



by Doug Knorr



Turn It Around

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One of the most defining changes in marketing and advertising these past few years has been the Internet. It was only a few years ago that retailers across America joined in a buzz of fear and trepidation. The question everyone was asking or thinking to themselves was, "Is retailing as we know it over?" Many retailers feared that bricks and mortar would be replaced with "click and order."

Yes, the Internet has changed how the consumer goes through the buying process. However, instead of replacing stores, the Internet has quite possibly become the best friend that the retailer has ever known! In fact, the Internet has provided us the greatest marketing tool of all time. Instead of fearing the Internet, wise retailers will learn how to use it to get connected to their customers.

So, let's start by taking a look at a word that seemed to jump out of nowhere and become mainstream in the late 1990s. It's the word "interactive."

Listen to what Mr. Webster has to say about the word interactive: "Mutually or reciprocally active." Think for a minute: wouldn't you like to be mutually or reciprocally active with your customers?

In a day when every company is doing whatever it takes to build a relationship with consumers and earn their loyalty, we now have the perfect tool — a truly interactive medium, the Internet!

So, why do so many businesses persist on using the Internet exclusively for a virtual showroom or cyberspace Yellow Pages when it is so much more? Today, the Internet empowers brick and mortar stores to integrate the power of "click

and order” and create a whole new marketing concept that I call “Click and Brick.”

The “Click and Brick” marketing strategy leverages the strength of the showroom with the connectivity of the Internet to provide the consumer the perfect buying solution! Click and Brick empowers consumers to get the information they are seeking so that they feel comfortable going through the buying process. Today’s consumer wants to research everything a company offers — before they walk into the store.

In a recent research study, PowerReviews and the e-tailing group found that nearly nine out of 10 U.S. online buyers surveyed in February 2008 read customer reviews at least “some of the time” before making a purchase.

Consumers have taken control of the buying process, and if you want to get connected to them you must transform your website into an interactive communications medium for your company!

Here are a few steps to guide you through the process. First, you need to listen. The best way to do that is to spend time on blog sites. You will be amazed at what consumers are saying about the products on your floor, your competition and maybe even you. (If you don’t know how to get on the blogs, send me an email and I will give you a list of blog sites to get you started.)

Then, once you know what typical questions the consumers are asking and the fears they share on blog sites, you can speak to those issues and provide answers on your website by developing a section of FAQs (frequently asked questions). Your print advertising could share a sample of one or more FAQs and direct people to that specific page on your website.

If you are willing to develop web content that is of interest to consumers, you will be surprised at

**Incorporate a
web presence
to grow your
“bricks and mortar”
store.**



how much more time they will spend on your website.

Next, take a close look at your overall website. Does it allow your store to be transparent to the consumer? In other words, can consumers find out everything they need to know about you?

For example, have you provided important information like customer/media reviews about your store or the products you sell? What about price guarantees and happiness guarantees that remove the consumer’s natural fear to buy?

Remember, it’s not only about the brands you carry and linking website visitors to manufacturer websites. Consumers need to know about you and your store.

Instead of filling your website with an overwhelming amount of product images that seem to flow into a sea of sameness, what about providing interesting content that educates and helps the consumer understand what to look for in a product to achieve the greatest value? In so doing, you will become the authority that the consumer will trust, and it will pay off with big dividends.

Finally, is your website “interactive?” Does it allow you and your customers to be reciprocally active?

You need to provide a section on your website that allows the consumer to ask questions about products and/or services, and you must make sure they are answered within one hour when you are open for business.

When you are closed, you need to have an automatic response to email to customer inquiries, thanking them for the request and letting them know when you will call or email them back.

To be interactive requires that we be proactive! First, learn what the consumer fears and what they want. Second, develop content on your website that educates the consumer and gives the consumer reasons to shop your store. Third, search out the software that can help you develop a stronger interactive communication with the customer.

In other words, implementing a “Click & Brick” strategy can help you “turn it around” in 2008! 