

# 7 habits of highly effective online marketers

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Success starts with your attitude toward your job, company, and performance. It's just as important to document your failures as it is to document your successes. The factor that separates effective marketers from careless ones is taking carefully calculated risks as opposed to blind risks

**Setting yourself apart:** In the 12-plus years I've been involved in online marketing, I've seen many marketers thrive, and many more crash and burn. Just like with any type of business, being an effective online marketer is about developing solid habits, repeating the things that are giving you wins, and keeping your eyes wide open as you look forward.

Stay informed. Of course, if it was so easy, then success would be a forgone conclusion at the beginning of everyone's marketing career. Since we know that isn't the case, then what exactly are the habits that define and propel the leaders in the online marketing community?

Anything worth doing is worth doing right. That means hard work and treating marketing as a craft. Keep reading to learn the habits that will enable you to be highly effective and put you on the road to mastering the craft of online marketing.

## Habit 1

***Screw your head on straight and jump in:*** If you're looking to be highly effective, you need to jump head-first into your job and fully immerse yourself in the online marketing world. So what does this mean?

First, it starts with your attitude toward your job, company, and performance. Winning can be the only outcome that crosses your mind. Once your head is screwed on straight, you've conquered a big part of the battle. It seems like common sense, but having the right attitude is often overlooked as one of the most important traits of highly effective marketers. When I think of the people in the interactive industry that have been highly successful, they all have one trait in common: They all share an unbelievably positive winning attitude that can't help but breed success. It's a contagiousness that attracts and draws results.

Second, you need to love what you do. Effective marketers don't look at what they do daily as a 9 to 5 job. They view their daily work as part of their passion, and it fuels their lives. When you're passionate about the work you're doing on a daily basis, it brings a sense of calm to your well being, no matter how hectic, stressful, or crazy your projects become. If you can't think of any other type of work you'd rather be doing, you're passionate about your job through all of the highs and lows; no matter how nuts it can become, you are fully immersed.

## Habit 2

**School is in session:** Online marketing is a moving target. It's a constantly changing landscape that requires you to keep your thumb on its pulse every day. As soon as you get comfortable with your knowledge and skills, the online marketing community will change all around you. So, with all of this shifting soil, how is it possible to stay on top of what's going on?

First, develop your list of weekly reading material. This material can come from websites, newsletters, RSS feeds, or blogs. I recommend starting your day with the RSS feed from iMediaConnection.com and a couple of other blogs to get a good feel for the daily industry "happenings." It's 15 minutes well spent before your days gets into full swing.

Second, audible media is increasingly becoming a better weekly learning source. The great thing about audible media is that it's highly portable, and you can fit it into several aspects of your daily life that are otherwise considered dead space. In addition to podcasts, books on audio are a great way to consume new information and general business knowledge. Check out Audible.com to build up your library of audio books on a variety of business subjects. These audio books, in conjunction with various business podcasts, can turn your iPod into a mini university, and your car, airplane seat, and treadmill into your classroom. A few years ago, podcasts and audio books turned my last marathon into five hours of class time!

Finally, do not forget about visual media. On many business sites, including this one, there are videos that provide a good amount of quick insight, and usually in 3-7 minute blocks. YouTube has become a video learning medium for many, in addition to the more traditional entertainment aspects.

## Habits 3 and 4

**Document it:** Your job as an effective online marketer is to be part marketer, part storyteller, part CFO, part analyst, and part historian. Remember, it's just as important to document your failures as it is to document your successes. Otherwise, how do you expect to learn what not to do as well as how to craft your future plan of attack?

What's the best approach when it comes to documentation? Everyone has their own methods, but what's important is to capture key elements. For example, whenever we run an advertising campaign, I want to know the type of ad campaign, payment metric, rate, duration, date run, dollars spent, impressions served, click-through rate, site conversions, the ultimate sales performance of the leads generated, and the resulting profit or loss. I prefer to group documented results weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually. Your preference might vary, but I recommend documenting monthly at the very least.

Once you have your documented results, you can create a summary scorecard for yourself, your team, and for the purpose of transparency sideways, upward, and downward throughout your organization.

**Network:** Nobody becomes a highly effective marketer without developing a strong network. There are many smart people in the interactive industry. Find them and learn from them. The network that you create will allow you to be more effective in your marketing strategy and tactics. Simply being able to pick up the phone or send an email to other successful marketers who have experience in a certain tactic will save you from the same pitfalls that others have gone through. In addition, it will allow you to put your best foot forward and increase your success. In addition to reaching out to your network and reaching out to others for advice, it's key to make it a two-way street. Effective online marketers know the importance of being there for your fellow marketers just like they will be there for you. It's a key element of the collaborative fabric that fuels the passion many of us share for the interactive industry.

In one of my early articles, I recommended some helpful tips to be more effective while networking at conferences. If you're generally not a social person, you'll need to force yourself to get out of your

comfort zone and talk with others. Some of my most valuable and longest lasting business relationships started simply by extending a handshake and saying, "Hi [name on nametag], I'm Sean, and I'm with AccuQuote. What do you do for [company on nametag]?"

## Habit 5

**Focus on objectives, not shiny objects:** Effective online marketers are just as intrigued by the newest technology and tactics as everyone else. The key differentiator for these marketers is that they ask themselves a simple question as a shiny object filter: "Will this tactic or technology effectively help me reach my key business objectives?"

This filter question is one that seemed to get lost over the past few years. Instead of focusing on business objectives, many companies engaged in social media and/or emerging media tactics because they were a lot of fun and had a "coolness" factor. Unfortunately, they didn't advance their key business objectives. However, many companies are now evaluating social media tactics with their business objectives in mind.

Innovation is at the cornerstone of the interactive industry, and it drives the continued success of many businesses. Therefore, it's easy to get distracted and caught up in all of the innovation. You should try the "latest and greatest" technology and marketing tactics and stay on the forefront of technology by continually testing. However, the key is to apply the shiny object filter and really examine your proposed strategy in terms of how it will advance your business objectives. If you can't answer the question, then start looking for another tactic that is a better match for hitting your business objectives.

## Habits 6 and 7

**Take calculated risks:** Nobody ever got ahead in business by always playing it safe. Take calculated risks by going out on a limb. Playing it safe can and might be much riskier to your career than actually taking risks. The key factor that separates the effective online marketers from the careless ones is taking carefully calculated risks as opposed to taking blind risks.

So what does it mean to take a calculated risk? As a direct-response-focused marketer, I get instant feedback on how all of my advertising campaigns are working. It's definitely a blessing, but it means that many of our advertising campaigns don't produce a positive ROI for us and need to be turned off. This means that I'm always testing. Some of these media tests fall into the safe category, such as media buys that mirror similar buys that have worked for us in the past. Others, though, are buys that are different from what we've typically done. This has sometimes meant targeting in a completely different way we were used to, testing video, social media, or myriad other methods. In each of these tests, I leaned on my bank of knowledge and experience, as well as feedback from others in my network, to determine whether or not I would move forward with a test. It still doesn't mean that each of these calculated risks is a home run, but some are. At the same time, I've easily used this approach to rule out many risks I didn't feel were worth it.

**Work your ass off:** Every effective online marketer has this trait. It's the backbone of their successes. They all bust their butt continuously and display a tremendous work ethic with everything they do.

This means that they often have to sacrifice other aspects of their lives. They are able to distinguish between when it's time to have fun and when it's time to buckle down, grit their teeth, and have laser focus. This is why this habit gets the distinction of being the seventh habit of effective online marketers.