

Forum Marketing Secrets



By Matt Bush

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CONTENTS

Why Forum Marketing Is Awesome	4
What Can You Promote With Forum Marketing?	5
Finding THE Best Forums For Your Market	6
Forum Marketing Checklist	6
Signing Up For A Forum	7
Establishing A Presence	7
Finding A Product To Promote	9
Creating An Effective Signature.....	9
Becoming An Expert	11
Finding Relevant Posts To Become Involved With	12
Creating An Effective Response.....	13
Tracking Your Results.....	15
Rotating Your Signature.....	15
Continuing A Discussion	16
Forming Relationships On The Forum	16
Additional Social Networking Sites.....	18
Exploring Joint Ventures On A Forum	19
Paying For Advertising On A Forum.....	19
Branching Out To Additional Forums	20
The Five Keys To Forum Success	20
Conclusion	21

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS FORUM MARKETING?

This video series will teach you everything you need to know about forum marketing, so let's go ahead and get started by talking about how forum marketing works.

Forum marketing is the process of finding relevant forums and establishing a profile as an expert, with the intention of marketing a product or service.

A forum (often called a bulletin board, or online group) is a place where like-minded people gather around to discuss common interests. There are literally tens of thousands of forums out there, for just about any topic imaginable.

Think about that for a second, and you just may realize the intense value of marketing on forums. These are places where people of similar interests "hang out" to discuss the things they love.

Take for example, dogs. There are a ton of dog forums out there, where fellow dog owners gather to talk about the joys and difficulties of having a furry little friend. If you had your own dog training course, could you imagine the potential sales you could make by establishing a presence in that forum?

Forum marketing is not complicated, it is as simple as finding a good forum, and "setting up camp". Hopefully you can find a forum that is both a good fit for something that you can market, as well as based on a topic that you have some interest in. For this to work, you will need to "get your hands dirty" and start interacting with others on the forum.

The good news is that if you put the time in, forum marketing can be an incredible time investment. As you will see through the span of this course, it can be a great way to build a loyal list of customers.

To hear more about what forum marketing is, and see an example in action, please view video #1.

WHY FORUM MARKETING IS AWESOME

There are lots of good reasons why you should be doing forum marketing as there are many distinct advantages. Here are a few:

Forum Marketing Advantages

- There are forums for just about everything!
- Forums can be laser-targeted to the niche you are promoting
- Often contains people that are very passionate on the subject
- Gives you an opportunity to establish a presence as an expert

Forum Marketing Advantages

- Allows forming partnerships and “joint ventures”
- Great place to get feedback regarding your niche
- If there is a marketplace or ads, this is a great way to find what is being sold to this niche

Believe it or not, I have seen many businesses use forums as a cornerstone to their business. That's how powerful they are!

To learn more about these specific advantages of forum marketing, be sure to check out Video #2.

WHAT CAN YOU PROMOTE WITH FORUM MARKETING?

Of course we won't be posting on forums just for fun, our focus here is to make money right? There are a lot of ways you can monetize on forums. Here are a few of the most popular types of things you can promote:

Monetization Options

- **Promote your own business**
- **Promote your own products**
- **Create branding for your business**
- **Promote affiliate products such as Clickbank**
- **Build a list and promote later**
- **Just about anything!**

Perhaps you already have a specific product or service you would like to promote, that's great. If not, no worries as there are tons of options out there, and later I will give specific advice on picking products. To hear me talk more specifically about the types of things you can promote, please view video #3.

FINDING THE BEST FORUMS FOR YOUR MARKET

Okay, now it is time to start digging around for a forum. The best place to start is the good old search engine. I like to use Google since it is the most popular and gets the most visibility. You can type things in like:

KEYWORD forum

KEYWORD bulletin board

KEYWORD online discussion

This should bring up lots of options. If you are having trouble finding results, I would suggest widening your scale a bit. For example, there probably isn't a lot of forums out there just for Shih-Tzu dogs, but if you searched for dogs in general you'll find tons.

To hear me talk more about how to find a forum and see me perform a live search, please view Video #4.

FORUM MARKETING CHECKLIST

Now that you've found a few forums, it is important to make sure they are going to be worthwhile places for us to be spending our time. I created a checklist of things you will want to be sure to look into, before launching a marketing campaign.

Checklist

- Does the forum match your niche?
- Does the forum contain enough members?
- Is the forum active?
- Is the forum private?
- Is the forum a paid membership?
- Does the forum allow signatures that promote?

To learn more about this forum marketing checklist, please view Video #5.

SIGNING UP FOR A FORUM

Now it is time to sign up at a forum. You will need an email address to register at most forums. Just head to a forum that you would like to try and look for a spot to register.

When registering, you will have the option to share a bit more about yourself. You may not want to do this now, but I definitely suggest taking the time to fill in your profile once you start getting more involved.

Please refer to Video #6 to see me sign up at a forum so you can understand what the process looks like.

ESTABLISHING A PRESENCE

Now that you are a member, don't start promoting your stuff just yet! We will want to make sure we take the time to "settle in" before coming off too strong (it

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is possible your account may even be deleted if it is apparent you only joined to promote a product).

There are many things you can do to start introducing yourself to the forum:

Establishing a Presence

- **Don't start out immediately promoting stuff**
- **Check and see if there is an introduction thread**
- **Provide a few thoughtful comments in some active threads**
- **Aim to get your post count up to at least 10**

I suggest that you view video #7, where you will get to see me go through these points in further detail.

FINDING A PRODUCT TO PROMOTE

It is possible that you will already have a product or service in mind that you will be promoting, but if you don't I would like to share a few thoughts as to how you can find one.

Finding a Product to Promote

- **What is your niche “hungry” for?**
- **Brainstorm by performing searches and looking at ads**
- **Review the clickbank marketplace**
- **Is the product selling well?**
- **Review the history of potential affiliates**

A great place to find tons of products that can be sold through affiliates is:

<http://clickbank.com>

To hear me talk more about finding a product to promote, I suggest you review Video #8.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE SIGNATURE

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An important part of forum marketing is being subtle yet effective in presenting the product you are promoting. This can be done through creating a strong signature.

A signature is a spot where forum members are typically allowed to promote things they are currently selling. Please note, not all forums allow this, so you will want to be certain before investing time.

Here are a few tips on creating an effective signature:

Signature Tips

- **Review the current forum-specific guidelines**
- **Add credibility when possible**
- **Do not be too pushy or “salesy”**

Most of the time you can add all kinds of effects to your signature, such as having a live link (highly recommended), bolded words, and so forth. Unfortunately you will need to be aware of how bulletin board code works (sometimes a forum will have an editor where you just push buttons to create the type of effect you want). To learn more about the most common bulletin board codes, be sure to check out this resource:

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<http://docs.simplemachines.org/index.php?P=0bef0266cf7439ee4b0f28875e3ed60&topic=57>

Here are a few examples of forum signatures, complete with bulletin board code:

Be sure to check out my [url=http://mysite.com]dog training book [/url], it will help you get your best friend under control. [url=http://mysite.com]You can learn more here[/url].

[b]Having trouble getting your fury friend to behave?[/b] Sign up for my free newsletter [url=http://mysite.com]here[/url] to receive helpful advice on getting your dog under control.

Tired of being up all night listening to your dog bark? I felt your pain once, learn how I got it to stop [url=http://mysite.com]here[/url].

To see me create a signature live, please view video #9.

BECOMING AN EXPERT

Now that you are an official member, it is time to discuss how you can create a reputation for yourself on the forum and position yourself as an expert.

Becoming an Expert

- **Answer niche-specific questions whenever possible**
- **Post frequently and consistently**
- **Publish original threads offering helpful advice**
- **Establish relationships with other “high posters”**

The important thing is to get out there and start interacting with the community, and helping others whenever you can with helpful advice. This time will be worth it, because while you are becoming an expert, you will be gaining the trust of those around you.

To hear me talk more about becoming an expert, please view video #10.

FINDING RELEVANT POSTS TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH

Our time is valuable, and it is crucial that we are making the best of it, so I want to say a few things about making sure you are commenting in posts that are going to bring you a decent amount of exposure. You don't want to just jump into the forum and start responding to random threads, you need to have a plan!

Certain threads are going to be better matches for promoting your product or service, and you need to keep that at the front of your mind.

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Here are a few thoughts on how you can find good posts to be involved with:

Finding the Best Threads

- **The search function is your friend!**
- **Keep an eye out for “stickied” threads**
- **Keep an eye on the most popular threads**

Please refer to video #11 to hear me talk more about finding and working with relevant threads.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE

I want to caution you to avoid responding to threads just for the sake of “boosting your post count” and having another chance to display your signature. Part of becoming an expert on a forum involves crafting thoughtful and helpful responses to highly visible threads.

One of the best ways is to find a post that is a question, and answer it in a way that helps the original poster. This will help you gain a notch with the original poster, as well as others reading the thread.

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I try to answer questions in a way that provides value to the original poster, while not “giving the farm away”. After all, if I reveal all of my tricks on the forum, there won’t be much reason for people to buy my products!

Remember, when you help someone by providing value, you will become more of an expert in their eyes, and who would you rather buy from, a passerby or an expert? I thought so!

I suggest you view video #12 to see me elaborate a bit more about this.



TRACKING YOUR RESULTS

It is crucial that you track what you are doing. In my experience, I have marketed on several forums and while some worked wonderfully for my business, others were disappointing. Thankfully, I kept a close watch on things and invested more efforts into the successful forums and pulled back from the duds.

Whenever someone clicks on your signature, they are coming to your website, it is best if you can track this. If it is your own personal website, you can just keep an eye on your website statistics using an interface like awstats through cPanel (available on many hosts). If you are promoting with an affiliate link (not recommended), you will need to run your link through some sort of tracking software.

Fortunately there are some free ones out there, such as:

<http://www.bit.ly>

I do want to encourage you however, to take the time to get an actual domain to promote something through. Say, for example, you are promoting a clickbank product. What I would do is pick up a cheap hosting account and create a one-page website on it. This page would then focus on “pre-selling” the product you are promoting. Preselling is a very common tactic in affiliate marketing, and is a bit out of the scope of what we are discussing here, but still I wanted to mention and recommend it.

I suggest you view video #13 to hear me talk a bit more about tracking your results.

ROTATING YOUR SIGNATURE

Once you start building up posts on a few forums, you will be accumulating a lot of valuable “ad space”. The nice thing about most forums is that you can change your signature once, and it will update on all of the posts you have already made. Pretty cool huh?

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I strongly suggest rotating your signature and experimenting with different things. This means not only trying out different products to promote, but even varying the wording you are using to get people to check out your stuff.

As those of you with pay per click experience can share, sometimes even changing just one single word can make a vast difference in getting more people to check out your products.

I like to save every signature I create in a text file, so I can rotate them whenever I want. Don't be afraid to experiment!

I suggest you view video #14 to see me talk more about rotating your signature.

CONTINUING A DISCUSSION

Continuing a discussion is a great way to “keep the ball rolling” when you are involved in a thread. You see, when you first post in a thread, it is pushed to the top of the forum, and will get the most exposure, but over time if no one else responds, the thread will become buried after a short time.

Often times, someone will respond after you, and it will be up to you to respond back. Taking the time to revisit threads that you have already posted in gives you a chance to offer additional input and skyrocket it back to the top.

As threads gain steam, they are viewed by additional people, and once you have multiple posts in a thread, it will give you multiple times to be putting your product information in front of the forum!

I suggest you view video #14 to learn more about continuing a discussion.

FORMING RELATIONSHIPS ON THE FORUM

As you move forward and become more invested in the forum, I suggest you take steps to form relationships with some of the other dedicated members. As you post, you will start to recognize some of the names of others, and they will recognize you when they see you post.

One thing I like doing is sending some of these people personal messages from time to time. This is a great way to make a closer contact on the forum. It is done directly through the forum in most cases, and isn't seen as being as invasive as sending an email.

You can do this for all kinds of reasons, to continue a discussion in private from a thread, to ask additional questions, or even just to introduce yourself.

There are many advantages to forming these kinds of relationships besides the obvious 'trying to sell your product' angle, including:

- 1) You can ask these people to check out your product and provide a testimonial
- 2) You can ask these people for feedback regarding your market, such as the types of things they look for in a product, etc.
- 3) You never know where a relationship may lead. For example, say you are promoting a dog training product. You could form a relationship with a pet store owner who would be willing to promote your product in his or her store!

I suggest you view video #15 to see me elaborate on forming relationships.

ADDITIONAL SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Digg is just the beginning, there are tons of social networking sites that you can utilize to help get your video free backlinks. Here are a few of the more popular ones:

Additional Social Networking Sites

- **StumbleUpon**
- **Del.icio.us**
- **Reddit**
- **Technorati**
- **Kaboodle**
- **Propeller**

I suggest you view video #16 to hear me talk more about additional social networking sites.

EXPLORING JOINT VENTURES ON A FORUM

I would like to talk more specifically about forming a specific relationship with someone else on a forum that also has something they are promoting or selling. These types of people do not need to be seen as your “competition”, in fact the both of you are in a position to help each other!

Say for example, I am participating in a dog forum where I am promoting a book I wrote on dog obedience. I could form a relationship with someone selling a dog food product. I could sell his product to my list of people, and he could sell mine to his list! Talk about a mutually beneficial relationship!

In the business world, this is called a joint venture, and they are a fantastic way to expand your business.

Not only can you sell products through each other, but forming friendships with these kinds of people will allow you to share marketing ideas, frustrations, and more. Perhaps it can even lead to you pulling your resources together to make a product!

Please view video #17 to learn more about joint venture opportunities on a forum.

PAYING FOR ADVERTISING ON A FORUM

Some forums offer advertising opportunities. This can be a powerful addition to your forum marketing arsenal. Normally when you advertise somewhere, you are presenting yourself as an “advertiser” and not as a friend. But here’s the trick, once you are an established member on the forum, your ad will allow you to play on your credibility while gaining a higher degree of exposure at the same time.

When people see your ad, they will associate the product with you, along with the respect they’ve gained from you by seeing your positive interactions in the forum. You can even mention your username in the ad to make a further connection!

Another great thing about advertising on forums is that often times it is pretty cheap too.

I suggest you view video #18 to learn more about advertising on a forum.

BRANCHING OUT TO ADDITIONAL FORUMS

Once you have an established base at a forum, I want to encourage you to branch out to additional forums. Of course it is great to continue to grow your following one place, but by pitching a tent somewhere else you will expose yourself to new people who haven't heard of you before.

Use what you have learned already, and move forward with what has worked best for you in the past.

Upward and onward, right?

I suggest you view video #19 to learn more about branching out to additional forums.

THE FIVE KEYS TO FORUM SUCCESS

I would like to conclude this series by reviewing what I consider to be the most important points, the five keys to forum success.

- 1) **Take The Time to Be Invested In the Forum:** This isn't something you can just pop in, throw up a few posts, and expect to get great results. It takes time and investment to establish yourself. It is worth it though!
- 2) **Establish Yourself As An Expert:** Don't just make a lot of "fluff" posts, but rather offer substance and value. This will help position yourself as an expert, and believe me, when you sell something people will be much more open to listening.
- 3) **Don't Push Too Hard:** There is no need to overdo it! Being subtle is key here folks. Hard sells are not welcome in forums and are a way to get a

negative reputation. Put the value out there, and slip in your sales pitch. The key here is for people to trust you so they are looking for your stuff, rather than being force-fed.

- 4) **Form Relationships:** Forming relationships with people is really important. It leads to people trusting you, it can even lead to some exciting opportunities. Take the time!
- 5) **Study What Works and Expand:** No matter how hard you try, not everything you do will be successful. The KEY is to study what you are doing, and expanding upon what works and cutting your losses and moving on when something doesn't work.

To hear me elaborate more about these points, please view video #20.

CONCLUSION

Forum marketing is a fantastic way to establish yourself in the online world and gain some sales in the process. It can be challenging starting out, but once you establish yourself, before you know it you will have forged a reputation online.

You now have the tools to succeed, you just need to get out there and take action.

I want to encourage you to get out there and start experimenting with this today. You won't regret it!

Take care,

Matt Bush

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