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Inside Edge

Does Your Online Brand 'Ring a Bell'? ...Give Your Website a Boost with Click-to-Call

In the exciting buzz around Internet marketing, a very commonly heard phrase is "call-to-action". Quite simply, it is the "calling" for a visitor on your site to go beyond the entry point and hopefully be engaged in the online actions that boost your brand's Internet profitability. For many small and medium sized business (SMBs) owners, the most desirable action their website can create in a customer's mind is to encourage a phone call. In this edition, we share with you some simple but highly effective strategies on how to make your online brand ring a bell...literally, as in Ring! Ring!

"In the beginning was a Phone Call, and the Phone Call was from a Customer, and the Customer was the promise of a Sale." This mundane twist on an oft-quoted biblical phrase is of extraordinary significance to the business world. Even before the mighty power of the Web, was the simple phone call. It's true that in the exciting and dynamic e-commerce world, the shopping cart reigns supreme. However, not every business can squeeze its products or even worse, its services, into an online catalogue or shopping cart. Remember Jennifer Lopez in "The Wedding Planner"? As she walks around with her wireless headset, her luck (b)rings in the biggest wedding of her career. Never mind that it also throws her into her life's biggest dilemma (about whether to plan the wedding for Matthew McConaughey or to become his bride – some trivia for those of you missed this Hollywood comedy)!

The point of the matter is that most small to medium size businesses using the Web are not suited for shopping carts. They sell services and products that just don't work that way — like plumbing, landscape design, corporate consulting, acupuncture, and yes, wedding planning. So when SMBs are asked what they want most from a website, they're more than likely to answer: more phone calls. This makes sense. A phone call is the call-to-action they most desire from their website. In the non-shopping cart world, sales are made - or at least initiated - with a phone call. Are you getting maximum value from your Web marketing dollars or does your online brand need a serious boost? That boost could be a phone call from a potential customer who is on your site.

A potential customer on your site could be calling your phone...

A good website should perform like a good salesperson – converting potential customers into profitable sales. It is relatively easy to work out the figures and gauge if salespeople are bringing in more than what they cost their employer. It is equally easy to see what kind of business is coming in via a company's sales force. Think about it, shouldn't it be the same for a website then?

The irony is that relatively few SMB sites have metrics telling them whether, and how many, site hits turn into phone calls, let alone intelligence like which keywords deliver the most calls. But if your Internet marketing spend is intended to drive foot traffic to your store or generate phone

leads that are converted offline, how can you effectively measure your ROI without this information?

If you have resolved to pay attention to your Web statistics and plug the leaks in your customer conversion funnel, take the right steps towards change. Common mistakes business owners make are to "tweak" a single Web page, or assume that a page needs to be reworked simply because a lot of people leave the site after visiting this page. If a large number of visitors leave your site on a certain page, it may actually be a positive step in the sales cycle. The page may have had a coupon to print out and take to a store, or a phone number in a large graphic that says "Call Now!" So they may in fact have left your site to visit you or call you. Or it may be that they simply found the information they were looking for on that page. Without careful tracking and analysis, you can't be sure.

The abundance of metrics or Web analytics provided by Internet marketing solutions report how many visitors came to your site, how much time they spent, what pages they came from, and what search terms they used. However, if the essence of your sales model involves converting online visitors to offline customers, these pieces of information don't necessarily tell you if your website is a good salesperson, just breaking even, or underperforming. Here's where Web telephony changes the rules.

Measuring Click to Call is Simple

Capabilities like click-to-call help to optimally combine and utilize the effectiveness of the age-old sales tool, a phone call with Internet marketing. Instead of simply listing a phone number on a site, click-to-call turns any image on any page into a phone call trigger – a 'call' to action. Because the phone call trigger is now a click, it can be measured like any other. When site visitors click the 'call' icon, that action is captured. Now you can see how many visitors called and exactly which page they called from, in the same way you can see how many pages of your site they looked at.

Converting more visitors to callers reduces your per unit cost of leads and in turn, the overall cost of customer acquisition. WSI can use statistical information to find out which keywords drive the best phone calls for your business. In the face of accelerating keyword costs, this added intelligence can then be used to bid on the best keywords and further optimize your Internet advertising spend.