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eBiz Insider

the magazine for e-commerce professionals



The Importance of Logo Design

—By Amy Fedele

- ◆ **Generate Sales with Viral Marketing**
- ◆ **Preparing Your Warehouse for the Holiday Rush**
- ◆ **Color Correction on a Shoe String Budget**

Read this magazine and make it a successful summer.
Or skip it. Success is probably overrated anyway...

eBiz Insider

the magazine for e-commerce professionals.

August 2007 Volume 1 • Number 4

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Editor in Chief: Scott Sanfilippo
scotts@ebizinsider.com

Editor: Kevin Lynn
kevinl@ebizinsider.com

Production Director: Randy Llewellyn
randyl@ebizinsider.com

Advertising Director: Lisa Kramer
lisak@ebizinsider.com

Sales Manager: Phil Gaughan
philg@ebizinsider.com

Web Development Director: Miguel Younger
miguely@ebizinsider.com

Exhibition Coordinator: Lisa Kramer
lisak@ebizinsider.com

Conference Coordinator: Scott Sanfilippo
scotts@ebizinsider.com

Online Producer: John Dawe
johnd@ebizinsider.com

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By Scott Sanfilippo,
Editor in Chief

What do you do for your customers?

more time to spend with them during the ordering process.

Premiums: I love the creativity of promotional merchandise. Give your best customers something nice like a laptop bag, beach bag, padfolio, etc. with your logo on it. Forget the stress balls and thirty-cent promo items and spend a couple of bucks to get a quality item. When your good customers order, include one with a personal note, thanking them for their business.

Go Overboard

Last month my company hosted 50 clients, their families and key members of our staff on a 4-day cruise to the Bahamas. We learned a little and laughed a lot, but above all we had the chance to show our clients that we care about their businesses and want to help them be successful. In our case, we thought outside the box and ended up on a boat. Remember, a good customer is hard to find and even harder to keep. Let me ask again, *what do you do for your customers?* **eBiz**

Please don't say "we provide good customer service." Is there a company striving for poor service? I want to know what you REALLY do for your customers and it's a question you should be asking yourself. If you believe the "80/20 Rule" that 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers or clients, you have a huge stake in making that 20% feel special.






There are simple ways to gain your customers' respect and ultimately, more of their business. Some examples:

Special Customer Special Offers: You know who I mean, the ones you wish you had by the thousands! They are the best-of-the-best; treat them accordingly. Don't give them the standard offers; give them something extra. If you want to keep your very best people, make them feel special.

Premier Service: Airlines do it regularly. My platinum card with US Airways includes a special toll-free number to a dedicated team of CSR's specially trained to deal with frequent flyers like myself. Just like the best reps are chosen to man that line, give your best customers a dedicated rep who has

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Generate Sales with Viral Marketing

It was the cover story in the New York Times Magazine. A woman comes to a barbecue with a brand new chicken product. She was happy to share this new product with dozens. The people were happy with the new treat. She was happy to be showing her friends something new. The company which made the chicken product was happiest of all. You see, the woman was their "Buzz Agent." Not only was she sharing food with her friends, she was marketing.

Word-of-mouth marketing is a trendy and fast-growing phenomenon online. The new terms for this old way of spreading the advertising word are called "buzz marketing" or "viral marketing." The basic strategy is to get customers to talk about products with friends and colleagues.

Some Buzz Agents approach strangers in stores as fellow shoppers. The trend is growing, and recent surveys suggest that nearly half of online marketers will engage in some form of viral marketing this year.

Be Good to Your Customers

The Word Of Mouth Marketing Association, WOMMA defines viral marketing as “the art and science of amplifying genuine consumer enthusiasm.” That’s a general statement with many specific dynamics. Basically, though, an effective buzz marketing campaign needs happy customers who will then spread the word about your business. So take care of business. Make your e-commerce site easy to navigate and provide solid customer service when people visit.

Remember, any good business will generate most of its revenue from loyal customers. That’s why you take care of them first. When they’re happy they can become real buzz agents for your company. We don’t recommend bad companies to our friends, after all.

More small online businesses are finding that direct marketing through their customers pays dividends and helps them stand out from the competition. They do it by turning customers into sales reps. There are several ways to turn active consumers into active boosters of your business.

Be Obvious

Your product pages and your home page should all contain a “Send this page to a friend” option. It’s a relatively inexpensive modification.

Be Generous

If you want customers to promote you, encourage them with discounts and special deals. One solid performer is the offer: “We’ll give your friend 10 percent off and we’ll give you 20 percent off.”

Be Exciting

Every e-commerce operator looks for the “wow factor.” After all, marketing is the indirect way of engaging customers and

successful viral marketing campaigns have included such wide ranging tactics as games, contests, white papers and e-card campaigns.

Be Imaginative

Brant Shapiro of SMARTbomb.com, an e-commerce site that specializes in nutritional products and information, is dabbling in viral video. “My company had some video clips [about supplements and health-related issues],” Shapiro says. A colleague referred Shapiro to fliqz.com, a video-sharing site. “I realized that I could take the embedded links and use them on my site,” Shapiro says. “I made a little video room, where people can see the videos and send them on to friends. We noticed that ‘forward to a friend’ is used more with the videos than the products.” Either way, people are engaged. They’re one step from shopping.

Be Great

Special offers, discounts, games and videos are fine, but compelling content is still the best way to excite customers and get them to enthusiastically promote your site. Stand out with presentation, prices, promotions and products.

Going Viral

Some of the most successful word-of-mouth campaigns were designed by experienced viral marketing agencies, but not all of them. It is very possible for small companies to create their own successful buzz campaigns with a little money and a lot of imagination.

Who knows your business better than you do? Who knows how great a deal is better than you do? There are probably a slew of companies that sell what you sell. But you know why you’re better than the others. You know what makes you special. Think along those lines. Think of how to make your customers want to tell others about you. You’ll come up with something. If you can’t, get out your wallet and call in the pros. **eBiz**



By Justin Rattigan

Justin Rattigan has been active in the e-commerce industry since he started his own design firm in 1999. He has served on the board of directors of the eMerchant’s Association, and is a moderator in the Yahoo! Store Owners’ Forum where his advice to other merchants is invaluable. Justin can be reached via e-mail at justinr@ebizinsider.com.



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Preparing Your Warehouse for the Holiday Rush



Example of bin labels

E-businesses expand at the holidays because of increased business, and it is critical to have a product location plan to teach to your holiday temps. An easy-to-navigate system is crucial, and is one of many things we learned along our very long road of very hard knocks as we developed our own company.

If you're selling product and stocking it in your warehouse, you probably have some type of bin location system in place to make picking easy for your employees. You don't? Well then, read on!

If you're just starting out and have a few employees who know where product is located by memory, it may seem like a good system to have. Don't be fooled. For instance, what happens when those employees take jobs elsewhere or you need to quickly hire new people to take care of the influx of holiday orders that suddenly crept up on you? Chances are you'll be wasting a lot of valuable pick/pack time having those employees walk around aimlessly searching for product. The solution to your warehousing evolution is bin locations.

Bin locations are simply the places where products are housed in your warehouse. This is a crucial system for every e-business to develop, and you

should organize your warehouse right down to the exact location on every single shelf. Taking the time to setup bin locations now, before the holidays, will save you time, money, improve your order turn-around time and eventually lead to greater customer satisfaction down the road. Here's how you start.

“... because of increased business... it is critical to have a product location plan to teach to your holiday temps.”

For the purposes of these examples, I will assume that your warehouse is set up with racks making up aisles, which we call pick lanes. The first thing you need to do is find a starting point for your pick route. A good origination point is the spot where you keep your pick tickets and baskets or carts for picking product. The second step is to label your pick lanes. Pick lanes should be labeled alphabetically. The aisle closest to the start of the pick route can be

labeled "A," second closest is labeled "B" and so forth.

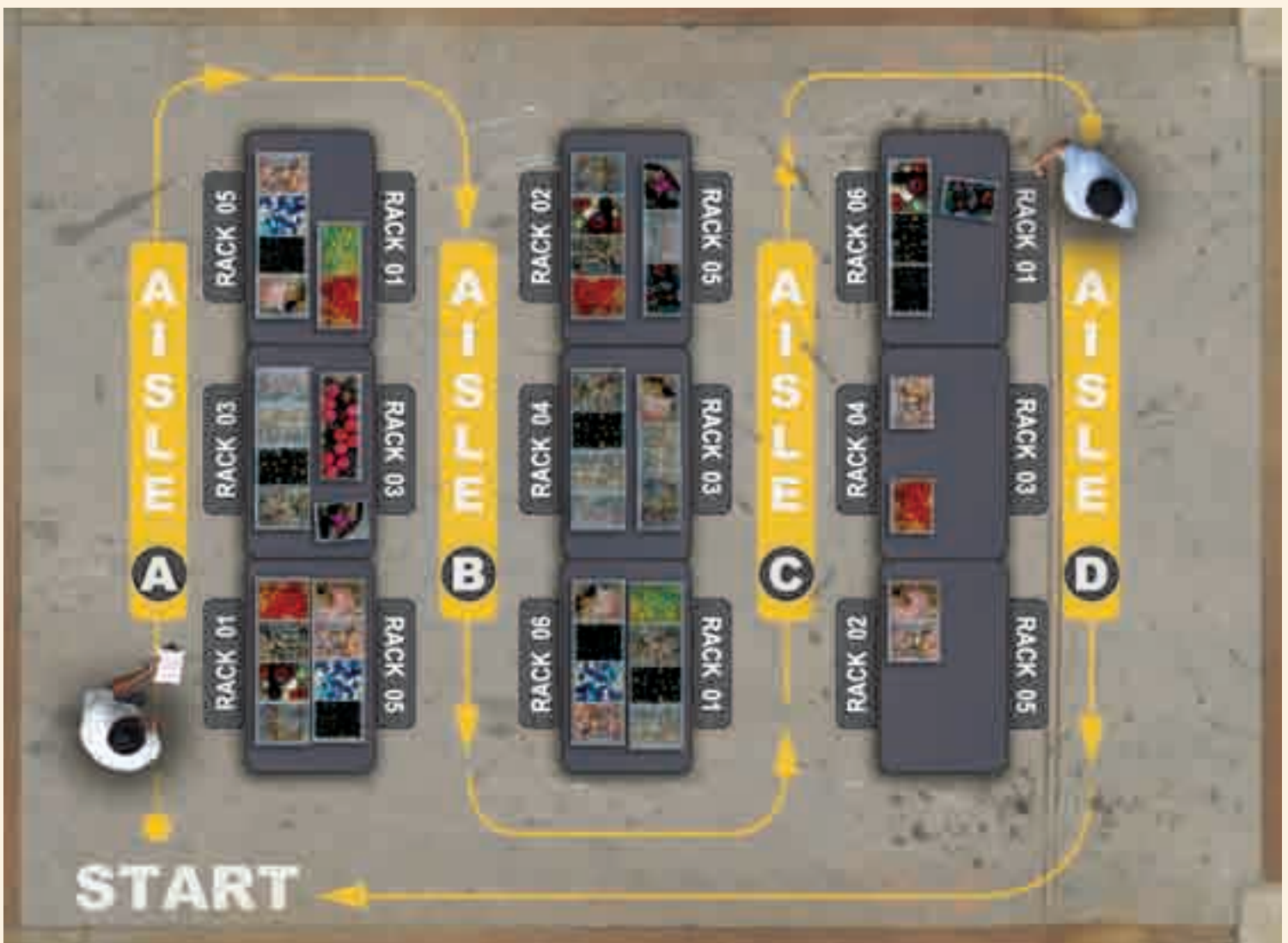
Once you have a map of your pick lanes, it's time to label the racks that are located in each of those aisles. In order to maintain a flow, racks are labeled in such a way that your picker will start at the beginning of the pick route, walk up the first aisle, down the second, up the third and so on, eventually ending up back at the start of the route ready to pick another order. For obvious reasons, we call this a serpentine layout.

Labeling your racks along the pick aisle is simple. Let's assume there are three racks in each aisle. Starting at the beginning, assign the first rack on the right the number 01 (put a zero in front of single digit numbers to maintain consistency and allow for future growth), the second 03, the third 05. On the left side of the aisle, assign the first rack 02, second 04, third 06 (see the example warehouse diagram). Once your racks are labeled, it's time to drill down to the details of each rack.

The first rack in aisle A is called A01 (aisle A, rack 01). Let's assume that rack 01 has three shelves. Starting at the floor, label the bottom shelf as A, the middle shelf as B and the top shelf as C. On those shelves your product is contained in boxes or "bins". Starting left to right, each "bin" will be labeled 01, 02, 03, etc. You will do this for each shelf, so that in this example, product in the 4th bin on shelf B of rack 02 in aisle A would have a bin location of A02B04 (see the example rack diagram). The key thing to remember: the bin location is not tied to an item, it's tied to the rack.

At first, organizing your warehouse may sound confusing and look like a lot of work but believe me, it will pay big dividends over time! The time spent training new employees on how to pick product takes no more than 5 or 10 minutes because the system is easy to learn. With a system in place like

Preparing Your Warehouse for the Holiday Rush continued on page 8



Example warehouse floor plan

this, when you need to bring in temporary help to pick and pack during the holidays, your training is minimal.

Once your bin location system is up and running, you can tweak it even more to improve warehouse efficiency. For example, you may want to put your most picked products right at the beginning of your pick route so your pickers don't have to go three aisles back to get the most popular items they pick on a constant basis. Or, if you have items that only sell in the winter, move them to the end of the pick route and put your summer merchandise at the beginning during the spring and summer months. **eBiz**



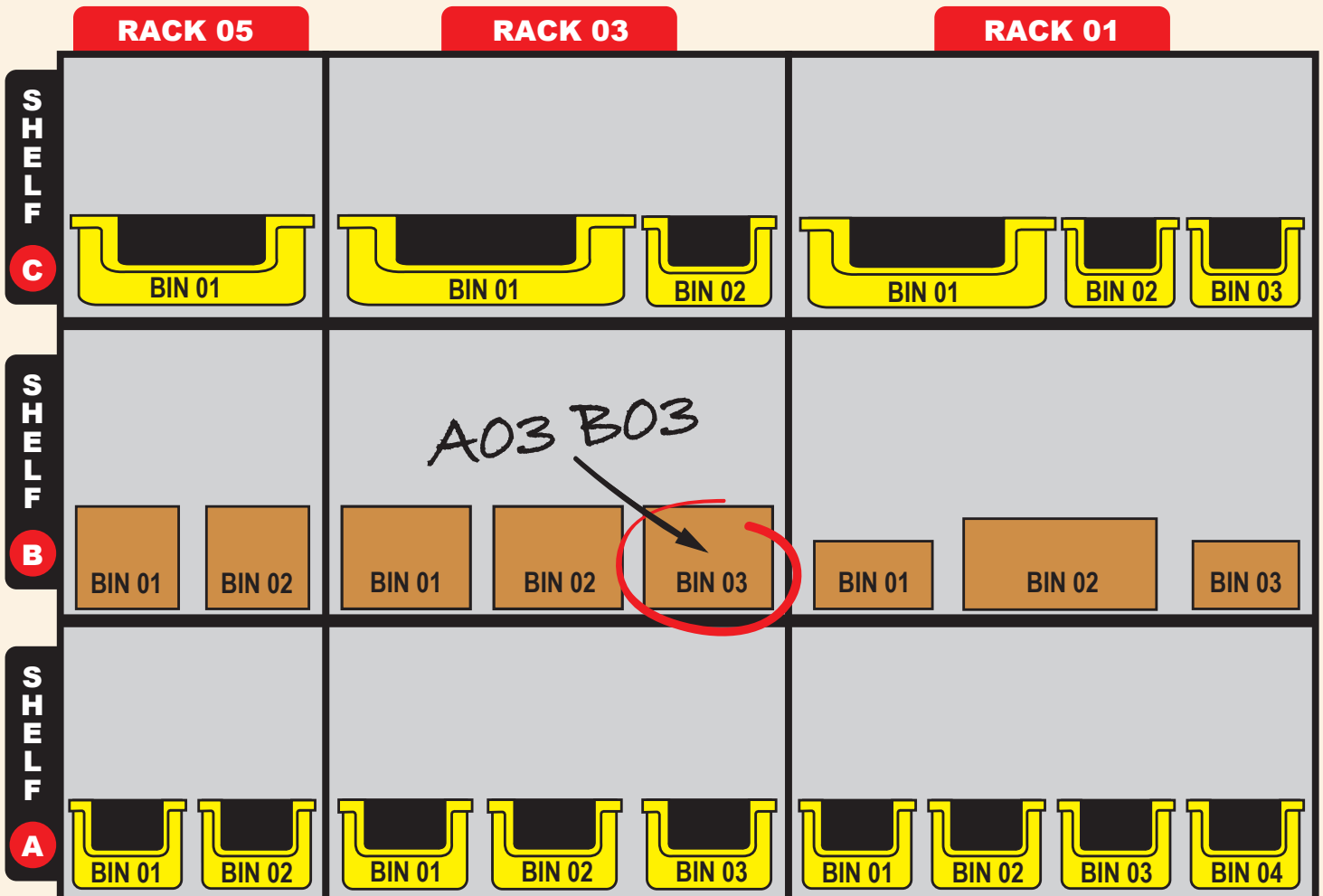
By Scott Sanfilippo

Scott Sanfilippo and his partner Joe Palko founded one of the very first e-commerce stores, *TheFerretStore.com*, in 1994 – when “Amazon” just meant a river. In May 2007, *TheFerretStore.com* was sold to the largest mail-order pet supply catalog in the country, *Drs. Foster and Smith* in Rhinelander, WI. After picking and packing hundreds of thousands of orders, Scott now serves as editor of this very magazine. Contact Scott at scotts@ebizinsider.com.

Getting ready for the holiday checklist

1. Stock up on packing supplies.... you don't want to hold up orders because you ran out of boxes.
2. Be sure to include catalogs or sell sheets with outgoing orders. Turn one time holiday shoppers into repeat buyers by keeping your name in front of them.
3. Give your website a holiday flair with a holiday logo to put shoppers in the spirit. (Don't wait till it's too late... Call Solid Cactus now!)
4. Offer gift certificates or gift cards. Great for the undecided shopper and they often go unredeemed.
5. Be prepared for an increase in orders... don't get caught with a lack of staff to pack and take customer calls. Bad customer service this time of year, often results in no repeat sales.

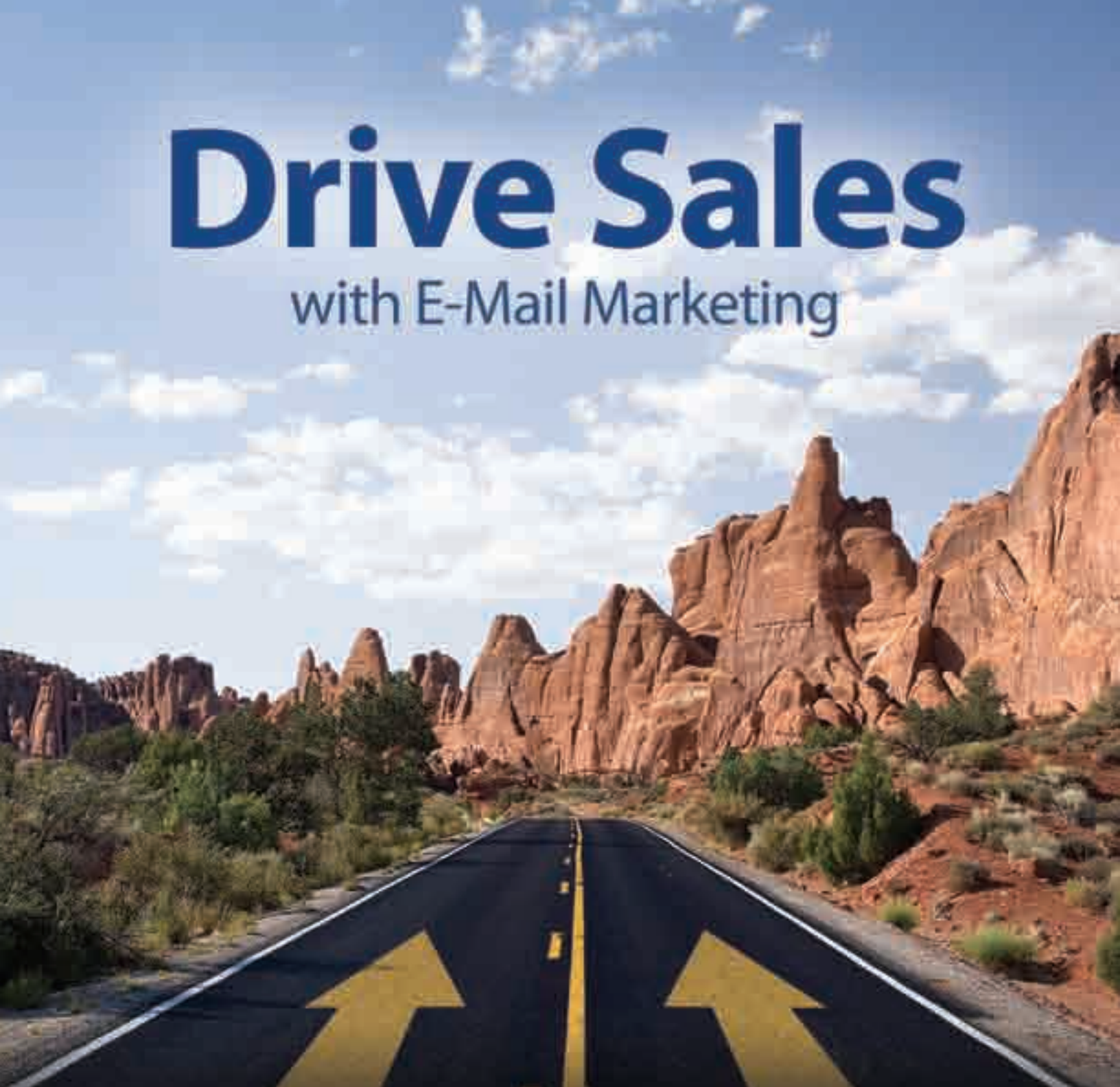
Aisle A Right



Example set of racks, see page 7 for examples of bin labels.

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image and instill trust in your customers. It shows that you are serious about your business. You may not have been in business “since 1908,” but if you have invested in your identity, you are more likely to appear reliable in the eyes of new customers. It is another step toward building that all-important “trust.”

The Importance of Logo Design

Your Logo is a Part of Your Brand

Your logo is a crucial aspect of your company’s brand identity. Branding is one of the most important aspects of any business. But what exactly does “branding” mean? Can it help a small business?

Branding is your competitive edge and your promise to your customer. It represents what your company offers that others can’t. What makes you unique? Are you the cutting edge maverick in your industry or the experienced, dependable one? Is your product the high-cost, high-quality option, or the low-cost, high-value option? The biggest branding mistake companies make is trying to be all things to all audiences. Who you are should be based on who your target customers want and need you to be.

Your website, packaging and promotional materials—all of which should integrate your logo—communicate your brand. Businesses too often change or alter their identity. This includes the logo, the logo colors, marketing materials and website, as

well as other important parts of a company’s mission statement. This can be confusing to existing customers. It is ironic but true: when you become tired of your logo, tagline, and branding efforts, is when they begin to sink in with your customers. Branding, first and foremost, is about consistency.

Your Logo

The foundation of your brand is your logo. A good logo presents your company’s values visually. Discuss your company’s values, goals and information about your target audience to help your logo designer. Once the designer has a good idea of the image you hope to portray, he or she will use fonts, color, placement, size, graphics, and design motifs to convey this to your customers.

You Need a Professional Logo to:

- **Establish trust and commitment.** Many e-commerce businesses are run from private homes. A professionally designed logo can portray a reputable

- **Stand out from your competition**

- **Attract more customers.** Customers look for a well-defined company and “look and feel” may be important to them.
- **Be more memorable.** 40% of people remember what they see more than what they read or hear. Associating consistent graphics, text, style and colors with your company will help your customers to remember you.
- **Explain your business.** If your company name is difficult to pronounce, hard to remember or doesn’t relate to your products/ services, you’ll need compelling graphics or a tagline. If your business is nontraditional or in a hard-to-explain industry, a logo can better clarify exactly what you do.
- **Comply with expectations** – frankly, in most industries a logo is standard.

What Makes a Good Logo?

All logos should use vector art. Vector graphics are geometrical shapes based on mathematical equations. This allows the shapes and text in the logo to be enlarged or reduced without compromising clarity and symmetry. Therefore, you can use the same logo on a business card and a billboard without sacrificing detail or quality. A common file extension for vector art is .EPS. Ask for your completed logo in this format.

Color is important to brand recognition, but should not be an integral component to the logo design. Logos should utilize as few colors as possible to establish the identity of the company. Depending on color to distinguish your brand is very risky. What if the logo is faxed or photocopied? Will your logo maintain your company's image accurately? Many designers will show you the logo concept in black and white before they add color. This is a good idea. Be satisfied with the other important elements of the design before adding color.

This is also the reason your logo should not contain any gradients as a major feature. If your heart is set on creating a logo using gradients, I suggest making a "web" version of your logo and another version of the logo without using the gradients for your print materials. Your logo should convey the same message with or without gradients or color.

A good logo should be able to maintain its integrity when printed in any size. Also, consider the various fabrics or materials where your logo may be printed in the future (e.g. clothing, pens, coffee mugs, hats, etc). Will the shape of the product distort your logo?

A tagline added to a logo can create a memorable phrase summing up the tone of a brand or product, or to make your company more memorable. If your name needs explaining, a tagline is a good way to tell people exactly who you are, what you do, and why they should care (e.g. the company Skygeek has a tagline of: Our parts fly, but our prices are grounded).



The most important aspect of logo design is making it unique and memorable. It doesn't have to be complex or flashy to attract your customers' attention. In fact, many of the best designed logos are memorable because they're simple (e.g. McDonald's, Nike, FedEx).

Guidelines

In addition to the elements outlined above, there are several guidelines for logo design which are simply common sense. For example, a logo should not feature the face of a person that is still alive. Additionally, a logo should never include imagery that could be classified as culturally sensitive. This could range from national flags to religious icons. Finally, a quality logo design will never rely on photography, clipart or other forms of complex imagery.

Types of Logos

1. Text-Based Logos

Visually, text logos are very simple, clean logos that aren't cluttered with heavy visuals and graphics. These logos are favored by many Fortune 500 corporations. The apparent simplicity of text-based can be misleading as these logos can be enormously difficult to design.

Text-based logos include the company name (and/or URL) in uniquely styled type font that accurately represents the company while still appealing to the target audience who will be buying their product or service.

A main reason to consider using a text based logo is for legibility and ease of recognition, even when the size of the logo is reduced (e.g. for printing your business cards).



2. Iconic Logos

Iconic logos feature simplified graphics (symbols) that reflect an aspect of the company. The symbol can be used by itself, with text, or the text can be integrated into the icon.

An icon is never a photograph or a life-like representation of an object. Instead, it is simple and clever and connects us to the company's name, its products or services. Other iconic logos often include geometric shapes, simple patterns, or initials

representing the company or the company name. It may also create an entirely new symbolic meaning (e.g. we did not originally associate the Nike "swoosh" with the company, but now we do).

In order for an icon to be a truly effective logo, it should be easily recognizable and memorable, while remaining clear when reproduced in small sizes.



3. Illustrated Logos

Illustrated logos are much more elaborate and detailed than iconic logos and should inspire awe in the intended audience. Illustrated logos should provide accurate representation of some aspect of the company or product portrayed. This can be the name, the business concept or a character/mascot. Illustrated logos can often brand the company by use of the illustrations alone.

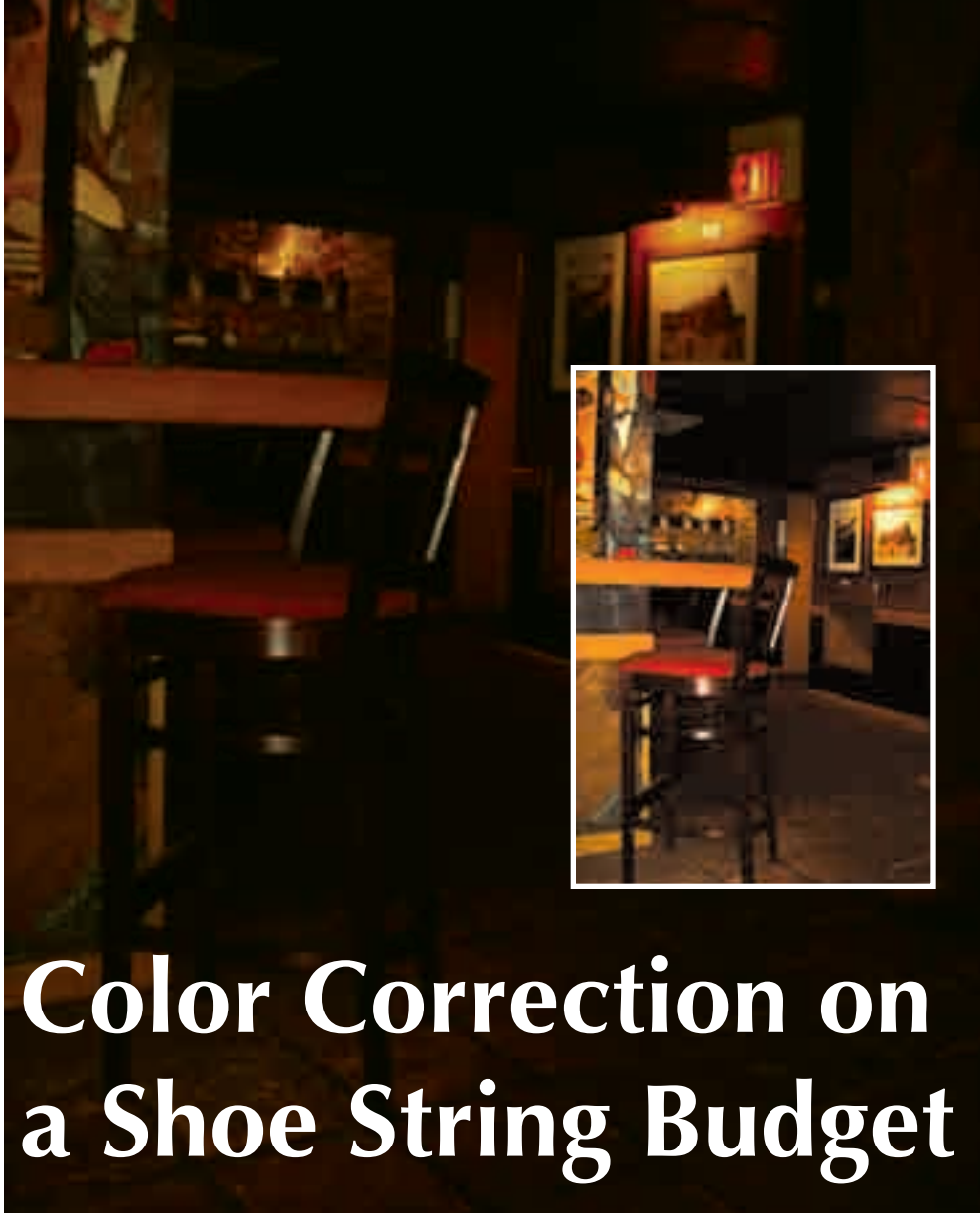


A strong, unique, professional logo defines your brand identity. It can inspire trust and commitment in your customers and differentiate you from your competition. Your logo should represent the values of your company and the image you portray to the general public. **eBiz**



By Amy Fedele

Amy Fedele has over ten years of graphic and web design experience and has designed over 250 websites based on ideas, goals and suggestions from the client, while incorporating her knowledge and expertise of design to enhance the site's visual appeal and usability. Amy can be reached via e-mail at amyf@ebizinsider.com.



Color Correction on a Shoe String Budget

Fig 1, photo taken without proper lighting

You take your time setting up the perfect shot, you get the lighting just right, you take the picture and everything is great... except the color. Don't worry, you're not alone. The simple fact is, no matter how good your setup is, sometimes you need to tweak your images to make them better.

Color correction is just one part of image correction, a process which includes cropping, touch-ups, hue & tonal adjustments in order to make the final image look as good as possible. If done well, it is completely unnoticeable and will make the difference between a good and great image. There are two industries where color correction is applied, print media and on-screen media. We will be focusing on the latter.

Screen based color correction will focus on the use of RGB (Additive 

Colors) color spaces, as opposed to CMYK (Subtractive Colors) which is used for print. While you would meticulously calibrate your monitor to match your print pieces for print based color correction, I advise you not to do this for on-screen imagery. The reason for this is simple, the final image output is controlled by 3 factors, PC environment, PC hardware and PC software. Each of these will vary from one person's PC to the next.

When I say "PC environment", I am referring to the lighting in the end users immediate environment which can alter the way colors are seen. Incandescent lights cast a yellow hue, fluorescent lights cast a blue hue, and of course the amount of lighting or reflection cast onto the monitor can affect the color's tone.

Hardware will affect final color output because each manufacturer builds their

monitors differently and with different capabilities and quality. The industry has switched from the ubiquitous CRT screen (which offers consistent and rich colors) to LCDs (which vary depending on the brand and quality). When dealing with lower-end LCD screens, a slight change in the angle that you view your screen can alter the overall tone of the image you are viewing. The quality of the monitor may restrict the brightness or range of colors that are able to be displayed.

Finally, software can also affect your images. Each operating system (Windows, Apple, Linux are a few of the more popular ones) will have built in color profiles which will affect the way that colors are displayed on the screen.

The good news is that modern PC's display images at higher quality, color range, and more consistently than they used to. This means that you probably won't notice much variation in the display of your final image from one PC manufacturer to another.

What we will be doing here today is focus on adjusting images that obviously need help. First, we'll need the right tools.

There are several different types of image editors on the market: Photoshop (www.adobe.com) is probably the most popular, but GIMP (www.gimp.org) is free! Any image editor should work as long as it has a few basic features:

Channels - Each color channel represents one of the colors in the current range. You should see Red, Green, and Blue channels when working with your images. (fig 2)

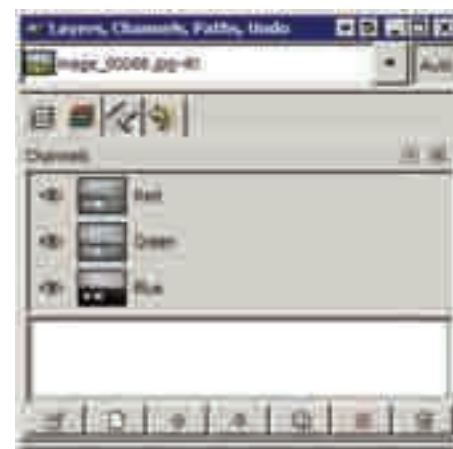


Fig 2 shows GIMP Channels

Histograms - This is an overall tonal scale of your image. It will let you know at a

glance if your image has an appropriate exposure. (fig3)



Fig 3 shows GIMP Histograms

Curves Adjustments - These allow you to alter the image's exposure within certain tonal ranges. (fig 4)



Fig 4 shows Photoshop Curves Window

Saturation Controls - This allows you to control your image's level of saturation.

Let's start with an example. The photo at the beginning of this article (fig1) is a regular image which was unfortunately taken without proper lighting.

Additionally, you'll notice that it has a rather strong yellow cast on it. This is the effect of incandescent lights in the area. What I need to do is open this image in an image editing program, I'll use Photoshop, and open up the Curves palette. (fig 5)



Fig 5 shows the histogram of a dark image.

You'll notice immediately that the histogram shown is severely one-sided. This means that the image has a lot of information for

the dark area, but not much for the light. The easiest way to fix this is press the Auto button. In this case, there wasn't much improvement. So we'll just have to dig in and get our hands dirty. (fig 6)



Fig 6 shows that the "auto" option doesn't always work out.

You'll notice that if I drag one of the anchor points from the lower left of the grid, the image immediately lightens up and more of the image is viewable (fig 7). This effectively reduces the tonal range by forcing the darkest points to become lighter.



Fig 7 shows how dragging the anchor point lightens the image.

As I drag the anchor from the upper right of the grid, the image's lightest points are affected and the image tones become even lighter. The side effect here is that the saturation of the image just jumped up! Don't worry, you can fix this using the Saturation controls later. (fig 8)



Fig 8 shows upper anchor points adjustment to lighten, but beware, too much of a shift will make the image look muddy.

Select "ok" for this update and come back to the image Curves again, you'll see that the image's exposure has changed and the histogram is now different. We are obviously missing really deep tones in this image but that is ok because the onscreen image is more visible now. (fig 9)



Fig 9 the on screen image is more visible and the histogram changed.

Let's move on to the hue adjustment. While a nice rich yellow hue will add warmth to any picture, this one simply has too much. In the RGB Additive Color spectrum, the combination of Red & Green light makes Yellow. By adding some Blue & Green (figs 10, 11) light the image is made brighter and the warmth offered by the red is reduced. Alternatively, if you remove some Red and Green the color is balanced and the image is made darker (fig 12 on page 14). Try some different combinations and see what looks best. You can even add a color cast to any image using this same technique. If additional light has been added and the image becomes overly saturated, just use the Saturation controls to knock it back down to normal.



Fig 10 shows adjusting only the blue channel.



Fig 11 shows adding green.

Color Correction... continued on page 14



Fig 12 shows removing green.

Again, keep in mind that different computers will display your image at a slightly different tonal range or with some color variation. Get your images to a

point where they look good, and strive for obvious color and tone. Just don't spend all of your time trying to change "butter yellow" to "beige" as most viewers won't see the difference.

There are several different tools that can be used to achieve the same results. Levels, Variations and Contrast achieve similar results using slightly different methods. The exact one you choose isn't quite as important as how you use them. Having a Lasso tool will be very beneficial to you as this will allow you to isolate an area of a picture in order to adjust the color/tone of it. (A common technique used by famous

photographers, such as Ansel Adams). You'll notice that by darkening parts of the picture, I'm able to draw more attention to the bright colors in the foreground (figs 13, 14).

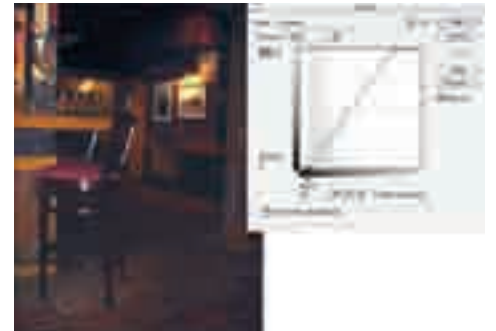


Fig 14 shows adjusting both ends changes the lights and darks, or contrast of the image.

And that's all there really is to it. It's a simple technique that gives you the ability to draw focus to appropriate parts of your images and at the very least, display products and scenes as they should be seen. **eBiz**



Fig 13 shows using a lasso to isolate specific areas of the image.



By Miguel Younger

Miguel Younger started his career as an Art Director and today oversees numerous departments working with department heads to implement time management and leadership skills among the team. Miguel can be reached via e-mail at miguely@ebizinsider.com.

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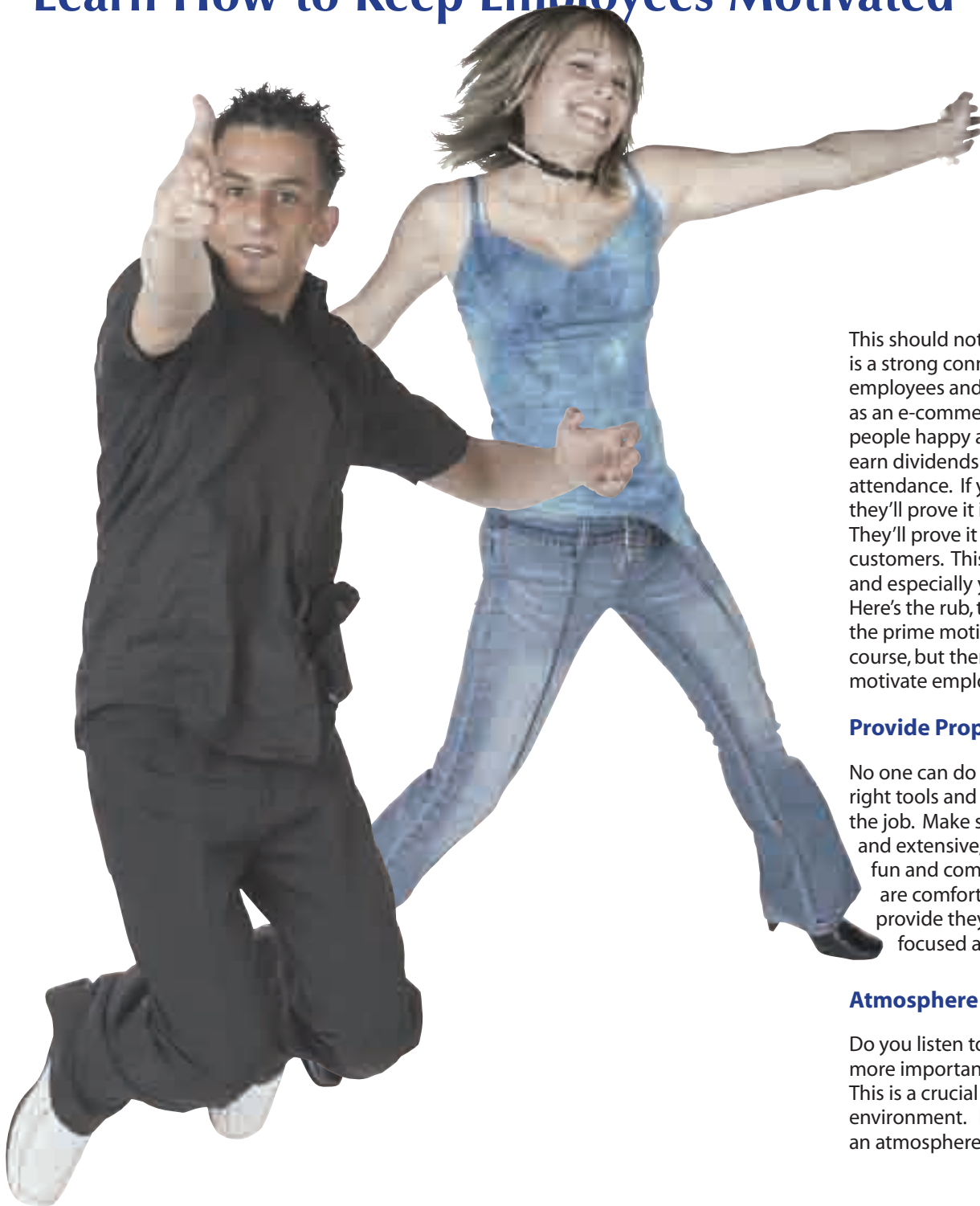
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Happy Employees = Happy Customers

Learn How to Keep Employees Motivated



This should not come as a surprise. There is a strong connection between happy employees and happy customers. If you as an e-commerce operator can keep your people happy and motivated at work, you'll earn dividends that go well beyond better attendance. If your staff enjoys their work, they'll prove it in the quality of their work. They'll prove it by taking better care of your customers. This will make your company and especially your bottom line look good. Here's the rub, though. Money is not always the prime motivator. Money helps, of course, but there are many creative ways to motivate employees.

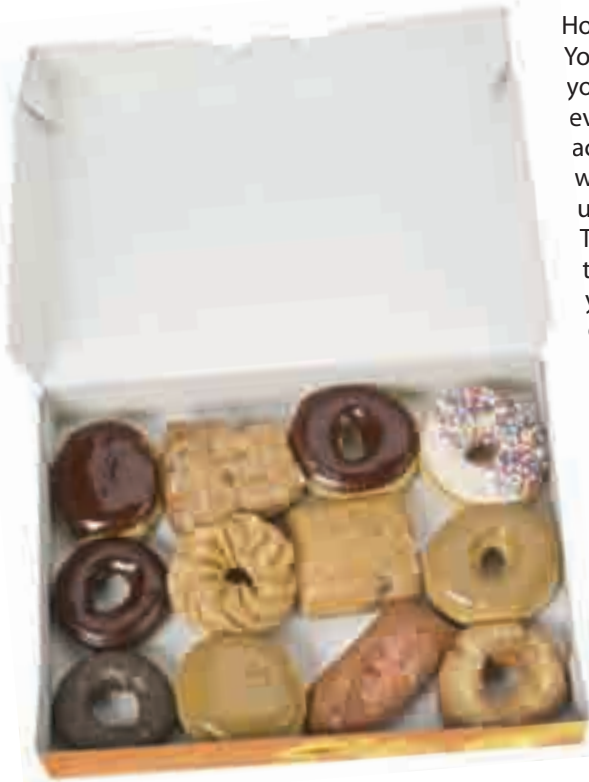
Provide Proper Training to Succeed

No one can do the right job without the right tools and training, no matter what the job. Make sure the training is focused and extensive, but make it work. Make it fun and compelling. If your employees are comfortable with the training you provide they will definitely stay more focused and motivated to succeed.

Atmosphere and Attitude Are Key

Do you listen to your people? Perhaps more important, do they talk to you? This is a crucial indicator of a happy work environment. Do your best to promote an atmosphere whereby employees

can talk freely with any member of the management staff, offer ideas and make suggestions. The fact is, your people often know how to improve their jobs in ways that never occurred to you. Not only should they feel free to talk, you should encourage their feedback on a regular basis. Sadly, some people are shy about direct conversations. Make it easy for them. Suggestion boxes are a great way to harvest the input and ideas of people who are uncomfortable going directly to a member of management.



Team work is a strong spirit builder. And it is true; the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The effective use of teams will result in happy employees whose combined decision-making solves more problems than having people go it alone. This makes you a better company, with your people sharing their wisdom and learning from others. This directly contributes to overall customer satisfaction.

Relax your dress code. To the extent your business allows, encourage casual wear. If you want a consistent look, use your imagination. Create some cool company t-shirts with your logo to hand out to employees.

Provide snacks. Candy, soda, fruit, doughnuts and the like may seem like a small thing. Don't be fooled. One of the first things people will say about an office that has snacks on hand is "my office is cool—they have snacks!" It will cost you a few dollars to keep the soda flowing, but the payoff is immense. Not only will you be saving people time they might have spent shopping on their own, you'll save them money and show you care.

Keep Employees Informed

How do you feel when you're "in the loop"? You feel important and connected, don't you? It's the same for your people. Keep everyone current on all the exciting accomplishments of the month and what's to come next month. Provide updates on company news in general. There are many ways you can do this through newsletters, e-mails or post on your internal intranet. If you want to go even further, have company lunches or dinners. This will take everyone away from the office monthly for a nice quarterly break.

Management Style

Avoid micro-managing if you can. Continuous fussing and meddling becomes a de-motivator for employees. That said; under-management is the overwhelming common denominator in low or below standard workplace performance at all levels. The under-managed worker struggles because his or her supervisor is not providing needed direction and support. When supervisors practice essential interpersonal skills, their behavior will result in happy employees whose work contributes to customer satisfaction.

It's a simple equation: Happy Employees=Happy Customers=Happy Owners! **eBiz**



By Ed Stanchak

Ed Stanchak has nearly a decade of experience in human resources management. When it comes to hiring, firing and employee motivation, Ed is the one to talk to! Contact him at eds@ebizinsider.com

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Mixing It Up!

Choose a Media Mix for Your Next Campaign.

2007 Media Schedule

| MEDIA OUTLET | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | OCT | NOV | DEC | TOTAL |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| NATION WIDE NEWSPAPER 2col x 3" B&W Sundays Only | 7 17 15 22 29 | 4 11 18 25 | 4 11 18 25 | | 7 14 21 28 | 4 11 18 25 | 2 9 16 23 30 | |
| RATE: | \$22,500 | \$18,000 | \$18,000 | \$18,000 | \$18,000 | \$18,000 | \$22,500 | \$238,500 |
| NATIONAL BILLBOARD 83 Major U.S. Cities | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| MONTHLY RATE: | | | \$31,500 | \$31,500 | | \$31,500 | \$31,500 | \$157,500 |
| BGH.COM Media Placement Banner | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| MONTHLY RATE: | \$4,800 | \$4,800 | \$4,800 | \$4,800 | \$4,800 | \$4,800 | | \$55,200 |
| DISCOVER CHANNEL Cable TV Advertising Sundays 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm | 7 17 15 22 29 | 4 11 18 25 | 4 11 18 25 | 1 8 15 22 29 | 4 11 18 25 29 | 2 9 16 23 30 | | |
| RATE: | \$8,190 | \$6,552 | \$6,552 | \$8,190 | \$6,552 | \$8,190 | | \$86,814 |
| TOTAL MEDIA COSTS: | | | | | | | | \$538,014 |

Mix it up

An effective media mix maximizes the exposure and effectiveness of your message. Every time your customer interacts with seamless and memorable communication it keeps your message front of mind.

Start Studying

Learn about your prospects through demographics or lifestyle statistics. Survey your existing customers to learn about future prospects. A carefully thought-out survey can reveal their tastes in TV programs, radio shows, websites, e-mail, publications, direct mail and other ways they interact with the media. Keep your survey easy to read with brief, simple questions. Try to use as many yes or no questions as possible. Ask for specifics. If the answer is yes to "do you visit websites at work?" Ask for a list of favorite sites. Make your survey easy to fill out and to return. Always, always offer incentives for answering surveys.

Developing a Plan

Too many businesses "manage" their media purchasing without a plan. They buy when salespeople call and when the money is gone their campaigns are, too. These businesses are passing up real opportunities to increase return on investment. The key is planning.

1. Set goals for your advertising with a plan to match. If you want an additional 10% in sales from your existing customer base, explain how the media

Some fishing ponds teem with rainbow trout, others are filled with carp. If you want the rainbows, be at the right pond at the right time with the right bait, or you'll be eating carp for supper.

A champion angler studies the ponds, the habits of the fish and the bait to land the big ones. E-commerce operators also have to identify their customer's favorite habits, baits and ponds.

Multiple Touch Points

Imagine your prospective customer starts the day with breakfast and a morning

paper, listens to radio and sees billboards while commuting, browses e-mail and websites at work, reads a magazine at lunch, opens snail mail after work, watches TV and shops online before bedtime. Clearly, only a true media mix can touch this person all day.

Companies use the media to become a part of our lives; in return we use their products or services. We take it for granted but they don't. Companies get close to us by taking advantage of multiple touch points. Use their example and create an integrated media mix which will reach your customer morning, noon and night.

outlets and scheduled touch times target your customer with the right message and incentives.

2. Identify the typical prospect. Make a profile. For example: my customer is male, 18 to 35, earns between \$20k to 50k, reads the sports section of USA Today, subscribes to Sports Illustrated, follows college basketball on ESPN2, listens to sports talk radio, visits espn.com at work, reads unsolicited mail about sports offers, etc....
3. Media Outlets: list the vehicles for your advertising, public relations or strategic messages. Budget accordingly. If your typical customer reads Better Homes and Gardens magazine or watches American Chopper on the Discovery Channel, then they should be on your list even if your budget can't presently accommodate them. Identify them now; touch them later.
4. Develop a year-long strategy and marketing budget including your goals and the message or incentives you want to deliver. Touching prospective customers, morning, noon and night may be too pricey, but do your best. If they visit a specific blog every day, include a banner ad or a text link on that blog. Remember, frequency keeps your company in mind.
5. Set up a calendar to show the media outlets you are using; mark the dates and track the costs.
6. Document your media buying. Track responses and sales carefully so you can adjust your schedule to get the best from your media mix. Tracking will also keep you from making costly mistakes in your future planning.

Let's Go Fishing

The better you know the fish, the more you'll catch. Learn where they live, what they like and when they like it; then attract them accordingly. It's the same with e-commerce. The fish are out there and they're biting. Don't forget the bait! **eBiz**



By Randy Llewellyn

Randy Llewellyn has decades of experience in print and web design and knows how to effectively communicate a message using various media mixes. Today, Randy is the designer behind this very magazine. Contact him at randyll@ebizinsider.com

Tech Corner: Avoiding Spam: How to Protect Your In-Box

You log on to check your e-mail and there it is. "Increase your endowment with this magic formula." Unfortunately, the magic formula isn't a mathematical equation and the endowment has nothing to do with your stock portfolio. Congratulations, you've been spammed!

Since this article is appearing in "the magazine for e-commerce professionals" let's assume you not only have an e-mail account, but you use it – A LOT. We'll examine both sides: (1) reducing the amount of spam in your in-box; and (2) ensuring you as an e-merchant aren't filtered and blocked as spam.

A Brief History of Spam

The word "spam" first was used to refer to junk e-mail in 1978 by members of bulletin board services and the U.S. Government controlled ARPANet (the predecessor to the Internet). In 2004, the U.S. Congress adopted the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing Act or "Can Spam" Act, making mass distribution of unsolicited e-mail punishable by heavy fines, imprisonment, or both.

Hormel Foods, which manufactures and sells SPAM luncheon meat doesn't object to the use of "Spam." However, the brand name "SPAM" in all caps, is trademarked and the use of the meat can picture or logo are strictly prohibited when referring to e-mail spam.

Reducing the amount of spam in your in-box

Spammers get your e-mail address by a process called "harvesting" where a system combs the internet for e-mail addresses. To prevent being harvested, don't list your e-mail address on your website. Instead, use a customized contact form that shows you're reachable, but doesn't include your e-mail address.

Spam also targets addresses beginning with common phrases like "info," "help," or "support." If you must put your e-mail address on your site, create something unique. If you specialize in gardening tools, perhaps john-the-gardener@yoursite.com.

Avoid using your primary e-mail address when you participate in online forums and newsgroups. Also, pay attention to online forms, and be sure to check or uncheck the box associated with "Share my e-mail address with people we think might share your interests" as appropriate.

Use a tool to filter spam into a "Junk Mail" filter. The big e-mail providers (Yahoo, MSN's Hotmail, Google's gMail) all provide built in junk filtering and allow you to upgrade your account to a "professional mail" package for advanced customization. If you're using another provider, check to see if they provide filtering, or use a third-party service like postini.com to do the job.

Send unwanted spam to your ISP's abuse desk and the Federal Trade Commission by forwarding the message to spam@uce.gov. The FTC uses e-mail stored in this database to pursue law enforcement actions against people who send deceptive spam e-mail.

*Spam is a fact of e-commerce life. The better you know your adversary, the better you'll manage. **eBiz***



By John Dawe

John Dawe is your typical computer geek. Ask him and he'll admit it! If you have a technical question and would like to see it answered here in Tech Corner, drop John and e-mail at johnhd@ebizinsider.com.



Rich Media — Use It Effectively to Drive Sales

You're open for business. You have your products, prices, logo and a fresh site design. You practice SEO. What's the next big thing to enhance the shopping experience? It's "rich media."

If you've watched a movie online, listened to an mp3 or used sites like Google Maps and Gmail, then you have used rich media. Rich media, or RIA (Rich Internet Application) describes a broad range of interactive digital media. Flash, video streaming, audio, animation, AJAX, and other mash-ups that create dynamic motion and content — are all rich media. "Web 2.0" is a trendy term that describes the sensory essence of the rich media experience. Is rich media for you? We'll discuss how to take advantage of these technologies.

Getting the Customer Involved

The advantage of using rich media technologies is that you can offer user interaction, which allows your visitors to actually participate and create their experience. Done well, this can separate you from similar retailers and attract people to your site.

Flash

Flash is a great way to enhance your e-commerce store if you keep it simple.

The vast majority of Internet users have a Flash plug-in installed. For those who don't have a Flash plug-in, provide an alternative presentation. When optimized correctly, most Flash files use less bandwidth than other common site elements like graphic headlines and buttons. You can use Flash to:

- Rotate a series of product images on your homepage or provide a simple sideshow.



- Showcase product options without having to refresh the page(s). For instance, if you sell t-shirts you can provide a visual example of color and size choices.

- Replace text to deliver dynamic titles with custom fonts. Flash image replacement techniques involve a place hold Flash movie that can take dynamic text and convert it to display using a font otherwise not available on the user's computer. The files created are smaller than using graphic headline, but they are also dynamic. If you want to change the headline text, you can do it easily and immediately.



SiFR (Scalable Inman Flash Replacement) replaces web fonts with dynamic flash fonts. It is used by ESPN and ABC.com amongst others.

- Offer video content. More shoppers are likely to have a Flash plug-in installed versus a Windows Media, Real Player, or Quicktime Player.

Streaming Video

E-commerce operators occasionally need to provide streaming video and Flash is the solution that the majority of the shoppers can view. Other popular choices include the big 3 (Windows Media, Quicktime, Real Player). Streaming video can be terrific for instructional information and product demonstration. Before you leap, consider your target audience and evaluate your choices.

AJAX

AJAX stands for "Asynchronous Java Script and XML". AJAX is a web development technique used for creating interactive web applications. It makes web pages feel more responsive by exchanging small amounts of data with the server behind the scenes, so that the entire web page does not have to be reloaded each time the user requests a change. This should increase the web page's interactivity, speed, functionality and usability. Ultimately, you may find yourself using AJAX extensively since it provides the most options. AJAX can create dynamic shopping cart results, instant search results and visual confirmation effects like process bars, animations, etc. Just as with other rich

media technologies, consider content and code and provide lightweight solutions that are backwards compatible for your shoppers. A custom AJAX shopping cart doesn't work if the user has Javascript shut off in their browser.

APIs and Mash Ups

Another form of rich media is service API's being mashed up with the rich media technologies. For instance, using rich media you can grab RSS feeds from another website (possibly your company blog) and deliver them on your e-commerce store. Video and images hosted on another website or via services like YouTube and Flickr can be integrated onto your store easily. You can add Google

maps, create XML files, etc. There are many possibilities that offer you as the admin a very simple and intuitive way to present and manage your media.

Industry giants are increasingly embracing rich media applications. This is not a trend; it is the future of the web experience. Get involved now to prepare your store for the shoppers of the future. **eBiz**



By Chris Pawloski

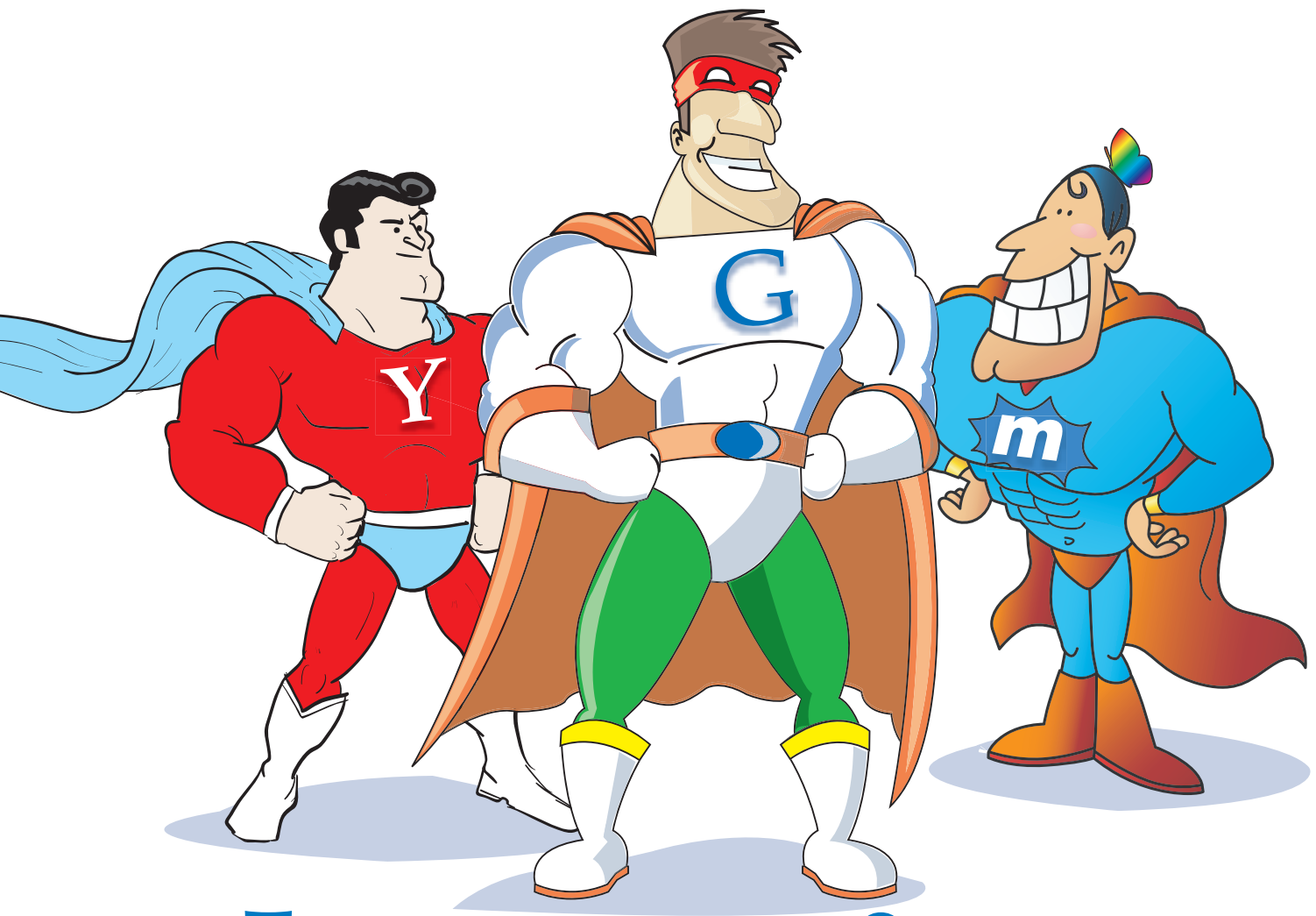
Christopher Pawloski has over a decade of experience in both graphic design and programming. He started his career doing print design and has had illustration work featured in major magazines. He is an advocate for usability and function-over-style practices on the web. Chris can be reached via e-mail at chrisp@ebizinsider.com.

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The Big 3

(Google, Yahoo!, MSN)

What makes them different and why they're all important?

If you want to be physically fit, go to the gym. If you want your online business to be financially fit, go to the GYM. GYM means Google (G), Yahoo! (Y), and MSN (M), the "Big 3" engines that account

for more than 90% of all searches on the web. A study by MarketingSherpa and Prospectiv found 52% of shoppers search on Google, Yahoo! MSN, (i.e. Search Engines). If you have an e-commerce store

it is very important to achieve and maintain organic/natural results on these engines.

What makes them unique? What factors differentiate them? Should you care about

all 3? Each engine has pros and cons and you can leverage each to your benefit.

The search engines' goal is to provide the most relevant results to their end users. How they do it and what factors they leverage is almost a mystery. SEO experts, by continually trying different techniques, usually figure out what the secret recipe is. Then the search engines modify their algorithms. There are ethical guidelines also referred to as "White hat" techniques that allow the end user to achieve long term results.

Which engine should you focus on for your Internet Marketing Needs (PPC, SEO) and why?

A recent report shows the market share of the "Big 3 engines"

- Google – 55.2% Market Share, 3.8 Billion Searches*
- Yahoo – 21.9% Market Share, 1.5 Billion Searches*
- MSN – 9% Market Share, 6.5 Million Searches*

This gives Google a huge advantage in terms of market share. Google built this advantage by being savvy in the way they give weight to different factors and by constantly refining their algorithms to provide the most relevant results to the end user.

MAJOR DIFFERENCES:

Google

Algorithm: Google's unique algorithm comes into play when its spiders crawl your site. Google's spiders are said to heavily weigh the age of the site, the theme of the site, the quality of the links and hundreds of other factors. Google has been known to penalize sites that engage in keyword spamming or duplicate content. Essentially, don't mess with Google because 10 times out of 10 they are smarter than you are.

Demographics: Google's Demographics are catered more towards serious searchers, advanced users, male and wealthier. According to MarketingSherpa, 61.8% of shopping-related searches were done on Google. Google is your priority.

Search Marketing/PPC: Google AdWords

is Google's pay per click management system. Users can specify the maximum price per click they are willing to pay for each keyword and create a maximum daily budget. In determining bid price, Google also weighs a site's quality score, and sites with a higher quality score may see a lower cost per click.

Yahoo

Algorithm: Yahoo! is in some ways less advanced than Google. Yahoo! has been said to still give weight to off-topic links within sites. Google gives a negative ranking to that maneuver. Yahoo! also

offers a paid inclusion program, where webmasters can submit/optimize their data feeds to appear in the organic results for a predetermined price per click. New commercial sites may be able to leverage this to appear high organically.

Yahoo! has a wealth of content, so they may give more weight to e-commerce stores, rather than content sites. Yahoo! is said to place a great deal of weight on common phrases like "how to". Unlike Google, Yahoo! doesn't seem to place as much weight on the age of a site, so newer sites may do better in Yahoo! search results.

Demographics: Predominantly Female, very portal-oriented. MarketingSherpa reports 25.6% of shopping-related searches are done on Yahoo.

Search Marketing/PPC: Yahoo! utilizes Yahoo! Search Marketing for its pay per click program. Users can specify a daily budget and maximum cost per click. The

new Yahoo! Search Marketing platform Panama weighs a site's click through-rate when they rank an ad.

MSN

Algorithm: MSN is new to search engine marketing. It has a difficult time determining if a site's links are relevant to the topic of the site, but places a great deal of emphasis on the content on the page. MSN appears to weigh commercial sites more heavily than content sites. Yet, newer sites that haven't risen yet on Yahoo! and Google have been known to see high rankings on MSN more quickly.

MSN may also give more weight to page titles and page content and has been known to process search queries

better than Yahoo! by taking into account the theme of the site.

MSN doesn't seem to give more weight to sites that have been around longer.

Demographics: Less Experienced users. Gender is all over the place.

MarketingSherpa reports 6.2% of shopping-related searches are done on MSN.

Search Marketing/PPC: MSN uses AdCenter for its pay per click program. It ranks ads on the max price you're willing to pay per click, as well as the click-through rate of the ad. You can also display different ads based on the demographics you're targeting. While MSN has smaller volume in terms of clicks/sales, the cost per click is significantly less than Google/Yahoo.

Conclusion:

Know your business model, demographics, and goals. This will help you decide which engine you should get your all-important advertising dollars. **eBiz**



By Farukh Shroff

Farukh Shroff is considered one of the top Internet marketing experts in the country as well as a true pioneer and leading voice of the industry who helps clients with affiliate marketing management, search engine marketing and optimization and media management. Farukh can be reached via e-mail at farukhs@ebizinsider.com.

E-mail Marketing –

Creating an effective e-mail campaign



E-mail marketing is no longer a simple blast out to a list from your Hotmail account with a screenshot of your homepage. It takes research, time and a financial investment to maximize your return.

Too many e-commerce operators have avoided e-mail marketing to avoid the "spammer" tag. An e-mail marketer is most certainly not a spammer, not with the right approach.

E-mail marketing is one of the most cost effective ways to advertise your online store. You are e-mailing someone who either purchased from you in the past, or gave you their e-mail address. If you are sending it to anyone else, then yes, you are a spammer.

“People gave you their e-mail addresses because your store intrigued them... Whatever it was, it says something about the people on your list.”

Getting Started

To create an ethical and effective e-mail campaign, include the following:

- What type of people are on your list
- Getting your e-mail to the in-box
- Once in the in-box, what will intrigue them to open it
- Attracting them to visit your store
- Once at the store, getting them to order

People gave you their e-mail addresses because your store intrigued them. It may have been your selection, your offer, the tone of your copy or the general feel of the site (fun, professional, etc). It may have been the time of day they shop, gender, coupon codes they redeemed, geographic location, etc. Whatever it was, it says something about the people on your list.

Create different segments that encompass the bulk of your list.

An example of a segment you could identify is the stay-at-home, bargain-shopping

mothers identified by the time of day they shop (8-11, 11-5), if they purchased from a sale category and if they used a coupon code.

Creating groups like this will allow you better target your message to your recipient.

Getting Seen

Once you know your target, how can you get an e-mail to their in-box?

Spam blockers and filters have complicated the e-mail process. The new challenge is to get around the road blocks. It's not unethical; this is the extra work unethical e-mail marketers have created for you.

What causes e-mail to be considered spam?

Issue: E-mail not sent directly or solely to the account (all recipients are Bcc'd with the "To" address being yourself).

Solution: Use an e-mail list management program so that each recipient receives a personalized e-mail that is addressed only to them.

Issue: E-mail is HTML only.

Solution: Provide a plain text version of your e-mail with identical content.

Issue: IP address for your e-mail server is shared with other people identified as spammers (common with cheaper e-mail solutions and list management solutions).

Solution: Premium e-mail solution like Exact Target or GOT Campaigner Pro. These companies have teams working with spam filtering companies to keep their IP addresses white-listed.

Issue: Text within your e-mail is causing spam filters to raise red flags.

Solution: Avoid known terms such as "sale," "100% guarantee," "specials," "offers," etc. in your subject lines and message. A premium e-mail solution will help you solve text issues.

Tip: In your HTML version you can use these phrases with the images of e-mail where the spam filters can't recognize them, but avoid them in the text of the HTML version and in the text version of the e-mail.

Issue: E-mail contained no unsubscribe link.

Solution: A simple sentence with a link to an "unsubscribe" page.

E-mail Marketing continued on page 26

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<http://mycoupons.solidcactus.com>

Following these guidelines will help you to maximize the deliverability of your e-mail and ensure that you are getting your advertisements into the in-box.

If you are intending to really make a go at e-mail marketing, it is strongly suggested to get one of the premium e-mail solutions out there. They will provide you with all the necessary tools so that your deliverability rate is optimal.

Getting Read

The e-mail is in the in-box. How do you get them to open it?

Your "open rate" is the percentage of people who received the e-mail and opened it (not the percentage you targeted – you'll have some bad e-mail addresses and despite all efforts some will be blocked).

The open rate is 100% based on the subject line; the only thing they see before they actually open it to read the message. You must be to the point and intriguing with as few words as possible.

Identify with your recipient! If you have a well-segmented list, you will be more effective. With the stay-at-home mom who is a bargain shopper, your subject line may be something like:

- Recipient first name – Your Company name"
- You used her name, so immediately she will know that you have had some interaction with her.
- You used your company name, so she may remember being at your store.
- You remind her of the pain-free shopping experience. This pain is taking her kids to the mall, trudging through endless stores and waiting in long lines.
- You did not use any terms that may get you flagged as spam.

Getting Visited

Once the recipient opens the e-mail, how do you get them to the store?

Even if people have HTML turned on, most still see the text version first. Text is where you start first to get interest in the e-mail.

Rather than have administrative controls

right at the top of the e-mail (e.g. "click here to view HTML version"), feature your message. The top middle portion of the e-mail is where 90% of recipients look first. This is very valuable real estate.

If your e-mail solution allows it, have a link to view the e-mail as a web page with the administrative controls. If you can get people online, they will be more willing to click a link in the e-mail and arrive at a product page of your store.



Your e-mail template should include your logo and elements of your web design, including homepage graphics which advertise specials, small design elements like wavy lines and so on. Branding helps the shopper remember your store.

Avoid using paragraphs of text, as people rarely read them. Most of us are attracted to images, graphics, large headlines, and products. Any statements of value (special sale, coupons, deadlines, etc) should be prominently displayed where people's eyes are attracted. Put your images, graphics and headlines in the top middle portion of the e-mail.

The most effective e-mail templates are simple and straight-forward. The sale message is right at the top of the page accompanied by an image of people using the product. Below the copy about the offer are more products, as well as a link to

a category containing any sale items. The subscription management links belong at the bottom...always.

Content counts. Sadly, while design is important, if your offer and products are not interesting, you won't attract people to your store. Make sure your e-mail offer is of high value and popularity. Ask yourself, would you buy it?

Getting the Order

Beyond e-mail marketing, the rules that effect conversion rates still count. Your store must be...

- Simple to navigate
- Well-categorized
- Professional in appearance
- Well-branded
- Provide links to important information like shipping policies, return and exchange policies, sizing charts, etc
- Thorough product descriptions
- Competitive pricing
- A consistent message will maximize conversion rates from e-mail marketing. If you were using a fall sale image in the e-mail, carry this look and feel across to your landing page. Show a similar image at the top of the page body, show the offer again with this image. Have the offer on your homepage.

Getting Real

Every niche is different. No magical formula guarantees the success of your campaigns. Apply these guidelines to your industry and what you know about your customers, and then test, test, test, until you learn what works.

Remember, you cannot find a more qualified list than past customers. If you don't have time to segment a list, come up with offers, design an e-mail template, find a premium e-mail solution and learn how to use it correctly, or find a professional who will.

Done right, e-mail marketing works! **eBiz**



By Sean Gove

Sean Gove spends his time creating successful marketing campaigns for print, web and e-mail and can answer questions about your next campaign. Drop him an email at seang@ebizinsider.com.

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