

"One Simple Marketing Tactic = Lots Of Free One-Way Links!"

It all starts with a simple story.

A few days ago, I came across [Seth Godin](#)'s new e-book, "Everybody's An Expert" (it's free, and you can download it from [here](#)). It's about a new way of finding information on the web - through recommendations and peer reviews. At 32 pages, it's a quick read. Through the e-book, Seth promotes his new project, [Squidoo](#) (don't worry, this is going somewhere).

To quote from the Squidoo blog:

"We've built a platform that makes it easy for anyone, even a newbie, to teach people about topics they care about. We believe that everyone is an expert about something, and the Squidoo.com platform is designed to make it easy to do that."

Fairly interesting - and the best part about this is, it's a fresh and extremely useful way of **raising your website's search engine rankings**.

While we wait for Squidoo to come out of beta (it was launched on Oct 17, but is limited to beta users only), there's an important lesson in all this. **The marketing.**

Seth has, perhaps better than anyone else, perfected the art of **viral marketing** - in essence, how to spread information / news about a product or service through referrals and word-of-mouth publicity. Despite a strange name (viral isn't immediately a friendly term), viral marketing has proved remarkably successful in drumming up news coverage and publicity for newly launched products and services.

For Squidoo, Seth used a relatively simple but powerful publicity technique known as **buzz marketing**. Essentially, it is a viral marketing tactic that creates instant value for the product by **restricting access** to only a few "selected" people in the target audience. By deliberately choosing "targets" who can **easily influence their peers** (say journalists, industry leaders, experts, business owners, etc.), buzz marketing creates a word-of-mouth campaign where consumers (flattered to be included in the elite group of those "in the know") **willingly spread the word** to their friends and colleagues.

Remember last year, when [GMail](#) was launched? It was an invite-only offering, and that instantly created a natural "buzz" about it on the Internet. People were talking about it in chat rooms, on blogs, on their websites, everywhere. GMail invites even went for sale on eBay!

Back to Squidoo. The e-book promoting Squidoo ("[Everyone's an Expert](#)") was posted on Seth's blog on Oct 7. Today, almost two weeks later, I took a quick look around the blogosphere to check its popularity:

- Did a quick search on [Technorati](#) (leading search engine for blogs) and found **249 posts** talking about Squidoo already.
- In the top 10 for searches done at Technorati in the past day (we're talking tens of thousands of searches here).
- Checked the track backs (people linking to Seth's post promoting the launch) - 46 so far.

Think about it. Within two weeks, this launch has already been covered by over 250 blogs, each with a readership of its own. Within two weeks, this launch has already been read about by tens of thousands of people, most of them content publishers / business owners who are looking to reach the largest possible number of readers.

By now you're probably thinking: "But Seth is a well-respected, well-read marketer. He's already published so many books. It's **easy** for him to build this kind of a buzz this quickly."

In other words: "How the heck does this help me?"

Let's find out.

What happened when websites and blogs started talking about Squidoo?

Within a week, the site received **249 new links** - all **one-way**, in original, user-generated content.

Not even ONE reciprocal link exchange.

This is organic marketing at its best. Instead of getting 500+ reciprocal, low-value links, you get 200+ very valuable, very powerful one-way links.

Looking at this in another way, think about the niche Squidoo is competing in. **Content publishing**. They're going up against powerhouses like Blogger, Typepad, WordPress, MSN Spaces (to name just a few). In addition, because this will be an information-rich resource, they're also up against Wikipedia, About.com and other content giants.

A heavy-hitting market to jump headfirst in. And how are they building their search engine rankings?

Entirely through **organic marketing**.

Now I'm not saying that everyone should do that. Seth's a big name in marketing, and for the rest of us, building organic, one-way links is a long-term process that involves **meticulous content building**.

So don't give up your reciprocal link campaigns just yet. For most websites, buzz marketing is not enough to create massive search engine rankings, and you'll still need the rest of your marketing strategy (content-building, link exchanges, article submissions, etc) in full flow.

But if you're looking for one-way links - links that bring you **added link popularity AND targeted traffic** - then give buzz marketing a serious try.

Buzz Marketing Basics.

The Internet is a powerful *social* medium. It allows people to offer opinions and recommendations on different topics almost instantly. Buzz marketing is about harnessing this power and using it to promote your own product or service.

It's *crazy* how quickly news can spread across the web by **word-of-mouth** - or in this case, through websites, blogs, emails and IMs (instant messengers). Squidoo is just one example - in the past few months, several new product launches have been promoted just through word-of-mouth advertising - consumers creating a "buzz" by recommending the product to their friends, reviewing the service on their blogs, creating affiliate pages on their websites - in short, word-of-mouth advertising works, and it works well.

Get Your Buzz On.

But exactly *how* does it work? Here are the necessary ingredients:

Identify Your Target Audience

If you maintain a niche business such as knitting, you might think it's impossible to create a "buzz" about your new service or product on the Internet. You'd be wrong. Any topic / niche that has a market (otherwise why would you be in business to begin with?) is a prime candidate for your buzz marketing campaign.

Figure out who your **target audience** is (people looking for information on knitting - patterns, equipment, technique (you can tell knitting isn't my strong suit)) and brainstorm on how you can tailor your campaign to capture their interest.

In addition, you'll also want to look at the "**authority**" **websites** in the niche - the leading blogs and websites in your industry. These can be used as launchers for your word-of-mouth campaign - once the big names review / take part in your new product launch or service, you are guaranteed exposure in that niche.

Give Something Away For Free

This could be a free e-book (like Seth did with Squidoo) for everyone who visits your website or a product / service offering to a select few (an invite-based online membership to your special knitting club - ok, so

maybe that might not work in such a small niche, but you get the idea).

The core idea here is to **give something valuable** to your readers for free - a report, a membership, limited access to an online service or a demo version of your latest software. Make sure that the freebie is of value (in terms of information or usefulness) to your consumers, and just as important, structure that freebie to promote your actual offer - a book launch, product launch, or a service launch.

Give Them Bait

In your marketing campaign and in your freebie, give enough information to generate interest in the subject, but **don't** give them everything. If you are promoting a book, you'd give them a free copy of the first chapter, a bonus report about the same topic as the book but NOT the actual book itself. In the same way, if you were promoting a new online service, you might want provide minimum "marketing" information, and then let users find out for themselves (either through the "invite-only" strategy or just by allowing a limited number of people to sign up at the beginning).

Leave enough **gaps** in your message so that the early users can fill them in for you. This may sound counter-intuitive, but it's pure gold. People on the "outside" - everyone without access to the information - will be looking to the people on the "inside" - people with access - for more details. And people love to talk, especially when they know they have select knowledge on the subject. This is key to creating the "buzz" - interested users discussing and describing your offer on their own websites, giving you instant credibility, link popularity, traffic AND best of all - **they're doing the marketing for you.**

Easy To Share

Google hit gold with their marketing strategy for Gmail - allow a select group of people initial access to the service, and then make it "invite-based". Suddenly, the value of a Gmail account skyrocketed, and everyone clamored to get one.

A critical component of the Gmail marketing strategy was the ease with which you or I could send "invites" to other people - just enter their email address and poof, an email is sent.

If you want your buzz marketing campaign to be effective, make sure that your freebie is **easy to share** - whether it's an e-book (or a link to it), an invite-only service or even audio clips from your next seminar.

Buzz Marketing - Just A Tool.

Whether you follow the advice in this lesson or not, remember that buzz marketing is just a tool - it's not a complete marketing strategy, and it should never be taken as such. For any online business, a marketing strategy involves a lot of different tools (content-building, SEO, PPC advertising, etc) and buzz marketing is just one of these tools.

If you use buzz marketing for your website, make sure you're **not** abandoning your marketing strategy.

All the best,



Brad Callen
Professional SEO
<http://www.seoelite.com>

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