

How To Find A Perfect Target Market Using Message Boards

By Lori Osterberg

How long have you had a website? Is it pulling in visitors that are taking action?

Unfortunately many small business owners today have fallen in to the “build it and they will come” mentality. Everyone has a website, right? So the owner spends a few hundred (or thousand) dollars putting up a website that is little more than a glorified brochure. After a few months, they begin wondering why they spent the time, effort and money necessary to put something online that just doesn’t work.

If you see yourself in this category of business owner mentality, take heed!

One of the simplest ways of getting targeted traffic in to your website is by chatting online with other people from around the world. It’s easy. It’s free. And it takes just a small amount of time each week to produce remarkable results.

A message board is a place on the web where users post and read announcements on topics of common interest. Users interact with other users on the message board by submitting a form with their message, allowing the message to be posted directly to the board itself for all to see.

The beauty of a message board is your response is permanently attached to that board, and can be archived and viewed by thousands of people over the course of weeks or even months. By placing a link to your website in your signature line, you guarantee that your website will be promoted for free again and again.

There are thousands of message boards online today. Boards exist on many topics in many industries, and you can usually find one that has a fairly specific interest. The key is to find a message board where people congregate with interests in what you are selling. For instance,

- A business that provides wedding invitations should find boards where brides-to-be post.
- An author with a book on small business marketing should find boards where small business owners post.
- A cruise specialist should find boards where people are discussing travel

You get the picture. Think about what you sell and whom you sell to, then find those people online in a message board.

Finding groups online is easy. But building up relationships and finding boards that work well for you takes time. Don’t lose patience. Instead, find a few boards that interest you and continue to work them several days a week. Start by looking at:

Groups.google.com
Groups.yahoo.com

Both provide a wide variety of groups with a broad range of interests.

Next, spend some time researching message boards with your favorite search engine. Type in “message board YourTopic”, and spend some time on the boards that come up in your search. From there you can continue to research and find niched message boards that provide you with access to hundreds of people that may be interested in your business.

Another resource for you to check out is Ryze.com. Ryze.com is a business-networking site that allows you to create a personal profile, and then have access to thousands of people by participating in their message boards. They have many different message boards, in a wide array of interests. Ultimately, you can create friendship links, and network with people all over the world just by sharing your information in a few different places. Ryze takes the idea of message board posting to the next level with the tools they provide.

No matter which board you decide to post on, and what communities you decide to join, the critical key to making this form of marketing work is to keep posting on a regular basis. Posting once a month doesn't work. Posting several times a week creates the exposure you are looking for.

Once you find a few boards that meet your qualifications, what should you post?

Message boards are a place to share. People come to ask questions and receive answers. If you are visiting a message board to gain potential new clients, your job is to provide answers, and ask questions that get people thinking about your services. But there are a few key rules to follow when posting online.

1. Message boards are usually not a place to advertise. Instead, they are places where people go to get answers to their questions. Provide honest feedback and helpful tips.
2. Make your messages are detailed. Provide guidance that will directly help the question being asked. Provide links to other useful sites. If you have a report or article on your own website that may be helpful, provide a link.
3. Develop relationships. Let people see your name again and again. When someone joins a board for the first time, let them see your posts and gain knowledge from your information. You will become an authority figure quickly.

Have fun with it. Make it a daily part of your routine, and think of it as you ½ hour daily networking function. You'll be surprised at how quickly you gain results!

Lori Osterberg has created three successful businesses in the past 10 years, and along the way discovered secrets of taking a local small business and turning it into a worldwide success. She now shares this passion with people all over the world, and writes and mentors on using technology to grow your business – and stay small at the same time! Receive her FREE ezine at www.VisionOfSuccess.com.