

Organic Route in Digital Marketing: How far can it be a Growth Propeller?

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Abstract — Srijan Ray is a PhD in Management who after several years of service in corporate and in academics decided to launch his own venture – Workshops of Dr Srijan Ray where he conducted workshops in varied areas of Marketing and Sales as its Founder-Trainer. Considering several constraints, Ray opted to go Organic ONLY to grow in the digital space as a service provider. Despite taking several tried and tested measures in the Organic route, Ray found that his actions hardly brought any positive results in terms of conversions or student admissions in his workshops. The major question he is faced with is whether an organic ONLY route to success in digital space a misnomer actually speaking or is it plainly his ill luck so to say?

Index Terms — Digital Marketing, Organic Growth, Social Media Marketing, Wordpress Marketing, Digital Marketing Tools

I. INTRODUCTION

Srijan Ray has been into academics for quite sometime as a Professor in Marketing. After doing his MBA way back in 2000, he started his career in Sales and after his selling stints with couple of corporate entities, he switched to academic research and technical content development five years down the lane. As a Content Supervisor with the research and publication unit of a leading private university of the country, Ray was entrusted with the job of developing and editing case studies and teaching notes in the areas of Marketing and Business Strategy. Three years down the lane and Ray switched to teaching full time. After around nine years of teaching students at the PG level at various B-schools in Kolkata, during which he also completed his PhD from an institute of national eminence, Srijan Ray felt the urge to plunge into an independent assignment. Ray planned to start a venture where he will be conducting workshops in varied areas of Marketing as an independent trainer.

II. MARKET FEASIBILITY STUDY

A cursory study of the market revealed that Ray had a number of unique offerings. First he will be conducting workshops in small groups thus enabling students to have optimal interaction and benefit the maximum from the workshops. Second, besides offering theoretical concepts, Ray will have number of application based exercises for his potential students that will enhance their practical understanding of a subject. Third, normally workshops are of a day or two days duration where it is all about trainer packing too many things and hardly offering participants much room to assimilate the knowledge being disseminated. What mainly stay with the students are participation certificates! However Ray's workshops were different as it were mini application based and industry oriented courses on various subjects of around 10 days duration on an average rather than being plain vanilla workshops. This created greater scope of interaction with the trainer and greater assimilation of the subject. Finally Ray offered workshops on Digital Marketing, Advertising & Brand Communication, Sales, Retailing and also on Content Marketing and there was not a single entity in Kolkata market who was offering all these sub domains of marketing under one roof and at a price being offered by Srijan Ray. Armed with this market analysis and understanding, Ray started his venture - Workshops of Dr Srijan Ray.

III. COUNTERING CHALLENGES

Srijan Ray belonged to a family where almost everyone near and far to him in terms of relationships have been into service and have never gone on to pursue business. Hence investing high on something that was speculative was not quite his cup of tea. Since it was about training through workshops in small groups, Ray felt that it will be wise for him to start the venture from his residence where there was space to accommodate small groups and train them via a multimedia enabled device. He consulted several articles in newspapers and magazines on businesses thriving through digital marketing being pursued organically and felt motivated about the same. In practice, digital marketing being pursued through organic route means where no investment comes into question whereas inorganic means where a digital marketer invests amount to promote his/her offerings on various online platforms and in various formats. Since Digital Marketing was a prominent workshop being offered and since Ray had plans to pursue the digital route to promote his venture's visibility and reach, he planned to make a calculated investment. He had a superficial knowledge of Digital Marketing and to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of the subject, he invested his time and efforts in pursuing two Digital Marketing courses being offered online. One of them being the FREE Digital Unlocked Course being offered by Google in association with ISB and FICCI and the other being a paid course with Udemy being offered at a special discounted price. The courses were found to offer Srijan Ray enough inputs on the subject both for preparing a holistic and up to date training material on Digital Marketing and also in terms of giving him a concrete direction of pursuing the organic route in promoting his venture in the digital space.

IV. GETTING DOWN TO DOING BUSINESS

The first thing that Ray attempted at was creating an online presence and undoubtedly for any business to have an online presence, one needs to have a website that becomes the online face of a venture. Buying a domain and then paying yearly maintenance fees for updating and keeping the website live was something Ray was not quite comfortable with because of reasons mentioned earlier. Hence he attempted at creating a free Wordpress site for his venture which had a number of free and user friendly features but then downloading and integrating various useful plugins (for example plugins for Google Analytics etc.) with the site were not possible and so were uploading videos on the site. However Srijan Ray was happy with the overall result as he had put in all important information about himself, his workshops along with a contact form

which people could fill in order to get in touch with him for the workshops.

The next important aspect was that of visibility. Promoting his venture and the site in social media was definitely feasible as he had a number of connections on linkedin and there were also a large of number of his students who were on Facebook and who would definitely be leaving their reviews on the Wordpress site or rate the page specially created on Facebook for his venture. It is a fact that almost all on Facebook has at least 200 friends and every 'Like' being received from a friend means that there is a possibility of the post getting larger mileage on social media through the friend's network. But then Ray felt that something more authentic and something that can add more to the visibility quotient will be if he lists his business in Google My Business which comes FREE to any enterprise. The listing happens once the contact details get validated by Google. Workshops of Dr Srijan Ray got eventually enlisted in Google My Business. Srijan Ray also went about creating a YouTube channel for his venture and attempted at soliciting subscriptions through his students contacts for his channel. He uploaded videos on his workshops and also videos featuring himself where he spoke about the USP of various workshops of his. Free online video making tools like Screencast-o-matic and RenderForest were put to good use. The videos were further uploaded on the Facebook page of Workshops of Dr Srijan Ray and also on LinkedIn and Twitter. Since Srijan Ray opted to have a free Wordpress site, its URL was pretty long that read <https://workshopsofsrijanray.wordpress.com>. Ray put the free online tool for URL reduction bitly to good use while posting on various social media sites and even while promoting through email marketing. Often such emails contained the link to SUBSCRIBE to the YouTube channel at the bottom of the email content. Since twitter posts work in real time and may be overlooked by many if posted at a single point of time, Ray used Buffer (another free online tool) for posting on Twitter and without himself being online at a point of time, relevant content got posted on his twitter timeline at various junctures during the day automatically through Buffer. Ray created a Tab on his site 'Refer & Earn' where he invited individuals and institutions to refer students for his workshops in lieu of getting 15% of workshop fees as commission once a candidate joined a workshop. Some of the videos on YouTube contained testimonials of his former students where they effervescently spoke of the superlative teaching and mentoring abilities of Ray. For each workshop of his, Srijan Ray offered a one day version at a subsidized rate so that interested pupils can have an overview of the subject and if they wish to they can join a more detailed version of the workshop later on. Certificates for one day workshops were also to be issued. Ray also kept the provision of conducting workshops in the online mode for participants outside Kolkata open which was clearly mentioned on his Wordpress site.

V. OUTCOME OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN

Six months down the line, Srijan Ray was pleased to see the amount of visibility being created online through his efforts. He garnered a number of positive and genuine reviews from his former students on his site as well as on the Facebook page. A number of Subscriptions did happen on the YouTube channel. Positive Reviews could also be seen associated with Google My Business listing of Workshops of Dr Srijan Ray. The ratings on both Google My Business and on the Facebook page were around 4.7/5.0. New videos

were uploaded, events around workshops created and posted on social media as well on Google My Business. Statistics like Reach, Views, Likes, Site visits etc were okay if not great so to say but then it was about CONVERSION. Conversions were dismal to say the least. No walk in enquiries happened through digital promotions. Even there were very few enquiries over phone or through email. Almost all enrolments for various workshops happened through word of mouth served by some of his former students. All digital marketing efforts executed by Dr Ray going via the organic route boiled down to nothing and this made Dr Ray feel severely frustrated. What went wrong? What more important and purposive could Dr Ray have done going the organic route to woo the target audiences? Was Dr Ray wrong in thinking that decent business can happen for a venture like his without treading the inorganic route in the digital marketing space? Was six months too early for Srijan Ray to expect marginal returns in lieu of efforts put in by him?

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