



Marketing Consultation Report

www.UnderdogMillionaire.com/blog/services

-Joshua Black, Outer Limit Productions LLC

Report Date: 4/28/2011

Client: Online Travel Business with \$4 million in annual sales

Consultation Background: Client is looking to add 20% growth to the business in the next year, while increasing brand awareness and a unique perception for their company. Currently facing intense discounting pressure from larger travel services with deep pockets for advertising.

Results

Quick Results/Web Suggestions:

- Put your email grabber at the TOP of your website, above the fold and include a valuable gift for the person in return for their personal information. “Mailing list,” or “newsletter” isn’t enough anymore. Everyone has one. Try creating a small information product dealing with travel and use that as incentive to get those names into your database. The teaser product must have real value.
 - Examples of teaser products/checklists:
 - 101 things that you cannot be caught traveling without
 - 25 unknown hot-spots for seniors
 - How to save \$8,000 on your next trip and practically travel for free
 - The 7 questions you must ask your travel agent before booking a trip (in order to avoid a disaster)
- Although it will annoy some people, you will increase your opt-in if you also add a pop-up email grabber box with your valuable offer in addition to having it at the top of the screen.
- Instead of 3 places for the customer to search, you may want to eliminate the option for the customer to search and place your custom search box in the upper left corner (best place for opt-ins, because that’s the first place the eye lands on a site). Offer your teaser product as a gift to them for placing a search, which will also place them on your email list at the same time you’re searching for a trip for them.

- If you give the prospect custom treatment (ie. You will create a custom package for them based on their dates), then you can establish a luxury business, instead of a price-searching commodity business.
- Look at your web imagery- sell the luxury and the dream, not only the boats. Each picture should be large and of PERFECT quality. Pay for high-resolution images. Take clues from www.Sandals.com and your own parent company's site www.oceaniacruises.com -They are selling a lifestyle of opulence, not just a boat.
- If you show pictures of people, use only images of people in the 55+ age group. No families. No kids. Just people well-dressed, enjoying life to the fullest.
- Remove the references to price deals. Your customers will shop for price, but you'll want to show them why they should do business with you, using a USP (unique selling proposition). *Side note: you may want to fix the misspelling on the "guarantee" tab at the top of the Oceania site to promote your level of quality.*
- Don't give your customers too many choices on the home page. When people get over-choice, they click away. Spark their interest, show them what you'll do for them, and do everything you can to get them to sign up for more information via email. This also goes back to having only one search/sign-up box.
- Exploit the value of your testimonials. Take your favorite quotes or partial quotes and use them right up front on your home page.
- Do what you can to show that you are very professional and you are the polar opposite of the big guys. Custom service, a real person on the phone, family business that thrives on repeat referrals (so they know you will work hard to impress them).

Hidden marketing assets:

- Tap into your repeat customer list with direct mail. Remind them that you are here to serve them at least once a quarter, but more frequently, the better. You are correct that you should avoid the direct mail offered by suppliers. Instead, you should use your own direct mail with your own copy and your own brand.
- You have the ability to be nimble and custom, where the big boys can't. Show this nimbleness to your customers through gift-giving, sending them congratulations cards on birthdays and anniversaries (without any sales pitch, just your name and 2 business cards included), random gifts for booking a trip. People will bend over backwards to stay with a business where they get the royal treatment. Tons of branded gifts are available very inexpensively.
- Solicit testimonials from customers that have not given them. Help them along with writing the testimonial by asking for any feedback on the service they

received, the way they were pampered in the process, in addition to the great time they had on the trip. You want your testimonials to reflect your business more than the actual trip people take, because you are selling your custom service, that's what will build YOUR brand, not the brand of the cruise line. This way, you can switch cruise providers in the future without hurting your brand.

- Survey! Survey! Survey!- Create a very in-depth customer survey and physically mail it your best customers. Include a picture of a high-quality coffee mug or other gift that appears to be high-value, which you will send them in return for a completed survey. You can buy these things for \$3-4 each and the information retrieved will be priceless for you marketing. You can also email these surveys.
 - Questions to ask include:
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Magazines read
 - Entertainment choices
 - How often they travel
 - Luxury purchases they enjoy
 - Web sites frequented
 - TV shows watched
 - Why they like doing business with you
 - As well as personal questions

Copywriting tips:

- Emphasize that you get what you pay for and that the “other guys” with deep discounts may also offer you no personal service, less quality, and treat you like a number, with no assistance while on your trip.
- Use terms that may spark interest from your prospects- (think of terms that your 55+ demographic can relate to, terms that people with a high net worth expect when they travel).

Examples of luxury copy:

- Customized travel package (this level of customer wants CUSTOM, or the appearance of custom at least).
- You won't have to lift a finger
- Personal service
- Travel with people of similar interests
- Couples only
- Relax
- More “ahhhhhhs” than any other trip provider
- Private, luxury quarters
- Personal touch
- Elegance
- Class

- Bespoke (fancy word for custom-made)
- Integrity (your term-this one is great!)
- Use terminology such that you make people qualify to do business with you instead of vice-versa. People with money love having things that other people can't get. Explain to them that they must apply and meet certain criteria before you will do business with them. This ties in to your techniques of using income as a guide if they can afford the trip.
- Make your offers time sensitive and send them a non-advertised package of free gifts for applying to do business with you.
- Stop promoting deals and start promoting exclusivity and custom travel packages with "white glove" support. Show your applying customers how you will roll out the red carpet for them by sending them a direct mail letter with a tiny red carpet attached. It's corny, but it will get their attention. Look at what the big guys are doing and do the opposite.

Long-term Suggestions:

- Since you work in an ever-changing, ultra-competitive niche, dedicate a small portion of your time each week towards brainstorming about the NEXT step (ie. How your business can continue to find and keep new customers without going head-to-head with the deep-pocketed corporations. There will ALWAYS be someone with a creative idea that will try to out-do what you're doing. Plan for it.
- Since 70% percent of your business comes from repeats and referrals, find out who your referral generators are and reward them handsomely. Create a "bird-dog" program, perhaps where you give a person a free trip if they bring in 20 paid referrals (or whatever makes sense monetarily to you). This would be different than your "free cruises" offer, where the people have to book together. You want incentive for people to hook their friends. Make this program exclusive, such as an email or actual letter that goes exclusively to those high-refer-ers. Create a separate program for your repeat customers, find out why they keep coming back and hold on to them with everything you've got.
- Go off-line with confirmations- Since you're in a high-end industry, with a customer niche where people were not raised on computers, separate your business from the big guys by physically mailing your customer their confirmation materials, thank you letter, and a travel tips kit (exclusive from you) all in a gold-leaf paper folder. Mail it next day air. Have "your custom travel package" and your brand logo written on the front. Custom, custom, custom!
- Increase your closing rate with incoming leads by creating a "stickiness factor" in your business, like a frequent traveler program, valuable newsletter, and anything else that you can do to remind them that only YOU can solve their travel needs.

Continue to go after the luxury angle instead of mentioning “price” or “discounting”

- Increase the “lifetime value” of each customer, which is the total dollar amount that the average person brings to your business over the time they are with you. For example if the average customer spends \$8k/year and stays with you or 5 years, then they are worth \$40k over their lifetime. This is a profit number, not a gross sales number. Current customers are much easier to close and cheaper to market towards. Even if you can increase that by 2-3%, it will dramatically add to your bottom line without having to constantly get new customers.
- Develop a BRAND for your business. Every mailing, every business card, every coffee mug, every web site, and anything else you put out should come from your brand. You want to make your business exclusive and to appear less of a representative for another business, more of a “custom travel broker.” All of your sites should tie together with your brand. Your Oceania site’s header looks similar to the main Oceania web site. If someone doesn’t bookmark your page, they will Google the parent Oceania site and you could lose a customer. You want them to think of your name when looking for a custom travel package through any of your sites. However, keep the same SEO terms that you’re using to bring them in.
- Increase the offers that you can sell your customers. In addition to trip insurance, think of things that you can offer them throughout the year that will enhance their lifestyle. Buying customers are like gold and the more you can offer them, the more you can grow your business.
- Try the following 10 ideas to help bring in/keep new customers for FREE, instead of trying to compete with the big guys for advertising dollars:
 1. Every time you meet someone, hand them your business card with a valuable offer on the back, enticing them to call or go to your website. Market guerilla-style with these cards and leave them wherever you go, anytime you tip, bulletin boards, senior centers, everywhere.
 2. Have someone interview you and create a podcast, or audio file where you explain what to look for in a travel company (and of course you will fit the criteria completely). Post on various podcast sites and your web page.
 3. Create a short video about cruise tips. Create a series and post them on YouTube, with your contact information throughout. 2-3 min max.
 4. Have a “call to action” in all of your marketing material. Each piece that you put out needs to give the customer a reason to pick up the phone, incentive.

5. Join a local small business networking group and ask for referrals. Many of these people are business owners.
6. Send a catalog or up-sell with every order that goes out. Give the person an additional deal for signing up right now.
7. Look for joint ventures (JVs) that you can do with other businesses. Perhaps you pay for half the mailing for a 50/50 postcard for a fine restaurant, golf pro shop, on-line travel apparel site. Use a survey to find where else your customers do business besides travel sites.
8. Offer your local newspaper a weekly/monthly column about travel advice for free. In exchange, they allow you to add your contact information to each piece.
9. Solve a pain for your customer in addition to showing them the comforting parts of going on a cruise and doing business with you. Their pain may be the hassle of dealing with the large travel sites where you're just a number. People will gladly pay extra to have a pain cured.
10. Think "relationally" not "transactionally." Remember that you ideally want to keep a customer for life, so you may want to spend some more money on obtaining them in the first place, in order to make them so happy that they stick with you for multiple transactions.

Resources that may offer additional help (I don't make any money from these recommendations, just places I like):

www.vistaprint.com -The best, most inexpensive site on earth for small business printing needs-awesome business cards (some designs even FREE)

www.sendoutcards.com -This is a source for custom-printed greeting cards and customer thank you cards, that cost less than a card you would buy at the store, including postage. They do everything for you, all you have to do is pick the card and send them your mailing list.

www.poorrichardspromos.com -Promotional gifts printer that you can use as incentive for people to fill out surveys, thank your best clients, and other forms of persuasion to close the sale.

Read the book: *Networking with Millionaires* by Thomas J. Stanley

Addendum

Additional projects I could help you with, if you're interested:

- Create a custom “red carpet” letter as a follow up for people that have shown interest in doing business with you.
- Information product development and e-book cover creation for a teaser, giveaway product to grab customer info.
- USP development and branding initiative
- Customer survey (creation only, not distribution)
- Web copywriting and article writing for your site
- Additional consultations to uncover hidden income streams and other assets