



by Doug Knorr with Phil Callighan



Turn It Around

Douglas Knorr, known as a "retail marketing activist," is president of Knorr Marketing (www.knorrmarketing.com), a full-service marketing and advertising agency specializing in the home furnishings industry. The agency provides strategic planning, creative production, public relations, sales promotions, website development and media buying services. Headquartered in Traverse City, Mich., the firm serves clients throughout the United States.

Phil Callighan is senior account executive at Knorr Marketing and a member of the Public Relations Society of America. He focuses on strategic planning and branding as well as providing Internet and public relations leadership for Knorr Marketing clients.

Don't view your website as just an electronic showroom.

Make it engaging, functional and interactive in order to communicate with your customers in a meaningful way to encourage store visits.

Today, your current or potential customer is media-savvy, tired of hype and technologically empowered to learn about you from a variety of resources on the Internet. Given this state of affairs, it is critical to connect one-on-one with each customer in order to cut through media clutter, distinguish your store brand and connect with your customer in a meaningful way.

For the past couple of months, we have been focusing on your website as a key tool to achieve this connection, begin interacting with your customers and drive them to your store. It's the "click and brick" strategy that's

a "must" for success in the digital age.

Online connectivity gives you several advantages over traditional methods that require printing, purchasing media insertions, newsprint space, broadcast time or mailing list/fulfillment services and postage.

Online tools, such as your website and email, can be far less expensive, much more personalized, much easier and much faster in reaching the specific people to whom you wish to communicate.

Having developed an engaging website with relevant content (as we explained in the March issue of NHFA's

Home Furnishings Retailer), and generated visitors to your website through pay-per-click (April issue) and search engine optimization strategies (May issue), you have set the stage to truly connect and interact with your website visitors.

It's important to remember that each website visitor has self-elected to come to your site to learn about you at their convenience. The more you can learn about each of your visitors, the better you can tailor your communications to their age, their lifestyle (and design/color) preferences and their budget, and give them reasons why they should visit your bricks-and-mortar store.

Your first objective in generating online connectivity is to have a website visitor/prospective customer give you her email address.

This will open the doorway for one-on-one communication. In the future, you can always send a message to that same visitor promising more information or additional promotional offers in return for learning more about them (birth date, how many years at same address, ages of children in the home, income range, etc.).

Warning: don't try to gather too much information all at once, as it will often discourage website visitors. This is usually because a visitor either doesn't want to spend much time with anything that disrupts her website navigation, feels you are prying too much into her personal life, or both. The solution? Start by simply offering your website visitor incentives to willingly give you her email address. An approach we've recommended before is to invite your website visitor to sign up to join your e-club by



Website and email marketing can be far less expensive, much more personalized, much easier and much faster in reaching the specific people to whom you wish to communicate.

giving you her email address. Such a club could promise:

- Advance notice of sales events
- e-club-only special offers
- News about what's new on your floor
- Product care tips
- Invitations to e-club member events

Other online website functions that might capture someone's email include:

- Providing opportunities to fill out online applications for credit approval.
- Permitting the ability to contribute and access consumer-generated content of store/product reviews.

continued on page 44



Entice website visitors to give you their email addresses by offering a free gift card, downloadable coupons and advance notice of sales.

- Participating in an online blog about your store and your products.

In addition, you can always create an online gateway between your visitor and some special offer, such as:

- a shopping incentive (free gift card, downloadable coupons or opportunity to enter a drawing to win a gift card)
- detailed how-to or product information. Visitors providing you their email will be enabled to pass through the gateway and access the information.

You have many offline strategy options to acquire email addresses, including:

- in-store e-club sign-ups
- traditional media messages that invite the consumer to visit your website in order to download additional discount offers in return for her email address.

- a promotional circular including a barcode that must be scanned in-store for the customer to learn if she has qualified for a prize or discount.

- Customer information gathered at the barcode-scanning terminal can include the customer's email, along with her address, phone, etc. (More about this in a future issue.)

Another strategy is to feature only a portion of a helpful article in a newspaper or magazine, directing the reader to your website in order to view the rest of the article. Of course, once at your website, the visitor must first give you her email address in order to view the additional content. (Unless you own the copyright on the article, be sure to get permission before re-using for commercial purposes.)

Your second objective with online connectivity is accountability.

At Knorr Marketing, we use proprietary software to conduct ongoing discussions with prospects and customers and create a database you can use to push out targeted email messages. We call this Knorr-Connect™.

Using this software, traditional advertising (direct mail, ROP ads, circulars, for example) directs the consumer either to your website home page or to a special online location. Once there, it allows the consumer to communicate back to you about her needs and wants.

In return for the consumer's email address, the software allows the consumer to make appointments online, respond to brief surveys or download special offers or coupons not available to the general public. By capturing the consumer's email address, you can conduct regular e-marketing programs.

Once the consumer visits your store and makes purchase, a salesperson can verify the name and email address of that customer and enter additional personal info into the database, along with the merchandise category in which a purchase was made, the purchase price, and salesperson servicing that customer.

What can you do with this data? Customize the contact as never before.

Imagine emailing an "up to 40 percent off" promotion on a custom-order companion loveseat to anyone who purchased a sofa that retailed for \$799 or more from your salesperson Melinda, and made that purchase within the last six months?

You could address each customer by name and Melinda could add her own comments.

This type of very targeted email marketing is exceptionally effective; a great sales tool for Melinda, easy for Melinda to follow up on, and easy for you to hold Melinda accountable.

Not comfortable with digital media or not equipped to handle such programs? You'll prefer the type of Customer Management System (CMS) that compiles an electronic database solely through in-store activity.

Our Knorr Marketing CMS solution asks salespeople to input each "Up" and identify the communications medium that generated the Up (circular, ROP ad, website, billboard, TV commercial, walk-in, or other) along with personal information about the consumer, including their email address.

While this database does not include the automated software that can push out emails to the customer, the same sort of prospect or customer segmentation can be facilitated for snail-mail or email.

Another strategy to capture your customer's email address (if you don't already have it), foster customer loyalty and encourage additional purchases is to integrate a customer purchase with a post-sale website survey.

How it works: upon merchandise delivery, your customer is given a unique coded invitation inviting her to visit your website and fill out a survey in return for a gift card or coupon that will be emailed to her.

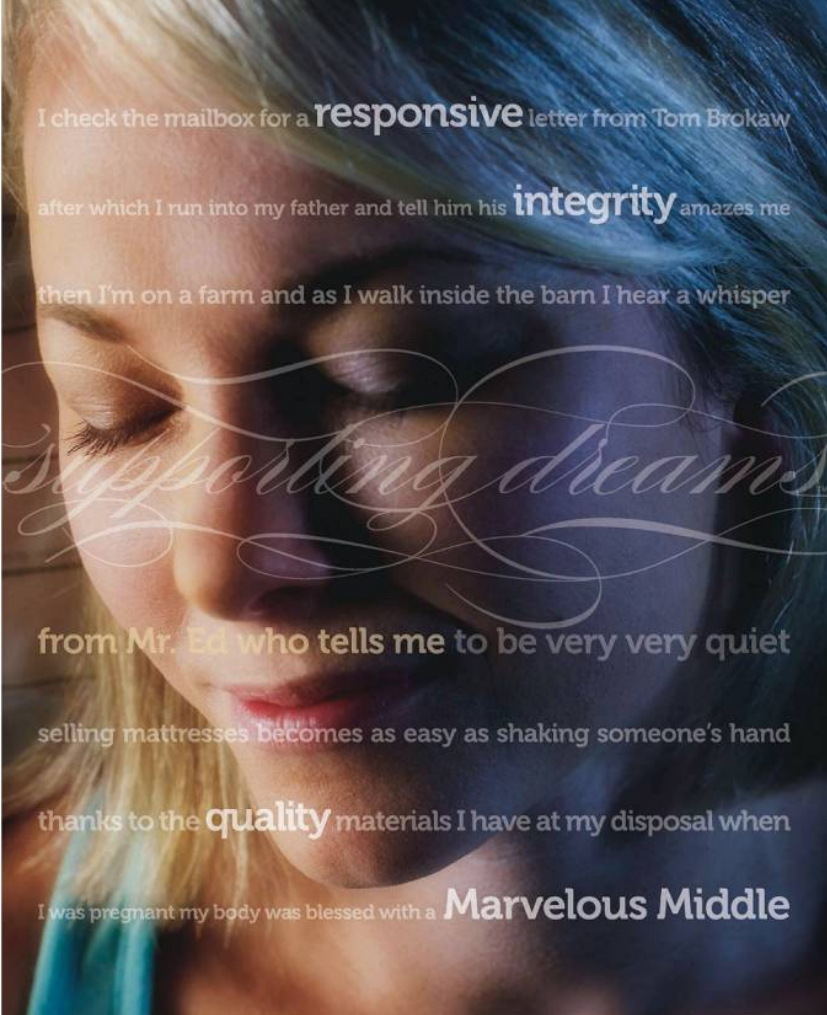
Once the customer enters the invitation code on your website, the survey can be matched to the customer database information you have previously collected.

Your customer is asked for her email address because that is how you will send her the gift card or coupon.

So, once again, you have captured an email address you can match to personal and purchased database information about your customer. This will make your future communications with

them relevant and meaningful — which is the only kind of communication customers want from you anyway!

Embrace this "click and brick" digital strategy today! It will help increase the volume and quality of the people visiting your store so you can Turn It Around in 2009! 



I check the mailbox for a **responsive** letter from Tom Brokaw
after which I run into my father and tell him his **integrity** amazes me
then I'm on a farm and as I walk inside the barn I hear a whisper
Supporting Dreams™
from Mr. Ed who tells me to be very very quiet
selling mattresses becomes as easy as shaking someone's hand
thanks to the **quality** materials I have at my disposal when
I was pregnant my body was blessed with a **Marvelous Middle**

Make your sales dreams come true.
In today's economy, it's important to rely on suppliers you can trust. At Restonic, we go above and beyond to provide innovative, high-quality bedding products. Plus, with more sales professionals per store than any other manufacturer, you'll find that working with Restonic is like a dream. restonic.com

restonic™
SUPPORTING DREAMS™