

Online Advertising

Internet marketing isn't just for consumer marketers or large B2B firms – it's a powerful vehicle for companies of all sizes.

Online advertising offers B2B marketers an opportunity to reach very broad or very targeted prospects to generate leads, communicate a message and raise visibility. In the Strategic Marketing Process, the term “online advertising” refers to three general types of campaigns:

- ▶ Banner ad campaigns on B2B websites
- ▶ Ads or sponsored content on targeted email newsletters
- ▶ Affiliate programs that enable other companies to put your ads on their sites in return for commission on clicks or sales

While a B2B marketer has a smaller universe of prospects than a consumer marketer, the value of each prospect is typically far greater. With a targeted campaign and a good offer, you may only need to generate a handful of highly qualified prospects to generate substantial revenue.

Here are three different online ad campaigns:

GENERATE NEW LEADS	DIRECT SALES	INCREASE YOUR VISIBILITY
<p>Promote a white paper, webinar or demo that can help prospects who are in the early phases of their research. Drive them to a special landing page; provide details about the offer and capture key pieces of data so you can follow up when the prospect is ready.</p>	<p>Run ads to sell a particular product or service. Drive prospects to a special landing page that describes your offer in detail; if you need to provide additional information, create supplemental pages as needed. Really focus on converting those prospects into sales.</p>	<p>Run a campaign to share a message, promote an event or offer, or raise awareness about your products. Your goal is twofold: Drive click-throughs and generate awareness. Use landing pages designed to convert a visitor into a prospect or customer.</p>

What are the benefits of online advertising?

- ▶ **Timing:** Reach businesspeople when they're actively looking for information, vendors and solutions.
- ▶ **Immediacy:** You can test and launch very quickly and generate response almost immediately.
- ▶ **Targeting:** You can deliver your message to very specific audiences.
- ▶ **Lead generation and nurturing:** You can capture prospects early, provide valuable information, and nurture them throughout the sales process.
- ▶ **Cost:** You can reach a large audience quickly and at a lower cost than many other media.
- ▶ **Scalability:** You can run campaigns of any size at any budget level.

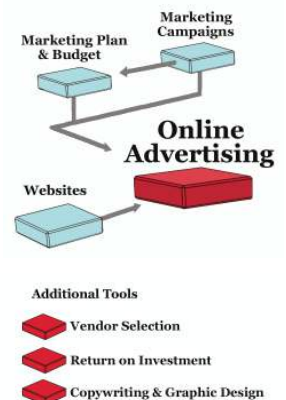
As with any marketing program, it's important to develop a good strategy, target your audience, test, measure and improve – especially because it's easy and inexpensive to test different aspects of your campaigns to generate the best possible results.

BEST CASE	NEUTRAL CASE	WORST CASE
<p>Your online ad campaigns are a strong element in your marketing mix.</p> <p>You use them to generate prospects and customers, but gaining visibility is also important. You calculate ROI so you can compare the return of these investments versus your other programs.</p> <p>You continually test your ads and landing pages to maximize your response rates.</p>	<p>You run campaigns periodically and they're moderately successful. Prices are high, but you reach a targeted audience.</p> <p>You occasionally test and tweak your ads, but it isn't a priority. Since you use cost per click to measure success, you can't accurately calculate ROI, but you're satisfied with what you're paying for traffic.</p> <p>You think you can generate even more traffic, but without better metrics, you can't divert more funds to these campaigns.</p>	<p>You've advertised on a few sites and generated some traffic, but you don't have data to indicate whether your campaigns are successful beyond initial visits.</p> <p>You don't create special landing pages – you drive visitors to your home page, and you rarely test your ads.</p> <p>You cringe at the prices for the sites you'd really like to use, and you think you're wasting money since you're paying for impressions not clicks.</p>

Key concepts & steps

Before you begin

Before you launch an online campaign, it's important to have a good **website** that can measure your traffic and convert visitors to prospects or customers. It's also helpful to address your online campaigns in your annual **marketing plan and budget**.



Develop a tangible goal

For example, determine how many click-throughs or leads you need to generate, then estimate your response rates to figure out how many impressions you'll need. Make sure you know how you'll measure your campaign as well.

Target your audience

Profile and target your audience. You can reach a large audience with your ad, but that doesn't mean you should – narrow targeting means you can speak more directly to their needs.

Create a good offer and compelling call-to-action

Your ad needs to generate interest and get people to click through to your website to learn more – give them a reason, a benefit. Keep your message simple and clear.

Focus on conversion

When you run a great ad, continue the message and momentum on your website. Don't drive prospects to your home page; instead, create unique landing pages that focus on the topic you used to generate their interest. Focus and sell!

Continually test, refine and improve

It's easy and inexpensive to test your online campaigns. You can test the offer, the design of your ad, the size and location of the ad, or the sites you choose. Start with the element that's most important – for example, the offer – and create two versions of the ad. Then run them against each other to see which performs best.

When you keep testing in this way, you can greatly increase your response over time – and that can mean a substantial increase in the number of qualified leads and new customers you generate.

What's next?

Keep refining your online campaigns and your website to drive and convert traffic.

