Inside The Mind of a Successful Surfer: A Journey of Passion and Purpose

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December 2007
Kingston, ON Canada

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Introduction –

When I began my journey into the vast cyberspace called Internet marketing back in 2001, little did I realize the path I would follow or where I would end up six years later. Like most novices the ability to make money quickly without any large upfront investment costs appealed greatly to me – might I say addicting. Seeking fortune and fame, I jumped into the deep end of the pool with both feet.

I first became aware of traffic exchanges by way of my MPAM membership. Although no longer a member of MPAM, I owe a great deal to Michael Russell and the lessons offered within this online money-making course.

Back then the lesson on traffic exchanges centered on the very basics – essentially, just join these recommended exchanges and start surfing. There was no mention of using splash pages, tracking your results, establishing a surfing plan or the importance of branding oneself. Nowadays, of course, most surfers are at least aware of splash pages, tracking, etc., so we, as surfers, continue to move forward along the learning curve.

This short report containing several essays of mine will, I hope, give you valuable insights into different ways to effectively use traffic exchanges.

My thoughts stem mainly from my experiences as a surfer since 2001 and what I've learned along the way; but, in addition, my experiences as a business owner, entrepreneur and leader also shape my views of the traffic exchange industry and how to use them effectively.

Before we begin I want to thank my Mom for her support in my online ventures. Her uncanny ability to know "what's best" continues to help me steer the ship in the right direction. And, of course, Jon Olson. I think every surfer alive today owes a great deal to Jon, for his pioneering spirit in shaping the traffic exchange industry, and setting the standard for excellent customer care.

Be the best!

Darrell Dean

Short-Term Thinking –

We hear the statistics – almost all surfers never achieve the results they seek when advertising (surfing) in traffic exchanges.

Why?

Simple question, but a complicated answer. Many, many factors could potentially prevent an advertiser from not achieving their intended results. Those factors include:

  - Not using splash pages (i.e., using generic affiliate sales pages)
  - Not branding oneself
  - Advertising (surfing) on ineffective traffic exchanges
  - Not tracking results and, therefore, no changes made to increase effectiveness
  - And on and on and on...

But do you know what I think is the biggest factor:

Short-term thinking. Let me explain...

Creating an effective ad campaign takes time. It's called repetition. A "law" exists in advertising which says something like "someone must see your ad at least seven times before they even become remotely interested in your product or service."

It's true. I know it to be true because I've tracked my results over many, many years. So...if it's true, and we all nod our head in agreement, then why should someone just beginning to use traffic exchanges expect to see stellar results after one day? Or after one week? Or after one month?

Learning Lesson:
- Establish an advertising (surfing) plan clearly identifying your intended results in one, three or even six-month intervals. Write them down. Track your actual results (results meaning page views vs. clickthroughs/signups vs. sales), and compare them against your written plan. Make adjustments as necessary.

Why Less Is More -

Back in 2001 my mindset was surf 25 traffic exchanges three
or four times per week, 20 times each. I even created a
fancy Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet – a checklist – to keep track
of my surfing efforts, to ensure I surfed them all. I was
proud of myself, I was advertising for free, using a plan.

But guess what?

No results.

After a few months I became frustrated and actually stopped
surfing altogether for a period of time while I tried other
forms of advertising. But that became too expensive, so my
thoughts turned back to traffic exchanges.

This time, however, I stopped and actually thought about my
objectives. I did the following math:

- My surfing ratio is 0.50 (for every page I view I earn
  0.50 credits);
- I surf 20 times on each exchange; therefore, my site
  is shown (viewed by others) 10 times on each exchange;
- I surf 25 exchanges every time I surf; therefore, my
  sites are shown 250 times in total (25 exchanges x 10)
  spread across these 25 exchanges.

Now stop – and think about the above surfing activity for a
moment. Is this an effective or efficient way to surf?

Well, I can't answer for you, but I came to the conclusion
it was neither effective nor efficient for me.

So, here's what I did...

Without changing my available surfing time, I started to
surf only 5 sites EVERY DAY (previously only 3 - 4 times
per week), but surfed much longer on these 5 sites. I
also, for the first time, started to track my results. I
modified my fancy spreadsheet so I could record, for each
of those 5 exchanges, page views (number of times my splash
page was being viewed by other surfers) and clickthroughs
(number of times a surfer actually clicked on a link on my
splash page), and then calculated my clickthrough ratio
(CTR %).

What I discovered astonished me!

First, the CTR % varied widely amongst those 5 exchanges, ranging from zero to around 8%. This was my first indication that maybe I need to replace a poor performing exchange with another one.

Second, the CTR % varied widely between the various splash pages I used.

No need to go further with this example – I discovered that my intended results increased dramatically by only surfing a "core group" of traffic exchanges every day. Sure, if I possessed extra time I would occasionally surf other exchanges outside of this core group.

Today, I still maintain a core group of 7 exchanges. I ensure my splash pages rotate in these exchanges 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Learning Lesson:
- Surfing longer on fewer exchanges can create an effective traffic exchange advertising strategy. Less is more. Establish your own core group of exchanges (even if it's only 2 or 3, it doesn't matter) and track your results. You may become surprised, just as I became surprised.

Selling To Sellers –

Soon after I began tracking my results, another light bulb
came on: I'm trying to sell to another seller.

Again, stop – and think about this for a moment.

Question – why do you surf? To earn credits so that others
can view your site or splash page, right? But how many
times per week do you start surfing while saying to
yourself, O/K, today I'm really gonna look at every page I
see to determine if I can buy something?

How many times?

Zero, right?

But having said that, you do occasionally click on a link
or complete an opt-in form to receive a report or other
information, right?

Why did you do that? Because the page caught your eye and
the information being provided struck a cord with you or
contained some relevance to your business or personal life.

So, if this is your surfing mindset, is that not also the
mindset of the majority of surfers looking at your page?

So...stop trying to sell them something – they're not
surfing to buy anything!

The reason why splash pages work so well in traffic
exchanges is because they are designed to grab your
attention, to make you stop and think – gee, am I
interested?

And lead capture pages go one step further and help you
build your very own mailing list to a highly-targeted group
of individuals who raise their hands in the air (i.e.,
complete your opt-in form on your splash page) and say yes,
I want to hear more from you about this topic. How great
is that!

Learning Lesson:
- Stop trying to sell something through traffic exchange
advertising. Instead, use a splash page or lead capture
page to build your very own mailing list. If you do, your
results will almost certainly improve dramatically!

Branding: The Forgotten X Factor –

Question – who would you rather buy from: a complete stranger, or someone you know and trust?

The answer is obvious – the person we trust, right?

The vast nature of the Internet gives rise to anonymity; yet, age-old marketing principles still apply in that we tend to buy only from those companies or people we trust. Yes, we search all over the Internet seeking the information we need in a complete vacuum, but when it comes time to buy, we still need that "comfort" level with whom we're dealing with.

Traffic exchange advertising is no different.

Putting your picture and name (and contact information) on your splash pages accomplishes two main objectives:

1) Externally, it makes you human, it builds recognization and, over time, it can lead to trust between you and your audience.

Trust is built in two ways in traffic exchanges. Using my own personal situation, first, those who happen to subscribe to something I offer or buy a product or service I recommend end up knowing I stand behind what I say.

Second, for those surfers who never subscribe or buy from me, they still see my name on a consistent basis and over the long run will tend to view me as trustworthy.

2) Internally, it makes you responsible.

Now I don't know about you but if I'm going to place my picture and name on a splash page, I'm going to make sure what I'm promoting is a valuable product or service which can actually satisfy a buyer's want or need, does so at a reasonable price and is backed by a reputable organization I trust and respect.

Branding makes you responsible – it forces you to evaluate the product or service you promote. Sure, at times the temptations arise to slap together a splash page and

promote the latest eBook – but I don't do it without
careful consideration of the consequences (i.e.,
reputation).

Learning Lesson:
- Branding yourself can give you a competitive edge over
others who ignore this rule and over time can lead to
increased recognization and trust – all of which will
increase your surfing results.

Passion: Internal and External Forces –

Building a business – any business, online or offline – is not easy. It takes hard work, courage, and the three "Ps": Persistence, Patience and Passion.

Let's talk about passion.

Internally, passion keeps us focused. In his book "I'm Going To The Top," John Haremza says "If you do not have a strong "WHY", you will not be around long enough to learn the "HOW" of doing the business."

When we become passionate about something, we don't let minor setbacks keep us from striving to attain our goals, whatever those goals may represent. We make plans, we act, we fail, we change our plans and we try again. But we don't quit when the going gets rough. So...

...why is our traffic exchange advertising efforts any different?

I mean, if we remain passionate about our business – notice I said the word business, why else would you advertise? – then why will you let poor results only after two weeks of surfing cause you to conclude "traffic exchange advertising does not work?"

And sharing our passion with others, externally, can lead to excitement and even increased trust between parties. Next time you build a new splash page, try to convey a positive message which reflects your passion about the product or service you're promoting.

In the end, passion is the glue which keeps us together. It keeps us focused on our long-term goals, not just short-term results. It helps us understand our "Why."

Learning Lesson:
- What ignites your passion? How can you translate that passion into your traffic exchange advertising campaigns? Your internal passion keeps you focused; sharing your passion with others, externally, helps you create trust with others.

Conclusion –

The collection of essays in this special report are
designed to make you stop and think about how you use
traffic exchanges.

There is no right or wrong way to use traffic exchanges.
Each of us must develop our own unique strategies that work
for us. While it is important to listen and understand how
others make effective use of this advertising medium, it's
equally important for us to find our own way.

Don't let fear stop you from trying different tactics.
It's O/K to fail – just fail small. We learn much more
from our mistakes than we do from our successes.

Look at the pages you see while surfing; jot down any
splash page ideas, or font style, or pictures, or whatever.
You are getting a free lesson!

If I can help you in any way, please do not hesitate to
contact me. I'm here to assist and support you!

Happy surfing!

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