

Using Free Offers to Drive Web Traffic

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
What to Give Away	3
Target Your Niche Carefully	3
Creating Your Free Product	5
Free Reports	5
Videos and Video Courses	6
E-Courses	7
Membership Sites.....	7
Webinars	8
Software	8
Free Offers and Social Media Marketing.....	9
Building Your Network	9
Personalize Your Posts	9
Relationship Building.....	10
Safelists and Traffic Exchanges.....	10
Promoting Free Offers with Paid Advertising	12
Free Ways to Get Traffic from Free Offers	13
Article Marketing.....	13
Videos	13
Guest Blogging and Blog Commenting	13
Forums	13
Your Squeeze Page	14
Free Offers and Your Mailing List.....	15

Introduction

One of the best ways to drive traffic to your website is by using free offers. No matter how much things may change on the internet, one thing stays the same -people love to get things for free!

This was true long before the time of the internet, when magazine, TV and direct mail marketers knew the power of free offers. This tactic is still used in offline marketing, of course, but the internet gives you many more ways to take advantage of this strategy. In this report, we'll be exploring some of the many ways you can leverage the power of free offers, including:

- Social Media
- Videos
- E-mail marketing
- Paid advertising such as pay-per-click
- Safe lists and traffic exchanges
- Forums

Some of the above techniques may overlap, of course. But all of them can be part of your overall traffic generating strategy.

What to Give Away

Before you can start getting traffic from free offers, you need to figure out what you're going to be giving people. This is one of the most important factors to consider, as this will often determine how successful you are.

Target Your Niche Carefully

While people do like to get free things, keep in mind that this is now a very widely used technique. There are millions of free offers on the internet every day, so you have lots of competition. Since everyone has limited time, no one responds to every free offer they see. That's why you have to form your offer with care.

If you're not sure what you're going to be giving away, start off by addressing an important issue, answering a question or solving a problem. Make it something that's specific rather than too general.

If you're in a niche related to health, for example, your target audience will have certain issues that are very important to them, whether it's losing weight, curing acne or preventing hair loss. These are just some very popular examples, but there are hundreds of potential niches related to health.

Many marketing guides tell you that it's important to solve a problem, and this is one approach. But you can also tempt people by offering them something desirable such as "6 pack abs" "more energy" or "how to look 10 years younger." In other words, your product (whether it's free or something you're charging for) can be framed as either a solution or as something that will benefit the person in some way.

If you're still not sure what issue you want to focus on, do a little market research. This doesn't have to be difficult or complicated. You can do some browsing on places such as:

- Amazon.com -bestsellers, magazines, Kindle books
- Google News
- eBay
- Yahoo! Answers and other answer sites
- Forums

You can also do research offline. Look at magazines and trade publications in your niche and find out what is currently popular. When searching on sites such as Yahoo! Answers, you can do searches related to your main topic. Find out what questions get the most responses.

The same is true for forums. Look for busy threads, and pay special attention to questions asked by newbie members. These provide you with valuable clues about what people are looking for.

You can also do some keyword research using the Google Planner Tool or any other software or services you might use for this purpose. Keywords can be important when it comes to naming your product or offer, and when listing it.

The main thing to keep in mind when coming up with your idea is to give it a real hook or appeal to prospects. You wouldn't want to try to lure people to respond to vague offers such as "How to make money," "How to be healthier" or "How to be better at sports." These aren't targeted enough and probably wouldn't get many responses.

Creating Your Free Product

Once you decide on what issue, question or problem you're going to address, it's time to create an actual product. A "product" can be anything that you charge for or give away, though here we're focusing on free offers. Some possibilities include:

- Reports or E-books
- Videos
- E-courses
- Membership Sites
- Webinars
- Software

These are some common examples, and they can be applied to just about any topic. Let's look at each of these in some detail.

Free Reports

You've probably seen thousands of ads (and received as many e-mails) that promise a "free report" in exchange for your e-mail address. This is the most common type of free offer, and it can still be effective. However, because it's been around for so long and is so widely recognized, you may want to think about doing something different.

At the very least, if you're going to give away a report or e-book, you should make sure it has some original twist. Otherwise it will be hard for it to stand out among many other similar offers. If, however, you are addressing a very specific issue that people are interested in, there's no reason why you can't build traffic using a free report.

When it comes to actually creating your free report, you have a few different options. You can do some research and write it yourself. If it's a topic you're very well versed in, you may not even have to do much or any research. This is always the best way to create content, as then you're completely certain it is original and unique.

You can outsource it -i.e. pay a writer to create a report or e-book for you. You can find ghostwriters on sites such as oDesk.com, Elance.com, and Fiverr.com. Fiverr, of course, is for \$5 gigs, so you probably won't get a whole report for that money. Some writers there, however, offer articles for \$5 and also have reasonable rates for longer projects. Forums such as the Warrior Forum and Digital Point also have many writers advertising their services. An excellent resource is also IMReportsHero.com for great material at very reasonable rates.

Reports can also be compiled using PLR or Private Label Rights content. You have to be careful with this, as there's a lot of cheap but very low quality PLR on the market. You should always proofread it before using it, and do some rewriting. Even if you're giving away a report, you don't want to be giving people the exact same thing that dozens of other marketers are giving away.

However you get your content for the free report, keep in mind that you want to deliver something that your audience will find valuable. Don't have the attitude that since it's free you don't have to worry about quality.

Your free offer is actually the first step in your sales funnel, and is a good source of potential traffic. Yet if people aren't impressed with what you send them, they're not going to return to your website or be interested in your future offers. So put as much effort into your free product as you would in one you'd charge money for!

Videos and Video Courses

Videos are now the most popular type of content on the internet. It's also easier than ever to create videos, whether you want to appear in them, outsource them or create a slideshow type video. Yet the huge popularity in videos also has a downside. This is that the perceived value of a "free video" isn't what it used to be.

Since people can watch literally millions of free videos on YouTube, Vimeo, and dozens of other video sharing sites on any imaginable topic, the idea of getting a free video isn't that thrilling. This doesn't mean you can't use videos as part of your free offer. But like free reports, you have to put some care into how you set up and phrase your offer.

One way to increase the value is to offer a video course instead of just one video. This may sound like a lot of work on your part, but the videos don't have to be long. In fact, a few short videos are often easier for people to focus on than one long one.

Even a single video can be desirable if it targets a very interesting and popular issue. So if you're going to make your free offer a video or a group of videos, make sure you focus on the importance of the topic, rather than just on the fact that you're giving people access to a free video.

Many free videos are little more than five minute sales pitches. You can get people on Fiverr to make such videos for you, or you can make them yourself. However, you should really focus on delivering some value in your video. Even if you want to sell something down the line, people are going to feel cheated if you promised them something for free and all you're doing is trying to sell them your \$47 product, or whatever it may be.

In fact, the best way to impress people with your videos is to devote most of the video to explaining a technique or answering a question and then delivering a short pitch at the end. You should, of course, have your website listed on the video.

You should also optimize your videos. On YouTube, for example, you can put in keywords and list your URL. It's better to make people interested and curious about visiting your website than to spend the whole video convincing them to visit or trying to sell them a product.

E-Courses

An e-course is simply a series of e-mails you send to people that teach them something. Many marketers use PLR for this, but as mentioned above, you have to choose this carefully if you're going to take this route.

E-courses are generally done with the help of an autoresponder service. If you're not familiar with these, they are services that allow you to send out e-mails automatically on a schedule you set up. The best known ones are AWeber and Get Response, but there are many others.

These services usually cost between \$20 and \$40 per month, but you can find free ones as well. Some will let you sign up for a free (or very low cost) month to try them out. When you have an autoresponder, you can load the entire e-course into it and schedule to have an installment sent out every week. This is much better than sending it out manually and having to remember to send it out on schedule.

E-courses are often used for online marketing products, but they can be used in any niche. You can have e-courses on health, sports, pets, dating tips, financial investing or fishing. Each installment of the course should focus on one tip or issue. It doesn't have to be earth-shattering, but it should be something truly interesting or useful.

An e-course can be a good way to get traffic, because each lesson can have links to your site. Once again, however, you should resist any temptation to do hard selling. After all, you've promised people information, so that should be the main focus.

At the end of the lesson, however, you can say something like, "for even more tips on this subject, visit www.mysite.com." Or you could have a teaser for a specific product. However, most of the e-mail should be devoted to giving people the information itself.

Membership Sites

This is a little more ambitious, but setting up a membership site isn't as hard as it used to be. One good thing about this tactic is that you can have several types of membership. You can give away the basic membership, and then entice people to upgrade. This means you have to offer incentives for becoming a paid member. This can be access to certain content or coaching sessions. Of course, you have to also give them something even to sign up for free, but the paid level can offer even greater benefits.

A membership site can also include a forum, which gives you a good chance to network with potential customers. However, to get people to sign up for even a free membership site you have to make it desirable. You have to promise them some benefits. This might include a certain amount of content every month, either that you send them by e-mail or that they have access to on the site itself.

Another way to use a membership site as a free offer is to offer a free trial membership. This could be for one week, two weeks or a month. This way you can have people sign up, give you their PayPal or credit card info and automatically start billing them when the trial period ends if they don't cancel. Just make sure you make it valuable enough that people want to stay on as paying members!

Setting up and maintaining a membership site does take some work, but it's not as difficult as you might imagine. Many aspects of it can be automated. It can be a great way to build a reputation in your niche and get traffic to your website.

Webinars

Webinars have suddenly become huge. They are being offered on many different subjects, and if you're on any e-mail lists you probably get invited to them all the time. While some people charge for webinars, free ones are more common. It's much easier to get people to attend a free webinar than to get them to pay for it.

There are now platforms that allow you to set up your own webinars for free or at a reasonable cost. Webex.com is one example of a service that offers a free trial and then a low monthly rate if you continue to use it. This is another area where modern technology has made it possible for anyone to set up these interactive sessions.

When you hold a webinar, you should be prepared with some good material. A good way to attract viewers is to have a guest, preferably someone well known as an expert. You can often convince authors, lecturers and other experts to help you with your webinar simply as a way for them to gain valuable publicity.

In some cases, it's profitable to set up a joint venture with your guest. If he or she has a product, for example, you could get a percentage of the profits. As with other free offers, though, you want to make sure the webinar gives people some real information and isn't just a long sales pitch.

If you're not very familiar with the format of webinars, it's a good idea to attend a few and see how they're run. Be critical as you watch, and see what you might want to do differently. As webinars become more popular, they also become more competitive. Even if they're free, people only have so much time to attend webinars. That's why it's essential to have a unique and interesting angle when you present yours.

Software

If you have the rights to software, apps or a WordPress plugin, this can be another desirable giveaway. These type of items are more often used as bonuses, and you probably wouldn't want to give away anything too valuable. But a fun or useful piece of software can be a way to get people on your mailing list and visit your website.

If you have programming skills, you may be able to create your own software. Otherwise you could purchase resale rights to something, although this doesn't always give you the right to give something away.

Free Offers and Social Media Marketing

Free offers are one of the best ways to use social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and others. People join these sites mainly for social purposes, which means that selling is not usually appreciated. However, if you give something away, you have a better chance of getting responses.

Building Your Network

Many marketers make the mistake of just joining social sites and expect to profit from them right away. This is seldom how it works, as you have to build up your presence and make real connections. You can purchase "likes" on Facebook and followers on Twitter, but these are not usually valuable and can even put your accounts at risk.

You should see social networking as a long term strategy. Reach out to people who share your interests, or especially the subject that your offer is focused on. One of the most important ways to make use of social networks is to post regular content to them. Update your Facebook status at least once daily, and if you use Twitter you should post frequent tweets.

Personalize Your Posts

The majority of your posts should not be selling anything, and not even refer to your free offer. You should make most of your posts simply friendly or educational. People on these networks actually appreciate a certain amount of "fluff" -this can be jokes, comments about the weather or even some interesting meal you've had or movie you've seen. This makes you seem like a real person, and not simply a marketing machine.

This is a very important principle, as many people are skeptical and even hostile to aggressive marketers on social networks. Even the word "free" is used so often that it makes many people suspicious. But if you take the time to make "real" posts, you can then get away with doing some marketing.

Relationship Building

The idea of building relationships in business is a well-worn cliché by now, but it's truly the way social media marketing works. You may get some people who have never heard of you responding to your posts. Of course, they must have become your friend or follower to be able to read your content at all, but this doesn't mean they really know you. You're far more likely to get responses from people if you do build some kind of relationship with them.

This doesn't mean you have to become close friends with them -it's not possible to get to know everybody well, especially when you start connecting with thousands of people. But even a few personal interactions can go a long way.

A good way to develop rapport with people on social networks is to simply answer and respond to their posts. Even short comments or answers to questions can mean a lot. Remember, not only will the person see it, but so will all of their friends. You don't have to include a link to your site with every reply (unless it's relevant). The idea is to get people used to seeing you and interacting with you.

Safelists and Traffic Exchanges

Safelists and traffic exchanges are two traffic building techniques that have been around for a long time. They are both widely considered to be useless or, at best, a source of low quality traffic. Some people believe that no one uses these anymore, but this isn't the case.

The fact is, both can be used to your advantage -especially when you're using free offers. That's why we're going to look briefly at each of these.

Safelists

Safelists are mailing lists that you sign up for, usually for free. You can send out messages to the list in exchange for receiving email from them. For this reason, you should get a separate email address for receiving these emails. Otherwise, you'll find your inbox flooded with messages every day.

There are many safelists, and it's best to use one with large memberships. They sometimes have several levels of membership, usually starting with a free one. If you pay, you can send out more emails and there is sometimes a level where you don't even have to receive emails at all.

The typical reason why safelists are considered ineffective is that everyone on them is there for the purpose of sending out messages. This means, so the argument goes, that they aren't really interested in your messages. This is sometimes the case, and you can't rely on safelists alone for building traffic. However, there's another side to the picture.

People who use safelists, no matter what their motive, are still people who buy things online. Specifically, you know these are people who are interested in making money online and building traffic. So if your offer is related to these topics, you have a good potential audience.

Even in other niches that are very popular, some safelist users will be interested in things like losing weight, improving their golf swing, or maybe making money in another way (e.g. Forex, poker, offline marketing, etc.).

There is one problem with safelists that you have to recognize -the open rate is going to be very low. Many people use a special email for these lists (as we suggested you do) and simply delete everything. But you will get some people opening them, and if it's not costing you anything it can be worth trying. Once you get the system down, it will take you less than five minutes to send off a message to the safelist. A few of the largest safelists are Global Safelist, Pearls of Wealth, Smart Safelist and State of the Art Mailer.

Since safelists are admittedly not the highest quality traffic, some marketers use safelist submitters -software or services that allow you to automatically send out messages to a large number of them at once. One such service is ipostad.com and there are others.

One good thing about safelists is that you don't have to worry about spam complaints, as everyone you send email to has opted into the safelist.

Traffic Exchanges

A traffic exchange is a service where you earn points by viewing ads, and you use these points to get hits for your own ad. You have to look at the ad for a certain number of seconds, to make sure you're not simply clicking through it. Traffic exchanges usually allow you to buy hits as well, if you don't want to sit there and read ads for hours. Some of the largest traffic exchanges include EasyHits4U, Traffic Swarm and I Love Hits.

Traffic exchanges have the same strengths and weaknesses as safelists. On the plus side, they're free (unless you choose to buy upgrades or hits) and do have a targeted audience of people looking for business opportunities. On the downside, they can use up a lot of your time and you shouldn't expect too much from them. However, when it comes to free offers, they can help you get some traffic.

You may or may not want to test either safelists or traffic exchanges for your free offer. If you're on a tight budget and seeking free ways to generate traffic, you may want to give one or both of these methods a try.

Promoting Free Offers with Paid Advertising

This method for generating traffic to your free offers is at the opposite end of the spectrum from traffic exchanges and safelists. It's the fastest way to get targeted traffic, and if you use the right ad, it can convert well. The main disadvantage is the obvious one -it costs money!

There are several types of paid advertising you can do. Some of these are:

- Google AdWords and other pay-per-click platforms
- Solo ads and other e-zine ads
- Display or banner ads

The best known pay-per-click advertising service is Google AdWords, and this can be an effective way to get traffic to your free offer. You have a better chance of getting responses to free offers than trying to sell something directly. However, you do need a certain amount of investment capital to use AdWords, as they can be expensive.

If you're in a popular niche, such as making money, dog training, weight loss, Forex, golf, etc. keywords can be well over \$1 per click. Since you're not even selling anything at this point, it can be an expensive way to get traffic.

There are some less expensive pay-per-click options, such as Bing, Yahoo and Facebook ads, but these are starting to catch up to AdWords. There are also smaller search engines, like 7search, but these potentially don't have enough users to generate large amounts of traffic. Yet, since they are quite reasonable, you may want to try one or two of them.

E-zine advertising is a method that has taken off, and this is definitely worth looking into. Look for e-zines or online newsletters in your niche, and see if they offer advertising. You might buy a solo ad, where subscribers only receive your ad. Another type of ad is a sponsored ad, where your ad comes with a newsletter but is the only ad in that issue. Cheaper ads will be ones where others are advertising along with you.

Banner ads can be effective if they're used on the right sites. Rather than purchase banner ads in bulk (you may have seen offers where you can buy these), you may want to approach individual blog and website owners in your niche and inquire about advertising. Very often, you can get a better deal when you deal with the site owner directly rather than buying from a middleman or large service.

Free Ways to Get Traffic from Free Offers

Since you're giving something away for free, maybe you like the idea of promoting it for free as well. Some of the above methods can be done without spending any money, but let's look at a few others.

Article Marketing

This is one of the oldest ways to get traffic. Granted, it is not as effective as it once was, however it can still be used to promote either products, websites or free offers. When submitting articles to directories, your resource box at the bottom is where you mention your offer. This is actually one of the best ways to promote a free offer, as it gives people a good reason to click on your link.

If you write an interesting and informative article, what better way to end it than with something like, *"To learn 10 more useful tips on this topic, click here."* Naturally, you would use anchor text with some good keywords rather than "click here." This will send them to your squeeze page (see below for more about squeeze pages).

Videos

Earlier, we talked about giving away videos and video courses as your free offer. You can also use video marketing to promote a free offer. You can make an informative video on your topic and promise viewers even more if they visit your website. Upload this video to YouTube and other video sharing sites.

Guest Blogging and Blog Commenting

This is an underused method that can be very good for getting traffic. Find quality blogs in your niche and leave helpful, relevant comments -not "Great blog," or anything like that. Even better, write to the blog owner and ask if he or she accepts guest posts. This can be a short or long article you write, where a link to your website will be included.

Blog commenting and guest blogging are ways to get your name better known. They can bring you direct traffic from readers of the blog, and they also get you backlinks to your website.

Forums

Forums are still another great way to get traffic by mentioning your free offers. This could actually be included under social media marketing, but forums are usually considered a separate category. The key to this is finding large forums that talk about something related to your topic or business.

If you're already active on one or more forums, so much the better. If not, pick one or two good ones and join them. As with social networks, it's important to participate and let people know who you are. You can use your signature to mention your free offer - don't mention it in posts. It may or may not be prohibited (as you're not actually selling anything), but it will still have a promotional sound to it you want to avoid.

If you introduce yourself, make posts, answer questions and start some threads, you can become part of the online community. Then people will start to check out your signature. This can be designed in a way very similar to your resource box in an article.

Your Squeeze Page

Many of the tactics discussed in this report require you to have a squeeze page. This is simply a landing page on your website where people arrive to find out about your free offer. If, for example, you're using pay-per-click advertising, you must have a good landing page for people who click on your ad.

A good squeeze page is brief, simple and to the point. It may have a graphic, but this isn't necessary. It's only real purpose is to get people to fill out their name and email address so you can send them the freebie.

Free Offers and Your Mailing List

Once you've gotten people to send for your free offer, what do you do next? It depends on your objectives, but there are several ways to approach this. If your main goal is to build an email list, free offers are a proven way to do this.

Once people are on your list, you can send them promotions for products you're charging for. However, you don't want to just send people lots of sales pitches as soon as they get on your list. Just as building relationships is the key to social media marketing, it's also crucial with email marketing. So you should continue to provide value to your subscribers, whether it's by sending them more freebies or simply writing good newsletters or emails.

You can always put a teaser into your emails and newsletters that suggest people read something on your website or watch a video. Once there, you may have various ads and other pages where they may buy something from you. So you don't have to do that much outright selling once you have a list. Just give people a good reason to stay on it.

Free offers are still one of the best ways to get traffic to your website. They can also be instrumental in building your mailing list and pre-selling your products. We've looked at some of the ways you can start implementing this strategy. Above all, keep in mind that even when you're giving something away, it should provide real value and make your audience hungry for more!

The desire to learn more is what will take the freebee seekers and turn them into paying customers.