



Development of a Web Marketing Plan for an e-Book – Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we emphasize the benefits of e-books for the customers who are looking for international availability, acquisitions in real time, competitive prices and social responsibility from the part of the publishers; our most important contribution characterized by originality is the design of a web marketing plan model for e-books selling process, structured in the following sections: search of the specialized websites, characterized by a high traffic, where the potential customers of the e-books (the readers) can be found, targeting the websites which sell e-books, design of the website dedicated to the e-book selling process, attraction of the potential customers using a free trial version of the e-book; implementation of the on-line media plan, promotion of the e-book within social networks and specialized forums and analysis of the indicators associated to the on-line media plan in order to assess the web marketing strategy.

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1. Introduction

The development of the new information and communication technologies in the last period provides opportunities regarding the development of e-books: virtual publications which can be reached by anyone from any point in the world. Even if there was a big controversy concerning the future of printed books, today this no longer exists. Both types of publication are now complimentary since each type has its specific characteristics. The wide circulation and availability of e-books are the most important advantages this type of publication can bring since this allows the dissemination of cultures all around the world.

The design of an e-book represents an important challenge for the authors, because it involves a lot of collaborative work with web designers, but in the same time it provides unlimited advantages. In the opinion of the specialists, the main benefits related to the design of an e-book are [1]:

- the existence of a total control on the e-book, as the author should retain it on the e-store in order to add or update a chapter before selling it;
- the affiliation represent another important benefit; in this context, the author should find persons which can promote the e-book in exchange of money resulted after-sales;
- the brand awareness of the author; whatever the subject of the e-book might be, the author will be perceived as an expert in its niche.

There are three types of e-books according to their complexity degree. First type refers to the text displayed without lecturing tool; in this category, we find the texts distributed on CD-R or DVD's which can be associated to a classic book. The second type of e-book outlines the text edition using search engines and lecturing tools; it is managed by the web-based technologies. The third type is the text which can be read on the computer, facilitated by multimedia, hypertext, interactivity and networks. It is very simple and easy to purchase and download e-books through the Internet. It is exactly like purchasing any other product. The only difference is that after payment the customer will be redirected to a download page or receives the download link in an email.

In view to publish an e-book, the author must take into consideration the following stages:

1. first of all the subject which will be discussed must be highlighted and how can the author will point out on the subject;
2. then, the public target will be defined; the author must set the targeting criteria (demographic, psychographic, geographic, behavioral) and focus his attention on the persons which are interested by the subject of the e-book subject;
3. the reasons for which the e-book is written must be emphasized in the next stage; affiliate marketing strategies represent one of the most common reason for the developers of websites which provide e-books;
4. next, the author must decide the chapters' format – the public target is interrogated on the objectives of the e-book in order to facilitate the feedback;
5. finally, the author must set the title and chapters of the e-book, as these elements of the e-book catch the eyes of the potential readers.

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2. The advantages provided by the e-books in the knowledge-based society

An e-book provides all the advantages of a printed book; moreover, it can be obtained for free or for 4 to 8 times lower prices than the printed version. In the majority of cases, the e-books can be downloaded from specialized websites. The e-books are very useful in the education and academic domains even if in the beginning they were especially used in the literature.

The original features of the e-book which can be translated into advantages are [2]:

- it can be found in different page formats, according to readers' preferences;
- it can be the object of a specialized reading software (search of occurrences and contexts);
- it can be submitted to a dynamic display which provides a temporal dimension;
- it is generated by a specific software;
- it can be easily outsourced, i.e. it can be propagated and read in the same time in different geographic regions.

Other advantages refer to the fact that the e-books can customize the viewing experience (enlarge font size and style, change orientation on device, modify screen contrast), they are easily searchable (specific terms, definitions, chapters), often by just clicking on a keyword within the text, they have the potential to add multimedia (graphics, audio, video) and hyperlinks to other information, including your own reference materials; in this way, the readers can acquire titles almost instantly via the Internet, including those that are backlisted or out-of-print.

An e-book, once sold, cannot be copied and sent to other persons, without the permission of the author. Only for specific purposes, certain parts of the e-book can be copied or annotated with the author permission. The publishing and the sale of the e-books are two profitable operations because there aren't expenses associated to the packages, transports, employees, exhibition spaces etc.

The e-books promote the social responsibility regarding the economies of the raw material (wood), representing one of the information technologies contributions on the sustainable development.

E-books allow publishers to publish (and readers to read) works by a larger number of authors, and works on a wider variety of topics. Critics of traditional book publishing state that economic pressures have reduced and limited the number of authors and topics that traditional publishers will now produce.

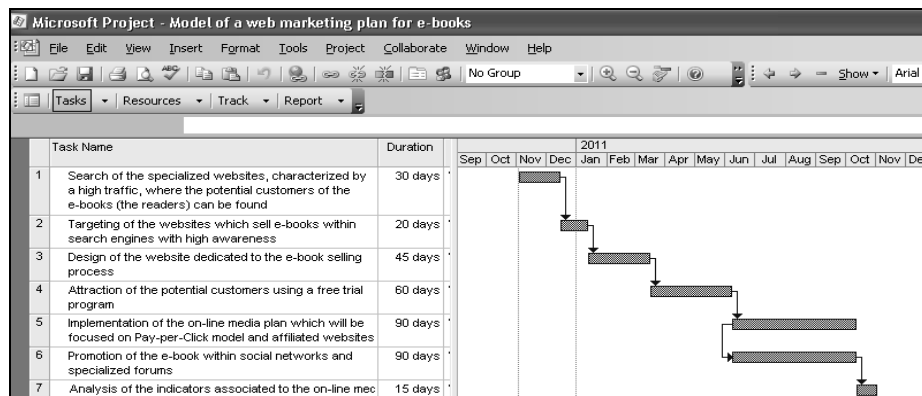
Most e-book publishers do not warn their customers about the possible implications of the digital rights management tied to their products. Generally they claim that digital rights management is meant to prevent copying of the e-book. However in many cases it is also possible that digital rights management will result in the complete denial of access by the purchaser to the e-book. As with digital rights management in other media, e-books are more like rental or leasing than purchase. The restricted book comes with a number of restrictions, and eventually access to the purchase can be removed by a number of different parties involved.

3. The implementation of a web marketing plan model for the e-books

The development of an e-book marketing strategy represents an essential part of e-book's success. We propose a web marketing plan for the e-books which involves the following main stages: (figure no. 1)

- search of the specialized websites, characterized by a high traffic, where the potential customers of the e-books (the readers) can be found;
- targeting the websites which sell e-books within search engines with high awareness;
- design of the website dedicated to the e-book selling process;
- attraction of the potential customers using a free trial version of the e-book;
- implementation of the on-line media plan which will be focused on Pay-per-Click model and affiliated websites (revenues distribution systems between those which buy Internet advertising and the owners of the websites which sell e-books) in view to get traffic to the website;
- promotion of the e-book within social networks and specialized forums;
- analysis of the indicators associated to the on-line media plan in order to assess the project performance.

Figure 1. Gantt Chart associated to a model of a web marketing plan for e-books



Search of the specialized websites, characterized by a high traffic, where the potential customers of the e-books (the readers) can be found

A potential reader of an e-book will access specialized e-book search engines as Digital Book (<http://www.digitalbookindex.org/about.htm>), e-book Locator (<http://www.eBookLocator.com>), Google

Books (<http://books.google.com>), Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>), Online Books Page (<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/>), Search EBooks (<http://www.searchebooks.com/>) etc. The book will be identified by a book icon in the search results. By clicking on the link, a searcher will have access to the e-book's details. The e-marketer's main task is to include the e-book in the main search engines in view to provide traffic to the website which promote the e-book. Even if ranking the e-book in the top ten or twenty search results is very difficult and expensive, it represents an opportunity that mustn't be missed. We reveal in the figure no. 2 an example of a specialized search engine - Search EBooks, which provides the opportunity to make refined e-book searches.

Figure 2. Example of a specialized search engine for e-books



Targeting the websites which sell e-books within search engines with high awareness

First of all, we will have in view the targeting strategy – an e-book's online customers have different demographic characteristics, needs and behaviors. It follows that different approaches to segmentation may be required and specific segments may need to be selectively targeted. Related to the positioning / differentiation strategy for an e-book, developing an appropriate online value proposition is an important aspect which will determine its performance. For example, the marketer can allow people to download the e-book before paying, read part of it, and then either pay to download part two, or get a password to read a second part. To define the best customers will require a financial model of customer lifetime value, by taking into consideration the forecasted future purchases and referral purchases [3].

Design of the website dedicated to the e-book selling process

Writing and creating an e-book can be a very challenging task. As a newer development, sometimes only the electronic version of a book is produced by the publisher. It is also possible to convert electronic book to a printed book by print on demand. However this is an exception as tradition dictates that a book be launched in the print format and later if the author wishes, an electronic version is also produced. The availability of toolkits as E-book Architect programs helps the authors to publish their e-books. Once an author have created and published several e-books, he can create an e-book store. The people who visit the e-store dedicated to the e-book selling process will appreciate the options and the instant ability to download e-books containing information they need. Without shipping costs, e-books downloads are a budget-friendly commodity. While designing a website for e-books, its usability is to be kept in mind. The textual content should be easily read and the content on the pages must be easily accessible. The most significant key variables which must be taken into consideration by the owner of a website – support for e-books promotion and selling are: high quality content, easy-to-use features, fast upload, permanent updates.

Attraction of the potential customers using a free trial version of the e-book

Free trials and samples of e-books are a great way to introduce new customers to the website. Providing a free trial of an e-book can be a great sale-producing opportunity. A great way to increase your e-book sales is to create a trial version of your e-book and freely distribute it. This will provide the potential customers with a sample of your e-book and encourage them to purchase the full version. If someone sees the benefits of what a publisher provides at no costs and risks, he or she will probably buy the e-book from the website. Giving away free samples and trial offers of e-books is a win-win business strategy for both publishers and readers. A person can make an e-book and give it away for free for the main following reasons: he could use the free e-book as a bonus, or thank you gift, for its customers, web site visitors or ezine subscribers, he could use the e-book to remind readers about its business or products or he could even include advertising within its free e-book.

Implementation of the on-line media plan in view to get traffic to the website dedicated to the -book

The online media plan will be focused on the following pillars: identifying a potential profitable topic, researching the viability of developing the document, discovering buyer preferences and understanding how the problem is framed in the mind of the prospect. First of all, after the approval of the online media plan for an e-book, the website certificate must secure the acquisitions of the potential customers. Delivering online advertising specifications represents another step of the online media plan. After media planners define the target audience for an e-book, they set communication goals: to what degree the target audience must be exposed to (and interact with) e-book in order to achieve advertising and online sales objectives. Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is one of the quickest ways to drive traffic to your e-book's sales page. It is certainly not the cheapest source of traffic, but it is probably the most effective technique to guarantee a high traffic[4].

The tasks associated to the stages related to the web marketing plan for the e-books can be revealed in an html version, being easily accessed by the persons involved in such a web project. (figure no. 3)

Figure 3. Html version associated to the tasks of a web marketing plan for e-books

ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
1	Search of the specialized websites, characterized by a high traffic, where the potential customers of the e-books (the readers) can be found	30 days	Wed 03.11.10	Tue 14.12.10
2	Targeting of the websites which sell e-books within search engines with high awareness	20 days	Wed 15.12.10	Tue 11.01.11
3	Design of the website dedicated to the e-book selling process	45 days	Wed 12.01.11	Tue 15.03.11
4	Attraction of the potential customers using a free trial program	60 days	Wed 16.03.11	Tue 07.06.11
5	Implementation of the on-line media plan which will be focused on Pay-per-Click model and affiliated websites	90 days	Wed 08.06.11	Tue 11.10.11
6	Promotion of the e-book within social networks and specialized forums	90 days	Wed 08.06.11	Tue 11.10.11
7	Analysis of the indicators associated to the on-line media plan in order to assess the project performance	15 days	Wed 12.10.11	Tue 01.11.11

Promotion of the e-book within social networks and specialized forums

Social networks and specialized forums are designed for information to quickly move from member to member, so the e-book web marketing campaigns that are focused on these capabilities perform the best. Members in social networks like to communicate with each other, or self-express. As a result, the e-book web marketing campaigns should satisfy these needs with the appropriate tools. As more people contribute or interact with the marketing campaign, the value of the e-book is increased. This can be in the form of viral marketing that is created by the community, contests, voting or games. In this way, a publisher can continue earning money month and years ago, as passive income [5].

Analysis of the indicators associated to the on-line media plan in order to assess the project performance

The underlying goal of any online marketing campaign for the e-books is to attract more traffic to the website. The analysis of the indicators associated to the on-line media plan can be performed by means of specialized software such as Google Analytics which will keep comprehensive tabs on traffic flow and visitor numbers to the e-book website. An improved reader experience may not lead to better rankings, but it will almost certainly lead to increased sales of the e-book.

4. Conclusions

Having in view the fact that Internet makes a worldwide bridge for the people, the opportunities for marketing activities are huge. Internet is the richest media from the perspective of communication possibilities for the e-books. Thus, the moment of the development of e-books' customer attraction can be rigorously planned, the messages can be customized according to the readers' preferences and can generate different modalities to assess the performance: the frequencies of a site accessing, the number of e-books sold, the number of recommendations of the website, etc. Taking into consideration the stages that we proposed for e-books web marketing plan model, the principle of customers' attraction can be formulated as it follows: "To propose the most adequate e-book design, to the most representative target and with the best argues".

Long term web marketing strategies build e-books awareness and increase sales revenues. Short term strategies create immediate revenue by giving readers an incentive to purchase. By implementing both long and short term strategies, the publisher of an e-book can attend to immediate sales goals while building the e-book reputation.

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