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The changing face of marketing

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The recession forced a friend, a successful developer/contractor for 28 years, to call it quits. Finding a job in his field was impossible. Starting a new career at age 50 was daunting.

In better times, he unwound with gambling junkets to Las Vegas and Atlantic City. One casino group's management liked him - a regular customer with a good personality. When they learned of his plight, they offered him a position as a casino host - mostly from home, sometimes accompanying individuals and groups.

I saw him recently. He loves his new career and says he wishes he hadn't spent so much of his life doing something he didn't enjoy. He's booked 100's in his first few months. "I never had to know anything about advertising or marketing," he admitted, "But my kids brought me up to speed on the technical side and the casino people gave pointers. I buy lists and send tens of thousands of emails monthly. Following each email blast, the phone doesn't stop ringing and my inbox fills up." He's hired two part-time assistants.

He says, "Print ads and traditional mailings are expensive, but for pennies per name I'm a marketing genius. I'm helping people have fun at an affordable price and make a living in a lousy economy."

His story illustrates how quickly and dramatically the marketing world is changing. Other examples:

*Besides its print edition, the Patriot Ledger publishes a daily e-paper that can be accessed online, through PDAs, e-readers and smartphones.

*The Boston Sunday Globe has 1.3 million readers. Boston.com Mobile reaches 600,000 customers monthly.

*In one year, Twitter usage doubled among people 50-64.

*The famed Mayo Clinic distributes traditional news releases but also 2-minute audio clips, longer podcasts, and video blogs.

*M-commerce: Via phone, you receive alerts on ticket deals, online auctions, etc. Mobile devices are always 'on' and always with you.

*Smartphone GPS tells a retailer exactly where you are: Passing a clothing store? Phone rings, sale is announced. Hot? There's an ad for a nearby ice cream shop.

*Johnson & Johnson's YouTube health channel has 2.3 million uploads annually.

We're in a marketing revolution. How many are you using to reach your customers - and is your content timely and interesting?

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