

Derrick Markotter's passion for digital marketing



Derrick Markotter of Ideal Media who designed the DWR website.

Growing a business means finding new customers and getting existing customers to buy again. For companies in the event staging industry, the traditional methods of getting in front of potential clients – ads in magazines and newspapers, the Yellow Pages, trade shows – are becoming less cost-effective. And businesses are rightly demanding a measurable return on their investment, which is hard to monitor with traditional advertising.

Over the last five years or so, the Internet has started to fulfil its promise to provide smaller businesses with a relatively inexpensive way to “level the playing field”. There is nothing to stop any business, no matter how small, from building a substantial audience on one or more of the social media channels, or on their own website.

But marketing on the Internet has its own particular set of rules.

This is where Derrick Markotter from IdealMedia Marketing steps in and he really offers so much more than just putting your business on the front page. Derrick is a well known lighting designer who left his console a few years ago to explore his passion for digital marketing.

Derrick is also the developer of the DWR Distribution website and has added user-friendly features such as implementing event and training calendars, made DWR more visible on various search engines and social media pages, implemented video clips, easy to manage newsletters and campaigns.

“There are four main areas every business needs to plan for and optimize,” says Derrick. “The first is the **reputation** of the business. These days, a prospective client can quickly find out what other people think about your company.”

“The second area is **reach**. Every business needs to make sure that more people know about the business today than did yesterday.”

“The third area is **resell**. Once you have a client, you need to retain that client for as long as possible and get them to buy from you as often as possible.”

“Finally, if you’re doing a great job taking care of your clients, you need to set up a system to get them to **refer** other people to your business.”

Derrick develops systems to help his clients produce predictable and measurable results in these four areas.

Customers do their research on the Internet and often know at least as much as the sales person about the

product they are looking for. It's important to create a sales funnel which engages these prospective clients, answers their questions, builds a relationship and ultimately turns these prospects into paying customers.

About Derrick – “worth the read!

Derrick went to the University of Cape Town with the aim to complete a BA course in drama. He had lit a few school plays and was part of the Bergvliet Dramatic Society back in the day. It seemed the right course to follow.

“Unfortunately the Baxter Theatre opened that year so I spent a lot of the time when I should have been studying, helping out backstage!” he remembers. “I was basically spending the afternoons and evenings at the theatre and it was much more interesting than lectures and exams. I dropped out of varsity and joined the Baxter as a part time, and then eventually a full time, technician.

Winston Cowie was the head of lighting at The Baxter then and Derrick learnt a lot from him. The lighting board was a Strand MMS and the first memory board he worked on. He was at the Baxter for about two years and couldn't escape any longer when called up by the army.

“After basic training I ended up by sheer good luck at COLET, The College for Educational Technology, as the lighting technician for the TV studio, making training videos,” said Derrick. Derrick was in the army for two years, then got a job at the State Theatre in Pretoria, which had just opened. He worked there for a couple of years, first as a lighting technician and eventually as a lighting designer. It was there that he met Nic Michaletos, Stan Knight, Paul Pamboukian, Rudi Kesting, Barry Snow and Mark Malherbe, and many others.

“It was always the combination of the technical elements and the creative elements which attracted me to theatre,” said Derrick. “And eventually they started allowing me to do the lighting design for small dramas.”

After staying at the State Theatre for about four years, Nic and Rudi and Paul started Production Projects and Derrick managed to get a job with them. In those days it was lighting fashion shows and gala dinners on low budgets. “There wasn't much then, it was half a dozen parcans and a smoke machine. In many ways it was the start of corporate events in South Africa.”

Corporate was different to theatre, the main thing being able to transform a room into an event venue for one night. All lighting equipment had to come in, be set up and taken down again that evening. “In theatre it was more controlled,” said Derrick. “But this had its own fascination.”

After a few years at Production Projects, Derrick moved to Sun International, firstly based at Thaba Nchu Sun near Bloemfontein where he worked with John Roughly (JR). Derrick was the Theatre Manager and also ran lighting and sound. “Basically it was a little dance venue with really limited facilities. After about another two years, I moved to the newly opened Sun International Wild Coast Theatre in Transkei, just across the border from KwaZulu Natal,” he said. He worked there as a lighting manager for another couple of years. “It was terrific, JR was there as well. The people were nice to work with and initially we were doing large shows.”

This was Derrick's first experience with moving lights, particularly Show Changers. “They were horrible and terribly unreliable,” he recalls. “They would drift off position and the gel scrollers would land up in the wrong colours. They required constant maintenance. They were controlled by a Strand Gemini desk which was not designed to control moving lights.”

After being retrenched from the Wild Coast – shows weren't making money and the theatre has since closed – Derrick freelanced for a while and then moved to Johannesburg, shortly thereafter being employed by rental company Showgroup. He stayed at Showgroup for ten years. “I was running the lighting for Showgroup for

the first couple of years and then I started becoming more of an administrator which was at the same time when the Internet started becoming more important and useful," said Derrick. "So I started becoming more interested in Internet marketing and eventually decided to branch out on my own and started a marketing company."

That is Derrick's life story. He is not the first lighting designer to have the same passion for computers. "I still have a soft spot for the event business and the specific challenges it faces," he says.