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the Internet

Inside Edge

Ring Out the Old, Bring in the New

... Keep Your Business UP in a DOWNturn

Welcome to the latest edition of the Inside Edge--your monthly report on Internet trends and advancements that can turn your business into a more profitable e-Business. As you rethink your marketing strategies and get ready for the New Year, the trump card lies in CHANGE. Being flexible in order to make the most of every opportunity, making small and big changes in the way you operate your business and changing the way you stay in touch with customers, can help you grab a greater market share. Make 2009 a year of innovation as you trim the flab and bid farewell to 2008.

No matter what industry you are in or the size of your marketing budget, there are smart ways to maximize your ROI and turn recession into an opportunity.

Zero in on the demand peaks: With the right monitoring and measurement mechanism in place, it is relatively easy to identify your high value customers, the ones that bring the maximum revenue and profit to your business. Loyal customers may reduce their overall spending but will continue to buy your products or services despite the downturn. Reward them for their loyalty by creating offers, discount programs, loyalty miles, etc. Communicate these offers through targeted email campaigns, landing pages and members-only areas on your website.

Segment your offering based on strong value proposition: Pick out the most relevant products or services in your total offering – the ones that are the closest to being consumer "necessities". Make offers like "buy one, get one free", "buy today, pay later", "no taxes in 2009", etc. to increase the sales volume for these products. Taper off marketing for products that customers would normally consider only when they are in a better spending mood. This strategy can work towards bringing in new customers that are shopping for the best deal and retaining old ones that appreciate the incentive to buy in a tough economy.

'Renovate' your website real estate: Unlike a home renovation which people take on in the good times, your website real estate can be renovated to move your business Up in the Down times. Start with critical areas that will make a difference – to drive targeted traffic and increase conversion.

Some quick and inexpensive ideas for website renovation:

- Clearly address your target audience and their **pain points**
- Align website copy with your **conversion goals**
- Accent **calls to action**
- Incentivise your **offers** -- give a little to get a lot!
- **Clean up!** Check for broken links, typos, outdated information
- 'Tag' your audience -- include relevant **title tags and meta descriptions**
- **Speak Up!** Use audio, video, live chat, Internet phone, a site 'host' or mascot
- Get on the grapevine! Add or link to a **chat or blog** that will interest your customers
- Remove rust and stains – make your shopping cart efficient and easy, state return policies clearly, **get rid of site 'distractions'**

Your Certified WSI Internet Marketing Consultant can help renovate your website and implement these ideas. Using advanced, yet inexpensive site conversion tools like WSI Voice Marketer, Live Chat and NetSpotAudio, your Web real estate can really start paying off. Get in touch today. Read on for more ways to face the slowdown.

Integrate your online and offline marketing strategy: Gaining greater market share is almost always a result of grabbing more customer mindshare. Whether it is your business card, a telephone greeting, flyer, manual, menu or tablemat, every promotional item has the potential to drive qualified traffic and conversion on your website. Ensure that your marketing dollars are truly well spent... or saved!

Check these fundamentals:

1) Be prepared for the Internet traffic jam. Ask your WSI Consultant to check whether your website hosting server is geared to handle high volumes of holiday traffic.

2) Establish your credibility. Here are some "legitimacy" signs that you can offer your customers:

- A lock in the lower right corner of the browser to confirm that your site is secure
- Get your site search engine optimized and listed on credible shopping sites such as Yahoo Shopping, MSN Shopping, eBay's Shopping.com or Shopzilla

- Publish your site's privacy policy and carry logos of e-security certification from organizations like TRUSTe, VeriSign, or BBBOnline
- Clearly mention any policies associated with buying on your site
- Always provide a physical address and a telephone number
- Set up an email auto-responder but follow up immediately

3) Offer payment options. Shoppers who are worried about the security of online payments or just don't have a credit card, look for flexible payment options such as PayPal, bill-me-later, pre-paid gift cards, e-bills and debit cards.

4) Be prepared to encounter failures and have a back-up plan. Using Web Analytics, you can identify when and where on your site customers are having difficulty and ensure that your website can respond appropriately. Your WSI Internet Consultant can provide you with a detailed Web Analytics report and help create rules-based triggers for your e-Commerce site.

Get in touch with your [WSI Internet Marketing Consultant](#) and make sure your business stays UP in the Down times.