

Cyberspace on Aisle Five

It doesn't take a lot of research to find out that in this day and age, virtually every business of any real size has developed some form of internet presence. Now, for many businesses, that may mean little more than an online business card that can be used to get the phone number and store location of the business into the mind of the prospective customer. But in this new century, the idea of having a business without a corresponding web page to support it is pretty much out of the question.

But if you look at the two business worlds, the internet business environment and that outside of cyberspace, there are some pretty big differences. While many companies like bookstores or concert ticket promoters have learned to build what might be viewed as parallel universes in which their business operations are just as sophisticated online as outside of cyberspace, other businesses have just not found that balance.

But as the legitimacy of the internet as a valid marketplace and business tool becomes more understood, more and more businesses are learning that cyberspace can become another valuable part of an overall marketing plan that drives business to the store shelves directly from their internet web presence.

So just as that billboard or newspaper coupon program are just as much part of the businesses corporate plan, that online effort out there in on the corporate web site can become a vital part of the stores operation so much so that the store manager will come to depend on the sales driven by the internet. To that store manager they will look for cyberspace on aisle five as a vital part of their plan for business success.

There is a systematic process that businesses go through to use the internet as a way of capturing web traffic and turning it into store traffic. Make no mistake, there is one principle that should seem evident but is the key to turning cyber visitors to in store shoppers and that is that - Internet Shoppers are People Too!

When a businessperson looks at those strange internet traffic reports that show that they web site has X number of "hits" and that Z number of web browsers went to Y number of web pages, all of that cyberspace mumbo jumbo just means that X number of PEOPLE were on your web site and looked at Y number of products or web page advertisements or services. And those PEOPLE are the same living and breathing humans who will walk in the front door of your store and buy products and services from you.

All we need to do is devise methods to drive those internet shoppers off of

their computers and into the businesses retail operations. And more and more you are seeing a businesses trend of internet promotions that are geared to put the customers feet down in the retail space. Some great methods for doing that are...

- * Online coupons that can be redeemed only in the retail store.
- * Online sales that can be picked up in the store. Many online shoppers might prefer to have the product shipped to them. So you will have to "sweeten the pot" by making shipping charges out of the question or by adding a promotion if the customer picks up his or her purchase in person.
- * Contests. Need we say more?
- * By promoting special events that will occur in the store. You can stage a major cyberspace promotional campaign for a book signing of an author or celebrity that will occur live at the store itself. The costs of the promotion and having the in store event will be offset by the increased sales.

If your web site routinely uses promotions that result in positive incentives to the customer to come to the store, before long a customer base of loyal consumers will get used to first going online to see what this week's big deal is and then going to the store to cash in. That kind of ongoing momentum is what makes such a synergy such a success and what makes even customers come to your retail outlet and look for "cyberspace on aisle five."