one, is that it increases your traffic, two is that it increases your Page Rank due to the link being on my site and three, it puts money from

members you wouldn't normally have, in your pocket. There is nothing wrong with free money. So, as you can see the Affiliate Program is essential for your dating site.

Because you only pay the affiliate when their traffic converts into cash, there is no risk in investing lots of money in advertising that may not provide a return.

Promote Your Site:

Another good idea is to hire your cousin or son or daughter or anyone for that matter to put fliers on cars parked outside night clubs and bars. Put them on the windshields. Also, talk to your local clubs and bars and see if you can put postcards in the bathrooms of the establishments. Maybe give a few bucks to the store owner or the bathroom attendant to help you out. The bathroom attendants will work hard for a few extra dollars. So, don't worry about being told no. Buy some small print ads in local newspapers and magazines. Contact them about last minute deals. They always give discounts at last minute to fill in empty spaces. Those work really well.

Keep Your Site Updated:

Search engines love sites that are constantly updated. I suggest updating your pages with new text every month. By updating, I mean add new text or new pages. Make sure you have links to the new pages from your existing pages. By adding new pages to your site, you create content and increase Page Rank and Page Rank is good!