



My Business

August, 2015

Page: 24
Section: General News
Region: National, AU
Circulation: 36000
Type: Magazines Business
Size: 2,258.00 sq.cms.



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seven marketing strategies to boost online sales

SMALL BUSINESSES CAN MATCH THE BIG GUYS ONLINE, BUT IN THIS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE ARENA YOU NEED A STRATEGY TO BE SUCCESSFUL. MARC LEVIN SHARES SEVEN WAYS TO HELP YOUR ONLINE SALES.

Selling things online is easy. Selling things online to sustain a successful business is hard. Developing a viable online sales channel takes time and every business has its own learning curve acquiring the web marketing skills and tools to implement activities and measure results.

Jason.L is an online office furniture retailer for small-to-medium sized businesses (SMEs), and also offers an easy solution for complete office design and fit-out service. Being an online retailer, growth experienced on our website is a key performance indicator of our business, with a 35% increase in revenue and a 30% rise in online shopping basket size in the last six months.

We use seven areas to support online sales. Only some may work for your business, or the ratio of what you use may differ to how we go about our campaigns, but certainly consider how the following might fit with your online sales channel.

1. WORK YOUR WEBSITE

Start by building (or rebuilding) your website with the target audience in mind. Our old website presented like a catalogue of products, although our core business is our office fitout services. We needed it to give a better reflection of our capabilities and we did this with a number

of callouts on the home page, product landing pages and at the checkout, as well as making our recent fitouts more prominent. As a result we saw a huge increase in the number and size of office fitouts because people don't look at us as just an online retailer but a full service solution.

One way to convert more visitors into customers is through website features like online cart abandonment software that aims to bring back the customers who have reached the cart stage and then not purchased. We have also introduced online 'Ask an Expert' click buttons that have engaged customers and solved queries effectively.

2. USE ADVERTISING WISELY

Buying online advertising is often considered a dark art but unless you sell fast-moving products like The Iconic or ASOS, it's a must-have for businesses with relatively low organic traffic. We use Google AdWords to generate traffic, but it is also good for retargeting, which is a mechanism that allows us to reclaim visitors at a lower cost.

Make sure you refine your advertising to find the optimum conditions in which to advertise. For example, as an office furniture specialist, the end of financial year is a peak time for us so we increase our budget to increase exposure at



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this time. We also try to make our advertising topical; for example, the \$20,000 tax incentive for small businesses became a key search term after the Budget announcement.

3. LEARN SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Only 20% of traffic comes from generic keywords and 80% from the long tail, so ensure your site is optimised for long tail targeting. Real content is highly prized and user experience optimisation—whether your site is mobile device friendly and quick to load—also contributes. If you're an Australian business targeting Australian customers, local SEO is also key. Make sure you have citations and mentions of your business, as linkbacks are decreasing in value for local SEO.

As content is still king, look to create new content and not just text, but images, videos and more. You will need to be creative in order to constantly create fresh content. For example, we had every person in the business write about their role and expertise so we could share it with our customer base. This has been great for SEO and also an important exercise in understanding our team's motivations and passions.

Above all, be patient with SEO as a website penalised by Google is harder to redeem than starting from scratch with your ranking. We use Moz to track and measure our SEO efforts.

4. LEVERAGE COMPARISON SHOPPING

Comparison shopping sites like GetPrice and MyShopping.com.au can help you increase exposure on search engines as well as generate a few leads, which you can then acquire through retargeting. For us they contribute very little in terms of actual sales, but they are handy for leads.

If you have a Google Merchant Center account and an AdWords account, I recommend listing products on Google Shopping, which has replaced a lot of the major comparison shopping sites. It shows the customer an image and prices on the first page of a Google search so it has a higher conversion rate than AdWords or comparison site listings alone, though it also costs more per click.

5. FIND THE RIGHT MARKETPLACES

Affiliate marketing consistently gives good return on investment because it's based on cost per action (CPA), not cost per click (CPC). This means you only pay for the sales you make, which gives you exposure, traffic and options to retarget as a bonus. Platforms like Neto and Channel Advisor can help you figure out which channels

to pursue. One common way to open a parallel stream is to sell on eBay, which gives you another sales and marketing channel for very little outlay.

6. MAKE FRIENDS WITH EMAIL

Email remains the most used tool online, and usually the conversion rate via email is far greater than website clickthroughs, so don't ignore your email database. Make sure you give recipients a compelling reason to open the email—relevant tips or advice about your product, or offers too good to refuse—so it's not just relegated to spam. We also identify peak purchasing days, so that's when we send out our emails.

7. SUPPORT STRATEGY WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can boost other areas, for example by supporting SEO and sharing your content, but it is also excellent to help with retargeting. We are very specific in our targeting on Facebook and other social media, and through careful monitoring we can serve the products that go the furthest in the buying process to get the best return on investment. We use Hootsuite, which integrates Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+, to manage and track our social feeds.

TRACK AND TWEAK

There is no one thing that increases online sales, so you need a planned process of looking at all the parts that make up the online marketing landscape. We don't have an unlimited budget, and can only focus on one thing a month so it's important to monitor and measure how our campaigns are going and adjust if necessary. We track the origin of our leads using CrazyEgg so we can see which areas have the best return on investment; at the moment CPC and Google Shopping are expensive, so we're focusing on increasing acquisition of big leads through SEO.

Online sales and marketing is an evolving process. Search engine algorithms change, platforms fall in and out of favour and new tools emerge all the time. Don't be afraid to make mistakes and try new things, because sometimes small changes can make a big difference.

Marc Levin is co-founder and Chief Ergonomic Officer of Jason.L, a third generation provider of office furniture as well as office fit out services for SMEs. Jason.L is an Anthill Cool Company Finalist and 'SMART 100' Index Runner up, and has been named in BRW's 2014 Fast 100, achieving an average of 63% growth year on year for the last four years. www.jasonl.com.au