

4 Game-changer Internet Marketing Tips

By Charles E. McCabe

When I founded Peoples Income Tax in 1987 the Internet was in its infancy and was certainly not an option to market our tax business. However, as the Internet grew rapidly, we decided to create our first website, www.peoplestax.com, which we launched in 1996. The website was essentially an electronic brochure that really didn't generate any new clients. Over the years traditional mass-media advertising became more fragmented and less cost-effective while the Internet grew exponentially. Our website had become more important and Internet Marketing provided an opportunity to compete effectively with national tax firms. Here are four internet marketing strategies that can be used instead of "traditional" advertising to grow your tax business.

- 1. Create an interactive website.** A website should be much more than merely an electronic brochure. It's tremendously important to develop a professional website that is aesthetically appealing, interactive and easy for visitors to navigate. We continuously add fresh content, such as new white papers, articles and news releases; in addition to product offerings or specials, and delete content that is not current. We make sure our content is valuable to clients and prospects and we include compelling calls-to-action. By changing our website to the WordPress platform (a free Open Source system to create an e-commerce website including a blog and, if needed, a shopping cart). With WordPress, we can easily make content changes ourselves without paying a programmer. Our website also contains tax information and resources such as articles and key tax information links that are valuable to taxpayers. We've made our website interactive for our clients by adding features such as online appointment scheduling, tax calculators and a portal for clients to access their tax return information, as well as a Live Chat feature. These add-ons were obtained from tax industry vendors at affordable prices. We've also added a resource page with free articles along with our archived monthly client e-newsletters. Our website is a never-ending work-in-process that must not be neglected because of constant changes in tax laws and the needs of our clients and prospects.
- 2. Optimize for Search Engines.** SEO is essential to make sure our website appears on the first page whenever anyone searches for a tax service in the Richmond, Virginia area. You can learn how to optimize your website for search engines by reading "how to" articles available online and in magazines such as *Entrepreneur* and *Inc*. It is important to get recently published articles with the most up-to-date information. We have also subscribed to Google Analytics, which enables us to track visitors and conversions (e.g., visitors who download a white paper or make an appointment) from our website. Google Analytics enables us to determine the effectiveness of our website and make corrections and enhancements to increase traffic and conversions of visitors to prospects or customers. Since our staff is stretched thin, I've recently hired a company that does SEO for small businesses to optimize our website for SEO. Their services include optimizing all URLs for search engines, writing and editing content, getting high-value sites to link to our site and adding compelling calls-to-action and graphics to increase conversions. The process typically takes about six months before results are realized, but we will see improvements well before next tax season. Ongoing SEO maintenance will be necessary to keep our website optimized for search engines to continue to list our website on the first page.
- 3. Produce cost effective Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaigns.** Paid search ads are those that are highlighted at the top and right side of the search page. Although many people ignore paid ads, we don't pay for people who may see our ad but don't click on it. Therefore, we only pay the small fee (usually much less than \$1.00) for qualified prospects who actually read our entire ad. The

advantage of PPC is that it is targeted, i.e., we only pay for people who have expressed interested in what we offer by clicking on our ad. The key terms of the ads must be localized, e.g., “Tax Preparers-Richmond, VA” so we only get prospects who are near our offices and the cost per click is much lower than buying a term being bid on by national tax firms. It is important to monitor each PPC campaign very closely to ensure that it is generating new clients that produce more net income than the cost of the ads. We track the results by including a targeted landing page on the website with a unique offer, such as a special discount in each ad. We considered using a paid freelance PPC expert, but determined it is not hard to do it ourselves by obtaining a current PPC book and following the easy-to-understand instructions to manage and optimize a PPC campaign.

4. **Generate business with effective Social Media.** Social media has provided a great opportunity to attract new clients and drive traffic to our website. Social Media allows us to engage with potential customers on various platforms and encourages shares and consumption of our quality content. While there are many different social media channels, the core ones to be on are LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as Google, Bing and Yahoo business listings
 - a. **LinkedIn** - When used correctly, LinkedIn pages generate relevant engagement and improve brand perception. We’ve created a local LinkedIn Group called “PeoplesTax Q&A” to answer tax questions for taxpayers in the Richmond, Virginia area. I personally have my own LinkedIn page as well as ones for my business.
 - b. **Facebook** - What a great way to post useful tips and tidbits interspersed with sales content. You can use sales oriented messages from time to time, but you really don’t want to make that the main point of your Facebook Page. The more engaging your content, the better. You want to try to connect with your audience so they will keep coming back for information and share your content.
 - c. **Twitter** - A good Twitter handle is one of the keys to success, as the handle tells about your business. I listened to my customers and have been making a conscious effort to have our posts be more conversation-oriented rather than promotional or sales.
 - d. **Google, Bing and Yahoo Business Listings** - You can claim your business listing for free and then add compelling online content like photos, specialties and services. This also allows your business to be found in searches, maps and mobile devices. You may even be able to get clients to review your business on these listings. True testimonials speak volumes about your business!
 - e. **Blogs** - Our WordPress platform includes a blog application that is professional and easy to use. I am the “voice” of [The Income Tax School Blog](#). An active blog on our website helps us to be ranked higher by Google. Therefore, I make sure I post to our blog at least weekly - usually more frequently. A blog with more than one voice is often even more interesting than a blog with one voice. It’s good to invite other credible experts to start discussions and comment on posts by visitors. This also makes my job of maintaining the blog easier, as well as gives our clients fresh content from trusted sources.

For more help with tax office policies, procedures and manuals, check out our [Tax Practice Management Tools](#) or our [Tax Business Articles](#).

LIKE WHAT YOU JUST READ?
Get More Great Tips On Our Blog:
<http://www.theincometaxschool.com/blog/>

Sign up for [RSS feeds](#)

About the Author

Charles E. ("Chuck") McCabe, a 40+ year veteran tax industry executive, has managed hundreds of tax preparation offices. Chuck earned his B.S. degree in management from Adelphi University and Executive M.B.A. degree from Pace University. He is a national speaker, teacher and author on small business and tax practice management. Chuck is founder & CEO of Peoples Income Tax, Inc. and The Income Tax School, Inc. Additional information may be obtained by contacting Chuck McCabe at 1.800.984.1040 or by emailing cmccabe@TheIncomeTaxSchool.com, or by visiting the ITS website www.TheIncomeTaxSchool.com.

About The Income Tax School

The Income Tax School is an IRS approved Continuing Education provider. As the National Standard for Tax Education, we offer [online tax courses and CE seminars](#) as well as [Tax Practice Management Manuals](#) that will help ensure your success. For more information, please visit us at www.TheIncomeTaxSchool.com.