



World Bank Group
Multilateral Investment
Guarantee Agency

Online Investor Marketing Best Practices

Financial crisis and the global economic recession caused FDI flows to decline by an estimated 21% in 2008 with further declines likely in 2009.¹ Pressure on investment promotion intermediaries (IPIs) to obtain a piece of the shrinking FDI pie will be greater now and with potential budgets cuts, IPIs will be expected to squeeze more out of their online investor outreach and marketing efforts. The following article offers several industry best practices to help IPIs fine tune their online marketing efforts to achieve maximum effect.

Web Strategy

Agencies without experience managing web sites may be tempted to “just get a web site” and be done with it. This approach overlooks the vast potential a well-run web site can provide in marketing investment destinations, engaging investors, generating investment queries and reaching a truly global audience. IPIs should strive to incorporate their web site into every facet of their business development plans in order to reach the maximum number of potential investors. All interactive features of a web site - email alerts, newsletters, instant messaging, multimedia including video - empower IPIs to engage directly with investors to facilitate the investment process – and for maximum effect, these tools need to be coordinated to produce specific strategic outcomes as specified in an IPI’s business development plan.

When Making the Cut, Content is King

For IPIs trying to make the cut in the site selection process, content is definitely king. While a significant amount of the initial investor site selection process begins with desktop research, recent studies suggest that “many countries have failed at the most basic function of marketing a country: making relevant information easily available to potential investors.”² Beyond investment and trade barriers, IPIs must first knock down barriers to information by providing complete, up-to-date, accurate and actionable investment information. For countries having recently experienced conflict or political turmoil, providing detailed information to investors helps dispel lingering negative perceptions. The quality of investment information, or lack thereof, could make the difference between your country making the cut in the site selection process, or not.

Partnerships: The Multiplier Effect

Leveraging the marketing and distribution platforms of global public and private sector firms specializing in investment promotion can extend an IPI’s reach to a larger pool of potential investors exponentially. Many organizations are happy to incorporate contributions from IPIs - especially investment opportunities - into relevant articles on their web sites and distribute them via newsletters and emails to their registered users. Such mutually beneficial content partnerships can be created at little or no cost to the IPI. For example, institutions as diverse as TradeInvestAfrica, the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro (FIRJAN) or the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) have all leveraged partnerships with FDI.net, a unique investor-focused portal operated by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), to reach a global investor audience free of charge.

Social Networks

For IPIs facing budget restraints, the Internet also offers a myriad of free, global marketing and distribution platforms to reach investors. Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, LinkedIn and micro-blogging tools like Twitter all provide cash-strapped IPIs with platforms to disseminate information about their investment destina-

About MIGA

MIGA's mission is to encourage foreign direct investment into developing countries to support economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve people's lives. One way this is achieved is by providing timely and essential data and analysis to investors, advisors, and investment promotion practitioners through our free online Investment Information Services.

FDI.net (www.fdi.net) is a unique investor-focused portal providing a growing base of over 25,000 registered users with the latest information on business conditions and investment opportunities and special features highlighting topics of interest to investors.

For additional information on online investor outreach best practices, contact MIGA's Investment Information Services at fdinet@worldbank.org. IPIs interested in exploring partnership opportunities for free content dissemination should also contact FDI.net.

About FIAS

FIAS is the World Bank Group's Investment Climate Advisory Facility. It advises client governments of developing and transition countries on how to improve their business climate for domestic and foreign investors. As part of a comprehensive range of products and services MIGA delivers IPI advisory services through FIAS.

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tions to millions of users – all for free.³ To start using these social networking tools, IPIs need to simply register with the services and upload relevant investment related content to attract potential investors. The above sites also offer FAQs and “how to” guides to help users create online communities around their topics of interest – investment destinations – how to effectively engage interested visitors.

Keyword Advertising

For IPIs with even a small budget, keyword advertising online offers an attractive option. Keyword advertising targets those searching online for specific search terms relevant to an IPI's investments. Such “Pay per Click” advertising programs provide unparalleled ROI as advertisers only pay if someone clicks on their ad. Traditional mass media advertising like radio, television and newspaper ads cannot offer the same targeting advantages as keyword advertising nor the ability to easily measure the performance of the advertising program. Google dominates the search engine industry globally and with over 72% market share in the U.S., its Google Adwords program is certainly worth a look.⁴ The search behemoth also offers a variety of free tools to help IPIs maximize their web site's rankings in search results. Check out Google Trends, Google Analytics and Google Conversion University for more information.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) regime allows IPIs to gauge how well their web strategy is working. Free (Google Analytics) and fee-based (Omniure Site Catalyst) web analytics software applications can be used to track the behavior of visitors on your web site providing key insight into their interests. Such real time market intelligence enables IPIs to quickly identify the type of investment opportunities and business environment intelligence that visitors are looking for and make sure that such information is prominently displayed. Through an M&E framework, responding to the expressed information needs of visitors helps IPIs grow visitor loyalty, increase return rates and build an ever increasing community of potential investors.

¹ UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2008.

² FIAS, Global Investment Promotion Benchmarking 2008: Summary Report.

³ Hitwise.com, Dashboards - 'Top 20 Sites & Engines'.

⁴ Ibid.