

## Hows and whys of local web marketing (July 15, 2010)

Local Online Advertising for Dummies, by Court Cunningham and Stephanie Brown, For Dummies: A Branded Imprint of Wiley, 363 pp., Wiley, 2010

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Reviewed by Jake Silker, marketing director, Foster Bank, \$550 million-assets, Chicago, Ill. Silker, also a Social Media Mogul for the Chicago American Marketing Association's BrandSmart communications team, was one of ABA's 2009 Financial Marketing Award winners. If you'd like to review books for our online book column, please e-mail scocheo@sbsp.com and tell us what types of books you enjoy the most (handbooks, historical, economic, political).

"If someone is searching around the 'Net for local goods and services and your business isn't represented there, that customer is going to click with someone else. That customer could have been and should have been yours."

—Court Cunningham and Stephanie Brown, Local Online Advertising for Dummies

The "For Dummies" book series aims at readers who are completely ignorant on a wide variety of subjects. In case you've never read one—why would you have read a book for dummies?—that's the series that walks you through EVERY step of the process of understanding the subject at hand.

For example, if you've never changed the oil in your car, you might check out Auto Repair for Dummies. Does an entire chapter on opening the hood is silly? Not for this series.

When Court Cunningham, CEO of Yodle, a company specializing in local online advertising, and Stephanie Brown, business consultant, wrote Local Online Advertising for Dummies, it was obvious they had experience explaining new concepts to people who were in completely unfamiliar territory. With such topics as "Pay-Per-Click or Organic Search?" and "Robots telling spiders where to crawl," local online advertising does sound confusing. The authors stand ready to explain these things to their readers.

Kicking the tires and checking things out

Let's assume for a moment we have no marketing experience whatsoever. Let's "open the hood" and take a look around

At many community banks, the concept of Marketing still seems quite new. After all, "We know our customers" remains a common attitude among community bankers. There has been no perceived need to promote products or services, with the belief that all a bank need do is offer "good service" and customers will come. And that's using "normal methods," let alone the burgeoning array of new web-based tools.

And for many bankers, this attitude worked for decades. There had been no need to market because there was little competition. But now, banks in even the smallest corners of the earth compete, even if that competition is only online.

In the introduction to *Local Online Advertising for Dummies*, the authors explain how to navigate the book. I found this very helpful. I'm a huge fan of researching information on the internet and of having everything "at my fingertips." After I've read something, I want to be able to retrieve the information quickly and efficiently, and this book is user-friendly and easy to navigate.

When I began reading the book, the first type of online advertising that came to mind was Search Engine Advertising. Sophisticated search engines are smart enough to target your search for you, based on your computer's internet protocol address. In this way, if you search for a "plumber," you will find plumbers in your area and even a map to the plumber nearest you. I really didn't see how Search Engine Advertising could be discussed for 364 pages, even if this book was written for dummies. Luckily, this book gives you information on much more than just Search Engine Advertising.

### Making online work for your bank

The book is broken down into easy-to-understand chapters that explain online advertising in all its forms.

Part 1, "Getting Started with Online Advertising," presents an overall picture of local online advertising and why it is such a powerful tool to generate new and repeat customers. This section helps with the pre-planning required to use the online space successfully.

Part 2, "Setting the Foundation for Local Online Advertising Success," demonstrates the importance of a quality website.

The authors give some important questions to ask about your site. Some are: What do you expect your customers to find when they visit you online? Can you engage the customer with videos or special offers? Have you captured customer information for later followup?

Cunningham and Brown also go into detail explaining how to monitor traffic and test to see if your advertising is working. (Chapter 6) Only after you've learned where your customer is and created a suitable space for them is it time to invite them to visit, the authors maintain in Part 3: "Doing the Advertising Part of Local Online Advertising".

### Online means more than search engine advertising

I had expected the entire book to be a dumbed-down tutorial on search engine advertising, but it doesn't even get to "The Nuts and Bolts of Search Engine Advertising" until Chapter 9. The authors then go into great detail and explain every aspect of search engine advertising before they go on to explain and analyze other types of online advertising.

The authors go on to explain ways to use non-search ways to reach potential customers. There are many ways to generate brand awareness using the internet that will drive traffic to your actual bank. Chapter 8 gives a detailed lesson in Search Engine Optimization—helping web users to find your online presence. They touch on e-mail (Chapter 10) and social-media marketing (Chapter 13), but they also explore the use of web banner advertising (Chapter 12), online PR opportunities (Chapter 14), and industry-specific directories (Chapter 11).

In Part 4, &ldquo;Staying at the Top of Customers&rsquo; Minds,&rdquo; [emphasis added] we learn how to handle the customers who are now beating a path to our door as a result of our successful advertising campaign. Chapter 16 discusses the finer points of building and nurturing customer relationships. Chapter 17 talks about the importance of mining your customer database for further business.

Using online to cultivate market share you already have

Many bank marketers will appreciate the part of the book that covers the basics of managing online customer relationships. For the bank that is new to marketing, this is an excellent introduction. Advertising or marketing without internal support is like bailing water out of a sinking boat. As Cunningham and Brown put it, &ldquo;You don&rsquo;t have to be an MBA to conclude that your marketing dollars go a lot further toward producing profits if you use them to build, nurture, and develop your current customer relationships.&rdquo;

Also very helpful to the beginner is Part 5, &ldquo;The Part of Tens,&rdquo; which is a quick re-cap providing three important lists: &ldquo;Ten Mistakes and How to Avoid Them&rdquo;; &ldquo;Ten Steps to an Effective Local Online Advertising Plan&rdquo;; and &ldquo;Ten Considerations When Choosing a Local Online Advertising Partner.&rdquo;

If you&rsquo;re looking to reach your customers online, &ldquo;Local Online Advertising for Dummies&rdquo; will help you find them. Whether you have the budget to place ads or just list your branch in free online business directories, this helpful guide will get you started.

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