

Growth Hacking 101

How To Build Virality Into Your Business



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Introduction

Growth hacking began as a trend but is quickly becoming a necessity. With the ever-expanding growth of the Internet, growth hacking is absolutely vital when bringing products and services to customers.

For years, marketers were in charge of pushing products while coders were fully responsible for entering and building code, or a platform. Now, however, these words have merged to create a single system of true growth, known as growth hacking.

Marketing will always be an essential element, but it's important to have a single individual or handful of employees who focus solely on the narrow growth of the company.

The Internet has truly created a new way for businesses to grow, seemingly overnight in some scenarios. Consumers no longer have to feel tricked in terms of product, because product features can be directly involved in growth.

In addition to these elements, growth hackers also understand that channels of distribution are no longer A to B, and any sale is a positive note.

Instead, channels are now moved or even created due to the channels created by social media. This could include new websites or even popular blogs from trending individuals outside of the entertainment arena. While growth hacking is currently implied to resolve around startups, it will soon be implemented into even the largest organizations.

In this guide, I'll go in detail on how you can grow your business, build your portfolio and brand using the power of the Internet.

Internet Marketing Basics

Essentially, convincing others to visit a particular site, download a specific app, or purchase a certain product all comes down to Internet marketing.

Whether a business or individual decides to hire a certain person or small group of people, those within the Internet marketing field usually consists of those with backgrounds in either business or even the IT department.

With the rise of technology, however, marketing and programmers have merged to form growth hackers, who expand businesses quicker than ever before.

Internet marketing no longer requires long hours in stuffy classrooms or in the back of crowded offices. Instead, the basics can be learned from simply being an avid Internet user. All the degrees in the world will not really help if individuals hate spending time on a computer.

Great examples of individuals who have the potential to become a successful growth hacker include those who truly enjoy being on up-and-coming social media outlets, those who are business-minded, those who enjoy buying and selling online, and individuals who enjoy blogging. These examples of hands on experience quickly help newcomers rise above the rest.

When entering the world of growth hacking, one of the initial factors to consider would be to establish a portfolio. When building a portfolio, there are several aspects to consider, but the main idea is to feature your best and most relevant work.

This comes into play when applying to a particular job or simply preparing a portfolio to extend to other professionals. Ideally, the goal is to focus on a marketing portfolio to sell yourself—through both past examples and promise of future excellence in a chosen field.

In addition to establishing a reputable portfolio, Internet marketers who wish to become growth hackers also need to find a specific niche to focus. There are many methods and techniques to consider when searching for a niche to enter, and most experts recommend focusing on a niche where the party involved already show interest.

In addition to learning the ins and outs of a particular subject, it's also important to use the benefits of the long tail of keywords, which focuses on several small units rather than one large or overly popular unit, or product.

After understanding the initial aspects of a reputable portfolio and locating a specific niche to focus study, there are four methods of success to begin the preliminary steps of growth hacking.

Among these four methods, businesses must first establish relationships with their potential customers in order to create lasting wealth. The other methods are direct response copywriting and content marketing, both of which are key to learning the ins and outs of growth marketing.

Finally, and perhaps the most important step, is to have a valuable product; one worth sharing and having others wants to share. With the understanding of the four methods of success, growth hacking becomes more realistic and the next steps involve more direct commitment.

True growth hackers understand that going viral is no accident, but rather, it is an engineered response to tactical and analytical growth. Growth hackers actually have the ability to make users want to spread the word about their business or product by asking favors that do not seem like favors. This collaboration will specifically discuss methods used by daily deal giants Groupon and LivingSocial.

Within the realm of a growth hacker, it's important to remember that these individuals only focus on actionable, realistic goals. These goals are then highly scrutinized using top-notch analytics, where strengths are leveraged and weaknesses are assessed to find optimal results.

Much like the scientific method, growth hackers begin with a hypothesis and continue to analyze and re-attempt experiments in order to find the best answers for ever-expanding growth in business.

In order to truly hack growth, one must completely understand the mindset of the consumer. Imagine those visiting a site as a filter or funnel. Growth hackers invite all sorts of visitors to the site, but then filter these individuals until they find which ones are capable and willing to make a purchase, sign up for a mailing list, or reach other profitable material.

From the initial beginnings to the final point of checkout, growth hackers make sure nothing is left on the table in terms of profit or growth.

Once the filter has been properly analyzed, it can then be dissected. The funnel begins with the expanded open mouth, where all visitors are invited to be pulled in by various levels of enticement.

These types of pull tactics include everything from free materials to prizes and invite users to come in from their own free will. Gaining visitors is not an accident and growth hackers understand how to properly entice, incentivize, and make a sale.

In addition to pull methods, there are also push tactics, which will be discussed in greater detail throughout the book. These push tactics are different in that they go after the consumer rather than sit back and wait for a visitor to stop by.

These methods can best be summarized as an ad playing before a video on a viral website. While these methods are both effective, neither is quite as effective as the possibilities that exist within the product method.

Product tactics are types of growth where users are actually using the interface when sharing the message of a product or service. This would include all social media outlets such as Facebook, Gmail, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Essentially, these types of products sell themselves in the respect that your friends need to be on the same type of service or plan in order to communicate and exist within the world of that particular social plane.

Building Your Portfolio

When debating the best time to begin a portfolio, the answer is always immediately. Even for those who are brand new in a field, it's never too early to start and there is nowhere to go but up.

Whether individuals are seeking a portfolio for either writing, graphic design, or even internet marketing, the basic idea is to begin a portfolio with plans to consistently update and revise the work, in order to always show off an individual's best performance.

In terms of marketing portfolios, it often depends on what type of future work the individual wishes to acquire. For some people, marketing will begin with a personally managed website, and while it seems insignificant to begin a portfolio, it's important to remember that while others are browsing the managed site, it's possible that outsiders will seek advice and it's always best to be prepared for an opportunity.

For those who are actively seeking employment, consider the type of internship or job you will be applying to when creating an updated portfolio. Generally, it's always best to collect the most outstanding work in a format to impress the majority of employers in a format that is truthful, sincere, and simplistic in the most functional manner imaginable.

Putting Your Best Foot Forward

Writing is as important in Internet marketing as it is in any field. Writing well separates those who excel and those who seem to be stuck in a particular field or level.

Proper grammar and tone are often a representation of patience as well as education. Having an improper sentence or phrase within the dialogue of a portfolio is much like misspelling a word on an application or resume when searching for employment.

In addition to writing well, it's important to demonstrate strategic thinking. While this may seem difficult to encompass in a portfolio, consider using ways to set yourself above the rest.

Analyze the situation, whether it is a campaign, collaboration, or new form of business strategy. Not only is it important to create new, it is equally important to understand current conditions to understand the ins and outs of Internet marketing.

Finally, make sure to represent the quantity and quality of work within the portfolio. Whether you have just graduated from college and only have work from school or whether you have been working freelance for a month or decade, make sure to highlight the amount of work in your best products by showing off the best work.

By showing off the best you have to offer, you can then move on to define what you want to do within the future of marketing and advertising.

Defining the Future

While it's simple to highlight the past, the main idea within a marketing portfolio is to display the steps being taken to define a future career. When employers view a portfolio, anything less than spectacular will represent a lack of commitment.

As you grow and succeed as a professional, consider even updating previous work to your current standard of perfection, using any tips and tricks you have acquired along the way.

Rather than only rely on current work, consider even creating work that you wish to one-day deliver. For example, a writer focused within the realm of nonfiction could work on fiction pieces during his or her free time to display both types of work in the portfolio.

While there may not be the same pressure to deliver as to the pressure to deliver to an editor, it will better display the portfolio's range and highlight the individual as an all-around freelancer.

Internships and Freelance

While hoping to enter the realm of paid work, internships and freelance can help everyone starting out; even those who didn't attend a university or perhaps those who decided to switch careers post graduation.

It's possible to begin a freelance career with only a handful of samples or one could apply for an internship and work on professional level work in a fast-paced environment

Working in an internship can help sell as individual as someone who delivers on their word within a timed deadline. Whether you are working as an individual on a project or working in a group, any completed work will help build a portfolio.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are working a group setting, make sure to include which portions of the work you specifically contributed to the project in a professional manner.

After building your portfolio, you will find yourself much more confident within meetings. Consider a situation where you will be asked a question, knowing that you have a sample directly in your portfolio. Having this type of material on hand will help you land jobs and prove yourself within the first few minutes of any interaction.

Remember, always build your best portfolio and keep it up-to-date to land unexpected jobs and continue to build upon your career as a professional Internet marketer.

Finding Your Niche

More often than not, consumers will find themselves rolling their eyes and taking a big sigh at the latest and greatest infomercials about the new must-have gadget of the season.

It can be difficult to imagine the ideal product for the masses and many times, creating the ideal gadget is nearly impossible so predicting the gadget of the season is up in the air. Rather than trying to create demand, consider filling demand by taking the time to conduct research and fill a niche area.

There is nothing more stressful than coming up with a new product only to discover that it has only been invented before, but marketed so poorly that you had simply never heard of it.

While many great products were created this way in the past, our current foundation for spreading the word on a new product is so great that it's difficult to be the best in any given field due to an array of constant competition. Instead, consider finding a market that already exists and creating a product to develop specifically for that demographic to purchase.

Consider working in a niche that interests you. For example, a male college athlete may be able to recommend the best workout gear for others in his demographic but probably knows little about what stay-at-home-moms need for the daily routines, despite his idea for a new baby sling.

The main reason to consider staying in your demographic would be that you would know what questions to ask and which problems to initially

avoid. Consider sticking to the habits of your target market, at least in the beginning of starting a business or when coming up with a new product.

Consider the Extremes

Think back on some of the most elaborate, yet specific businesses listed online or in a favorite magazine. Photo Finish Frames, created by a marathon runner, initially launched as a framing business but quickly moved to specialized frames for runners.

Basically, the owner developed a system to ship a specific size frame to a marathon runner in order to frame an image of the runner along with their racing number and finishing time.

No Film School is another example of a specific niche. Websites like this one send to-the-point, weekly emails. No Film School's emails show up as a list of twenty articles for the week.

Among these articles, each one is designed for aspiring filmmakers who are interested in the inner workings of script, camera, lighting, production and all the other areas that result in creating independent films outside of Hollywood.

This niche simply invites the idea of everyday film education without paying the staggering debts of tuition.

Finding Your Niche

Marathon running and independent filmmaking do not interest everyone, which is what makes these two companies so successful within their field.

Rather than continue to dream of creating a business that already exists, consider examining the social groups that you are already belong to in order to create a new business that you would be excited to be a part of, as either an owner or a member.

Start by taking a creating viewpoint at your current resume, social media page, hobbies, work experience, and daily physical habits. Think about all of the groups you have ever been a part of and consider joining new groups that interest you for further inspiration.

This may involve actual groups or even magazine subscriptions or websites that you often read. Then, consider other individuals like yourself and think of what you enjoy, why you enjoy it, and consider others who may value similar items.

Narrowing Results

After creating a detailed list of fields that interest you, narrow these down to two specific fields that most interest you. Sometimes, a product may overlap into both categories, but it's best to start with two in order to brainstorm a wider range of results.

Once you have chosen two categories, conduct additional research. Begin by searching online for websites that focus on specific categories or visit a local bookstore to find out more information on a particular field of interest.

While it's not important to choose a category for the wealthy, such as golf, it is important to choose a category of those who purchase goods within a field, such as runners or photographers who buy shoes and equipment.

Once you have chosen two specific markets, begin brainstorming ideas of products that currently do not exist, or have been marketed poorly.

Consider coming up with problems that exist and quick ways to solve these problems with a simple product. In terms of simple, think how revolutionary, yet essential, the windshield wiper was for the first vehicle.

Be Specific

Perhaps even before the initial product has been created, think of the benefit to be had or problem that the product is trying to fix. Much like finding the proper tagline for a movie, the product must be well explained in a single sentence, so there is absolutely no complication of the potential customers not understanding the benefit of the product.

Consider the initial release of the Apple iPod. Rather than list the gigabytes or any of that other technological jargon that confuses many consumers, the company simply delivered "1,000 songs in your pocket."

Long Tail of Keywords

After coming up with a successful product or service, a sales site can then focus on the long tail of keywords. While the phrase originates from statistics, the concept remains quite simple.

The term applies to retail when considering sales of a large number of unique items or when delivering a large number of individual web searches.

Meaning, it can be difficult for a new company to show up in the top results on a Google page, but when searches are more specific, it's easier to place higher among the results.

In order to better understand the long tail, consider the example of real estate. When choosing SEO words like "real estate," there is a great deal of competition fighting for top results.

However, when using phrases like "Winston Salem North Carolina Real Estate townhouse," results are much more specific. These types of businesses are ignoring the vast, general terms and focusing on the specifics.

The long tail allows for businesses to ignore the responsibility of supplying popular items to the masses by focusing on difficult-to-find items for niche consumers.

The total sale of the large number of unique items can help companies compete with more well known companies who sell bulk popular items. Consider the bulk book sales from Amazon or the bulk movie rentals, song downloads or book downloads from Apple, two of the more known long tail retailers.

Methods of Success

As previously mentioned, understanding Internet marketing isn't easy, but it can be simple. Much of the problem individuals have with Internet marketing is the thought process that it is just another "get rich quick" method of business.

And, while there are "overnight companies," it's easy to forget the time invested before overnight success, much like an athlete from a small town, being drafted in the first round or winning an Olympic event. Just because the public didn't see the struggle doesn't mean it didn't happen.

For those willing to put in the work, however, businesses can grow faster and more efficient than ever before, thanks to Internet marketing and growth hacking.

In this chapter, readers are invited to discover a systematic method of effective Internet marketing. These four methods can be considered the backbone of Internet marketing as well as the foundation of success.

While there are seemingly endless examples of advice (both good and bad) in regards to Internet marketing, there are four methods that can never be overlooked.

These four, fundamental methods that make up the backbone to Internet marketing are as follows: relationships, direct response copywriting, content marketing, and valuable products.

Relationships

Perhaps the most fundamental method is developing strong, personal relationships with customers. Whether this means individual connection or overall audience connection often depends on the company in question.

Either way, the method reminds business owners that keeping a working relationship is much easier than starting a new one.

Hunting for new customers is time consuming and expensive. Finding new leads have troubled businesses for years, whether it is a brick and mortar store or an online publication.

It's easier to ask a loyal customer to return than it is to bring in a new one off the street. Know the value of your customers and let them know their value.

In order to do so, it's vital to create an environment worthy of their interest. Much like a dim-light store, no one wants to visit a poorly managed or weakly designed website more than once.

Beyond these seemingly obviously aspects, remember that customers (whether you're selling products or seeking readers) want to see new information and that is what brings them running back for more.

Following these steps will not only bring customers back, but it will encourage those same customers to spread your message for you, reducing the price of advertising and only inviting new members from word-of-mouth.

Customers spread the word when they feel respected and believe in a product or source of information. Always have respect for your audience and let your audience know this mutual respect exists.

Respect comes in the form of your audience and your market. Focus on the needs of the market and the audience as if nothing else matters, because, essentially, nothing else does matter without your loyal customers.

Put their needs above the needs of the company and the company will strive from this foundation of respect. Commit to a level of excellence and expel this excellence onto your customer base.

Direct Response Copywriting

Most readers will quickly notice that the most-read sites keep up with social media trends and highlight those articles, reports and videos so users can quickly find them on their sites.

Since the national attention span has reduced to milli-seconds, it's important to feature the most up-to-date stories up front for new viewers, much like featuring new products in the front window of a neighborhood store.

Whether a site displays recent events or creates their own, it's absolutely crucial to have solid copywriting techniques to spread the word. Try to come up with an amazing headline to catch the reader's attention in a way that flatters and informs.

In this regard, it's actually important to not be overly subtle to make sure the point hits home. Many sites may even use a pun to highlight the story and put a smile on the reader's face.

After designing the perfect headline, move on to a well-written, informative, strategically placed, layout. This will cause action within the reader, whether that means moving to the next step of purchasing a product or clicking to the next link within the website.

These traditional techniques that date back to businesses or newspapers decades before still work as efficiently as ever before. Stick to the basics of integrity and to-the-minute information with beautiful layouts.

Content Marketing

In addition to the headlines and layout, the next feature to deliver is great content. Make sure to find the best information and deliver informative, grammatically correct information, written from credible writers. For those who find themselves too busy to write their own information, outsourcing is available from various freelance websites.

Once the initial content has been delivered, it's important to keep delivering great content. A handful of articles here and there are never enough. Set up a routine and continue to deliver on a regular schedule, much like feeding a pet. Stay focused and keep on a strategic schedule of content to please readers and inform newcomers of information.

In addition to scheduled content, consider offering benefits to the reader on another systemized schedule. This can include seasonal discounts or free ebooks from time to time to give an example.

In addition to discounts and free information, offer other benefits that results directly in the exchange of money in exchange for product or to

better promote the business in the form of a donation, if your business fits this model.

Valuable Products

The final piece of the puzzle is to have a valuable product. While it's discouraging to see others selling lower-quality goods to make a large income, this is no reason to do so yourself. If you are unable to create something worth selling, find something valuable to buy and sell for profit.

More than likely, readers have an idea of what they want to sell, even if the idea is new and somewhat fuzzy. The truth is, everyone is in the business of sells.

Whether individuals are selling ideas, services, downloads, or products, each can create wealth while providing a valuable service to clients.

After finding something truly valuable, make sure it is worth the price marked. When coming up with a price for a product or service, it's important to factor in the priceless value of the reader's attention.

Because public attention is such a valuable commodity, it can never be overlooked and must be cherished for what it is to the owner.

If a company asks for attention rather than money, this time and attention must be seen as valuable as monetary income. While it may seem less valuable at first, it is the initial step in which to make something worth attention worthy of actual dollar bills.

While this seems confusing, consider companies like Instagram or Snapchat, which have both been offered billions of dollars for a service that previously made no actual income as a service.

Growth Hacker Marketing

True growth hackers understand the misconceptions of Internet marketing and what it truly means to go viral. Like all outsiders who see an “overnight success,” going viral looks like a chance, coincidence, or a complete accident.

In reality, while viral marketing holds massive appeal, it is not as easy as simply posting a video online. While everyone wants to go viral, it takes more than want to create massive source of sharing.

For growth hackers, the first dilemma is deciding on whether or not a product or service is worth sharing or talking about. If the product is worth mentioning, the potential for customers to spread the word is higher than usual.

In this scenario, if the product is worth mentioning, it should also be easy to spread. In the most basic form, this may include add-ons like social media outlets as one example of sharing.

The biggest problem companies or individuals have spreading news of a product is by believing their product is worth going viral when it isn't. Going viral is not something that happens out of thin air. The reason certain products spread faster than others are because they are simply worth mentioning and often better than their competition.

Diagnosing Growth Hacking

To begin, think about the individuals who will potentially be spreading the word on a new product. In order for virality to work, potential consumers or trend-setters must find a product that is worth taking the social media time to mention or post.

Whether this includes a simple copy and paste, adding a link, embedding a video, or mentioning a product, this takes time from any one individual's social experience.

For smaller businesses, this may simply include asking a friend to post a video, share on Facebook, place on Twitter, or invite as a business contact. While speaking with true online friends is an ideal place to start, it must also be done in a delicate manner.

No one wants to help if a friend seems pushy or insincere. Instead, focus on asking a friend this enormous favor by making it not seem like a favor at all. Not only should this be worthy of trending, it must also be conducive to trend when it extends your reach.

Growth hacking surpasses traditional marketing when it comes to spreading the word on a new product. Only certain products will ever go viral and the value of the product must be desirable for all of those who potentially come in contact with the product or service.

This only happens when a client believes in a product or when a product is truly remarkable. While translation of the word "remarkable" has lost some of its meaning, it simply means that the product is worth remarking about.

Becoming a Growth Hacker

After choosing a product to help grow, it's important to remember that a growth hacker has no actual influence to improve or even change a product in any way. Much like a spin-doctor aiding a politician, a growth hacker can do everything in their power to change the description of a product, but they are unable to change the product itself. Rather than live within the world of built-on marketing, growth hackers work to build virality.

Perhaps two of the best examples of recent growth hacking are LivingSocial and Groupon. These two daily deal sites not only continue to grow in terms of countless products and tons of special offers, they also provide a great marketing plan.

LivingSocial offers a "Get this deal for free" option, which invites customers to share any deal with three friends through a specialized link, inviting the initial user a free product, despite the price. On Groupon, the "Refer a friend" option gives back ten bucks when a friend purchases a product through the site.

These examples are much different than something as simple as "Like this on Facebook" buttons, which do offer a chance for customers to share the product, but do not offer any real incentive.

Through the LivingSocial example, a user could actually receive a free trip by simply signing up three friends. These daily deal sites save tons of advertising and the leads are much more satisfying than simply Liking something on Facebook. These two deals are actually paying users rather than taking a shot in the dark with wasted advertising bucks.

Shortly after these two sites hit the market, brilliant (but struggling) company, Dropbox, started a “Get free space” option to invite additional users to use their cloud-based storage system.

For every new friend who joined, 500 megabytes were offered for any additional friends who signed up for the service. After months of struggling, Dropbox increased sign-ups by approximately 60 percent with nearly 2.8 million direct invites recurring each and every month. Presently, 35 percent of customers still come from referrals.

Using Email Services

Gmail and Mailbox now use the simple idea from Hotmail: placing a line at the bottom of an email. In this scenario, Hotmail would write “PS: I love you—Get Free Email,” which tremendously helped the company grow—somewhere around a million members within the first six months after implementation.

Shortly after, the company doubled and eventually sold to Microsoft for somewhere around \$400 million. Google presented a similar idea but with the twist of an invite-only scenario.

These types of key strategies greatly trump hiring a PR firm because they begin within the organization and grow out. By growing from within in this manner, these organizations determine the presentation of the product as well as the inner workings of the product.

Essentially, these organizations are providing free data or free products to simply help the company spread the word on products and services that customers already enjoy.

Not just any product or video can be shared overnight to millions. It is important to have an enthralling reason for the community to share any specific item. Virality is an engineered procedure and not an accident.

Step-by-Step Hacking Process

Much like any successful enterprise, it is best to begin with a narrow focus on specific, realistic goals. When individuals focus on too broad a spectrum, focus becomes meaningless because of its vagueness. Also, while large growth is of course the hopes of the end result, achieving smaller tasks must develop it.

Much like driving a car on a long journey, the end result only occurs after understanding the route.

Once potential growth hackers have defined a realistic, actionable goal, the next step is to implement analytics in order to track the process of goals. Without having precise analytics, goals are essentially empty.

It is, of course, possible to hit certain goals working without an outline, but structure is vital for success. Analytics provide a definitive answer to prove that a result has or has not been reached.

They also provide the information for the suggestion of which aspects to change in order to test another hypothesis. Much like a sculpture, the unnecessary elements must be stripped away for the ideal end result.

After analytics have been put into place, the next step is to analyze the startup or company to find out which elements are possible to use as leverage for the company.

Every company has the ability to have something unique to help define or enhance the organization. In the example of mass email marketing, the

answer is usually within the question. Certain companies would require one strategy while others another.

Always plan growth by building upon strengths and remember that each company features a different type of fulcrum for their specific leverage.

Before moving forward, it is best to create a hypothesis. Much like scientific method, a hypothesis is a strategic guess at potential results from a procedure.

After writing down the hypothesis, begin the experiment. When conducting any experiment, make sure not to be naïve when considering resources required for predicted results.

If the organization requires thousands of users to work, do not expect it to work with a few hundred. When all of the data is in place and resources aligned, learn from any successes or failures and remember that the data will provide information as long as you are willing to use it.

Experiments, in science or business, are meant to be performed repetitively until successful. This may require minimal tweaking or full-blown remodeling.

In the case of using email marketing, consider creating a control group. This group will help track the exterior environmental factors that are more difficult to track in even the most optimal settings.

It's important to know when an outside factor greatly affects the sales of a product. Consider companies who wish to spread to another region of the world, only to find out their products offend aspects of certain cultures. This

may be overlooked and thought of as a failure without a control group narrowing down the results.

Finally, make sure to repeat the process. While certain experiments do not work, others simply need to be tweaked and adjusted. Use the data and continue to repeat experiments until reaching success.

Much like the gold-hunter giving up his dig inches from richness, the answer is usually within reach, so make sure to continue the hunt for a successful growth hack, as long as you believe in your product and your company.

Growth Hacker Myths

If the steps above sound a little foreign, ignore the scientific jargon and look at what it truly means to be a growth hacker. Since the phrase sparked in 2010, too many people have said it too often and too out-of-context.

Much like a new buzz word, other phrases and wrongful ideologies are quickly associated with a new phrase like this one. Rather than continue to believe it's only for certain types of people, browse the following to learn the myths behind the buzz.

First, it's important to understand that a growth hacker does not have to be a programmer or a traditional marketer. In fact, marketers will have to greatly define and narrow their field in order to become a growth hacker.

By narrowing their field, it will then require a marketer to deepen their skill set within that field. Among these myths, many outsiders feel that growth hackers only rely on analytics, which is also a wrongful interpretation. While analytics are important, they are more of a guideline to proficiency.

In addition to analytics, growth hackers are also resourceful with a curiosity about creative growth. Truly, it is the combination of right and left-brain that help the most successful growth hackers expand businesses in a successful and creative manner.

These individuals build upon the smallest amount of success and narrow their focus much like passing helium into the small hole of a balloon to expand the entire project to its greatest capacity.

Building A Funnel

Much like a bottleneck, a funnel begins with a wide end and then narrows in a triangular shape to a small opening. Funnels are needed when filtering uncooperative materials, in order to make them cooperate accordingly.

In terms of funneling customers, the goal is often to sort out the unpredictable individuals in order to find those who are searching for your product or type of information.

Essentially, you will want to guide visitors through the site in order for them to end at a signup or checkout point, inviting them into your community.

Imagine the large end of the funnel as the initial goal of “Inviting Visitors.” These may be fans or they may be those who have literally stumbled upon the site by accident for the first time. Either way, the goal is to build a relationship with those who should belong to your group.

With this in mind, the next step would be to “Activate Members,” which consists of building a relationship with a customer or potential customer. The third step would be to “Retain the Customer.”

Three-Step Breakdown

Imagine the three steps as the beginnings of a relationship. The first step (Inviting Visitors) results from a type of activation upon their part. Imagine this is an attractive individual flirting from across the table. Much like a wink, new users must join an email list, create an account, or purchase goods on the site.

The next step (Activate Members) will then require that person to continue to use the product, much like being a romantic relationship where dates are the standard. This could include individuals who read and share emails or continue to purchase products on a regular basis. These users (Retain the Customer) most resemble getting married.

Understanding Successful Rates

It can be discouraging to have a scenario where thousands of individuals are visiting the site while only a handful of customers are actually making purchases.

In this scenario, it's important to understand which conversation rates signify normal success. Honestly, the deeper into the funnel, the less traffic exists. Mathematically, imagine 100,000 visitors resulting in 1,000 members, which would be a 1 percent conversion.

Of those 1,000, let's only 600 stick around, which would be a 60 percent conversion. While the numbers are helpful to determining individual growth, they are almost impossible to compare to one another.

Knowing the Variables

The first thing to consider would be whether or not your overall traffic specifically identifies with a product. If the product in question is an ebook about woodworking but the articles are about welding, many visitors will quickly move on to something else.

Much of this depends on the relationship of products available as well as the headlines of feature articles. With that in mind, there are specific types of traffic sources that can convert members at higher rates than others.

Sometimes, this will be current trending topics or any of other countless examples.

In another scenario, consider your specific activation goal. Trying to get an email is much easier than trying to make a sale. Asking for smaller favors results in larger results. This is also true of high membership fees.

When considering retention rates, it's also important to consider others within the same market. Certain products will feature more repeat users than others.

For example, high-end hand-crafted pieces of furniture may not have repeat customers while a fruit-of-the-month club will invite shoppers to purchase goods each month.

Determining Success

Once a growth hacker understands the variables, there are additional facts to keep in mind when tracking and expanding growth. The first rule is that numbers should always be improving.

Much like an athlete, there is never a reason to slow down or lose a step in a monthly training regime. In terms of analytics, visitors should grow each month on a steady incline. This has nothing to do with unknowns because growth should happen like clockwork despite any adventures in trial and error.

After setting up steady growth, consider tracking growth with a fellow hacker. Find somewhere with a product in a similar field that doesn't specifically compete with your product and work together to find the most successful rates of growth.

Check one another's numbers in order for both of your organizations to succeed. These examples may work better for area-based businesses such as a coffee shop in New York and another in Los Angeles. Another example may be two online companies who sell winter gear, where one sells hats and the other scarves. These methods truly help determine realistic conversion rates.

Finally, make sure that you are reading the data correctly. For example, if number of visitors increase but retention drops, take this into account correctly, rather than only looking at the drop of retention.

The main goal of tracking this data is to create conversion rates in various key points within the funnel. These various stages will work together over time to create a greater impact on the business as a whole.

Setting Priorities

Funnels actually help determine where to place the most emphasis to build growth. While methods still aren't soundproof, the results are usually within the analytics.

Imagine a 60 percent conversion rate from visitors to members and a 50 percent conversion rate of those members to users, with only 100 new daily visitors. In this scenario, the conversion rates would be high but the new visitors are relatively low and should therefore be the focus of the growth hacker in this scenario.

Moving aside from growth, it's time to think back on the product. The term "product-market fit" applies to the priority of the product on the market.

Essentially, if the product completely disappears from the market and 40 percent of that product's users were not extremely disappointed, then it may be time to reevaluate the product.

The team behind the product needs to focus more on the actual product, helping to create something that will demand outrage if it were to ever leave the stands (online or otherwise). Make sure the energy going into the growth of a product is for a product that deserves to grow.

Gaining Visitors

Many readers will skip directly to this chapter and believe that getting visitors is the main goal of growth hacking. While increased traffic is vital and a key result in growing an online business through traffic, it is merely the end result and the journey is not only rewarding, but recommended.

However you have found yourself in this chapter, it's time to dive into the essentials, which can be summed up as the following four procedures:

1, 2, 3, P

There are three ways to drive traffic to your site and each of these ways begins with the letter "P." The first method is Pull in traffic. Simply put, this is a way for you to pull in visitors by providing a reason for these individuals to continue returning to the site.

Whether you entice them with information, incentivize them with prizes or gifts, or provide a free book, users will be drawn to the site and thirsty for more.

The next type is the Push method. Think of Pull as an open door that reads "Welcome" and think of Push as an individual passing out invitations. With Push, growth hackers skip the enticements and go directly to users, pushing them onto their site.

For example, think of those individuals hoping to see a new YouTube video, finding out they can only view the video after seeing a paid

advertisement. This is Push marketing and it exists because you find your potential users and push them to your site.

The final “P” stands for Product. The simplest way to describe this method is through a social media outlet like Facebook. Basically, the more people that use the product, the more it is able to spread. This is true for any type of app that requires some sort of “friends” to interact with, including Words With Friends, SnapChat or Instagram.

Analyzing the Methods

Both push and pull methods ask growth hackers to rethink the word “distribution.” Almost like predicting the future, growth hackers are able to analyze which trails of online distribution are spreading, and in which direction.

For those less experienced, simply conduct the research in order to determine which online portals are most popular. Much like a popular restaurant, there are ways to determine which areas are more inviting and user friendly, in terms of group congregation.

Knowing where users congregate ultimately results in how and where to push or pull them to your site. With the product method, however, distribution remains the same but the term “product” can be changed in order to apply to more customers.

Again, this applies to types of customers as well as the skill of the growth hacker in question. While the product itself cannot be changed from growth hacking, the purpose or definition can be warped to apply to multiple groups.

Also, there is not one method that specifically works better than the other and each will depend on the product as well as the hacker, while other products will rely on using portions of all three methods for ultimate success.

Top Pull Methods

Perhaps one of the most well known methods of Pull is to be featured as a blogger or guest blogger. These methods are ideal for pulling traffic, especially thanks to SEO context within blogs that aid search engines like Google to search for specific words to highlight articles, phrases, and products mentioned. With these methods, the more you write (daily articles for example), the more chances to be picked up within the search. The most successful blogs, however, still focus on living within a specific niche.

Besides blogging, growth hackers can also focus on podcasting, or guest podcasting. Much like a blog, podcasts spread information on a regular basis to specific audiences who enjoy that category of information.

Unlike blogs, podcasts have the ability to open new realms in terms of hearing versus reading. With podcasts, guest podcasters are able to reach a specific audience, assuming the crowd listens to each and every podcast. One drawback from guest podcasting, however, is that the podcasts are not typically indexed like that from SEO and links or businesses mentioned are harder to find, versus clicking on text within a written article.

Next, there are guides, whitepapers and ebooks, which can be sold or given away for free. While it's easy to skip over a blog post, it's more difficult to skip over a beautifully crafted, well-written book on a niche subject.

Offering a free book will often entice visitors to sign up for a site that interests them in hopes of downloading the book. Users will feel a fair trade when giving up an email in exchange for a free ebook. In addition, these are easily spreadable through outlets of social media, inviting online authors to spread their work to those interested in similar subjects.

Infographics are another form of pull method that are often highly effective among new users. These beautifully designed visualizations are able to highlight information along with design and invite users to spread them through social media.

When developing an infographic, consider finding a great topic with current data. Build the narrative and come up with a style of design that highlights the concept and make sure to polish the design and information before spreading the information. Infographics are popular on sites like Pinterest that feature an image and invite users back to the initial site of publication.

Webinars are an online source of seminar that invites users from all over the world to learn more about a subject in somewhat of a classroom setting. Usually live, webinars are scheduled to be hosted like an event that users can look forward to, and invite their friends via simulcast. In order to make it more like an event, these types of pulls are usually invite-only with limited seating, asking those who are serious to join. Because these methods are educational, they act as a win-win link between businesses and users.

Using social media has been sprinkled throughout the text, but it's important to remember that it's more than just an ingredient. While there are many things to avoid, other methods to focus on, include engaging with

those within your product's demographic and providing value as frequently as possible.

Always answer questions and give advice to curious consumers. This will not only build relationships but it will let your company know what customers want to see next. Let your creative juices shine in social media and make sure to view it as a distance run rather than a sprint.

In addition to social media, consider using contests to bring in traffic. Contests are good for small and large companies. The key when trying a contest is to give away something worthy and consequential to your growing audience.

Not every type of blog should be giving away the newest gadget, especially if they are hoping to sell something that exists without technology. In addition to picking the ideal grand prize, make sure to include something for first, second, and third, so users feel they have a better shot to win.

Finally, when choosing a winner, make it a big deal and let everyone know the prize is legitimate.

Understanding Push Tactics

After mastering pull tactics, consider moving on to push tactics. With push tactics, some type of interruption is involved, unlike within pull tactics, where an enticement is being offered.

Think of an advertisement on YouTube when thinking of a push tactic. While the ad is not what the user was searching, they will have to watch the video before the watching the video they had to set out to watch. Pull invites users in while push seeks users by going out to look for them.

Before diving into push tactics, it's important to understand the lifetime value of a customer. Known as LTV, this encompasses all of the profit that can be made on a customer over a lifetime. LTV is why Starbucks justifies placing a location on every corner—each location represents a specific number of lifetime customers.

Within the formula, certain products will make a certain number of income per year, but may exist within a product that customers change every five years, meaning their entire LTV exists within those five years.

Push Tactics

Perhaps the most well-known push tactic would simply be to purchase advertisements, such as those mentioned that play before a YouTube video. While these seem more like marketing than true growth hacking, there is a time and place for everything and growth is the ultimate goal.

With buying ads, however, there is still the open invitation for creativity as well as strategy in terms of both when and where to place an ad. When placing ads, there are the giants like Google but there are also niche sites to consider that relate more specifically to certain products. When buying ads, also consider the platform, strategic calendar of ads and the personas of your demographic.

The next type of push tactic is the promo swap, where companies will both mention one another's product in order to quickly spread the word on a product while helping another company grow. This works best when you find another company that shares a similar demographic.

While there are many ways to conduct a proper promo swap, consider beginning by swapping tweets or Facebook posts. In terms of email, there are dedicated email swaps and sponsored emails swaps. With a dedicated email, the entire body is dedicated to another business whereas email swap usually only features a linking, "sponsored by" newsletter within the text. Other types include giveaway swaps and ad space swaps.

Another push method would be to recruit affiliates. Essentially, this method creates a sort of chart where you pay someone for each milestone they hit. Milestones could be whatever you choose, but often result around examples such as bringing visitors to your site or activating current members.

Affiliates could use any number of method to bring traffic but the main idea is that you are paying them to do it instead of doing it yourself. When searching for a key affiliate, make sure to vet the individual thoroughly in

order to find somewhat that is a reflection upon yourself, your product and your company.

Finally, direct sales are also a form of push growth hacking. While direct sales teams do not work for every type of product, they do work more for some and should not be disregarded completely. While most startups these days tend to avoid these methods, consider appstack.com. This company began with mobile ads for local businesses and they actually began from telephone sales. In today's modern digital world, this is less common but does still exist and may work for some.

Using Product Tactics

Perhaps the most advanced method of growth is the product method. While push and pull methods are both effective, using the actual product is one of the most engaging methods for sharing a product and growing a business. The vast effects that result from product methods are irreplaceable when compared to any push or pull methods.

Pull methods have the unfortunate side effect of potentially losing individuals that make up traffic. Consider using an infographic to build traffic, with the thought those inbound visitors may decrease daily because seeing any one graphic only relates to individuals a handful of times.

When using the product, however, it is entirely possible that each visit to the site will not only mean a returned customer, it will mean they bring their entire online network with them. If every one individual simply brings one additional individual with them upon return, then that product or service has then officially gone viral.

In industry terms, the viral loop comes into play. Basically, if a growth hacker is able to set up a network where every individual who enters a product brings another person with him or her, that equals a coefficient of over 1, known as “K,” which equals exponential growth.

In most scenarios, examples such as B2B enterprises, there are rarely coefficients as high as 1 because even the most expert tactics do not work for every product, nor do they work in every type of market. However,

despite the odds, it's important to remember that any K factor above 0 results in positive growth.

Product Tactics

Social networks are all around us, and network invitations are great ways to show off products. Twitter, Facebook, Gmail, and LinkedIn are perhaps the most well known, but other social groups are spreading rapidly. Of these network invitations, remember to think of all of your resources, including phone contacts, email contacts, and social contacts.

Mobile apps are more and more likely to feature a button that invites users to invite all of their friends with the click of a button. Likewise, there are also email lists and social media contacts that work the same way. Even if only a handful of individuals initially download the app, but decide to share with their hundreds of friends—you will find that these numbers quickly add up to reach mass audiences.

Social sharing, which is somewhat different than the method listed above, involves the act of simply allowing others to mention a product or service within their network.

For example, instead of asking someone to invite their friends to “Like” your page, this method simply asks that the individuals mention the product in their profile or status so others can see and perhaps click on the item. These are often available in the forms of buttons below a posting, for example, in a blog. There will be an example such as Like, Tweet, or Share, along with the number of others who have shared the topic or post. This data also comes into play in terms of analytics. If most of your traffic

comes from Twitter, make sure to not only allow users to post on Facebook.

Building upon social sharing, API Integrations integrate products at a higher level. Rather than asking for permission to share, API Integrations actually creates an experience where users can share in the background without constant reminding. Consider the example of Spotify, which is a music-based app and website. Spotify connects with Facebook and automatically publishes Facebook feed for anyone connected with Spotify and Facebook. This type of frictionless sharing only works with open permission. Another type would be the Nike+ app, which also connects with Facebook.

This app allows for runners to share their trails and times online in a seamless fashion in order to inspire and create competition among friends. The only probable difficulty with these methods is that the dominant side holds the reins. Meaning, Facebook will always share with others to spread their message, but they may shut others out of their information in order to stay the biggest and the best.

The backlink option was one of the first types of growth hacking. Hotmail launched a service that read “Get your free email at Hotmail” along the bottom of each message, inspiring others outside of their group to join, creating a viral loop. Consider any type of widget or side panel to work as a backlink. Guest blogs are another example and are as effective as they have ever been.

When the word incentive comes to mind—within the realm of growth marketing—the business Dropbox is usually on the tip of the tongue. After months of struggling, the group launched a tactic to give away free space in

the crowd by simply signing up friends. In this regard, their storage space quickly changed to currency, inviting outsiders to sign up and share with friends for more and more space to save data.

With Dropbox, the company earns new users, creating value, while the users earn free storage space, valuable to them. Many other companies tried to copy Dropbox and failed. Perhaps one reason why is because Dropbox also rewarded those who better understood their product, giving away additional space by testing educated users and offering additional rewards.

Finally, there is organic word-of-mouth. Individuals sharing your product either online or offline is still one of the most effective methods and only happens when customers truly love a product. This method may or may not even result from an orchestrated attack of growth marketing.

These individuals are happy to spread the word even without being incentivized. This type of method cannot be measured, nor can it be controlled. Think of sharing the information about an upcoming movie or new gadget—only doing so before you look forward for the device or event.

While these methods are seemingly unpredictable, there are certain behaviors to make word-of-mouth advertising more possible. Consider creating beautiful products that can be described in a simple demeanor. Other organic products are those that are trendy as well as those, which effectively relieve pain. Finally, emotional, unique, and fun products spread quickly and with no effort in some occasions.

Activation & Closing Statements

Activating Members

While it's been a great deal of the journey to simply bring visitors to a site, visitors alone are actually more of a problem than a solution. Rather than merely have visitors circling the surface, it's time to activate members.

Visitors who only visit will unfortunately leave at outstanding rates.

Therefore, activation is the ultimate goal. Activation occurs when visitors do something that you have decided for them to do.

While these methods can range from an array of areas, the main idea is to get these visitors interested in more than just the surface of the website.

Usually, the main idea is to get a visitor to enter an email address or make a purchase but there are other techniques as well.

In addition to the two techniques listed above, consider asking visitors to read a blog, make a comment, fill out a questionnaire, watch a video, interact with another member, or request some sort of friendship or membership.

While these seem simple, much of growth marketing only requires small results. Remember, a great deal of small results equivocates to large results. The key is to be consistent and continue to work towards greater and greater goals.

Summary

Internet marketing and programming are no longer separate entities. The methods and procedures used for each are both coming together in the form of growth hacking.

Businesses, both small and large, are steadily seeking growth hackers to help grow their businesses to exponential, seemingly overnight, levels of mammoth success.

Internet marketers began as IT professionals and business students but are moving to the underground, in the form of all sorts of hacking techniques.

Thanks to increased technology, growth hacking can occur at the fingertips of any individual, through a keyboard and into the ever-expanding Internet that spreads worldwide.

Individuals are invited to build portfolios from their college years, through internships and freelancing or on their own as Internet-savvy fan boys. Portfolios can range from all sorts and levels, but must be kept up-to-date in order to highlight a designer's best work.

Portfolios can exist in many freelancing fields, but it's important to always use proper grammar and spelling techniques. In addition, it's wise to occasionally go back and revise old work, using new techniques that you have picked up along the way.

Perhaps the most important aspect of any portfolio is the open-ended ambition that a well-kept portfolio invites. Future employers want to know

where you want to go with your work and encourage foundation with a view.

Amidst the portfolio, a specific niche often helps individuals as well as businesses. By defining a particular niche as described within the long-tail of keywords, even the smallest companies to strike high search results among the largest search engines.

Specifying an area of study greatly improves the success of a business by helping the business itself focus while keeping a simple strategy in mind among present and future customers.

There are countless examples that currently exist and even more on the horizon. When looking for a niche, consider examining fields of interest that currently catch your attention. Consider ordering niche magazines or conducting in-depth research to find out more information.

When choosing a niche, business-minded individuals will quickly come up with grand ideas to improve categories within the field. Others will simply want to blog about the subject in order to highlight their knowledge to the world, creating a community of additional, like-minded folks.

Once a product has been created, there are four methods to begin a business that never go out of style. First, always focus on relationships. This benefits everyone, from brick and mortar pizza shops to online teapot sales in Taiwan—customers appreciate developed relationships.

Direct response copywriting is another important aspect and a subject that should not be left to subtlety. In our milli-second world, it's important to have engaging, tagline-like headlines to hook visitors.

Content marketing is the third method of success and asks for users to deliver scheduled content to their readership in a way that readers expect and crave emails and additional information.

Finally, make sure to have valuable products. In this scenario, valuable is not relevant to monetary, but valuable in terms of worth. Do not waste your time or your customer's time writing, blogging, or advertising about an inferior product.

Growth hackers understand the "going viral" is no accident. Any video or product that reaches millions has more than just overnight success. Virality only occurs from a great product and lots of belief.

After finding the ideal product, growth hackers can then define actionable goals to follow through with. These goals will be guided through analytics, making sure to leverage the strength of any given company for ultimate success.

While any hypothesis could be wrong, a hypothesis with a narrow focus and backed results has a better chance of equaling success. Through these marketing experiments, growth hackers can prove results and repeat as necessary to find the best results for amazing results.

In addition, to track growth, it's important to understand the mindset of the consumer. Through a funnel, growth hackers understand how to funnel occasional visitors to the site in order to find those willing to sign up for an email account or even purchase goods on a recurring basis.

Gaining visitors is vital for growth hacking. Through various techniques of marketing, growth hackers can pull and push users directly to a site. Pull

methods use incentivized techniques while push methods chase potential customers through advertisements.

Another technique, and possibly the most successful, is the product technique. This involves methods like Facebook and Twitter, where users must be logged in to use a particular service.

Finally, remember that visitors on a site are not enough and it's as important to bring visitors, as it is to funnel those visitors through the site. Simply ask your visitors to read a blog, click on a link, watch a video, or sign up for an account and you will be on your way to becoming a successful growth hacker.