

10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT INTERNET MARKETING

The importance of Communication & Cooperation

Written by Valleyken

for

Website owners & Website members

This report is written based on several years of experience with running my own websites. Further insight was obtained by extensive discussions with other website owners about the problems they have with their websites, and from questions from members about their problems to earn money online.

Purpose of this report

Internet marketing is very popular these days. People, ranging from very young to very old age, try to improve their financial status by using the internet as a business platform.

Unfortunately, only a very small percentage of those who try, succeed to make their dream for a reliable online income a reality.

- Some people try to earn money by selling other people's products/services. I call these "website members".
- Others create their own website and products/services. I call these "website owners".
- Many people also find themselves in both positions. Think for example about a website owner who joins some advertising websites to increase traffic to his own website.

Everybody wants a piece of the pie, and that leads to a very competitive marketplace where you better have the appropriate skills to succeed.

There is also a lot of abuse: outright scams, overpriced low-quality products, marketers using questionable tactics to gain an advantage over their competitors, spam, hackers, identity theft, ...

Internet marketing is not as easy as some people would like you to believe.

This report tries to improve communication and cooperation between website owners and website members.

This report was written to make the daily life of website owners easier, which in turn benefits the members of their sites. A well-oiled machine runs better.

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Fake and outdated email addresses

Who isn't sick of all those ads flooding their mailbox every day ?

People have become very reluctant to give their real email address on websites.

It is a necessity for every mailinglist owner to send a confirmation email when somebody joins their site. This will ensure that:

- the email address exists and can be reached
 - that it was the owner of the email address who submitted it.
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- People often submit email addresses that are not their own in online forms. You receive an email then that says "thank you for joining" while you never joined the site. Somebody else joined "on your behalf". That is why the website will send you an email to verify that it was you who signed up.
 - Other people try to sign up with a valid email address of their own, but unintendedly make a mistake in their email address. Obviously, they can't receive the confirmation email then.
 - Many people join a website with an email address that they barely check. This is because they expect that the site will send them emails, and they don't want to receive them. This means that the website owner can not send you updates about the site. It is crazy to expect that the website can help you if you don't even care about what they have to say.
 - Most websites have trouble to get their email delivered to certain valid email addresses. Many websites are unable to reach Yahoo mailboxes for example. The website owner either loses a lot of valid customers by enforcing strict account confirmation, or ends up with a list with many email addresses he can't reach.

!!TIPS

- Keep your account email up-to-date. Use an email address that you check regularly.
- Use a reliable mailbox. Gmail is very good and free.
- Yahoo is very difficult for many websites to reach. You should not use a Yahoo mailbox to receive important emails.
- Especially when you send a support-email to a website, make sure to use a reliable email address where they can reach you or you might never receive a reply.

AutoReply and AutoResponders

Auto-Reply

Many mailboxes have a built-in feature to send an automatic reply to every email that is received. This can be useful to let people know when you are away on vacation and can't answer your emails for a while.

AutoResponders

An email address can also be an auto-responder. For every email received, the sender of the email will be added to a mailinglist and receive a series of emails in return, at some pre-set time intervals.

These are very useful tools, but have been extremely abused in internet marketing. They are a very big source of irritation to website owners.

● When you join a website, you usually agree to receive news updates and/or commercial emails from that site.

It might be tempting to join with an email address that sends an auto-reply.

- Some people do this to let the sender of an email know that the email was received. But others take the opportunity to add their links in the auto-reply, trying to make a sale.
- The idea behind this, is that if they are going to be receiving emails from that site, they might as well send their ads back to the site owner. But they forget that the website owner never agreed to receive their ads. They are spamming.

This is probably promoted as a "good marketing trick" by a lot of questionable marketers. Something that is supposed to help you make more sales. Or maybe people come up with the idea themselves. Whatever the reason is, it does not put you in a good light to the website owner.

● People often fail to understand the effects of this behavior. For themselves as a member of the site, it is a 1:1 trade. "I read your email, I send you my own ads in return".

For a mailinglist owner, the problem is bigger because he is dealing with a lot of people who do this.

When a mailinglist grows, this problem grows too. So what would you do as a website owner ? Can you imagine that it irritates a website owner if he sends an email to his members, and receives maybe 300 auto-replies in return ?

!!TIPS

- Never join a website with an email address that sends an automatic reply.
- Website owners hate to receive auto-reply emails. They do not like people who join with an auto-reply mailbox.
- As a website owner, make it your policy to remove auto-reply email addresses from your mailinglist.

How to turn off the auto-reply of your mailbox ?

This depends on the mailbox that you use.

- Check the options (or preferences, or settings) for your mailbox.
- You will find something like auto-reply, or vacation message.
- Disable it.

You can then use that mailbox to join websites without upsetting the website owner.

Email verification

There are email providers that promise to keep your mailbox clean from spam.

If you have such a mailbox, then for every email you receive, the mailbox will send a verification email to the sender. The sender then has to click a link in that email to prove that it was sent by a real person, from a real mailbox.

This is called a challenge/response mechanism.

What does this mean for me as a website owner ?

When somebody joins my website with an email address that does verification, I will receive an email and have to manually confirm that my website has sent this person the signup email.

But I can not know if the owner of that mailbox really joined my website. Maybe it was somebody else who abused that email address to join my website. That means, if I click the verification link, I am actually spamming. So, as a policy, I don't allow mailboxes with a verification system.

Those mailboxes with verification are not supposed to be used for joining a website. They are intended for people who want to avoid spam and only have a few personal contacts.

!! Tips

- Never join a website with an email address that uses a challenge/response verification.
- As a website owner, make it your policy not to click those verification links. You might unwillingly be spamming.

Angry support emails

It often happens that I get an email from people who claim that they did not get a reply from me to their previous email(s).

What they usually don't realize is that email delivery is very unreliable. Their email might never reach me, especially when they email me from free mailboxes like Hotmail and Yahoo. And if I don't receive their email, it is only normal that I can't reply to them.

Furthermore, while I might receive their email and send a reply, it is also possible that my reply never reaches them.

Email goes in 2 directions, so there is a lot that can go wrong in the process. That is why I have set up a helpdesk, which tremendously increases the chance that people are able to reach me.

Online marketers very often under-estimate the unreliable nature of email. When they don't get a reply to the email they sent, they think the other person is ignoring them. But most often, it is just because emails don't reach their destination.

- I have done a lot of effort to improve the email delivery of my server, so that I can more often reach people with my replies.
- I have also set up a helpdesk to make sure that I receive emails from members of my sites.

But still many people just send me emails directly from their mailbox, instead of using my helpdesk. Then they blame me if they don't get a reply, while it is actually their own ignorance that caused the communication problem.

!!TIPS

- Always ask your support questions to a website owner in a respectful way.
- Don't trust email, because it can't be trusted as a reliable way to communicate.
- If you don't receive a reply from a website, it is very likely that there is a problem with emails being blocked by spam filters. It does not mean that they don't want to answer your question. It just means they never received your email.
- Always contact a website through their helpdesk link (if they have one). A helpdesk is not used for anonymity. It is a way to ensure that your emails are not blocked by spam filters.
- If you don't receive a reply to your questions, consider giving them a gmail address to contact you. Gmail is much more reliable than most other mailboxes.
- If the only way to contact a website owner, is his email address, then communication will be very difficult when you have a question one day. A website without a contact form or helpdesk, is very unprofessional.

As a website owner

- Do not give people your email address to contact you. Email is very unreliable and you might be losing a lot of important emails. Always use a helpdesk.
- The easiest to use helpdesk can be found here:
<http://profitsdesk.com/order.php>

Cryptic support emails

I receive a lot of emails from members who have a question about their account in one of my websites. So-called "support emails".

Very often, those members forget to include important information that I might need to help them solve the problem.

It is good practice to include any information that might be helpful to the website owner, when you send a support email.

This information can be:

- the website you have a problem with
- your username
- your email address
- the link of the page where you have a problem
- anything else that might be helpful to solve the problem

This might seem obvious to some people. But others write their questions totally incomprehensible. Some members even only use the subject line of their email to ask their question, without any more explanation in the email body. It happens quite frequently that I have to ask members to better describe what they are trying to ask.

!!TIPS

- Always provide as much information as possible when contacting a website for support.

Spammers, hackers, email delivery

I already mentioned the problems from people spamming me by joining my site with an autoresponder address.

But there are also the "REAL" spammers. The typical emails that promote online gambling, pharmacy, adult content, and even containing viruses.

This is a problem for everybody these days. Spam-filters, anti-virus scanners, responsible behavior concerning your mailbox, ... are all tricks that could help to improve the situation. But we all know that we are still going to be bothered by it. Those spammers always find a way. Sometimes I think they even have better email delivery than most honest website owners.

There is a complete industry around it.

- Companies paying professional spammers under the table to promote their products through spam.
- People using software to automatically gather email addresses from the internet. And those email addresses get added to spam lists that are sold a million times as so-called legitimate leads.

Website owners under constant attacks

I rent a very expensive server to host my websites and to be able to get my news emails delivered to the members of my sites.

And it is not fun to find out that:

- Everyday, there are literally thousands of attempts from people trying to break into my server. Forcing me to spend a lot of time on guarding the security of my server.
- Spammers use my domain names in their spam, so that I receive all the bounce emails, and sometimes even unjustified spam complaints.
- Spammers send their spam to random domain names. Just owning a domain name makes me a bigger target for spammers than people without a domain name of their own.

I am not blaming any member of my site to be doing these unpleasant things. I just want to point out that these are big abuse issues that all website owners suffer from. Some website owners just don't realize it, until it is too late and they have to call in professional help. But the problems are always present, and consume a lot of time, effort and money to fight.

Honest website members can't do much about these abusive actions by spammers and hackers. Not directly. But you could cut a website owner some slack, and not add to the other problems like using AutoResponders, or sending angry support emails. A lot of time and money from website owners goes into maintaining a website that is just "reasonably" secure and well-performing.

!!TIPS

- Do not add to the huge problems that website owners always have with real cyber-criminals.
- Website members sometimes try to gain an advantage over their fellow marketers instead of working together for mutual benefit.
- Using lame tricks, like joining a website with an auto-reply mailbox, can do much more harm to a website than you might think. It makes you a spammer, harming the website owner, your fellow website members, and ultimately yourself too.

Unjustified Spam Complaints

Sometimes, a website owner receives a spam complaint from his web space provider. This is a very unpleasant situation for a website owner, because his website might be shut down if he can't prove that he wasn't spamming. It costs time and effort to figure out why the complaint was made.

Filing spam complaints is very ineffective.

“Real” spammers can't be shut down:

- They use hacked websites to send their spam from, not their own.
- The spam often is sent from countries like Russia or China. And it is often impossible for a US hosting company to prevent the spammer from sending out spam, because of international policies.

So, the real victims of spam complaints, are small business owners.

- Their web space gets abused by spammers. The spammer moves on to hack another server to send his spam from. But the small business owner might lose his web space and the resources he built up over the years.
- Often, members of a website don't use the appropriate ways that are provided by the website to unsubscribe. Instead of using the provided unsubscribe mechanism(s), they prefer to click the “this is spam” link from their anti-spam software. The website owner is reported automatically to his hosting company.
- Ignorance of website owners about how to provide reliable unsubscribe mechanisms, often causes trouble for people to unsubscribe from their list. But this is often a result of communication problems, rather than bad intentions.
- Ignorance of website members about how to make sure that their unsubscribe request reaches the website owner, also causes frustration. This also leads to unjustified spam complaints.

!!TIPS

- Don't file spam complaints too quickly. You might be harming well-meaning people, while the real criminal spammers get away.

Product overload

I see so many people buying typical “guru products” that promise the moon and the sky.

Some e-book or software that is supposed to make you rich, but in the end it usually doesn't work as well as promised in the sales page.

And then, if you get further help at all from the person who sold it to you, you are often told that it is your own fault, and you need to buy some more self-development e-books (which is sometimes valid, but there is a limit too).

Many online opportunities are over-hyped, or at least embellished and hiding the shortcomings of the products. Many marketers are only interested in the money that they can earn from the internet, but have very low standards for the quality of their products.

- If the sales copy makes enough promises, the product sells. No matter if the product doesn't offer any real value.
- Many affiliates don't care about what they sell, as long as it sells. They often don't have any interest in the product or service that is offered. But instead they think: “That looks like a very seductive sales page. I'll buy it because I think I can sell it easily.” It is like selling sales pages, instead of selling products.

In contrast, there are the rare product creators who really care about creating quality solutions with a long-term vision. Talking from my own experience:

- My sales pages don't promise overnight riches.
- I try not to charge more than the real value of what I can deliver to the members of my sites, and in case of doubt I would rather under-charge.
- I even help a lot of people for free with their website problems. Something the “big earners” don't do because it is not profitable.

But people seem to be attracted more to hype than to honest offers. It is the human desire to strike it lucky some day and stumble upon some opportunity that will magically change your life for the better. But there is no such thing as easy money. If something works then it is probably because you make it work and put effort in it.

They spend their money on expensive opportunities that don't make them rich. Then, when nothing worked, they join my sites and complain that they are broke.

I understand that money is tight sometimes. So I am quite flexible in my pricing. I often give free upgrades to members who don't have too much money to spare. Just to help them get started in this tough online marketing world. But I can't do that for everybody of course, since I do this for a living.

People often think that I must earn a lot of money because I run some popular websites. But that is far from the truth. Much of my profits go to commissions for members, or are invested back in the business.

My prices are very low, compared to the competition. You will never see me charge \$1000+ for a course, or \$50/month for a membership site. Yet, many people would rather upgrade in those expensive sites because they expect that they have more to offer.

I just wished more people would be prepared to pay the modest fees I ask for an upgrade in my websites. But so many people have been burned so many times already. Not only their budget is thinned out, also their confidence in online opportunities has been affected.

!!TIPS

- Realize that business costs money. If a small investment to get started is a problem, then you will have a hard time to make it in internet marketing.
- Try to avoid hype in favor of honest website owners who show that they care. An offer that seems too good to be true, usually is too good to be true.
- Starting a small business is more than just renting some cheap webspace, creating a quick product, and throwing it online for selling. Just like in the offline marketing world, small businesses have a hard time to compete with big corporations (like Google). I think small businesses deserve some extra credit and understanding, when they ask for a fair fee for their service.
- Websites that show a serious effort to be available when you have questions, are a rare gem. Don't spend your money on a website that doesn't even answer your emails.

Time burglars

Many people who never used a computer before in their life, are now getting on the internet everyday. Many get involved in online marketing.

There are a lot of basic computer skills that are necessary for any online marketer, and that actually have nothing to do with the products and services that are offered in online opportunities.

Just some examples:

- installing software on your computer
- unzipping files (opening .zip files)
- how to copy-paste text
- Opening .pdf reports
- Basic computer maintenance like anti-virus and spy-ware removal tasks
- Basic html knowledge
- uploading files to your webspace
- ...

And while I often help the members of my sites with those things, it can add up to a lot of work that is not really my task. And it can often be very difficult and time-consuming to help somebody over email.

So if you want to be an online marketer, it is good to learn at least the most common computer skills. And it is always good to learn these things at places that offer that kind of information, instead of expecting from website owners to give you a free full course on those topics while it is not their place to do so.

!!TIPS

- If you want to be an online marketer, you need basic computer skills.
- Learn these skills at the appropriate places. Google can help you a lot.

Conclusion

I hope this report has shown how website members often make the life of a website owner more difficult than it should be.

Both website owners and website members are in online marketing for a common goal: earning money from the internet. Better cooperation can only lead to better results for everybody.

Communication often goes very difficult between website owners and members. This is because email is very unreliable, and most people have no idea that their emails often don't reach its destination. Getting informed about the huge problems in online communication, is crucial for online marketers.

Learn about email delivery:

<http://emaildeliverysecret.com>

Use chat for more reliable communication:

<http://adboardz.com/community.php>

Use a helpdesk so that people can easily contact you:

<http://profitsdesk.com/order.php>

Sincerely, Valleyken
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