



# The 3 C's of Internet Marketing:

*Discover the Internet Marketing tools your local business can use to capture attention, communicate the right offers and convert more prospects into customers*



It seems like every day, there's a new way to market your business on the web. Search engine marketing, local search, online yellow pages, LinkedIn, blogging – its dizzying to know what to do to be successful in your business. Even big businesses have a hard time keeping up – but, they have the budgets to experiment and fail. You don't.

To decide what might be a good approach for your business, first you need to understand how different web and Internet marketing strategies and tools can help you. That doesn't mean you need an education on every single tool out there. What you need to know are which tools and strategies are most helpful for different stages in the prospect-to-customer cycle. Depending on what you are trying to achieve – more qualified leads? Better communication with customers? Higher purchase rates? – you'll want to focus your time on different tools.

## What is the prospect-to-customer cycle?

Every customer you have today went through a process to become your customer. Maybe a friend referred them to you. Or you met them at a networking function and you exchanged business cards. But, how did they get to the point where they agreed to become a customer? There was some process you went through with them to build trust and gain their business.

A referral or business card exchange is just one way a person becomes a prospect, by raising their hand and saying "yes, I may need what you're selling, tell me more." But, if you're like most people, you can't spend all your time at networking events – and, those people may not be the best prospects for you anyway.

That's where Internet and web marketing comes in to help. People don't ask for more information on a website unless they want more information. People use Google, Yahoo and other specialized directories and search engines to find information and business services they might need. Depending on how they search, they might come across your business if you have a web site and or a blog. If what they read in the search results makes sense to them, they may click on your site. But that still doesn't mean they will buy from you, or that they're ready to buy. You need to spend some time nurturing this new lead, communicating with them to build a level of trust in your business. Once that trust is built, you'll have a better chance to convert them to a customer with the right offer – the offer that appeals to them best.

Referrals happen online, too. People post questions on message boards and in online communities they participate in. Many times they're looking for recommendations: "What's a great seafood restaurant in Orlando?" "I need a math tutor for my teenager." "I have questions about life insurance." If you - or one of your customers - is participating, you've got a better chance to capture a new lead. Plus, as an added bonus, Google and other search engines "crawl" many of these online communities, so these conversations will show up in search results, too.

## For each customer, you must move through the 3 C's:



Internet marketing tools and techniques can greatly improve your performance across the 3 C's.

## 1. Capture

Capturing the attention of people searching for what you provide – whether its real estate services, office supplies or carpet cleaning -- is the first step in capturing leads online. When people click on your website, they are taking the first “raising my hand” step.

### What Internet Marketing tools do I use to Capture leads?

The best way to capture attention online involves building your visibility to the search engines as well as in the local directories that people search. How do you do that? By link building and creating content that fits with what your prospect is searching for. If you speak the language they search on, you dramatically improve your chances of capturing their attention.

**Search:** Google and other search engines make it really easy for most people to search for things they need or want online. So, the best way to help those people find you is to make sure you (or your products or services) appear high in the listings for search terms related to your business. The best way to get higher in the search results is to make the content on your web pages really focused for a small number of targeted keywords or phrases. Other things that help raise your rankings have to do with the number of “inbound” links into your site – meaning other pages on the web that are related to what you do or sell that link to you.

**Building Inbound links:** There are plenty of Internet marketing tools available to build links to your website:

**Directory submission:** Have you ever heard of DMOZ? How about Yahoo's Business Directory? These are just a few of the directories that exist where you want to list your website. These directories are organized by topic, so they are related to your keywords and help boost your standing in the eyes of Google.

**Reviews:** When you're looking for a hotel in a strange place, it's always nice to see if there are reviews on Hotels.com so you can get a better idea what it's really like there. It's like getting a referral, only from someone you don't personally know. Wouldn't it help your business if there were reviews of you or your business online? Sites such as Yelp.com, Google Local and more have reviews, which you can build by asking customers to review you online.

**Social media content:** What social media sites are you involved in? Do you have a Facebook profile, or are you a photo buff with a Flickr account? There are many different social media outlets you can try, and if you can somehow relate them back to your business -- without directly pitching your business -- you can build links back to your site.

Example: If you have a restaurant and like to take pictures, you might take photos of some of your best-looking dishes and post them to Flickr, with links back to your restaurant site. Or, if you're a real estate agent, you could do video walk-throughs of all your listings - with or without voice commentary or a soundtrack - and upload them to a YouTube account, with links back to your site.

**Local search:** If you were looking for a dentist, and you lived in Kansas City, KS, it wouldn't be very helpful to have to search through listings of dentists in New York City or Ottawa, Canada, would it? If you're a local business, you can take advantage of local search opportunities through Google, Yahoo and local online yellow pages directories. That way, if you're a dentist in Kansas City, KS, someone searching for "dentist, Kansas City, KS" will find you.

**Local business results for dentist, near Kansas City, KS**



- A. [Moreno Family Dentistry](http://www.morenofamilydentistry.com) - [www.morenofamilydentistry.com](http://www.morenofamilydentistry.com) - (913) 647-1900 - [More](#)
- B. [Kansas City Kansas Dental Associates PA](http://www.stevenpendletondds.com) - [www.stevenpendletondds.com](http://www.stevenpendletondds.com) - (913) 321-4385 - [More](#)
- C. [Westwood Dental](http://www.shellygalvindds.com) - [www.shellygalvindds.com](http://www.shellygalvindds.com) - (913) 432-0765 - [1 review](#)
- D. [Sunflower Dental Care](http://www.kcdentist.net) - [www.kcdentist.net](http://www.kcdentist.net) - (913) 287-9600 - [1 review](#)
- E. [Indian Springs Dental Clinic of Kansas City](http://kansascity.citysearch.com) - [kansascity.citysearch.com](http://kansascity.citysearch.com) - (913) 287-7977 - [More](#)
- F. [Jerry J Vernon PA: Pendleton Steven DDS](http://www.stevenpendletondds.com) - [www.stevenpendletondds.com](http://www.stevenpendletondds.com) - (913) 299-0704 - [More](#)
- G. [Huertor Orthodontics](http://huertorortho.com) - [huertorortho.com](http://huertorortho.com) - (913) 334-3055 - [More](#)
- H. [Jenkins & Le Blanc](http://www.kidsmilekc.com) - [www.kidsmilekc.com](http://www.kidsmilekc.com) - (913) 299-3300 - [More](#)
- I. [Pearly Whites Dental Care](http://www.pearlywhitesdentalcare.com) - [www.pearlywhitesdentalcare.com](http://www.pearlywhitesdentalcare.com) - (913) 721-3525 - [More](#)
- J. [Rose Tommy DDS](http://maps.google.com) - [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com) - (913) 321-3999 - [More](#)

[More results near Kansas City, KS >](#)

#1 | PR: ? | Google Cache Date: ? | Traffic Value: ? | Age: ? | del.icio.us: ? | del.icio.us Page Bookmarks: ? | Digg: ? | Digg's Popular Stories: ? | Stumbleupon: ? | Twitter: ? | Y! Links: ? | Y! .edu Links: ? | Y! .gov Links: ? | Y! Page Links: ? | Y! Page Links: ? | Technorati: ? | Alexa: ? | Compete.com Rank: ? | Compete.com Uniques: ? | Trends | Cached: ? | dmoz: ? | Bloglines: ? | Page blog links: ? | dir.yahoo.com: ? | Bot: ? | Whois | Sitool | Yahoo position: ? | Majestic SEO linkdomain: ?

Here's an example of a Local Search results page, showing results for dentists in Kansas City.

**Pay-Per-Click (PPC):** PPC is search advertising. These are premium spots returned on a search results page that you pay for. Depending on the terms you want, it can be really costly to get leads through PPC, so it's important to either get familiar with the campaign management tools that Google, Yahoo and MSN offer, or to hire a company like ITEA to help you.



**Blogging:** If you like to write, and you're good at explaining things related to your business, than blogging might be a good way for you to capture attention. If you can narrow your topic and stick to it, the links created back to your site will improve your overall search rankings. Search engines like it when a website is updated often, and blogging is a great way to keep your site updated.

## 2. Communicate: Build trust and familiarity, extend offers to buy

No matter what methods you use to Capture attention or a lead, it's really just the first step in marketing. What do you do with leads after you capture attention, or get their permission to email them information? Unless someone is ready to buy now, you have to nurture that relationship until they are ready to buy. Once someone becomes a customer, you want to keep them as a customer. **Remember, once you have a customer, it's easier – and costs less – to sell to them again and again than it is to find new customers.**

**Web content:** Relevant web content makes the difference between a site visitor staying at your site and looking around, or clicking away from it right away. So you want to communicate as clearly as possible with content that says, "Hey! You are in the right place!" To find if if they are in the right place, most people scan what's on the page to make sure it really is relevant to what they are looking for. Whether they got to your site from a link in a blog post, a search from Google, a post on a review site or some other method, the first thing they want to know is, "does this page have what I expect?" For example, if I am looking for a tea house in New York City, and I click a link that takes me to a coffee shop that also sells tea, that may not be what I want, so I might click away. Good web content leads people around so they have an interest in looking around more, investigating further.

**Blog posts:** Writing articles related to your industry is a great way to get people to return to your site more often – plus, it helps your position in the search engines. You can also offer visitors a way to subscribe to your blog so new posts get delivered through email (called an RSS feed).

**e-Mail marketing "drip" campaign:** If you have something to offer for free – like an article, or coupon – consider sending a series of emails to your prospect list over a period of time. Drip campaigns can be very successful because they repeat contact with prospects who have expressed some interest in what you sell. The repeat contact helps to reinforce your message over a period of time, instead of in a single blast. Best of all, you've got a greater chance of connecting with them when they're ready to buy.

**Social media content:** Are there blogs you visit to get industry-specific information? Are there blogs or communities that are related to what you sell? Participating in social media is a great way to build relationships with like-minded people, but it takes time (which is why it's good for relationship building, not sales). Investigate social media tools you may have heard about, like Twitter, MySpace or LinkedIn. See if there's a way to incorporate social media into communications with potential prospects and existing customers.



**Video and live web seminars (webinars):** What can you give away for free? It might seem scary to give away information, but that free service builds your credibility online, and can show potential customers how you will support them when they become customers.

For example: If you are a nutritionist, you could offer a series of short videos about different nutrition topics – like how to read nutrition information labels – then post them on your web site and on YouTube or some other video platform.

Do you already have some customer support videos, or offer training webinars to customers? You could make some of those available for free on your website to anyone – not just customers. This gives non-customers a low-commitment way to get to know you or your business - and gives them a reason to come back to your site (to watch new videos).

### 3. Convert: Prospect becomes a customer

What causes a prospect to convert a customer? It only happens when the prospect is ready to buy – which may or may not be when you want them to buy. Because you don't know when someone is ready to buy, it's important to connect with prospects over time (not just once). When someone is ready to buy, you want to make sure you deliver the right offer -- one that motivates them to buy or get in touch with you directly. Having multiple touch points gives you different ways to present offers to prospects so you can convert them into customers.

**e-Mail marketing:** Email marketing is the Internet's version of offers you get in the mail, such as coupons, newsletters, special offers and event invitations. Once you have permission to email a prospect (which you got in the Capture stage), email is a great way to deliver offers over time, so you can hit a prospect with the right offer when that person is ready to buy.

**Landing pages:** When someone is ready to buy online, you don't want to distract them with more information. Landing pages are single-page or small sites that have one purpose – converting the landing page visitor to make a purchase (or fill out a contact info form if your sale has more steps). How do people find a landing page? Generally they get linked to from a search or banner ad, or as a link from an email marketing message.

**Web content with a call to action:** Do you invite people to buy, or call, or request information on every page of your website? Even simple calls to action, like "call now to make an appointment" or "get 10% off when you buy today" can convert a person who is at the right stage in the buying process. So why not put a call to action on every page of your site? Tell site visitors what you want them to do next, and sometimes, they will do it.

Internet marketing has truly expanded the number of marketing tools available to get prospects through the sales cycle. They tend to be less expensive to implement than offline tactics such as direct mail, trade shows and print or broadcast advertising, but you have to spend some time to understand the best ways



to use them. Otherwise, they'll end up being frustrating. The first step is understanding which tactic works best for each step across the sales cycle.

Understanding where you want to improve your prospect-to-customer cycle will help you narrow down which Internet or web marketing tactic to try. Sure, you could probably stand to improve something in each category, but if you're doing all the work yourself, or with a limited internal staff, it's a good idea to pick one stage in the 3 C's and choose a tactic to try for a while. Once you see improvements in one stage, move onto the next. Just make sure you keep doing what helped you improve your first step, and build on your successes.

**Interested in generating leads and closing more sales using Internet Marketing, but don't know where to start?**

ITEA provides customers Internet Marketing solutions specifically to meet the needs of small to mid-sized businesses. From local search to website design, ITEA has packages to help you target more qualified leads and close sales.

**To learn more about ITEA's Internet Marketing services, call 1-800-565-9860 - Option #2.**