

# **Ben Franklin's Guide to Internet Marketing Success**

**How You Can Use Ben's Thirteen  
Virtues to Make Your Business a  
Fortune on the Internet**

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# 1

## **NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN**

### **A LOOK TO THE PAST**

The internet has represented a major revolution in our society. In a very real sense, it is "the future" that most of us were waiting around to appear in the form of flying cars and jet packs. That future is now our everyday reality and it has transformed the way in which we as a species communicate with one another, the way we learn, the way we travel, and of course the way we do business. For businessmen, the internet represents something more: with the majority of the world now online, the internet is officially the biggest marketplace that anybody has ever sold in. When you put a product up for sale online, it has the potential of being reached by more customers than any other forum.

The trick is, of course, that you have to reach those customers. You know how it goes. The popularity of the internet is a double-edged sword – while there may be billions of potential customers out there, there are also a much greater number of people selling things. This doesn't mean that you can't reach the wider audience offered up by

the internet, it simply means that you have to excel at internet marketing in order to tap the true potential at hand.

Because the internet is a new frontier in selling, many people also believe it's a new frontier in advertising. In certain technical ways, such as sites using click-through or keyword-targeted ads, it is. But on the other hand, some age-old principles still apply. Look at the most popular "new" methods of advertising that have arisen with the internet: viral marketing which spreads by word of mouth, or "personality"-based crazes like lonelygirl15 or Fred. Word of mouth? Sales based on reputation? Those are the oldest tactics in the book!

## **LESSONS FROM OLD BEN**

When advertising first developed and became popular across the Western world, it took a form very similar to what we see going on today. This is because in those early days certain principles of advertising were codified and became "standardized" by virtue of their proven ability to appeal to human psychology. Advertising based on image was huge. Ask yourself a question: who is the CEO of Exxon? The CEO of General Electric? If you don't know, don't feel bad – the average person doesn't either. But do you know who Henry Ford is? How about Andrew Carnegie? And Rockefeller? These titans of industry made names for themselves by putting their names out there, personally endorsing the products produced by their companies. Does this bear any similarity to today's "mascots" like the Old Spice Guy or the Fanta girls?

Advertising also depended a lot on word of mouth in the early days. It had to. Businessmen mostly had print based media like newspapers or magazines to get the word out, and there were huge percentages of the population still illiterate at the time. Word of mouth was everything. The "testimonial" that we see today developed out of this tradition. So did the "viral video" that is now seen as the cutting edge pinnacle of marketing. These trends aren't new; in fact, they're downright old-fashioned!

So, how about we take a novel approach to the question of how best to learn to effectively advertise on the internet. How about instead of looking to the future and trying to guess what the next best thing will be, we instead look to the core ideas of the past that are, as we've seen, in many ways still thriving today. If we accept that the past has a great deal to teach us about advertising, then we might well ask ourselves who in the past we should look to. Well, why not the individual who was the best at advertising, who pioneered many of these techniques that we still find valuable today. Learn from the best, right? And who would that be?

Ben Franklin.

Yes, the founding father, Ben Franklin. Ben Franklin is hands down the most innovative advertiser in the history of the game, so much so that it was his newspaper that ran the first print ad in the country. This guy also managed to effectively use principles of advertising to sell not just products to people, but to cause them to question their very values and in some cases stand up for important causes. Clearly, he was an individual who recognized and utilized the real power at the core of

advertising, which is, after all, an effort to reach the heart and mind of another person in an effective and appealing way.

Great, you might say. What good does it do us if the best teacher of advertising is long dead? The good news is that Ben Franklin was a prolific writer who left behind a detailed explanation for his success, as well as a clearly formulated plan for how anyone who wanted to could easily become as great a success as he was. When he was still a young man, he wrote a treatise on thirteen virtues that he felt represented his core values, and which, if practiced diligently, would lead one to be a success in whatever one happened to undertake.

The thirteen virtues are as follows, along with a little note telling us what Ben thought about them:

- **Temperance:** Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation.
- **Order:** Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.
- **Resolution:** Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.
- **Frugality:** Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.
- **Moderation:** Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
- **Industry:** Lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

- **Cleanliness:** Tolerate no uncleanness in body, clothes, or habitation.
- **Tranquillity:** Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.
- **Silence:** Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.
- **Sincerity:** Use no hurtful deceit; think innocently and justly, and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
- **Justice:** Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.
- **Chastity:** Rarely use venery but for health or offspring, never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.
- **Humility:** Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Now, you might find yourself thinking that these virtues are all great and good, but unclear as to how they relate to becoming a better advertiser. Well, the secret, according to old Ben, was that an individual who wanted to be a success at advertising needed to first be a success as a human being. Only a virtuous person could succeed in any truly meaningful sense of the term. Since Franklin was such an unqualified success, we're inclined to believe him. There are also some direct case studies which demonstrate just how truthful and accurate his belief is, even in 2010, which we'll look at a bit later on.



In other words, if your business is struggling, or your advertising isn't going as well as you'd hope, the problem likely lies within. It's too easy to blame the market or the environment for our failures; in truth, we can always push ourselves a little bit harder. If we follow these virtues, we'll be changing ourselves. If we change ourselves, we change our businesses, because a well run business is a natural extension of ourselves and our value.

Ben succeeded wildly in his lifetime. He was a definitely "master of all trades" in defiance of the old cliché. In addition to being one of the most revered politicians in the history of the United States, he was also a prominent writer, a publisher, an inventor, and much more. As we've said, he was also a major pioneer in advertising, successfully promoting his own inventions and products and establishing the kind of reputation that would eventually become legendary. He also managed to do all of this without the internet, because of the sheer unassailable strength of his ideas and core concepts.

He was able to do this so successfully because his ideas have synergy. While following these virtues will make you a better person, they also have direct and practical applicability to the world of internet marketing. Just as you develop your own resolve, you can immediately apply those efforts to the way you do marketing on the internet, and become more successful at it as a result. As you build a reputation for yourself as a fair-minded individual with a wealth of expert knowledge, you can use this reputation to sell products; you will become your own marketing.

The internet is a frontier, just like the frontier on which Ben Franklin earned his chops and his place in history. Its wild territory where

unpredicted things can happen which change the game entirely. Imagine investing tons of your time and money in a fly by night form of novelty advertising that's dead in the water by the time you get ready to launch. It's a fool's game to try to anticipate such changes and to adapt one's self to them. While adaptability is certainly an asset, it is the business built on strong unchanging principles which can weather any storm.

Think about it. In Ben's day, if you ordered a shipment of product, it could take weeks to arrive by train and then by horse and carriage. There was no guarantee that it would get there at all. A sudden rainstorm or a hole in the road could delay a shipment for days. Marketing was difficult to do because there were no widely accessible forums in which to advertise. Ben Franklin was able to succeed in this wild and unpredictable marketplace because he had stability within himself. He followed his thirteen virtues and they saw him through the crests as well as the valleys.

Ben Franklin may have lived in another time, but the values he taught are still applicable today. Just as they brought him success, they can bring you success. When something wasn't working out in Ben's life, he changed himself, and then found the quality of his life naturally improved as a consequence. If you are willing to become receptive to Ben's sagely advice, you too will find yourself changed, and you'll find your business moving along with it. As you make a name for yourself and cultivate word of mouth sales, you'll not only be making something of your business, but something of yourself as well. This is the kind of substance that lies in the souls of legends, the types of people who are remembered forever. Ben Franklin was one of them. Could you be too?

## **HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

This book is an attempt to present Ben Franklin's thirteen virtues in the context of using them to become more successful at internet marketing. In order to familiarize you with Ben Franklin's achievements as a businessman and advertiser, and to give you a better sense of why we should all be listening to him, the next section is devoted to a brief rundown of his life, with a focus on his business prowess and practical wisdom. Following that, there are sections devoted to each of the thirteen virtues. In each one, the virtue in question receives an explanation and abstract treatment, as well as a "virtua practicum", an example of putting the virtue to practical use in today's age in order to more successfully market on the internet.

Then, we'll take a look at two real world examples of online businesses, one a newsworthy flop, the other a revolutionary success. We'll examine their rise, and for one of them, the fall, from the perspective of Ben Franklin's thirteen virtues in order to get a sense for just how effective they are when it comes to successfully building a business online.