

ONLINE MARKETING REVIEW: Recommendations & Resources

ASK THE EXPERT SESSION SUMMARY

- Additional resources, articles, white papers and research available at: www.MilesMedia.com/insight

1. HAVE A PLAN & INTEGRATE.

It can be short and very simple – but have a clear plan of what you are trying to achieve online. Your online marketing plan should have clear, specific and measurable goals. Set a budget (an online marketing budget should typically be 20-50% of your total marketing budget) and make sure online efforts are integrated with your offline marketing.

2. SMART BALANCE OF PAID AND ORGANIC TRAFFIC.

Develop a smart blend of organic (search engine) and online advertising sources of traffic. Move resources between different channels depending on the results and Return on Investment of each.

Figure 1. An Integrated Approach to Online Marketing



Source: Miles Media.

3. MONITOR, MEASURE & MANAGE.

Install, use and report from a good web analytics solution. Google Analytics is a free, powerful reporting option. Make sure you are regularly reviewing this information and making decisions on your web site and online marketing based on what is working and what is not.

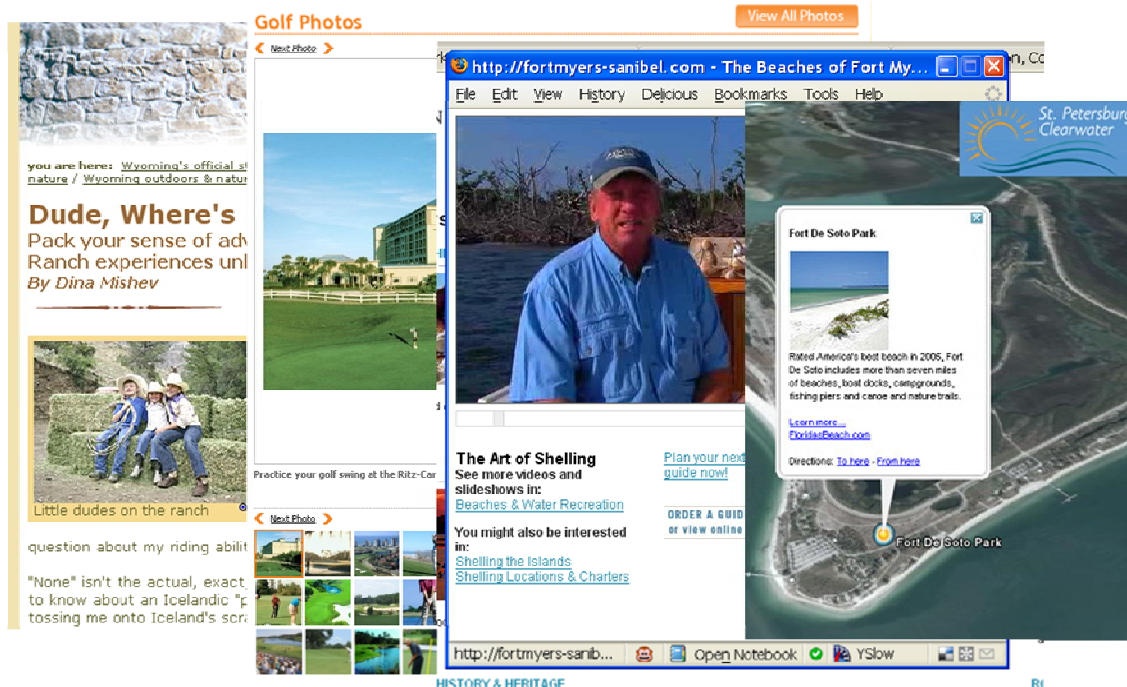
Focus not just on the overall level of activity on your web site but critical engagement metrics such as: Bounce Rate (overall and home page), page views per visit and/or time on site, conversion metrics (percentage of visitors completing a specific 'success event' on your web site).

- Google Analytics is available at: www.google.com/analytics

4. 'CONTENT IS KING'.

Users come to your web site for inspiration and information. It is also this content that drives your primary sources of site visitors - organic search engine traffic. Invest in content that is relevant, constantly updated and useful. Reach out to guests for their contributions (eg: user generated photos, videos, tips and short stories etc). Make sure your site's navigation and design is simple, easy and intuitive to use (see 'Usability Research' below).

Figure 2. Invest in good quality, relevant content enriches the experience for site users and drives your primary source of sites visitors – search engine traffic. There are now low cost ways to create content online video and 3D maps (eg: Google Earth).



5. OPTIMIZE CONTENT INCL. A Search Engine Friendly Site Map.

Follow the simple best practices to optimize your content for search engines – conduct simple keyword research and ensure content has relevant Title Tags, headings/sub headings, meta descriptions, alt tags and meta keywords (in descending order of priority). Make sure your site has a

Search Engine Friendly XML Site Map (based on Google/Yahoo/MSN’s open standard). An extension of your ‘on site’ SEO work should be a linking strategy to build good quality links from relevant Florida and related travel sites. Finally, make sure your pages are optimized to load quickly (research shows you have 7 seconds or so to engage with a first time user of your site. See ‘page weight’ tool below.

- Setting up a Search Engine Friendly Site Map: <http://www.sitemaps.org/>
- Check your current site’s SEO ‘ranking’ @: <http://www.websitegrader.com>
- Check the ‘page weight’ of your site: <http://performance.webpagetest.org:8080/>

7. TARGETED ONLINE ADVERTISING.

Balance online and offline advertising (each has its own place and audience). Make sure your online advertising is targeted and has effective creative (A.I.D.A - does it create ‘Attention’, inspire ‘Interest’, create ‘Desire’ and prompt ‘Action’). Also make sure it is measurable and managed ‘beyond the click’ – including special landing pages and calls to action (see 10. below). Action this day! - refine and improve your advertising during the campaign.

8. WIDEN YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT – Social Media Marketing

Your web site is just one small part of your digital footprint. First, make sure to follow and if appropriate, respond to your online reviews and ratings at sites like TripAdvisor, IgoUgo or even Twitter. Make sure to act on this free customer feedback. Invite clients to post their views on these sites. If you or your clients have compelling content – eg: video – syndicate this content onto community video sites such as YouTube, Yahoo, TripAdvisor and Flickr. Keep an eye on social media opportunities like Twitter and test and trial marketing without over-investing.

Figure 3. Content Syndication includes posting videos to multiple community video web sites.



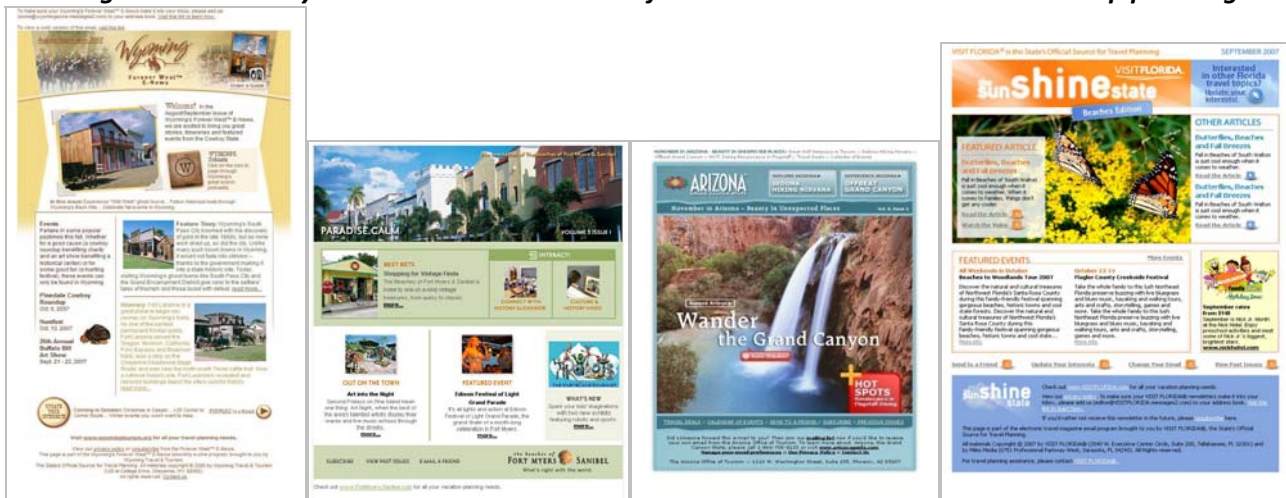
8. CONDUCT LOW COST RESEARCH ON YOUR WEB SITE.

Seek feedback on your web site – formal and informal, including following social media sites noted above. Conduct ‘Usability Testing’ – observing ‘visitors’ trying to find specific information or complete tasks. Look at your web analytics and try different designs and placements to trial and test what works. Use a low cost online survey tool such as Survey Monkey, Zommerang or Vovici to seek more in-depth feedback on ‘why’ users act in certain ways.

9. CONNECT WITH REGULAR VISITORS.

Your best customer is your current customer. Have a system of collecting information from regular or repeat visitors – especially locals. Hold this information in a robust database and reach out to them via email, social media marketing or other channels with relevant information and offers.

Figure 4. Email marketing can be a highly effective, low cost method at reaching out to regular visitors including in state and key drive markets. Over 19% of leisure travelers use email in their trip planning*.



Source: State of the American Traveler Research. November 2008 and January 2009. Destination Analysts.

10. THE YEAR OF THE DEAL – Have a Compelling Call to Action

Having a strong, clear call to action is an essential part of successful online marketing. Offers and specials are perhaps the most important call to action in today’s economy. The ‘State of the American Traveler’ research (sponsored by Miles Media) illustrated in its January 2009 edition that affordability is the number one factor considered by visitors. More than two thirds report “actively” looking for specials and deals during their travel planning. Deals should be driven by demand and supply, continually updated and don’t have to be price driven discounts – they can include smart add ons, incentives, loyalty benefits or other ‘value’.

Figure 5. Having a clear and compelling call to action is vital for Attractions.



Source: State of the American Traveler Research. November 2008 and January 2009. Destination Analysts.

Feature these deals prominently on our web site and in your online/offline marketing. VISIT FLORIDA offers the ability for all partners to load up offers and deals on the www.visitflorida.com web site at no cost. Also look for these opportunities via your local CVB or other marketing groups.

- To add/edit or manage your deals via VISIT FLORIDA go to: www.visitflorida.org
- Additional research resources: www.visitflorida.org, www.tia.org & www.phocuswright.com