

# how to appeal to **vertical markets on the web**

If you were setting up an online shop, looking to sell a range of products, could you ever really compete against Amazon? Or even against the hundreds of other retailers and thousands of individual sellers on E-Bay?

In the service industry, or for business-to-business, could I possibly suggest that I am the best online marketer when there are thousands online saying exactly the same thing? It's not only inevitable that cost (value) will play a part, but also the awareness that my competition is no longer the local online marketing community, but also a start-up in India, a student in New York or a retired marketer in Australia who has set up a hobby business.

In a world of plenty of choice, how can we possibly grab [marketing] attention in a world where attention is hard to come by?

## The long tail and vertical markets

The Long Tail is a concept by Chris Anderson ([www.thelongtail.com](http://www.thelongtail.com)) that states that the more choice you give people, the more choice they will use. As well as number ones and top tens, there is also an almost infinite need that trails off.

For example, Amazon sells plenty of best seller books and DVDs but they also sell low numbers of tens of thousands of other titles. Then, there are top tens for all sorts of niches. Why? Because people are interested in niche - there is a requirement. They no longer have to put up with a product range that physically sits on a shelf. iTunes is another great example of this phenomenon.

In terms of how The Long Tail translates to web traffic, for example, let's have a look at The Escape website (Jan-Feb 2008), which showed 2860 visitors from search engines by 1326 different search terms. 1061 of these search terms were unique so although we have our big number one, the vast majority of search terms were one offs and many of these were quite specific. Much of this search traffic variable is due to value-added content in the form of white papers and articles about design, web site build and search engine optimisation - niche, quality content... and it could be more niche.



In terms of how this could affect your business marketing on the web, have you ever wondered how you could take advantage of niche or vertical markets?

What if you could define specific target markets that you work for and tailored an offering accordingly?

## Appealing to a vertical market

You may find in your day-to-day work that you have a few (or many) customers in the same

vertical market? These companies may use you because they know that you understand their business and industry. What's more, your sector experience allows you to offer value added knowledge to their projects.

Here's your starting point. What is the specific value add that you have to offer and can it be translated into thought leadership online?

Thought leadership is a phrase that encapsulates how you (as a business or an individual) can use your sector knowledge in a marketing and PR capacity. Examples may include writing white papers or magazine articles, delivering seminars on your subject, etc. By doing this you can demonstrate that you know your stuff.

So, your vertical market (or niche). Why not deliver information about what you do, specifically for a vertical market?

EG. You create websites for a living (sounds familiar). What if you tailored a specific service and some thought leadership about websites for social housing groups because you do a lot of work in that sector?

You could approach your market, find out current issues, use your existing experience about social housing and website design to formulate some quality data that is useful to that sector. Information that gets you noticed and answers queries that people in that sector may have.

The more you can refine, or segment, your offering to appeal to the long tail and vertical markets within your client base, the more relevant you become to a niche market. Your marketing investment moves from blanket advertising to generating niche content but along the way you are also building a sustainable marketing platform online - as well as a reputation.

## **The Escape**

Loddon Business Centre, Roentgen Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 8NG. United Kingdom  
**t:** +44 (0)1256 334567 **f:** +44 (0)1256 470700 **e:** ideas@the-escape.co.uk

**[www.the-escape.co.uk](http://www.the-escape.co.uk)**

**theESCAPE®**