



The Content Man

The information you need to optimize your web content.

Want leads? Make an offer.

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In politics, it's a timeless truth: "If you want people to vote for you, ask for their vote."

The same principle applies to website lead generation, quite literally. In asking people to take any kind of action at your site, especially contacting you or making a purchase, you are asking for their vote of confidence, not too mention their time and money.

The best way to get them to cast that vote is to offer something of value. Much has changed in direct marketing since the Internet, but this hasn't. People will take notice if they can get something they want. What kind of offer has value? That depends on your customers, your marketplace and your competitors. In many business and technology markets, a white paper will generate good quality leads. In a more consumer market, don't underestimate the power of a free T-shirt.

You should follow a few rules when making an offer on your website:

- Make sure the offer is appropriate for your brand. Never offer anything that is "beneath" the image you want for your company. You can trade up, but never trade down.
- Make the offer relevant to your business. The closer your offer is associated with what you do, the better. For instance, a light bulb company can offer a white paper about energy reduction. A paper company can offer a beautiful print of an image uploaded by the customer.
- Ask for a LITTLE information. When they click on the offer, you can use this opportunity to gather information about your prospect. Ask for their name, email and company. Get their phone number if you can. The better your offer, the more you can ask. But don't get greedy and ask for too much or they'll click away.
- Connect the offer to a sales visit if possible. If your object is to get in the door, this is your chance. Get them while they're hot. Many companies follow up leads within a week or two with phone calls. Hiring a telesales firm to do this for you may be a good idea.
- Have a long-term follow up plan. Use an automatic customer contact system or assign someone inside to do it, but make sure you stay in touch with the people who contact you, through a vehicle such as a regular e-newsletter.

You have to invest a little bit to make good offers on your home page. But by following these steps, that investment should pay off in site performance and, better yet, in sales.