

FORUM MARKETING

MASTERY 101



DISCOVER HOW TO TURN FORUM TRAFFIC INTO CASH

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Why Forum Marketing?.....	5
Why Do Most Marketers Fail At Forum Marketing?	12
Forum Marketing 101	18
Effective Forum Marketing Is Content Marketing	24
Forum Marketing Success Framework.....	31
Shared Forum Content Guidelines.....	40
Killer Content Creation Guidelines	49
Forum Content Posting Best Practices	55
The Hallmarks of a Solid Forum Thread.....	62
Your Overall Strategy: Help Turn the Forum into a Niche Resource.....	67
Your End Goal	72
Don't Forget to Build a List	78
Conclusion	80

Introduction

There are many ways to generate website traffic off the internet. In fact, your problem as a marketer is not whether you can generate traffic both on a paid or free basis, but which type of traffic you would go with that is right.

The issue is not whether there is traffic to generate, but the fact that there are just too many ways to do it. There are just too many options on the table. It is very easy to get distracted. It is very easy to get confused among all the different methods of driving traffic. In fact, if you come across a website that allows you to build a link that points to your site, that is a potential source of traffic.

In many cases, there are many online platforms that allow you to mention a brand name without even mentioning URLs, and if everything else lines up, those platforms are also viable sources of online traffic. Again, the issue is not a shortage of online traffic sources. There are just too many of them. In fact, I would venture to say that the only real limit is your imagination and creativity.

With that said, some sources of traffic are obviously much better than others. Some sources of traffic take a lot more money and a lot more time to produce results. Others are more targeted, and take less of your time and less of your money to turn into cold hard cash.

One of the most powerful sources of traffic that you should never neglect is forum traffic. This book spells out why you should consider forum marketing and the benefits it brings to the table. It also steps you through the process of using specialized online forums and message boards to get highly targeted and high performing website traffic.

CHAPTER 1



WHY FORUM MARKETING?

Why Forum Marketing?

The interesting thing about generating online traffic is that it is very easy to conclude that you basically have to create interest in whatever it is you are promoting. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that what you are offering is something so new and so different that you have to go out of your way to create a demand for it. The truth is quite the opposite.

The truth is that regardless of which niche you are promoting, chances are there are already people online who are interested in whatever it is that you are trying to market. In fact, they are not just interested; they are actually expressing their interest about your niche product or service. They are asking questions about it. They are networking about it. They are trying to support each other in their efforts at finding solutions regarding your niche.

In other words, there are specific communities of people that already are interested in what you are promoting. Isn't this amazing? Isn't this great news?

Unfortunately, too many marketers think that they have to re-invent the wheel and drum up traffic out of the thin blue air. In reality, people already online are congregating in special areas, asking questions and sharing information regarding your niche. These specialized areas are called online message boards or forums.

Regardless of what niche you are in and regardless of how seemingly obscure your niche is, there is sure to be at least one forum that specializes in that particular subject matter. Even in the rare case that there is no one forum that directly specializes in your niche, you can rest assure that there will be at least

one forum that would have a sub-forum where at least several discussion threads are talking about your niche.

Why should you consider forum marketing? Why should you bother to market your niche product or service in these areas online? Here are just some basic benefits that you get. This is just a partial list. In fact, the longer you engage in forum marketing, the more you would be surprised as to how many benefits forum promotions bring to the table.

These are just some of the basic benefits that easily come to mind. You really have to engage in forum marketing for an extended period of time to get a full appreciation of its complete list of benefits. These benefits are the ones that materialized for most people trying their hand at forum marketing.

Niche Specificity

To make money online, you have to really do one thing: You need to get the right message in front of the right eyeballs at the right time. In other words, everything has to line up for you to generate a sale. It all, of course, boils down to trust. You cannot simply market something that people are not interested in because they will not trust you, and they would have no need for whatever it is that you are pushing.

Niche specificity will help you solve a lot of your marketing problems because you can put your offer in front of the right eyeballs. These are people who are actually already talking about the particular niche product or service you are promoting. These are people who already expressed their interest and concern about your niche product or service.

This tight fit between the subject matter of the product or service you are promoting and the interest of the people within a particular community increases the likelihood that people would pay attention, and people would want to know more about your product. Depending on how everything else goes, the more they know, the higher the likelihood that they may build enough trust in the content that you are sharing that they would then take the next step and buy your product or service.

Topic Specificity

If you have been trying to sell stuff online, you probably already know that simple niche specificity is not enough. Simply going to a place where people are interested in your product or service is not in of itself enough to generate sales. You have to do something more.

This is where forum marketing blows away lots of other traffic-generation methods. You can go to a forum that already deals with a specific set of problems and issues your particular product or service addresses and look for even more specific discussions. In other words, you get topic specificity.

Topic specificity is extremely important because as I have mentioned earlier, to sell anything online, you need to get your offer in front of the right eyeballs at the right time. Topic specificity is all about timing. When people post a question regarding a particular issue, people who click on that link are actively interested in that issue.

In other words, they care in the here and now regarding a particular issue that they need a solution for. They are not looking for a solution way into the future.

They are not interested in the issue on a purely theoretical basis. They need an answer now.

This is extremely important because if they know about your solution, then chances are good that they may take you up on your offer. Why? The need already exists in the here and now. It is present. It is not theoretical, it is not something that could happen, but it is actually something that they already have.

You can Shape Discussions

Another great thing about forum marketing is that you are in the driver's seat as far as directing people's interests. As long as you know what you are doing, you can shape the discussion in a forum in such a way that it benefits you. Of course, you have to do it in a very subtle way. You cannot just say to people that they need to buy whatever it is you are offering immediately. That is not marketing. That is spamming. I hope you know the difference. That is also an abuse of your power to shape discussions.

Forum marketing enables you to create open-ended discussions that are specifically engineered to lead to more and more specific discussions. This is important because if you know how to line up your ducks properly, you can orchestrate your replies so that it leads to people opening their minds regarding a specific set of solutions. Once they open their minds to those solutions, then the particular solution you offer would look better.

Of course, it all depends on how you play the game. Again, you cannot be blatant about it. You cannot just drop a link and leave. That is spamming. It is like an intricate dance. Regardless, the power to shape discussions is one of the most powerful benefits of forum marketing. You do not have this power with other

ways of generating online traffic. You shape the discussion and this also brings a lot of power to direct the discussion.

You Get Multiple Opportunities for Building Credibility

To sell anything online, as I mentioned earlier, you have to focus on building trust. This is very easy to understand because nobody will buy from you if they do not trust you. Likewise, nobody will trust you if they do not feel that they like you. Finally, people would not like you if they do not feel they know you. All these processes work hand in hand. You have to start with the know stage and end up in the trust stage. Only once you get people to trust you would they buy anything from you.

Unfortunately, a lot of marketers have it all wrong. They think that the moment they talk about a particular solution, people will just click on their link and buy. It does not work that way. That is like somebody coming off the street, somebody you do not know, offering you to buy stuff. Would you buy from that person? Probably not. Why? You do not trust that person.

If that is how your mind works, then why do you expect other people's minds to work any differently? Just because we are dealing with the internet does not mean that we are going to think differently. What works in real life works the same, as far as decision making is concerned, in the online world. You have to build trust.

Forum marketing enables you to build a tremendous amount of trust because it gives you a lot of opportunities to share trust-building content. It gives you a lot

of opportunities to shape discussions and direct discussions in such a way that it builds a lot of trust. This book will step you through the process of using your forum accounts to build trust and credibility, so you can sell more online.

CHAPTER 2



**WHY DO MOST
MARKETERS FAIL AT
FORUM MARKETING?**

Why Do Most Marketers Fail At Forum Marketing?

I am sorry to report, but the vast majority of people that try to market on forums fail. Of course, failure has different levels. There is of course obvious failure. Obvious failure is when somebody goes to a forum, does a lot of things and has absolutely nothing to show for all their time and effort.

Unfortunately, failure at online marketing is not this stark and easy to detect. In many instances, people put in several hours every week doing forum marketing and they think that they are succeeding. This is the worst form of failure because their efforts are not living up to the fullest potential of forum marketing. They get a few sales here and there, and this is enough for them to maintain their efforts. However, they are not getting the full benefit of forum promotions.

This is the worst kind of failure because you are completely blind or oblivious to what you are doing wrong. You are just putting enough effort so you can get certain results, but if you were to analyze what you are doing, you would realize that you are actually losing money because you could have been getting better results if you fine tuned your efforts. This is kind of a silent killer as far as your personal effort and resources are concerned.

Regrettably, the vast majority of forum marketers fall into this camp. They are not getting the very best results from their forum marketing efforts, and they are simply settling for cents on the dollar instead of truly benefiting from forum marketing. Here are the most common reasons why most marketers fail at one level or the other at forum marketing.

Drive by Spam

Drive by spam as alluded to in chapter 1 is simply all about spreading your legs. You sign up at a forum, create an account, find topics that deal with your niche, and you just drop a link. You might try to spice things up by posting a sentence or two that explains your link and you call it a day.

This kind of behavior is driven by spamming and it really does not do anybody any favors. You are simply polluting the forum with your link. What you think will happen?

I will tell you what will happen. It is actually quite a black and white situation. Your account gets banned and your links get taken off. This is why most people who do drive by spamming actually use software because it is a numbers game. It is like a cat and mouse game that simply seeks to pollute forums with links and hope against hope that somehow, someday somebody would click on a link, and they would make money.

It is driven by volume and forum marketers who use this approach use all sorts of complicated software as well as deception technology like proxies to spread their links. This is a losing marketing game. It really is, because as I have mentioned earlier, people will only buy from you if they trust you. Drive by spam does not build trust. It is just all about blasting promotional links all over the place. That is a lousy way to get people's attention and earn their business.

Thin Content Spam

Thin content spam is really just one step away from bulk drive by spam. With thin content spam, you are basically just copying and pasting like maybe a paragraph or two paragraphs of content to couch your link and you create other discussions. While this is a little bit better than drive by spam, in terms of results you will still get lousy traffic, and conversations will still also be equally horrible.

The whole point of forum marketing is building credibility and you can only really build credibility if you engage with people. Even if you go out of your way to create some sort of context for the link that you will be publishing, there might still not be enough content “meat” associated with your link to make it worthwhile for people to click on your link. In many cases, you have to engage with people, get them to ask a lot of questions, answer their questions on a point by point basis, and then drop a link.

That is how it works and for that to happen, you must have built up quite a bit of personal credibility for your account, so people would trust you. Do you see how this works? This does not fit with thin content link spam because you are just disguising your link.

What you are really doing is drive by spamming, but you are just trying to couch it or camouflage it with very thin and non-responsive content. It is like taking a crap on the floor and then spraying room deodorant all over your crap. It might not smell like crap, but it is still crap. I hope you get my point.

Bulk Forum SEO Link Spam

Another common reason why many forum marketers fail is that they engage in spreading links for purely SEO purposes. They would create what would seem to be normal-looking posts, but those posts are really intended to provide back links for SEO purposes. Search engines factor in the amount of back links you get from websites to determine how high your target website would rank for certain keywords. Many forum marketers use forums for this type of link building.

The problem with this is that Google continues to evolve at a very rapid clip. The practices that worked 10 years ago no longer work now. In fact, Google is evolving so quickly that it is beginning to appear that the old ways of building back links will not only fail to benefit you, but also actually end up penalizing you. That is right.

A lot of the things that used to build up your website very quickly will actually push it down the toilet in this day and age. This is why it is truly important to avoid bulk forum SEO link spam. Focus on contributing real content. This means actually engaging with other forum members and sharing valuable information.

Shallow Signature Marketing

One of the most common ways people market on forums is to simply post lots of responses. In fact, they post almost in all threads. They try to share information and at the bottom is a signature. The signature, of course, goes to their target website.

What is wrong with this form of marketing? Well, if you are simply responding to forum posts because your primary motivation is to get people to look at your signature link, you run into all sorts of problems and temptations. You run into problems because it is very easy to give in to the temptation of simply responding with worthless answers. Your focus is to not really offer real information and actually help people. Your real focus is to get as many eyeballs on your signature.

This is a very shallow form of marketing because you are not really adding any real value. Also, many forum users have forum signatures turned off by default. Not surprisingly, you are not really benefiting if you keep posting all these bogus or low-quality answers and end up wasting people's time. Shallow signature marketing is not the way to go.

The good news is that you are partially there as far as high-quality and high-performing forum marketing is concerned. You just need to take it to the next level. This is definitely way better than shallow content marketing or SEO link spam or drive by spam.

If there is any one pattern that emerges from all the failed and low-quality forum marketing techniques outlined above, it is this: They all have a short-sighted focus on direct traffic. All these practices are simply aimed at siphoning traffic from one source to another site. It is really all about transferring traffic. In other words, you are stealing traffic. Stealing is never a good idea.

If you want to truly take your business to the next level, you have to go from a mindset that focuses on stealing to one that focuses on earning your traffic.

CHAPTER 3



FORUM MARKETING 101

Forum Marketing 101

Forum marketing is all about earning your traffic from forums. This means that you have to provide value to get value. It really is that simple. For you to do this, not only do you have to avoid the practices outlined in chapter 2, but you also have to have a clear set of objectives.

You have to remember that effective forum marketing can only bring solid results to the table if you approach it on both systematic and methodical basis. Otherwise, it is very easy for you to give in to the temptation of taking shortcuts. It is also very easy to miss certain elements that would go a long way in building trust.

As I have mentioned in chapter 1, for you to sell anything online, you have to get people to trust you. Forum marketing is definitely a very powerful way of building trust. However, you need to do it right. Here are the key ideas that you need to wrap your mind around so you can put together a winning forum marketing strategy.

I am not giving you a cookie cutter blueprint for forum marketing. I am not doing that because, first of all, it is very cheesy. That is how many other forum marketing books do it. Unfortunately, most of them fail because they use a cookie cutter approach.

The truth is that in your particular marketing situation, product and niche, the focus is different from mine and from all other marketers. By paying attention to these basic principles, you can then quickly and easily craft together a set of strategies that would work for your particular set of circumstances. This would lead to more responsive solutions and better results down the road.

Set Objectives

The first step is to set your objectives for your forum marketing efforts. What do you want to see happen? Obviously you want to generate sales. Obviously you want to get new clients. I get that. That is too obvious. Instead, focus on making your objectives as niche specific as possible.

Whose eyeballs do you want? When do you want it? Where do you want to take those eyeballs to? Why should they buy your product? How do you filter people with a certain need? Are you offering the best product for a particular need? Are you targeting the right forums for people with a certain need?

You need to work through these questions so you can set the right objectives that would produce the right results.

Understand That It is All about Establishing Credibility

It is a very important concept to get. Forum marketing is all about establishing credibility. At the most superficial level, you have to make it clear to people that you know what you are talking about. You are somebody that they can trust. You

are somebody that they should listen to. If you do not do this, then you are playing the game to lose.

This is fundamental. This may seem very basic, but you would be surprised as to how many people completely blow this and engage in the worthless forum marketing activities outlined in chapter 2. They do those activities because they have completely set aside building credibility. They have completely discounted the power of credibility.

This really is too bad because credibility builds trust. You cannot have trust if people will not believe you. Do you see how this works? People will not buy from you if they do not trust a word that comes out of your mouth. Everything you do at online niche forums must be all about building credibility. To do that, however, you need to have a firm grasp of the know-like-trust cycle (KLT).

Mastering KLT

KLT is crucial for you to sell online. As I mentioned earlier, for people to buy from you, they must first trust you. However, for them to trust you, they must first feel that they like you or like your solution. To get to that stage, they must first feel that they know you.

These all work hand in hand. People are not going to like something because they do not know enough about that particular option. Similarly, people are not going to trust you and your product if they do not like you. These are all interrelated.

The good news is that getting from the know stage to the trust stage does not have to be a long time. There are some people that can go from the know stage to the trust stage fairly rapidly. In fact, many people go from wanting to know about a product to actually buying the product after reading just one blog post or after reading a sales page. Other people are more skeptical and more confused, so they require a lot more time.

Regardless, your target website must have content ready, so that it can accommodate people regardless of where they are in the KLT buying cycle. By having pages that specialize on certain areas of the buying cycle, you increase your likelihood of generating a sale. Why?

If you set up your pages properly, it would be possible for you to take somebody at the know stage and push that person to the like stage. Your page focusing on the like stage in turn would have enough information that would build enough trust, so that the reader would reach the trust stage.

Once they reach the trust stage, they can always click to your sales page and buy your product. Do you see how this works? It is all about meeting your target customers where they are in the KLT buying cycle. It is not about blindly assuming that they are ready to buy. If you try to market that way, I am telling you right now that you are not going to generate great sales. You are simply getting ahead of yourself.

Forums Give You the Inside Track on KLT

The great thing about forum marketing is that forums enable you to direct discussions and shape discussions. This is all you need to get on the inside track of KLT. By being able to open people's minds regarding certain topics, you can shape the discussion in such a way that you can direct it to where you need it to go.

Where do you need it to go? It is very simple. You need people to get so excited about a particular topic that they would want to know more solutions or discussions about that topic. You can then feed them subtle information that would satisfy their need to know about the topic. Once they are on your website and they get all they need to know about the topic, you would have other pages that would help them like your solution.

I hope you see where this is going because it is all about walking people through the KLT process using forum discussions and content on your pages and on third party pages to generate a sale eventually. The linchpin to this whole process, of course, is trust. Without trust, you are just wasting your time. Without trust, you are simply engaging in behaviors and traffic generation techniques outlined in chapter 2

CHAPTER 4



**EFFECTIVE FORUM
MARKETING IS CONTENT
MARKETING**

Effective Forum Marketing Is Content Marketing

One of the hottest trends in internet marketing currently is content marketing. Whenever a hot new term emerges, people come up with all sorts of definitions. It can really get confusing because if you look at some of these definitions, it seems that they contradict each other. A lot of them cancel each other out. This is especially true when it comes to SEO. SEO people have a very interesting take on content marketing that does not necessarily square with the definition offered by forum marketers.

When it comes to forum marketing, let us just get one thing clear. It is content marketing. There is really no way around this. The reason for this is quite simple. If you are going to market on forums effectively, you have to use content. In other words, you have to use content marketing.

Here is how the process plays out.

Forum Members Have Specific Needs

People go to forums for a specific reason. They go there because they have certain questions. They go there because they are looking for certain information. This is important to note because it opens up tremendous marketing opportunities. It is also important to note because it clues you in as to what you need to do to get their attention and build their trust.

If somebody is at a particular place with specific needs, then it makes a lot of sense for you to show up with information that meets their needs. Clear?

Forum Members are Looking for Someone to Trust

The funny thing about most forums is that it is like an open air market. You have been to an open air market, right? There are lots of people yelling, there are people running around, and there is a lot of hustle and bustle. It is fun. It can also get hot and sticky. In other words, it can get very confusing very quickly.

This is why when you get on a forum, it is very easy for forum members to get very desperate because they are looking for an answer very quickly. They are looking for somebody to trust. That is their mindset. They do not have all the time in the world to read all the posts with a fine-toothed comb. They just need to zero in on somebody that they can place their trust on, so they can be rest assured that, with all things being equal, they will get the information they are looking for.

This is a golden opportunity because this actually lowers the amount of work that you need to do to get people to trust you. Since they already have a built-in incentive, or in some cases desperation to trust somebody, this makes your job of building credibility all that much easier.

Build Trust and Expertise through Content

You have to build trust and expertise through content. The first step in forum marketing is to build people's trust. You do this by sharing content. For example, when people ask a lot of questions, you give them information that they are looking for. In other words, you answer their questions. You meet their needs.

When you do this, you look good. You look like a hero. People are looking for an answer and you were there to supply it. You did not drop your link. It is not obvious that you want something in return. You were just that special person that showed up at the right time with the right answer.

This cannot help but make people look at you in a favorable light. You need to keep repeating this until you reach a point where people can trust in the fact that you know what you are talking about. At the very least, you have their best interest in mind and you have a high degree of concern for their welfare. This makes you stand out from everybody else because all the other marketers there are simply looking for quick and easy traffic. They are simply looking to siphon traffic as quickly and efficiently from that forum to their target site.

By sharing content, you also share contextual assistance. In other words, the information you share has a proper framework. It is not just floating out of nowhere. It feeds into something, it is related to something, and it is connected to something.

Build Trust and Expertise through Engagement

In addition to sharing high-quality content with people on forums, the next step is to actually engage with people. This is extremely important because as mentioned earlier, people are looking for experts they can trust. It is one thing to be an expert by simply pointing people to the right direction. You can give people looking for specific information resources and have them figure it out.

However, when you engage with people, you actually spell it out for them. You break down information into bite size pieces that they can actually suggest and make sense of. This makes you look much better in the eyes of the community than a person that just spits out standard content from third party websites or even your own website. In other words, not only do you give them food, but you actually chop up the food so they can digest it better.

This is extremely important to note because depending on your niche and depending on the competition level in your niche, you need all the competitive advantages you can muster. You need to focus on the things that will make you stand out. Frequent engagement definitely makes you stand out. At the very least, it makes you look like you care more about your target audience members than competitors who simply just post resource content links. I hope you can see the difference.

Why You Need to Build a Site or Blog

Many marketers mistakenly believe that they no longer need to blog and that they think that blogging is simply just a remnant of a past period in online marketing. They think it is just a remnant of the past. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A lot of people who are very critical with blogging have a negative impression of blogging because it takes effort. It definitely can take quite a bit of money to come up with high-quality blog posts that actually address people's concerns. However, if you really want your forum marketing to bear a lot of positive results, you need to invest in a blog.

You need to come up with periodic blog posts that answer particular clusters of questions directly. You need to come up with content that is not only responsive, but also comprehensive and that can be used as a permanent online resource. It really would be a colossal waste of your time if you were to come up with all these amazing responses to forum questions and not have a permanent record of your responses. When you do that, you are basically giving yourself a short-lived shot at turning that engagement into traffic. This really is too bad.

The better approach would be to answer people's questions and then have them click on your link for a fuller answer. This fuller answer is a permanent record of you answering to their needs. This fuller record then becomes a permanent resource on the internet that can be indexed by search engines. It can also be linked to by other people interested in your niche. Do you see the difference here?

I have been doing forum marketing for a long time and I cannot even begin to tell you how many otherwise expert forum marketers waste their time. They post these really amazing responses. We are talking about very long responses, very detailed and some even have graphics and diagrams. However, there is no link to their blog. There is no archive of that post except on the forum. The only people

that benefit from that response is the forum because the forum gets resource content.

Sure, the forum marketer can get direct traffic, but this benefit is outweighed by the permanent resource created when they answer specific questions. Do yourself a favor and create a home for your brand and expertise by creating a blog or a website. You have to understand that when you engage with people at a high level and you are really helpful, you are creating a brand. It really would be a waste if that brand stays at the forums. Build a home for your brand by creating a blog or website.

CHAPTER 5



FORUM MARKETING SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

Forum Marketing Success Framework

As I mentioned earlier, I do not believe in turnkey solutions. I do not believe in cookie cutter approaches to online marketing. What may work for somebody may not work for you. Somebody's check list might produce amazing results like a charm and be completely worthless to you.

It is not easy to understand why this is the case. Everybody's situation is different. There are all sorts of different sets of circumstances surrounding our different projects. Instead of giving you some sort of magic bullet solution that works for all people at all times and under all circumstances, I am giving you a framework.

This framework allows you to make certain changes. This framework is also very flexible, so you can take some stuff off if it does not apply to you and add some things that would make it better fit your situation. Keep the following action items in mind.

Pick the Right Forums

Your first step should be to look at the particular product or service you are promoting. What niche comes to mind? What sub-niche comes to mind? If you are completely stumped, you might want to look at your competitors. You can use Google to look up your competitors in your niche. How do they classify your niche? What keywords do they have? What questions do they address? Taking all these information, you can then search Google for forums that deal with your niche directly.

Another way to understand niche is that they are a set of needs, so using Google, figure out forums that address the particular set of needs the product or service you are promoting addresses.

Pick the Right Sub-Forums

In many instances, there is no one specific forum that deals directly with your niche. If this is the case, then you should not get desperate. Do not get depressed. Do not get discouraged.

Instead, look for specific discussions or threads that mention your niche's keywords. You would quickly find out that there are forums that have sub-forums dedicated to your niche. In light of the fact that there are no forums that are directly related to your niche, this is the best you could hope for. Sub-forums would do just fine.

Establish a Credible-Looking Persona

Once you have put together a list of niche-targeted forums or sub-forums or even discussion threads, the next step is to create a persona. I am telling you right now, a lot of marketers just rush into this and come up with a forum identity based on what comes to mind. In many cases, they use the wrong names and they use irrelevant pictures. Not surprisingly, they end up falling flat on their face.

If you want to do forum marketing right, everything has to be done just right. Everything has to be methodical. Everything has to be done on purpose.

This especially applies to the persona that you are creating. You need to pay careful attention to the name that you are using. Make sure that your name is related to your niche. Also, if the forum allows for avatars, make sure you pick an avatar picture that is at least related to the niche that you will be promoting.

Your signature is very important. If the forum allows for signatures, then you need to be careful regarding how you craft your signature. Your signature must attract people's attention. Your signature must also filter people based on their interest. You cannot create a signature that is great at generating blind traffic.

For example, if you create a signature that says, "Click here for pictures of naked girls," I have no doubt you will get a lot of clicks. However, if you are dumping them to a website that sells dog training services or kitty litter, you will convert very little people. You would just waste your time trying to make money with that signature. I hope you get my point. Your signature must be targeted enough so that even if there are very few people clicking on your signature, the chances are quite high that they would convert because your signature filters your traffic based on interest.

Likewise, all the details in your profile must be professional. What I mean by "professional" is that it has to be related to your niche. It is all about the persona that you are creating. You are creating a persona that will guide people towards a certain body of information. You do not have to be overly serious, but you should at least be very specific.

When people click on your forum profile details, they will see that this person is a person that is serious about a particular body of knowledge. You also want them to think that by going with you or paying attention to what you post, they can rest assure that they will get the very best information regarding a particular niche.

Share Credibility-Building “Best of Breed” Content

To get people to buy from you, you must first get people to trust you. However, people would not trust you if they feel that you do not know what you are talking about. This is the essence of credibility.

To build credibility quickly, the good news is that you do not have to be an instant expert. You do not have to write all these amazing pieces of content or blog posts regarding your niche. You do not have to do that, at least not at first.

You can simply take the best of breed content or most helpful and useful and informative content created by your competitors or other people in your niche, and share that with the community. Of course, you need to do this right. You cannot just drop content out of nowhere with no context and expect it to help your credibility. You will look like a spammer if you do that. There is no credibility there.

Instead, you should pay careful attention to the questions people ask and then you offer the best of breed content link. Make sure you include a paragraph or two explaining why the resource link that you have posted addresses their

questions. You might want to also quote from the blog post, so it is very easy to figure out how this particular resource addresses their concerns and meets their needs. That is how you build credibility using other people's content. It has to be in context and it has to be directly quoted so people can quickly understand the value your reply brings to the table.

Become Associated with High-Quality Content

If you do the previous step frequently enough, eventually you will reach a point where people will associate you with high-quality content. People will automatically assume that your user name is going to be posting information that they can trust. If you do this enough times, then people will find you credible. People will actually start opening your responses first ahead of everybody else. That is where you want to be.

Once you reach that point, then you become "default authority." A default authority is "go to" resource for certain topics. You want to be that person. For example, if you are promoting dog training manuals, then when the discussion turns to dog training, people will start expecting you to show up because you are the person that they are paying attention to as far as dog training information is concerned.

Do you see how this works? It is all about building the right persona. It is all about being equated with a high degree of authority regarding a particular narrow field of knowledge.

Engagement Helps You Become a "Default Authority" as Well

When you engage with people in the forum, you also help build your default authority. Simply sharing information is not enough. You have to be there to shepherd them through follow-up questions they may have.

For example, if somebody said, where do I get a list of quality dog training manuals? You would, of course, reply with a blog post link that would list such resources. The person would then have a follow up question. They would say, well I am actually looking for this type of training for this type of dog. You better be there for a follow-up answer. Otherwise, it will take you a little bit longer to build credibility.

You are already credible because you are sharing content, but to really deepen your credibility and really polish your default authority, you need to be there to take care of follow-up questions. You cannot simply just drop a resource in response to somebody's question and leave. That does not push the ball far enough.

Be there with follow-up responses. That way, you look like somebody who cares. You look like somebody who is a very indispensable member of the community.

Mix in Your Targeted Content

Once you have build up your default authority to a certain point, the next step is to start mixing in your content. This is where you get paid. Why? Previously, you are not making much money because you were simply sharing other people's

content and in those situations, you probably do not even have a signature line yet. This means people do not really have a way to go to your website.

At this stage, this is when you show your signature link and you share your own content. When people click your content to go to your blog post, there is a chance that you can turn this traffic into cold hard dollars. This is the part where you get paid.

However, do not get too excited. Do not blow all the credibility and authority you have worked so hard to build by featuring and posting and promoting only your targeted content. It does not work that way. You can easily look like a spammer if you do that. You have to focus, above all else, on high-quality content.

Always focus on sharing the very best content and mix in your own high-quality original content from time to time. The focus is on maintaining the expert status of your account, so you can truly help people and be equated with a high degree of value.

Focus on Building a Solid Forum Brand Persona

As I mentioned earlier, the focus should not be on getting traffic from the forum. The focus should be on maintaining your level of expertise. This is extremely important because it is very easy for people to blow this. It is very easy for people to simply promote their own stuff once they reach a high degree of default authority.

The whole marketing process all becomes a conversation about what they need. That is not going to help you all that much because for you to make money online, you have to first get people what they want so you can get what you want. It is easy to see what you want – you want money. However, for you to get that money, you have to deliver solid value to the lives of other people.

In other words, to serve yourself, you have to first serve others. You can do this most effectively on forums by building and maintaining solid forum brand persona based on expertise and value.

CHAPTER 6



SHARED FORUM CONTENT GUIDELINES

Shared Forum Content Guidelines

Now that we've covered the fact that you have to share high quality content to build your credibility and authority in forums, the next step is to focus on the content that you are sharing. You can't just share any type of content that you think is "best of breed". You can't just share content on a very random basis.

It's very easy to create content that you think is awesome but few other people find helpful. Similarly, it's very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that only your highly targeted content is the only content worth sharing.

I can understand why many marketers fall into this trap. You do get a major incentive to think this way. The incentive is simple. You make more money sharing your own content. Eventually, you would reach a point where you have a strong built-in bias for your own written materials because, subconsciously, you get addicted to the cash it generates.

Unfortunately, doing things this way is not always going to benefit your target audience members. If you want to do forum marketing right, you want to stay in the game for as long as possible, and produce the very best results, you have to focus on quality. You have to focus on what your target audience members are actually looking for and add value to their lives.

If you lose focus, it's too easy to screw up. It's too easy to produce and share content that only benefits you. Eventually, people will see right through what you're doing and, guess what, all that credibility and authority that you've worked so hard to build will eventually evaporate. That is not what you want to see

happen. This is why you need to pay close attention to the following shared forum content guidelines.

Don't Get Too Fixated on Your OWN Content

Your focus should be on building credibility. Your focus should be on building your authority. That's it.

It's not about lining your pockets. It's not about sucking up as much traffic as possible. It's not about making as much money as possible. Your focus should be on your authority, expertise, and credibility.

If you remain focused on these, you will make money. However, if you try to cut corners and just focus on your own content so you can suck as much traffic and as much cash as possible, you will end up taking shortcuts. You will end up producing content on a mass basis. Eventually, everything that you've worked so hard to build will go up in smoke.

Don't get that process going. It's a slippery slope downwards, and it's very easy to get started on that path. By constantly focusing on building your credibility by offering only the very best content, you assure yourself a steady source of income long into the future. However, the moment you lose sight of that and credibility is no longer important to you, you can rest assured that you will eventually lose your income at some point in the future.

How to Pick Best-of-Breed Content

It's very easy to say that you need to only post the very best content. It's very easy to say that you only need to focus on the very best niche-specific materials out there. The problem with this is that what may be "best" to you might not be the "best" to somebody else. In many cases, it might be actually a very horrible piece of content.

So how do you know which is best? This is a very tricky question because there are a lot of materials on the internet that seem to answer the questions being posed by people on the forums you're marketing on. They seem to hit the nail right on the head. However, all these contents are not created equal. Some are definitely going to be better than others.

So how do you know which is best? Well, the first step is to answer this question in the most inefficient way possible.

It's really inefficient to actually read through all that material. I'm not just talking about reading the first sentence and then reading the conclusion. I'm talking about actually reading through all the content and going through it with a fine-tooth comb. You're simply going to run out of hours in a day. There are just simply not enough hours in a day to do that.

The good news is that there is a shortcut. You can use social media signals to determine the value of the content you're considering sharing. Pay attention to the amount of Facebook shares it has. Pay attention to the amount of Twitter, Pinterest, and Google Plus shares. The higher these figures are, the higher the chance that this is actually very viral and, by extension, very useful content.

Of course, this isn't always the case. There are, of course, spammers who try to game these numbers. However, use your common sense. Read enough of the material, then look at the social sharing figures, and put two and two together. You'd be surprised to see that social media popularity is often a good indication of content value and quality.

Solve Real Problems

It's very tempting to share only content that benefits you. It's very tempting to share advertorials or infomercials. I'm telling you right now. If that's the kind of content you share, you're simply wasting your time. People will see right through what you're doing.

Instead, focus on solving real problems. You have to remember that people ask questions on forums because they're actually stumped regarding a particular question. Pick content that not only addresses that question directly, but also opens their mind to sub-questions that they should be asking. These sub-questions are actually what would put extra dollars in your pocket. These sub-questions are what open them in taking steps to using a particular solution.

Offer Solid Solutions

If you are going to be sharing your own content that leads to a particular product or service, make sure that whatever it is promoting is a solid solution. This is not always the case because there are a lot of affiliate programs that will pay you a lot

more money promoting an otherwise shoddy product or service. If this happens, then you are caught in a classic case of conflict of interest. This is going to be a problem for you because your primary concern should be to offer only the very best solutions. Why?

If you're known to offer only the best legitimate solutions to people's problems and needs, then they would trust you more. They would consider you a real expert, and they will come back again and again to you. They will pay attention to whatever you say. If you, however, focus on promoting only certain solutions and you leave out the best solutions, eventually people will figure out what you're doing. Eventually, this will undermine whatever authority or credibility you have managed to build up to that point.

Your Blog Posts Must Be Multipurpose and Multi-Format Friendly

One of the most common mistakes forum marketers make when sharing high quality content on forums is to produce content that is too tightly geared for forums. In other words, you actually have to read the original discussion on the forum, click on the link, and then read the blog post for the blog post to make sense. I hope you can see the flaw in this content strategy.

Your blog post must not just be geared towards forums, but must also stand on its own. This way, you create a multipurpose and multi-format piece of content that will not only benefit you on forums, but can also be shared on social media. In other words, it can attract traffic from a wide variety of places. How can this attract traffic?

Well, people can talk about and share your blog posts on social media platforms. They can also talk about your post on their own blogs and link to you. As you probably already know, the more blogs and websites link to you, the higher the chance that you would get more traffic from search engines. All these work together. This is why you need to make sure that your blog posts that you share on forums are multipurpose and multi-format friendly.

Focus on Case Studies

It's one thing to tell people the solution to their problems. Anybody can do that. Anybody who can access Google can do that. **It's another to show them the solution.**

These are two totally different things, because when you tell somebody a solution, in many cases, the solution remains on a purely intellectual level. It's something theoretical. It's something that they should do. It's something that is just floating out there.

However, if you show them through diagrams, testimonials, or actual step-by-step case studies, the solution to their problem becomes personal. They can start looking at the personal narrative of the people mentioned in the case studies and see themselves. They can see themselves taking advantage of a particular solution and ending up with a specific benefit.

Make no mistake about it. Case studies are extremely powerful not only in building your credibility, but also in generating sales because you put people in

the picture. They are able to see the distinct benefits that they get when they buy and apply the solution you are promoting.

As powerful as case studies may be, they're not always applicable. While I highly recommend that you post as many case study blog posts as possible and share them on forums, keep in mind that they are not always applicable. There are many forum questions that cannot be answered by a specific case study. In many cases, those forum questions can simply be answered by a listing of answers or just stock answers. Your job is to know which situation is which. As much as possible, use case studies.

The More Actionable Your Content, the More You Stand Out

As I have mentioned earlier regarding case studies, the reason they're so powerful is people can actually put themselves emotionally in the picture. Whenever you engage somebody emotionally, they are that much closer to buying whatever it is you're promoting. This is extremely important.

However, it's also important to note that your content must also be actionable. In other words, when people read your content, they come away with a series of steps that they can then implement immediately. When they implement these actions, they then get a certain result.

If your content is actionable, this will make you stand out from the competition. The sad reality is that the large majority of your competition simply features theoretical content. Even the ones that show case studies might not present their case study in such a way that it's actionable. If you're the person who features

actionable content that people can implement in the here and now, you blow away your competition.

CHAPTER 7



KILLER CONTENT CREATION GUIDELINES

Killer Content Creation Guidelines

These guidelines should guide you in creating blog posts. These blog posts, as you probably already know, are pieces of content that you share on forums. Most of the time, you share the links to those blog posts as a response to targeted or pointed questions by forum members. Use these guidelines to increase the overall quality of your blog posts and website content.

Don't Just Answer Forum Inquiries in a Shallow Way

It's very easy to create a blog post that answers forum questions on a point-for-point basis. Unfortunately, if that's how you write your blog posts, you're simply leaving a lot of money on the table. Anybody can do that.

Unfortunately, this leads to very short forum posts, and the forum posts will look very disjointed. In many cases, it would require the reader to actually go back to the forum to see the actual context of the question to understand your answer. Worst of all, you're simply just engaged in forum sniping. You're simply using questions from forums to come up with questions which would then lead the reader to whatever it is you're promoting.

Depending on who's reading your materials, this can be very spammy. Also, you run the risk of not building up much credibility creating content this way. It's much better to focus on producing deep and rich content. Why?

Imagine yourself asking somebody a question. When their answer is only tightly related to the question, chances are the conversation will die. Why? You got the answer that you're looking for. There's really no need for you to take the conversation further. There is definitely no need for you to take the conversation to a much higher level.

However, when that person answers your question directly but also opens up other sub-questions, this person is actually engaging you in a conversation. It's no longer a simple question-and-answer session, but an actual conversation. Your emotions are engaged and you're also given an opportunity to develop a fuller understanding of your niche.

People, of course, are naturally attracted to these types of answers. This is what separates a blog post from simply engaging in forum question sniping and functioning as an actual internet information resource. Your blog posts should be resources. They shouldn't just be shallow responses.

Reverse Engineer Your Competition

To produce the very best content, you should do your own research, but you should also reverse engineer your competition. In fact, you might want to start with reverse engineering your competition because it saves a lot of time. You're simply using your competition to do your homework for you. Nine times out ten, they've already addressed the questions and needs that people on forums ask. You only need to cherry-pick the very best answers from your competition to come up with a full-figured and very heavy blog post that can function as an online resource.

Blow Away Competing Content

I don't mean to give you the wrong impression with my previous point. I don't define reverse engineering your competition as simply copying and pasting information from your competitors. That's not going to cut it.

It's okay to get facts from them. It's okay to get information. However, you need to assemble it into a superior piece of content. How do you do this?

First, you need to make sure that whatever content you put in your blog post is updated. This means featuring only up-to-date content. You'd be surprised as to how many of your competitors feature outdated information.

Second, if your competitors feature list articles, like for example nine ways to do something, blow them out of the water by offering more list items. If they offer nine items, offer ninety items. If they offer 20 items, offer 200 items. I hope you get the point.

People looking at your materials should be quick to understand and appreciate the value you bring to the table. One of the easiest and most dramatic ways to do this is to simply offer a numerically superior piece of content. Swing for the fences when creating list content.

Don't just settle for top ten items or even top twenty items. Blow people's minds by reaching the three digits like top 100 or top 200 items. Not only would this get more attention and further cement your credibility and authority on forums, but it can also encourage more people to link to your blog posts.

Offer a Better Layout

Even if you have the very best content in the world, if you present it in a very hard-to-read or distracting manner, a lot of its firepower is lost. Blow away your competition by offering a better layout. This is actually simpler than you think. By simply buying high quality commercial Wordpress themes, you can offer better layouts than your competitors. This would make your content easier to read, as well as make your blog easier to navigate.

Be More Thorough

If you notice that your competitors offer shallow content, go the extra mile. Be more thorough than them. If they're only focusing on certain things, make it a point to really get to the heart of the matter and produce content that is as thorough as possible. Really blow away the state of knowledge regarding a particular topic and you will soon develop a reputation for being the most thorough source of information regarding a particular niche.

Graphical or Video Elements Can Really Help You a Lot

Let's face it. People are graphical creatures. We like pictures. The old saying of a picture being worth a thousand words is definitely true. If anything, it's definitely going to get you more attention.

Try to feature specialized graphics or diagrams with your content. If possible, include video elements with your text. It's one thing to put concepts together by reading text, it's another to see it play out with a video animation or an infographic.

The Bottom Line: Create Content Worth Linking To

The bottom line is very simple. Create content inspired by questions on forums that is worth linking to.

When people link to you, they're actually saying a lot. First, they're saying that your content is important enough that they're linking to it. Second, they're taking a lot of risks by linking to you because they are lending you their credibility and authority. If your piece of content gets a lot of links, you can benefit greatly over the long term due to search engine optimization benefits.

CHAPTER 8



FORUM CONTENT POSTING BEST PRACTICES

Forum Content Posting Best Practices

When posting content, I hope it's clear that you shouldn't just share your own stuff. You shouldn't share content in a very shallow way. Here are the best practices that you should follow when posting forum content.

Answer Real Questions

It's very important to answer real needs that people have. You can't post discussions that are theoretical in nature. If it's obvious that you are really just trying to create an opportunity for you to share your own content, people will see through that. If you keep that up enough, whatever credibility and authority you've built up to that point will evaporate. Eventually, people will get annoyed and irritated enough at you that you might get banned from the forum.

Focus on what people really need. Focus on pressing issues. Don't just come up with all sorts of excuses to post your own self-promotional stuff. That's not going to cut it.

Don't Just Share Your Own Stuff

I know I might sound like a broken record because I've said this already, but I can't say it enough. If you're responding to threads posted by other forum members, don't just share your own stuff. People will be able to figure it out because the domain names will be the same. People are not stupid.

If you are going to be sharing your own stuff, at least try to be clever about it. Use a redirection service like Bitly.

However, I don't recommend this. If anything, share new stuff all the time and share your own stuff sparingly. This way, people would feel that you are there to actually share knowledge and help the community. If people see that you're only just recycling the same stuff from your website again and again, they will get suspicious. Eventually, they will begin to hate you.

Share Your Own Stuff Only If It's Extremely Relevant

There are many forum marketers who are so eager to drag traffic from forums that they would really bend over backwards interpreting questions on forums just to drop a link to their blog. This really is too bad because when you're doing that, you are not building credibility. When you're doing that, you're simply engaged in a form of shallow content link marketing. You're really rolling the dice when you do that.

Instead, you should post links to your own content if and only if the discussion is directly relevant to the content that you are sharing. I cannot emphasize this enough because any kind of disconnect between the content you're sharing and the question that you're trying to answer will lead to people being more suspicious of you. Eventually, people will become skeptical and they will stop reading your content.

Always Include Introductory Materials

When you're sharing content through a forum post, make sure that you explain why you're dropping that link. This goes a long way in establishing context for that link. It's actually a good idea to quote certain parts of the content so it becomes very clear to the reader that you are sharing a resource.

You have to remember that people are lazy. Internet users actually have a form of attention deficit disorder. They have very short attention spans. In many cases, you have to spoon-feed them the answer for them to pay attention to you. This is why it's very important to include a snippet of content from the blog post you're sharing.

Ideally, you should include a quote that directly addresses their concerns. Once you whet their appetite, they are given all the incentives in the world to actually click through and consume the content. That's how it works. It's all about context, and it's all about introducing content. You can't just drop a link and expect people to pay attention just because you've developed a certain level of credibility and authority.

Share at the Right Time

As I have mentioned earlier, the essence of forum marketing is getting the right item in front of the right eyeballs at the right time. You need to share your content with people at the right time. This means that you can't just bump very old threads just because that thread is directly talking about your niche.

This is a serious violation on many forums. Your motives are very obvious if you do this. Focus only on relatively fresh posts made by forum members that address your niche.

Avoid Shallow Bumps

A forum bump happens when somebody replies to a forum discussion. When you post on a forum, eventually your thread sinks because other threads are more active and people reply to those threads. Whenever you reply to a thread, it goes back to the top of a forum. This is called a bump.

Bump very sparingly. Don't bump your thread by responding to something that you said. That looks very bad. It looks like you're simply just promoting your thread.

Instead respond to questions or comments posted by people in your thread. This makes it look more natural and this actually helps you build your credibility further because you are actually engaging people. You're interacting with them.

Sandwich Your Content

When sharing your content, make sure that you share other people's content. You might want to put your own content in the middle. When you do this, it's not obvious that you are actually promoting your content. This goes a long way in throwing off haters.

You have to remember that, regardless of what you do online, you will develop haters. There will be people who, for some reason or another, will grow to dislike you. This is just part of life. Get used to it.

Haters will hate. What's important is not to give them ammunition. By sandwiching your content, your content will look more natural because it's in between other relevant and useful pieces of content. Of course, this cuts down on the amount of traffic your content will get. However, this is the necessary price you have to pay to avoid building a lot of suspicion and outright hostility to your content shares.

"Pull In" Other Forum Authorities By Mentioning Them

This is one of the most powerful forum marketing techniques I can share with you. You have to remember that, in every forum, there will always be a handful of people who will become authorities. These are people that almost everybody would consider experts. You turn them into allies and partners by mentioning them in your forum posts. They become emotionally invested in what you're doing because their ego is helped by being mentioned in your post.

In many cases, they can help you by simply replying to your forum post. This, of course, bumps your thread back to the top. The other way they can help you is when they refer to you in their own posts. When they do that, they essentially lend you some of their credibility and authority, and your stature in the forum increases further.

This is always a good idea. Figure out a creative way to pull in other forum authorities by mentioning them in your content shares on forums.

Pick the Best Section of the Forum When Sharing Content

A lot of spammers and rookie marketers completely blow this. As a result, they look like spammers. They end up not adding much value to the forum. Even though they are sharing otherwise good content, by picking the wrong section, they dilute the overall impact and value of the content that they are sharing.

Don't do that. Pick the most relevant sub-forum and post there. This increases the likelihood that your forum post will be looked at as a resource rather than just another piece of online conversation. By simply dumping on the main forum, you are neglecting targeting.

As I have mentioned earlier, it's much better to attract less traffic as long as it's better targeted. Better targeted produces better conversions. At the end of the day, conversions are what put dollars in your pockets, not raw clicks.

CHAPTER 9



**THE HALLMARKS OF A
SOLID FORUM THREAD**

The Hallmarks of a Solid Forum Thread

In previous chapters, I've talked about sharing content and participating on forums in a general way. This means that you're simply just responding to forum posts or just engaging in forum conversations. For this chapter, I'm going to outline how to create discussions the right way.

When you create a discussion or a forum thread, you get a tremendous opportunity to direct the conversation. You get a tremendous opportunity to make your brand look good. However, you need to do it right. You need to make sure that the following hallmarks of a solid forum thread are present. Otherwise, it's very easy to produce discussions that really won't help your brand much.

Be Relatively Unique

Create threads that are somewhat unique. Don't just create a thread that is on the same topics as all the other threads on the forum. I hope you can see why you should do this. If you are just simply talking about the same stuff everybody is talking about, then people really don't have much of an incentive to click on your discussion. Why? They can easily click on tons of other discussions.

Don't let your message fall between the cracks. Talk about something relatively unique.

Open With a Solid Intro

When creating a forum thread, make sure that you frame the issue correctly. Introduce the issue and make it clear to people why they should pay attention to this thread. In other words, spell out why the issue that your thread addresses is important.

If you do this right, then people will pay attention what you're saying. If you don't do this right, then it's very easy for them to click on your thread link, read whatever you have to say, and then close the thread. In other words, you have failed to make an impact. Establish the right context so you can maximize your thread's impact.

Ask a Series of Questions

One of the best ways to kill a conversation is to simply just jump to conclusions and tell people what you think. You're just spitting out statements. Good conversations, of course, are based on a series of questions. People ask a question, then you answer. This then inspires them to ask other questions, you answer and then you post more questions, and so on and so forth. Both sides learn. It's a two-way street.

Instead of just spitting out what you think, you should focus your threads on asking a series of questions. This gets people excited about the overall topic you're talking about. This gets people motivated to continue the discussion.

Reference Previous Discussions

If you're going to be talking about certain topics, it's a good idea to reference previous posts you've made. When you do this, you actually go a long way in building your credibility. You give people a starting point that they can reference.

By clicking on that previous link, they can see that you know what you're talking about. They can see that you've already shared high quality information regarding this subject. This is very important because this helps set their expectations. At the very least, it gives them a very good impression that they won't be wasting their time reading this particular thread.

Open Your Thread to Further Conversation

Always ask a question at the bottom, like "What do you think?" "What can you add?" or "Prove me wrong." When you do this, you are opening up the thread to further conversations. Compare this to the very common problem on most forums where people just simply blurt out an opinion and there's really no opening for a follow-up. If anything, the fact that the thread starter simply unloaded an opinion makes any sort of critical follow-up look like a hostile act. I hope you see my point here.

You don't want to create threads that seem to close up any further discussions. Your job is to actually maximize engagement by getting people to ask follow-up questions and evolve the state of knowledge embodied in your thread.

Offer Different Resources

People are always looking to learn. They're always looking for authority. This is why it's always a good idea to make sure that your forum thread must offer different resources that people can follow up on. This again helps you to build up your reputation. This helps cement the mental picture in most forum members' minds that you are the go-to source for a particular body of knowledge.

Collaborative in Nature

It's really important to structure your thread in such a way that the first post is not the only quality post. You have to structure the thread in such a way that it draws the very best responses. If you're able to do this, then people reading the thread will see it as an actual resource. This is because not only is the first post highly useful and valuable, the responses, in and of themselves, are also useful and valuable. Eventually, the overall impression that you create is that this post is something people should bookmark and come back to time and time again when confronted with the issues discussed in the thread.

CHAPTER 10



**YOUR OVERALL STRATEGY:
HELP TURN THE FORUM INTO A
NICHE RESOURCE**

Your Overall Strategy: Help Turn the Forum into a Niche Resource

I know this chapter is probably going to throw you for a loop. If you're a typical marketer, your mindset is to get into a particular traffic platform, get the benefit that you're looking for, and get out quickly. I don't blame you for thinking that way. It is a very efficient way of thinking.

However, as I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, if you want to make money online, you have to first help people get what they want so you can get what you want. It really is that simple. By being a little bit more selfless, you can actually be more efficient in meeting your otherwise selfish objectives.

This is why I insist that your overall strategy should turn into turning whatever forums you're marketing on into niche resources. The more you do this and the better you get at it, the more benefits you will eventually walk away with. In other words, by helping forums dominate their niche, they would be in a better position to help you with your traffic generation needs.

It's very easy to see the logic in this. If you participate in a forum and it develops a reputation for being the go-to place for a particular body of information, then it will be able to attract more people and it will be able to attract targeted users. Who would these targeted users be interested in following? Who would these niche-targeted users want to pay attention to? That's right. The answer is, of course, your brand.

That's how everything works together. By helping the forums that you're marketing on to become niche resources, you can't help but help yourself. They

would do a better job in driving more traffic your way. Here are some best practices to help you do that.

Post Only the Most Topical and Relevant Replies in Threads

The first step is self-restraint. You cannot look at forums as a parasite looks at a host. You can't do that. You can't just look at a forum based solely on how it would benefit you.

If you do this, then the temptation is really high to essentially spoil the forum. If you lower the quality of the forum, you are essentially shooting yourself in the foot. Why? The quality of the people that it would attract would be lower. Also, its ability to attract people in the first place would degenerate.

So do yourself a big favor and act like a model forum citizen. You do this by focusing only on the most topical and relevant materials. Either post topical threads or post only relevant replies.

Post Your Stuff As Reference Materials

If you're posting and positioning your materials in such a way that they truly help people, they act as references. They become resources that people from all over the world can benefit from. However, if you post your stuff in such a way that you just try to drag traffic from the forum, you're not acting in a very responsible and helpful way. You're simply just posting the link to suck traffic up.

That's not the way to do it. That doesn't turn the forum into a resource. In fact, it turns the forum into some sort of spam cesspool. I hope you can see the difference.

Become an Expert That People Will Seek Out

When you follow all the tips I've outlined above, you will go a long way in becoming an expert. This is definitely worth doing because whenever you speak at a forum, people are more likely to listen to you. People are more likely to give you the benefit of the doubt when you share a link.

That's all well and good, but the ultimate benefit is that you will drive more people to the forum because non-forum members would be drawn to your highly targeted and highly useful answers. This ends up driving more traffic to the forum and ultimately driving more traffic to your website.

Help Build Up the Forum's Brand

Ultimately, these best practices all boil down to you helping the forum develop a more solid brand. As I have mentioned earlier, the better it is for your target forums in terms of traffic, the more benefits they can drive your way.

Look at it as a symbiotic relationship. The more you build up these forums, the more they can help you. You look at them really as filtering and brand-building

platforms. By helping them develop a solid level of traffic, they would have more quality traffic to share with you. Again, to help yourself, you have to first help others.

CHAPTER 11



YOUR END GOAL

Your End Goal

If you don't have a clear idea as to where you want to end up, it's very easy to get lost. It's very easy to get stuck at a place that is not very beneficial. It all boils down to clarity. By simply being clear as to what your end goals are, you can go a long way in maximizing your success. This is especially true when it comes to forums.

Here are some end goals that you might want to consider. Again, I hate giving cookie cutter solutions because everybody's situation is different. Pay attention to these end goals only if they make sense in your particular set of circumstances.

Your Forum Presence Builds Your Brand

As I have mentioned earlier, one of the best things you can build online if you are marketing is a brand. You have to build a solid brand. You have to get people to equate your brand with certain values they have.

The better you do this, the higher the likelihood that you would dramatically decrease your return on effort. Simply put, it would take less work on your part to generate the same results. In other words, it takes less work to generate more dollars.

Make your forum presence build your brand. Everything you do online can impact your brand. You're either dragging your brand down or pushing it to the next level. There is no middle ground. This is why you have to be very careful

regarding how you respond to people and how you hold yourself out to the broader global internet community.

Your Forum Posts Lead to Backlink Opportunities

Another goal you might want to consider is link-building through forum posts. Of course, I'm not saying that you should just link directly to your blog posts on your forum posts. That's spamming. I'm not saying that at all.

What I'm saying is that your forum posts should be so informative that people reading your forum posts would want to link to your blog post because your blog post has a high degree of value. That's the most effective way to earn backlinks from forums. When you're offering high quality content, you're earning links. You're not building links. I hope you see the difference here.

Your Forum Posts Lead to Highly Targeted and Niche-Specific Traffic

As I have mentioned earlier, on the internet, quality is never quantity. Don't play the internet revenue game like a numbers game. If you do that, you're simply going to be wasting your time, effort, and money. It has to be focused on quality.

This is why it's okay for your forum posts to get very few views and get very little traffic, as long as you filter that traffic thoroughly. The more filtered your traffic, the higher the likelihood that the traffic will convert into list members, ad clickers, or buyers. Whatever it is, you stand a higher chance of turning that

traffic into cold hard dollars in your bank account. You can't do that on a sustainable level without a high degree of targeting.

Become So Trusted People Won't Hesitate to Click Through Your Site

As I have mentioned earlier, people will not buy anything from you if they don't trust you. Similarly on a forum, people will not click your link if they don't feel that you know what you're talking about. This is why it's really important to share content in such a way that people will build their trust in you. Not only will people want to click on your links, but people might actually get excited about your threads. When they see a thread posted by you, they subconsciously develop an expectation that this thread is going to be good because it's posted by this person that I trust.

Develop that trust. You need to reach that level. If you are able to reach that level, you would be able to drive more traffic from forums. You would be able to drive highly converting traffic.

The More Credible You Are, the Higher the Likelihood Your Content Will Convert

I guess this heading at this point goes without saying that the more you build credibility and trust, the higher the likelihood that you will get targeted traffic. The more targeted your traffic, the higher the likelihood that you will get that traffic to convert. Of course, this is not a slam dunk. You still have to arrange your content in such a way that it addresses the KLT buying process I outlined in Chapter 3.

You have to know the KLT buying cycle code. Otherwise, you might end up in the ridiculous situation where you're driving high quality traffic from niche-specific forums, but failing to convert that traffic. People who have this problem are essentially lazy. They didn't create a target website that shepherds people through the KLT process.

You need to do both ends of the equation. Making money online is not just a simple matter of generating traffic. If you think about it, with the right software and the right connections, you can drive a lot of traffic.

That's not the issue. The issue is traffic plus conversion. However, you can only convert if you drive that traffic to materials that build their trust.

Remember: It Takes Time!

Now that you have almost completed this book, I'm sure you're quite excited about using forum marketing to take your business to the next level. I'm really excited for you and I greatly encourage you. However, I don't mean to throw cold water at your whole forum marketing project, but it's worth remembering that this whole process takes time.

Becoming a credible member of any forum community takes quite a bit of effort. It takes a lot of time. Just because you share an awesome piece of content one time doesn't necessarily mean that you automatically become an expert. You have

to do it consistently. You have to do it even when you don't feel like doing it. You have to remember that forum marketing is a marathon. It is never a sprint.

CHAPTER 12



**DON'T FORGET TO
BUILD A LIST!**

Don't Forget to Build a List

It really would be a waste of time and a minor personal tragedy if you follow all the tips outlined in this book only to have it result in temporary traffic. I'm sorry to break this to you, but most of the traffic you will generate on the internet is temporary.

It doesn't matter how targeted that traffic is. It doesn't matter how much is the amount of scale and care you put into generating the traffic. That traffic will be temporary.

For some reason or another, when people go to your page, blog, or website, they will bounce out. Maybe they liked the content there. Maybe they actually read through your materials. Eventually, they will leave. Unless you convert them right then and there by getting them to click on an ad for a product or service which they then buy, they will be gone.

The vast majority of your traffic is temporary. Wrap your mind around this. This is why it's extremely important for you to build a list.

A mailing list is nothing but a device that turns otherwise temporary traffic into a semi-permanent traffic asset. When you get people to your list, you automatically get a legal way to drag them back to your website. When you send them a reminder and they click on a link, they go back to your website. Instead of that traffic going away for good, your mailing list enables you to resurrect your traffic again and again.

You have to understand that you've spent a lot of time building up a highly targeted forum traffic. Don't waste that invested time by failing to build a list. Use your list to turn otherwise temporary traffic into a permanent asset.

When it comes time to sell your website or your online properties, you will probably fetch more dollars if you include your mailing list. Sophisticated buyers know that a highly targeted mailing list that is very responsive can produce quite a bit of money, not just at one time, but over a long extended period of time. This is why it's extremely important for you to get people to sign up to your mailing list.

Try An Auto-Responder Course

There are, of course, many ways to build up a mailing list. One of the cheesiest ways is to simply offer a freebie like an e-book or a free report. Personally, I don't like this method. The reason is simple.

When people sign up to your list because you've incentivized them with a freebie, nine times out of ten, they're signing up for the freebie. They're signing up for that digital bribe you've given them. They don't care about your mailing list. They don't care about your updates. They're just interested in the freebie.

How responsive do you think that person would be to your updates? I'm telling you right now, those people will probably just be list squatters. Stop wasting your time on squatters and focus on people who are really interested in your mailing list. This is why I recommend promoting an auto-responder course instead.

An auto-responder course is simply a series of emails that teach people how to do something. This series of emails actually helps them solve a particular problem. When they go through this course, their trust for you builds with time because for every lesson you teach them, they end up finding you more credible.

Eventually, they build a high level of trust for you. This is why near the end of the auto-responder course, you should give them a reason to sign up for another list. This is a list where they give you express permission to send them updates. At the end of that auto-responder course series, you would be able to separate people who trust you from people who are just simply looking for solutions. These people who trust you can then buy from updates that you send.

Make no mistake about it. One of the most powerful assets you can build online is a solid mailing list. This is a mailing list that focuses on quality instead of quantity. This is a mailing list that would be able to turn your temporary traffic into a semi-permanent asset that generates cash long into the future. There are a lot of upsell opportunities. You could also sell ad spaces on your mailing list. There are many ways you can make money off a solid mailing list.

Conclusion

It is my hope that this book has not only changed the way you look at online message boards and bulletin boards, but it has also given you the framework you need to succeed with forum marketing. Make no mistake about it, forum marketing can deliver solid results.

The secret?

You have to be systematic and methodical about it. You can't view it as some sort of 'magic bullet' online marketing solution that will deliver traffic that converts. You have to earn it. You have to work for it. This book outlines how you can draw highly-targeted traffic from forums. Just follow the tips and tweak your implementation to fit the particular details of your situation.

Keep fine tuning your forum marketing campaigns until you reach a point where you can almost predict how people will respond to your content as well as predict how much each post can draw. Once you reach this point, don't make the mistake of NOT building a mailing list. I am adamant about this. In fact, I am so sold on mailing lists that I highly recommend you build one immediately after you put up your blog. Do this before you hit the forums to market.

I wish you all the best and if you have some time, drop me a line so I can help you take your forum marketing campaigns to the next level.

To your success!