

USING THE INTERNET

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USING THE INTERNET

The subject of electronic marketing will not be complete without at least mentioning the network or all computer networks, known as the Internet. Founded over 20 years ago by the U.S. military, and managed in part by the National Science Foundation, the Internet has 20 to 30 million users worldwide. People who use the Internet include, entrepreneurs, executives, researchers, educators, technicians, consumers, activists, students, and military personnel. Most use the Internet to exchange e-mail, pursue special interests, search databases, and conduct business.

E-MAIL

One of the most popular uses of the Internet allows you to send and receive messages to and from people around the world from the comfort of your home computer. These messages, which are free to send, are almost always delivered faster and more accurately than regular mail. You can send messages to anyone who has an Internet address. This includes members of most online services.

It is estimated that over 4,000 e-mails per minute go through the Internet. What this means to you as an information marketer is that you can conduct "direct mail" through the Internet to existing and potential customers. This will eliminate your postage and printing costs. It will also reduce the amount of time needed to process your mail.

The Internet also has mailing lists to which you can have your e-mail address added. These mailing lists are made up of groups of Internet users with similar interests. The users send messages back and forth to each other regarding relevant topics. For example, if you are selling a publication on gardening, you might want to join a mailing list of users interested in outdoor hobbies. Whenever someone sends e-mail to this mailing list, the e-mail goes to everyone on the mailing list. Sometimes the mailing list is monitored by an administrator. If this is the case, you may be limited to the kinds of e-mail you can send. If you can't find a list that has to do with your publication's topic, you can start your own mailing list and wait for others to join.

Once you join a mailing list, usually for free, you can receive 1000's of e-mails from users you have already selected based on their interests. You can then respond by sending an e-mail to each user's e-mail address. Your e-mail might be a short message where you mention how your information products can help them. Rather than responding to each e-mail individually, you may be able to respond by sending one e-mail to the entire Internet mailing list.

USENET

The Internet also has what is called, USENET newsgroups. This aspect of the Internet allows users with specific interests to form groups and share information with each other, usually by posting messages that others can read. Unlike mailing lists, you do not need to send or receive any e-mail. You simply connect to the Internet, locate a USENET newsgroup, and read or post messages to that particular group.

Marketers can also use USENET newsgroups by finding a newsgroup that focus on interest of specific advantage to the information products being sold. You can do this by scanning the messages that have been posted. By recording users e-mail addresses, you can compile a mailing list to which you can e-mail information describing your product.

The Internet also has 100's of free databases that can be accessed to gain information on practically any subject. These databases are indexed so that you can search for information using key words or phrases. Most are run by volunteers, but, just about anyone can start one. Publishers can use these databases for two purposes. First, they are an excellent source of current information. This information can be used to help you write your publication. Second, experienced publishers can create their own database. Once created, the database can be accessed by millions of Internet users worldwide. Your own database can contain your publication(s), much like your own BBS.

Finally, the Internet, like many online services, is scattered with 1000's of interesting computer files that is accessible free of charge to Internet users. These files are usually located in areas called special interest groups (SIGs). There are over 5,000 SIGs on the Internet.

Information Marketers can upload free reports, announcements, press releases, etc., to these SIGs for others to download. This process is known as file transfer protocol (FTP).

Using this process, Internet users can send and receive computer files all around the world. These computer files may contain more complex information than contained in standard e-mails. These computer files can contain text, graphics, sound, or they may be actual programs. They have all been created, saved, and stored by a computer connected to the Internet. You can send and receive advertisements, small reports, or entire publications using the File Transfer Protocol.