

# Turn your offline network into online opportunities

## How your Rolodex can be a directory of profitable online partnerships



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We're all aware that strategic networking can significantly increase our business while allowing us to meet and help others. But it is shocking to realize this kind of networking really only exists offline, which leaves tremendous Internet and other electronic networking opportunities unexplored.

Traditional networking involves people getting together to discuss objectives, such as potential new customers, and searching for ways to help others attract business. Those that excel at networking are continuously seeking out new methods to assist others, such as asking existing clients if they are interested in the products or services of others in their network.

In addition to in-person events, marketers need to consider how Internet marketing can play an integral role in a successful networking campaign. Take the following case, for example: Dr. Greenberg, a

very well-known cosmetic surgeon, is launching a new product line called Cosmetic Surgeon in a Jar. In searching for ways that Dr. Greenberg can effectively and efficiently promote the launch, here is how the strategic Internet networking component comes into play.

First, Dr. Greenberg must identify his target audience. Upon deciding that it is females ranging in age from 25 to 75 years old, the best strategic path would be to provide the following key elements.

### An introductory offer sent via e-mail

Such an e-mail enables the doctor to test offers such as discounts, free shipping and the ever-popular "buy one item and get another at a special price." But first, he must determine who will receive the offers.

Again, Internet networking comes into play.

Given Dr. Greenberg's target audience, he contacts New York-based LoveMyShoes.com because its customer base

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represents the perfect demographic for his product line's introduction.

The company's e-mail list contains nearly 200,000 names and addresses of women aged 20 to 45 who buy shoes on the Web. The bonus is that these women are already experienced in purchasing online, so they should be comfortable acquiring Dr. Greenberg's product line at CosmeticSurgeonInaJar.com.

Dr. Greenberg can encourage LoveMyShoes.com to distribute his information for free by either cross-promoting the site's products in his e-mail blasts or on his site, or by offering to compensate the company on a cost-per-acquisition basis. For example, for every order that Dr. Greenberg receives based on the e-mail blast, he might compensate LoveMyShoes.com to the tune of \$15.

Many other online networking opportunities exist for Dr. Greenberg. Shawn Elliott Luxury Homes & Estates sells high-end homes with values exceeding \$1 million. Thus, its e-mail list is a perfect fit for Dr. Greenberg. The same goes for Lucille Roberts' gym e-mail list, which contains hundreds of thousands of names and addresses for fitness-minded women who want to look great too.

### A display ad or promotion on a strategic partner's Web site

In addition to introductory e-mails, acquiring real estate on networking contacts'

Web sites also works extremely well by putting businesses in front of their ideal audiences.

Take Metro Candy, for example. Prior to the Halloween season, it networked with HalloweenScene.com. The two Web sites promoted each other via display ads and promos.

The partnership offers a prime example of Internet networking at its finest – both a trick and a treat that gives customers looking for Halloween costumes access to a huge stash of candy.

### Networking affiliates

Does establishing networking affiliations entail paying other parties to be included in their e-mail blasts or on their Web sites?

Not if I can help it. I avoid the exchange of money in online networking relationships, preferring free, mutual cross-promotion instead (i.e. cross Internet networking) among related brands to achieve strong results.

The other acceptable alternative, mentioned earlier, is the cost-per-acquisition model.

When networking, it pays to take the extra step of exploring the many existing online opportunities within your circle. Think of it as profitable social networking for your business.

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