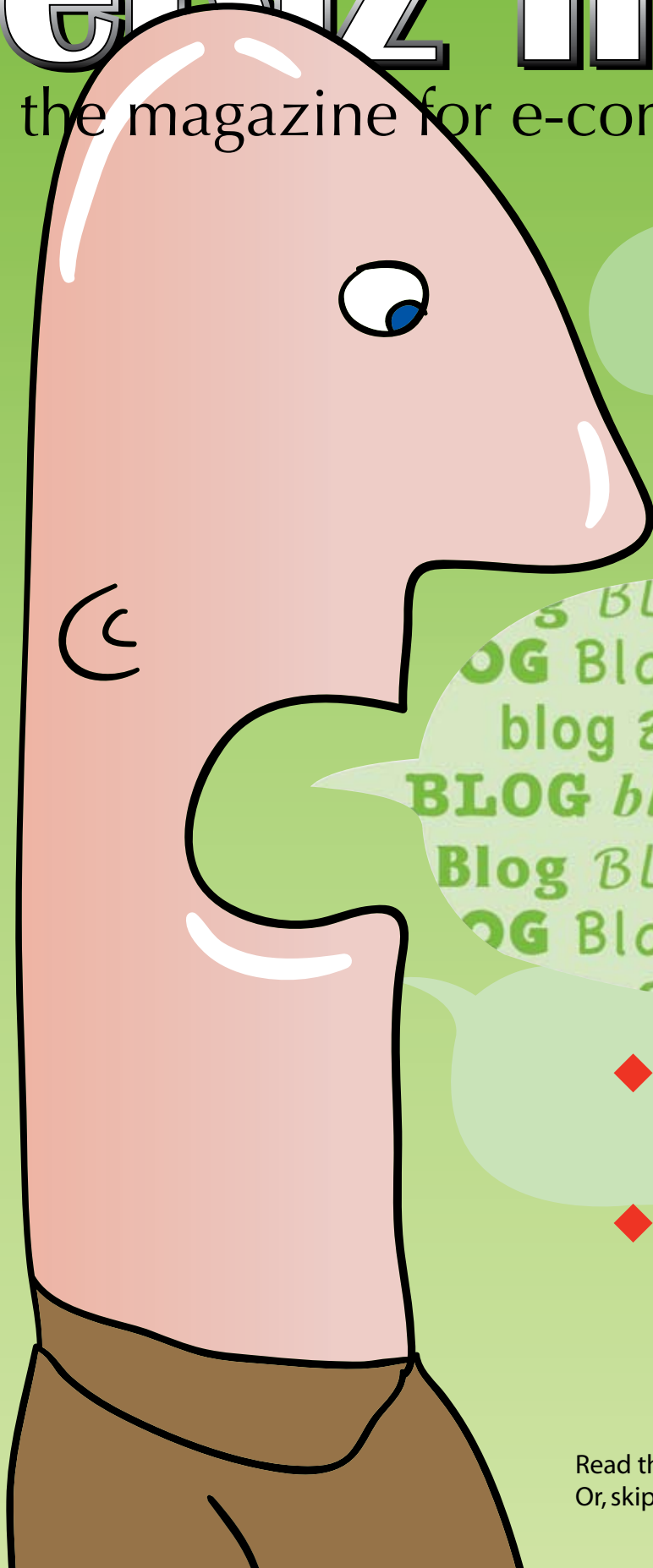# eBiz Insider

the magazine for e-commerce professionals.

THE BLOG
COMES TO E-BUSINESS

Is a blog right for your e-business?

—*By Chris Pawloski*

◆ **Creating Your First 360 Degree Product View**

◆ **Why Copyright? Copyright Registration and the E-merchant**

Read this magazine and make hay in summer's longer days. Or, skip it. Hey, that's why they call 'em dog days…

eBiz Insider

the magazine for e-commerce professionals.

July 2007 Volume 1 • Number 3

COMING NEXT MONTH

- *Mixing it Up!*
  Choosing the right media mix for your next campaign.

- *Photo Manipulation*
  Color correction on a shoe-string budget.

- *Branding: Not Just for Cattle Ranchers*
  Learn the importance of carrying your "brand" throughout your site.

- *Rich Media*
  How to use it effectively to drive sales.

- *Plus, Tech Corner, Letters to the Editor, and more!*

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Lessons of an E-shopaholic

By Scott Sanfilippo, Editor in Chief

Hi, I'm Scott Sanfilippo, and I'm addicted to Internet shopping. If I were in a room full of *eBiz Insider* readers, I'm sure several of you would be yelling "Hi Scott!" As e-commerce store owners, we should all make great e-commerce shoppers. After all, it's what we do. But we should also be even better "secret shoppers" as we spy on our competition—*and ourselves.*

I've peered into the "neighbor's yard" many times. I ordered from my competitors to see how long it took the purchase to go from the Internet to the UPS truck, what type of inserts or samples were put in with my order, the condition of the box and its contents upon arrival and what e-mail communications I received along the way. I placed phone orders to see if the customer service representatives were able to answer specific product questions and to see how a customer was treated pre- and post-sale.

Is it sneaky? Well, I did it with my companies and it was all to the same end. I want any information that will help my people serve my customers better.

Providing your customers with quality service is crucial and the rewards can be substantial. This month's issue of *eBiz Insider* examines little things that many don't even regard as customer service. 360 degree product photos to give your customers the full monty; Blogs and SEM tricks to boost rankings and click-throughs, coupons to save your customers money and living, breathing reps to make them happy. It's all service and it should all be part of your business.

The Bigger You Get…

Speaking of service, I'm writing this column fresh off a client-oriented event called the Solid Cactus Boot Camp. We hold these meetings for clients four times a year at different locations. Our most recent boot camp was on the "*Disney Wonder*® ship" from "*Disney Cruise Line*®". 50 clients and staffers spent 4 days in the Bahamas attending seminars and bonding on and off the ship. We planned this event solely to improve communications between our clients and our people. Oh, plus it was FUN! **eBiz**

Successful
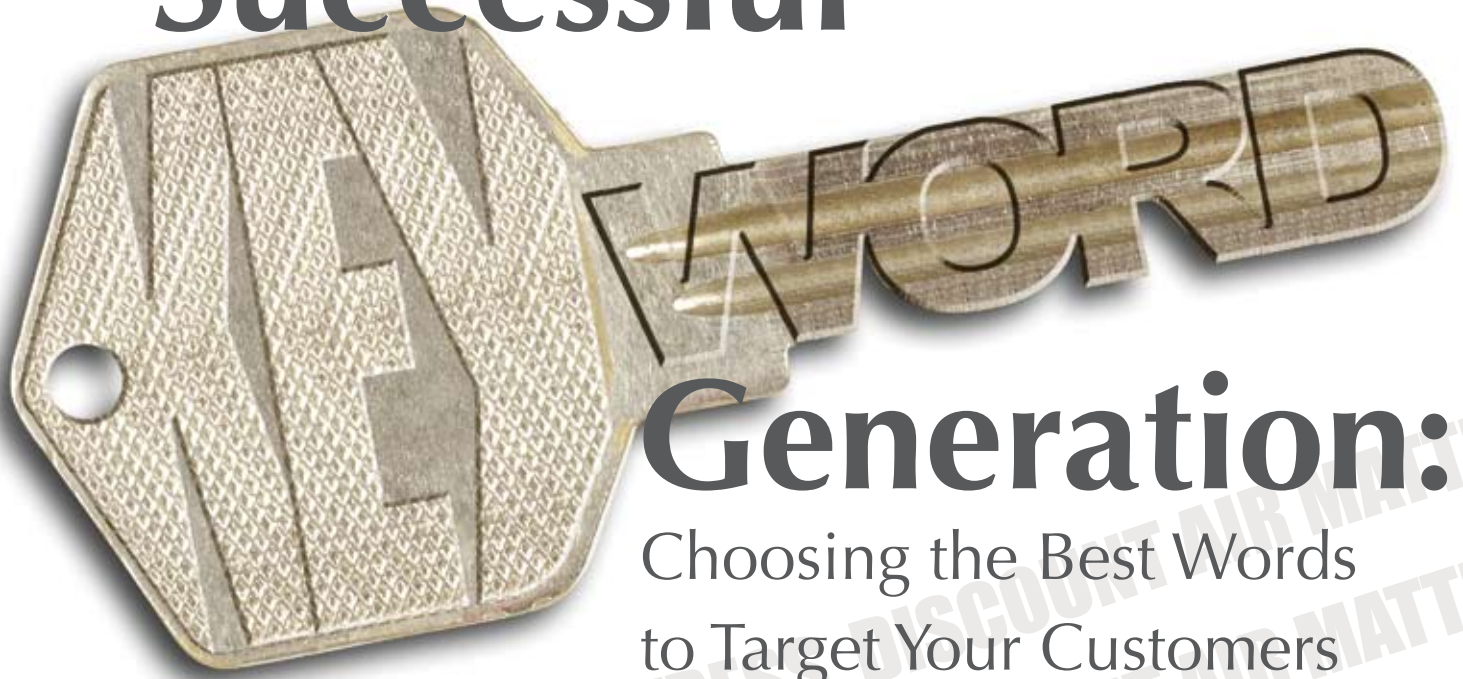
Keyword

Generation:

Choosing the Best Words
to Target Your Customers

At first glance Keyword Generation seems easy. Just pick keywords that are relevant to your business, put them on your site or bid for them in Google Adwords. But many business owners become overwhelmed when they begin fully researching keywords for SEO content creation. It becomes especially confusing once you hit Pay-Per-Click (PPC) with its various match types, negative keywords, and bidding strategies. Which keywords will bring a return for your time and ad spend? Just remember your business objectives, your customers' objectives and the profitable long tail.

**"A word used as a key for
opening the door to targeted, relevant traffic."**

This is where it all begins. The goal of any keyword research campaign is to build a list of keywords that will draw relevant, targeted traffic to your site. Let's say you sell air mattresses online and you decide to bid on the keyword "air." This is an example of a horribly general keyword that will attract people that are looking for air guns, air tanks, oxygen and the like. You'll generate worthless traffic that will cost you serious dollars. In this case a keyword like "air mattress" would be a better start. Find a word that opens the doors for targeted potential consumers who already want the products you offer.

"A word used as a reference point for finding other words or information."

Think like a consumer. Identify key words that potential buyers might use to find products. Customers looking for a mattress that they

key·word [kee-wurd] also key word: n.

1. A word used as a key for opening the door to targeted, relevant traffic. *(Perspective: Your business objectives)*

2. A word used as a reference point for finding other words or information. *(Perspective: Your customer's objective)*

3. A significant or descriptive word. *(Perspective: Key to the profitable long tail)*

can put under a sleeping bag while camping might use the word "camping mattress" as a reference point. Start with the relevant reference word and spin out a list of keywords targeting those customers looking to purchase your product. Successful keywords could be "buy camping mattress," "buy camping mattress online" or "discount camping mattress."

Eliminate irrelevant traffic and cut costs by including negative keywords. If you only offer premium air mattresses and never cut prices then you would want negative keywords such as "sale," "discount" or "cheap." This increases conversions by only attracting buyers who are looking for a premium air mattress.

"A significant or descriptive word."

The average cost per click increased by 30% last year and is expected to increase another 30% this year. Ironically, keywords which cost the most also bring in the most general traffic. Keywords like "air" are not relevant, won't lead to conversions and they're expensive!

Descriptive long tail keywords on the other hand usually cost only cents per click. Because they are more descriptive they are more relevant to the product or service you are offering. A great long tail keyword would be "white Samsonite single person air mattress." By including the brand, size, color and product you increase relevancy dramatically. You might get fewer clicks on this keyword, but your chance of converting is much higher.

Compound your results by building a substantial list of long tail keywords. The best way to compile lists of descriptive relevant keywords is using the "concatenate" formula in Microsoft Excel. Create a list for each descriptive quality (brand, color, etc) and then use the concatenate function to incorporate those various entities into long tail keywords that are relevant to buyers.

Summing Up

When generating keywords for your business; be sure that they are relevant to your products, targeted to consumers who want to buy and as descriptive as possible. Congratulations! You've passed Keyword Generation 101. **eBiz**

By Jeff Petrosillo

PPC, SEM, SEO, CTR, CPM, ROI…they're all terms that make Jeff Petrosillo stand up and take note, after all he spends his days managing clients search engine marketing. Jeff knows the lingo and works hard at developing strategies to make clicks convert. E-mail Jeff at jeffp@ebizinsider.com.

Outsourcing Customer Service:
Do it and Prevent Alienating Your Customers

Who goes to your site and looks at your products? Who finds the products and takes the time to call? About 30% of your potential revenue, that's who. Lacking a top notch customer service department, you're losing 10% of your revenue during the off-season and as much as 30% of your bottom line during the holidays. Customer service is a need, not an option.

History

Customer service used to be an extra. Recently its popularity has grown online (and offline) as firms found increased profits by providing quality help to their customers and elevating their business profile. Customer service is crucial to ensure consistent growth and loyalty.

Costumer Service as a Buffer for Customers

Occasionally customers experience technical difficulties (cart not responding, pages breaking, customers who can't find the giant red order button. Hey! It happens!). Customer service can save the sale. They can take the heat when you ship the wrong item. You may eat shipping costs from time to time, but a company that responds quickly and professionally, keeping the "customer is always right" attitude, will generate greater customer loyalty than one that skimps on customer service.

When to Staff

Offer flexible hours. Don't just do 9-5; if possible offer 8 a.m.-12 midnight Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekends. Customers countrywide can call at their convenience. 24 hours sounds good, but the percentage of off-hour revenue typically won't support the expense.

How to Staff

It's best to have your own experienced Customer Service Staff, but professionalism comes first. Call centers train employees on customer service policy and phone etiquette. If you lack the manpower or the money to hire your own customer service representatives...outsource! Find a call center that focuses on e-commerce businesses.

Joe's Shoes: An Adventure in Customer Service — By Lorina Fauber

Why Outsource Customer Service?

Outsourcing leaves servicing your customer to the pros. Professional call centers ensure quality and customer loyalty with consistent training, quality monitoring of reps regularly, personal employee goals, an incentive plan and upward mobility to give employees opportunity for advancement. Outsourcing is usually cheaper than hiring, training and maintaining your own internal staff. Most call centers charge per minute and some even charge per second. Small to medium-sized companies should strongly consider outsourcing customer service.

Do NOT go Overseas!

We have all called an 800 number and dealt with somebody who barely speaks English. By the end of the conversation you either didn't want the product or didn't like the company, or both. If you outsource your customer service overseas you may be saving money while losing sales. "Cheap" customer service becomes an expense and doesn't build returning clients.

Outsource more than Calls

Some call centers will keep your business running if you go on vacation, or if you need some unexpected time off. Find a call center that is able to process orders, issue resolutions for upset customers, issue order tracking, up-sell products, work declined credit cards and help provide customer feedback, keeping the company goals consistent with their marketing.

Pay Attention

If your customers want quicker shipping, give it to them or your competition will. If they want a particular product, provide it. Quick response to customer needs separates you from the competition.

In Conclusion

Up to thirty percent of your visitors will turn into customers when they get to your site, find the product and call. Don't lose them now. Professional customer service is not an expense, but an investment. Customer service is your front line. If you don't have the resources for your own people, hire a call center. They have systems in place for quality control. The call center will keep you in touch with your customers, which will help your overall marketing and continue your growth. **eBiz**

By Kevin Barr

Kevin Barr lives, breathes and sometimes drinks customer service. As a call center manager, Kevin knows what it takes to make customers happy. After all, isn't that what customer service is all about? E-mail Kevin at kevinb@ebizinsider.com.

Tech Corner:
Gone Phishing – How to Avoid Getting Hooked

Phishing is when Internet scammers use e-mail lures to fish for user names, passwords or financial information. Hackers simply replaced the "f" with "ph". Usually a phishing attack is done with e-mail spam, sending millions of messages with one mouse click. Phishing was "born" in 1996 when hackers stole AOL Internet accounts by scamming passwords from AOL users.

How to Spot a Phishing Scam

At first glance, e-mail might look legitimate, as if it came from a company that you do business with. The "From" field of the e-mail might have the company ".com" address and a clickable link that takes you to what looks like the company's website, but a close look at the link will show that you've been directed to a different site. One of the best ways to tell is to copy and paste the link into the Internet browser address bar. Another trick are fake URL's that look genuine but switch one or two letters around.

E-mail with misspelled words or poor grammar often indicates that a letter is a fake. Most phishing e-mail show false statements to create the impression of an immediate risk or a threat, then ask for bank, credit card or financial information. Use common sense. No reputable financial institution will ever ask you to send sensitive information by e-mail.

Phight Phishing!

Never e-mail personal or financial information. If you need to send sensitive information over the Internet make sure that the Internet site is secure. Look for the lock icon on the Internet browser. Make sure that the site that your are connecting to begins with "https". Never give your account number and password out in response to e-mail.

Be careful about opening any attached files clicking links within the text of the e-mail. Attachments can contain threats that can weaken you computer's security and links can take you to fraudulent sites.

If you receive spam that is phishing for information, forward it to spam@uce.gov. If you believe you have been scammed, file a complaint at ftc.gov

Internet Explorer 7 and Mozilla Firefox both have Phishing Filter options.

To set up IE 7 go to the Tools menu in the upper-right toolbar, select Phishing Filter and make sure it is on.

For Mozilla Firefox, go to the Tools menu, select Options and the click the Security button. Make sure you have "Tell me if the site I'm visiting is a suspected forgery."

Scammers are out there and they're at the door. Don't let them in!
eBiz

Need help with spyware removal? Windows keep crashing? We feel your pain. E-mail your tech questions to techcorner@ebizinsider.com and look for the answers right here.

Holiday 2007:
What's On Your PPC Wish List?

Whether your site's been live for three weeks or three years no holiday season is like any other. Attitudes, perceptions and preferences change year to year – will your Pay-Per-Click (PPC) be ready?

AdvertisingAge.com projects that large companies with multi-channel marketing strategies will up their Internet Marketing spend to 10% this year, outpacing radio. With larger companies allocating more resources online, getting your PPC ready is more than an option, it becomes a number one priority.

Getting in earlier makes your ads more visible, more valuable and allows you to keep costs down.

Text Book Business Rule of The Universe: Create & Capture Value

With stronger PPC competition, costs will surely rise (for the guy who comes in late). If your quality score is in place early, you will trump the high cost bidders and get your company where you want to be!

Make Your Promotions Visible

If you offer free shipping include it in the ad text. If you offer bulk pricing make sure people know. Ad text promotions can be the deciding factor if your ad is clicked this holiday season or not.

Match Types

Match types are crucial to how many (or how few) impressions your site receives. Be aware of the strategic purpose and function for each match type. If your product offerings are very specific and niche friendly, utilize exact and embedded phrases to better qualify consumers.

Watch Your Position

Being number one or two on search engines might not be what's important or profitable for your website. Run reports and find out where you preformed best. Reports are free through AdWords. Use them!

Know Your Market

The most powerful tool in marketing remains knowing your customers and their preferences. How do they shop, what do they want and why should they choose your site? Go though the user experience. If you sell widgets, search widgets, search variations of keywords. Learn what your competitor is bidding on, know their variations and their positions.

Brand, Brand, Brand

The holiday is a key time to make sure you're bidding on yourself and your competitors. Be aware of your online image – how well do you communicate who you are and what you sell?

Trend Watch

Be aware of trends; don't aimlessly follow them. Depending on your monetary constraints, your entire season's budget can disappear if you bid too much on fad keywords or variations. Bidding on expensive or non-relevant keywords can drive an account into ruin.

Quality Score

Quality score is determined by a list of factors such as the amount you're bidding, your click thru rates (CTR) rates, landing page score, ad quality score, etc. The bottom line - make sure you structure your keywords in a tightly woven manner with ad text that corresponds to that set of keywords. Also, make sure that your landing pages are not full of images. Since robots can't read images, this could reduce your overall quality score.

Day Part Budgeting

Know when and where your customers are shopping. Do they look online during the day and purchase at night? Do they ignore all phases of the research cycle and buy on impulse? Will your PPC be ready? Will it produce the greatest return on investment (ROI) possible? Day parting allows you to hand pick when your ads are shown. Setting your budgets low or high in these times, assures your max marketing dollars are being spent at the right time on the right people.

Follow these guidelines and remember: PPC is both a long & short term strategy to prepare you and your site for maximum holiday exposure & ROI. Keep checking your accounts regularly. During the holiday selling season, bids will be at both the peak of volatility and excitement.

So, what strategies are on *your* holiday wish list? **eBiz**

By Michael Jozaitis

Michael takes pay-per-click seriously. After all, clients rely on his advice and recommendations to develop campaigns that generate positive return on investment. His advice pays off for clients on a daily basis. E-mail Michael at michaelj@ebizinsider.com.

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✳ Yes, I would like to receive more information about payment processing with Chase Paymentech and receive a FREE GIFT from Solid Cactus.

Business Name: _____

Phone: _____ Current Processor: _____

Contact Person: _____ Est. Annual MC/Visa Volume: _____

Title: _____ Average Ticket: _____

Fax to Solid Cactus at 570.270.3476 or call 888.361-9814.

MyCoupons.com:
A New Twist on the Discount Game

America is awash in online and offline coupons. Last year companies printed 300 billion coupons for discounts on all manner of goods and services. Consumers cashed them in, too, redeeming an estimated 2.6 billion of them and saving a staggering $331 billion. "That illustrates the investment marketers are willing to make to move products off the shelf," said Matthew Tilley, Director of Marketing for CMS. "Ultimately, it says volumes about how much they trust coupons to do the trick. You hear a lot of talk about the advertising value of coupons. While brands would be foolish to completely depend on that value to justify their investment, it would be equally foolish to completely ignore it."

Online, coupon use actually increases with income, according to a PriceRunner survey conducted by Amplitude Research in April. Nearly three-quarters of Internet users had redeemed at least one coupon

online during the previous six months. Nearly 20% had used online coupons six or more times during the previous six months. While less than 60% of those with incomes under $35,000 used a coupon online in the previous six months, nearly three-quarters of those with incomes between $35,000 and $74,000 said they converted a coupon in the previous six months. Finally, a staggering 84% of those with incomes of $75,000 said they had used online coupons in the prior six months. The numbers make sense. Coupons work. Now, which way do they work best for you?

The Coupon Model

Most online merchants promote their coupons through affiliate networks like Commission Junction or Link Share. The merchant pays the affiliate a percentage of the sale (usually 4%-20%). The affiliate network then charges the merchant an additional percentage premium. This means for merchants who want to target a discount to their customers, they're really giving three discounts.

The MyCoupons.com Model

"We publish coupon codes," says Greg Stoltz, CTO of MyCoupons.com. "But we're not trying to get in the way of the merchant/customer relationship. Our goal is to get the merchant to use us and cut the network out of the deal. With our way, merchants can give bigger discounts because they're not paying multiple fees. The customers get better discounts. We get a fee. Everyone wins."

The fee is another important difference between MyCoupons.com and its competitors. MyCoupons.com charges a flat $3 fee. So the fee for a $100 sale is still just three bucks, not $15 or $20 as the charge might run from an affiliate network. MyCoupons.com says it's all part of a better business "mousetrap."

"In the offline world you pay on a CPM basis," says Stoltz. "Essentially you pay for each box a coupon ultimately reaches. We believe we go one better. We don't get a commission until the customer redeems it. And it's still just three dollars. Our tag line for our merchant customers is 'it's your revenue—it's your customer.' We believe that coupons have to offer real value to work on an increasingly savvy shopper. MyCoupons.com clears the way

for merchants to offer better coupons and attract more customers."

"…we're not trying to get in the way of the merchant/customer relationship. Our goal is to get the merchant to use us and cut the network out of the deal. With our way, merchants can give bigger discounts because they're not paying multiple fees. The customers get better discounts. We get a fee. Everyone wins."

— Greg Stoltz, CTO of MyCoupons.com

The Stakes

More merchants are offering coupons and prosperous online customers are redeeming them. The question may not be whether to offer coupons, but how best to make them available and attractive to your buyers. However, research shows that while coupon printing continues to boom, coupon use has actually declined. Both the number of coupons distributed (-12%) and those redeemed (-13%) were down in 2006. The magnitude of the numbers suggests that, like other ad clutter, coupons may be overwhelming their intended targets. This increases the importance of offering meaningful savings.

Bottom line - a good affiliate and MyCoupons.com will both send you customers that will appreciate a deal. The difference is, MyCoupons.com's flat rate will most likely be cheaper than the percentage of sale an affiliate would normally charge. We think you will appreciate the savings just like your customers.   **eBiz**

By Sean Gove

In between making a list and checking it twice, Sean Gove spends his time working on eye catching and wallet grabbing marketing campaigns. Ask for a lump of coal, e-mail him at seang@ebizinsider.com.

The Blog
Comes to E-business
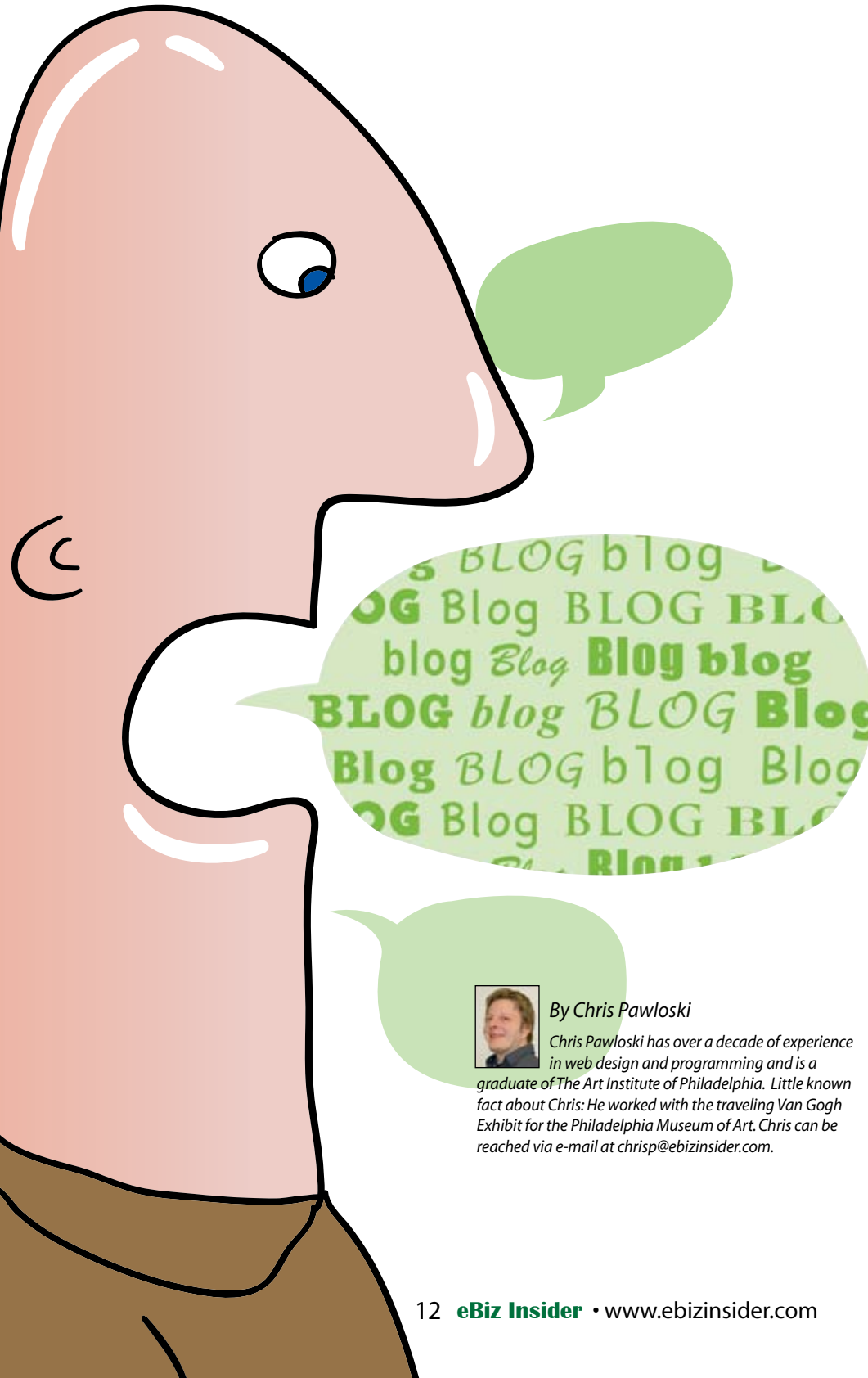
"Blog" is short for weblog. A weblog is a public journal (or newsletter) that is frequently updated. Blogs generally represent the personality of the author or the website.

What might have seemed like a passing trend is here to stay and might be the best vehicle of unbiased communication between the writer and his/her readers. That form of communication extends to e-commerce. Any website operator serious about business success is serious about getting the word out. Every website should have its own blog.

Staggering Statistics of a Growing Phenomenon

Last year the blogging search engine *Technorati* (http://technorati.com/) reported there were over 60 million blogs online with a readership triple those numbers. The trend is growing. The number of blog readers online has doubled every 5 months for the last two years. Traffic to blogs in the first quarter of 2006 was 48 percent higher than the previous year. Surveys report blog readers tend to make more online purchases, spending 6% more than the average Internet user. In the first quarter of 2006, less than 40 percent of the total Internet population made online purchases. By contrast, 51 percent of blog readers shopped online. The connection is there. Blog readers are shoppers. If you're in e-commerce, you want them as your shoppers. You want to blog.

WHY A BUSINESS BLOG?

The Price is Right

The majority of popular blogging applications and tools are an open source and free. Your only investment is customizing your blog to suit your businesses needs and match your brand. You can build time and trust-based relationships with little overhead. A well-delivered blog attracts an active and loyal community. So your challenge is to be interesting, compelling or informative when you blog. Build your readership the old-fashioned way - earn it!

Search Engine Optimization –Automatically!

Blogging applications are built with SEO in mind. Without any real customization, your

By Chris Pawloski

Chris Pawloski has over a decade of experience in web design and programming and is a graduate of The Art Institute of Philadelphia. Little known fact about Chris: He worked with the traveling Van Gogh Exhibit for the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Chris can be reached via e-mail at chrisp@ebizinsider.com.

blog will usually structure content and code that is optimized for search engines; that validates and encourages user interaction and link-ins. Most blog software offers uncomplicated URL structure, making it easy for search engine spiders to find and crawl blog content. Blog software makes it easier to algorithmically categorize content which helps search engines read the content. Blogs are all about fresh content. Conveniently, search engines love fresh content. Using RSS feeds (more on RSS next month) and links from other blogs or link sites, you can attract non-search related traffic. You are more likely to have someone stumble upon your blog through reference elsewhere than you are with a regular website or e-commerce site.

Branding Power

Having a content-rich blog increases your branding power. This is another outlet to promote your business. Humanize your business with personality and professional advice that builds better customer relationships and turns your customers into evangelists.

Revisiting Your Business Plan

Planning regular creative content for a blog tends to make businesses regularly revisit their own business models. This is a good idea for any serious company. The process of content creation offers the opportunity to step back and re-evaluate your businesses goals, directions, services and purpose.

Plan Before You Blog

Before you jump up and start a blog, remember–maintaining a blog can require a lot of work. Most business owners are not content creators or editors. Before you begin blogging, create a plan of purpose. Make sure you have a dedicated person assigned to maintaining your content. Too many blogs start without any plan to keep them going. Business owners know the buzz and want in but then release blogs that are stale and redundant. A static blog can actually hurt your business. Blogging because you can doesn't mean you should. If the sole purpose of a blog is to duplicate material already delivered on another website or your print media, you missed the point of a blogs purpose. Not only are you likely to lose a unique visitor, you may lose loyal ones as well. Before you begin your

blog, have a plan to keep it going.

Blogs Begin Conversations and Build Relationships

A cornerstone of blogging is developing a relationship among your readership. No matter what type of blog you have, this is the one fundamental that is a proven principle of blogging success. Besides having passion for a topic of interest, targeting a readership provides additional motive, purpose, and focus in blogging. To guarantee return readers, offer them content they can benefit from. Waning messages are all too common in the "blogsphere" and can be avoided by focusing on value-based publishing.

Key Elements to a Great Blog.

- ■ *Strong Content*
- ■ *Communication and Interactivity*
- ■ *Custom design that highlights your brand*
- ■ *Usability*
- ■ *Keeping it Informal*
- ■ *Feature Rich Content Management*

One of the key benefits of blogging, and reasons for its popularity is the power of its content management. Different blogging tools and applications offer different functionality but overall the majority of them concentrate on a few must-have features. Among them are the ability to post content easily and organized, as well as archiving and categorizing content seamlessly. Another great benefit is that almost all the blogging tools have very powerful search features built into them that require little or no customization.

Other important features include the ability to edit and create content from anywhere via a web browser or in some cases via e-mail. By default, there is automatic formatting of all your posts. No need to mingle with HTML, CSS, and other web based code. Just type and send. With a single click you can activate a commenting system allowing personal communication among your readers.

Comment systems can be tricky. On the one hand they can make for strong interactivity on the part of your customers. Conversely,

there are many "trolls" around who like to cause problems and post rude, obscene, or otherwise questionable material just to be bothersome. Even worse, comment spam is very real and often discouraging. Tools and plug-ins can help you battle comment spammers. Still, if you don't have the time to monitor the section, you might consider leaving the comments option alone.

Ready Set Blog!

Here is a quick checklist of things to do when you are ready to start your own blog.

Choose Your Name. Decide on a stand alone domain name and/or sub domain of you current website. Avoid hosting services that do not allow you to use your own domain name. (For more information about these platforms visit ebizinsider.com

Choose Your Platform. Some of the most popular blogging options are Word Press, Movable Type, and Expression Engine. Review each and see what best suits your needs.

Invest in a Custom Design. There are plenty of templates available for most publishing platforms, but in order to remain original you should make a small investment. Work with professionals to design and program the system to match your brand.

Research Keywords. Do it ahead of time and develop a glossary and plan your articles to include such keywords. Use keyword-rich categories.

Create a Feedburner Account to deliver your RSS feeds.

Create a Google Account for a sitemap and analytics. This is a very valuable move for any serious e-commerce operator.

Join the Blogging Community. Promote your blog on other blogs, forums and the like. The more people know about you, the more they'll seek you out. "Word of word" advertising will tell others about you.

Engage in Link Building. Link to others and they will link to you.

Request Feedback from your Users.

Hopefully you gained some insight on blogging. Figure out how to make blogging right for you and your business. When you do, I'll be looking for you in the blogsphere! **eBiz**

Creating Your
First **360** Degree
Product View
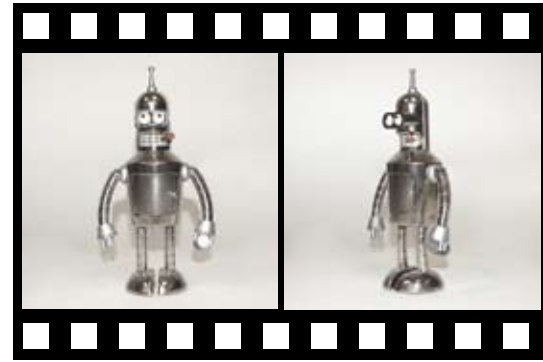
Products benefit from 360 treatment when, literally, "pictures are worth a thousand words." Customers can become immersed in the product. Conversely, using a 360 product view at the wrong time or on the wrong product will distract customers from their ultimate goal - purchasing. No one wants to see a rotating trash can, but a digital camera with unique features could help finicky customers avoid reading endless product specs. Remember, the goal isn't to showcase one cool feature; it is to showcase a complex product.

I recommend no fewer than 8 photographs and no more than 16. The more slowly the product rotates, the more images you'll need to make the rotation believable. If your customers don't have fast Internet connections, forcing them to download multiple images could test their patience.

1. Getting Started:

You'll need specific supplies. A tripod stabilizes the camera, a turntable allows consistent product rotation, photographer's hot lights provide professional lighting and a digital SLR camera produces top images and color.

2. The Shopping List

2.1. *Digital camera*

2.2. *A camera tripod, or makeshift substitute.*

2.3. *A flat working surface with plenty of room around the product and camera. The area should have consistent and bright lighting.*

2.4. *Large sheet/roll of neutral colored paper for the background or "backdrop." Bright white or pitch black paper offers a consistent*

background tone and requires minimal digital "retouching."

2.5. *A ruler measuring 12 or more inches.*

2.6. *A Lazy Susan, Turn Table, or a square (a true square, not a rectangle) of any solid material to use as a base for your product shot.*

2.7. *A viewing application that will stitch all of your photographs together and present them in rotation. The one we are using supports 8 images (The Flash 9 plug-in is required for customers to view your 360 product)*

2.8. *Tape*

2.9. *Web hosting to store your digital files online. If you have a Yahoo! Merchant Solutions account already, then you can use the Web hosting that they have provided you.*

2.10. *An FTP program to place your multiple images online. Yahoo! Web hosting offers you a File Manager feature on their website. If you have this, you do not need an FTP program.*

3. Setting Up Your Work Station
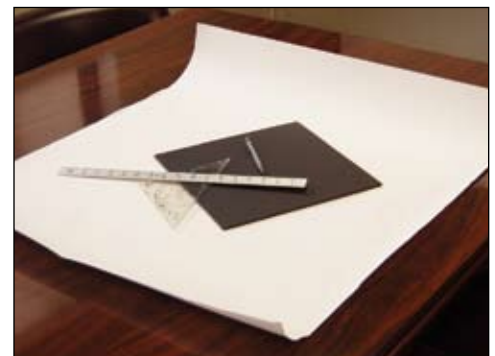
Lay down a large sheet of paper as a backdrop. Tape down the far edges to prevent the paper from shifting as you rotate your product. When you take product photographs, the only thing that

should change is the product rotation angle. The camera angle, lighting, and even zoom must remain exactly the same. If you don't have a turn table, use the pencil and straight edge to map out an eight pointed star on the backdrop. Each point of the star will be a reference point when photographing.

4. Lay Out

Start by drawing a faint line across the center of the backdrop. The line should be light enough to just barely see with the naked eye, but not so dark that it will be obvious when viewing the final photograph (If you intend to digitally clean up your images afterwards this won't matter).

Draw a perpendicular line through the center of the first line (use a protractor or the square base to help draw the line a proper 90 degree angle), you should have a faint plus sign on the backdrop now. You have four reference points now and need four more.

Measure the distance between two of the points and mark the halfway point. Now draw a line from the center out to this line and repeat for each quadrant. When you're finished, you should have an eight pointed star of equal proportion and spacing.

If you are using a turn table, skip step #5 and move on to step #6. From here on, we will assume you are using a square base though the instructions will work for a turn table as well. If you are photographing a product with a square base you may skip Step #5 and #6.

5. Placement

Place the square base in the center of the star so that each of the 4 corners rest

exactly on one of the drawn lines. As you rotate the base later on, ensure that the corners always rest on a line. This will keep your shots centered at all times.

6. Touch-Up

If the base you are using is a different color or tone than the backdrop, you'll need to mask it. Using the same material as the backdrop, lay a large sheet ("swatch") on the base. The swatch should be large enough to ensure that the swatch isn't creating any shadows under it. Now you are ready to place your product.

7. Shooting

Place the product (or product arrangement) in the center of your target area, set up your camera on the tripod (or alternative) and take a test shot. A timer setting on the

camera (or a cable shutter release for professional SLRs) eliminates blurring the photo or shifting the camera angle as you depress the shutter.

Take a photograph and turn the product so that your reference point is pointing to a new line on the 8 pointed star you drew earlier. Repeat this step until the product has rotated at least once. You should have a total of 8 images when you are done.

8. Editing

You may use an editing program to clean up your images depending on how careful you were with your lighting and backdrop setup. Each photograph should be properly centered. If you overlay each using an application like *Adobe Photoshop* (adobe.com) or *Gimp* (gimp.org) you should see a static image of your product rotation.

9. Animating

Import your photos. For this example, we are using an Adobe Flash 9 based player created by Solid Cactus. To use the 360 Viewer, upload your images (in ".JPG" format, though a simple change to the JS file will allow any extension) to your web hosting account and note the web address. In order to use the Solid Cactus 360 Viewer, each of your images must be named after the page name but without the ".html" and followed with a hyphen and a number. *Example: myproduct-1.jpg. myproduct-2.jpg, myproduct-3.jpg,* etc. Download the

Solid Cactus 360 Viewer from http://360.solidcactus.com. Unzip the download and upload all of the files to your web hosting folder with all of the product images you have uploaded. Edit the contents of the page that will display the 360 Product Viewer. Open the ReadMe.pdf file and Copy the piece of code under installation. Paste this code anywhere on the page of your live site and save your changes.

10. Test it!

Go to the page where you embedded the JavaScript code from Step #9 and see your new 360 product. Read the ReadMe.pdf file that comes with the download for instructions on embedding the Flash-based SWF file on your item page. It will also offer basic troubleshooting advice.

Quality Counts

If you enhance your store with the 360 feature you'll want professional results. Be prepared to invest in quality equipment, expert help and/or hours of trial and error. Creating a lifelike environment where your customers are better able to see your products will bring you higher conversions. **eBiz**

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.

Why Copyright?

Copyright Registration and the E-merchant

Intellectual property protection has become an increasingly hot topic throughout the rise of the Internet. However, while e-merchants spend countless hours and money in developing their website content, they often overlook adequately protecting that content. Such protection can be invaluable in the long run. Of the intellectual property protections that are available, one of the most misunderstood and overlooked by e-merchants is that of copyright.

Copyright is a form of legal protection provided for original works of authorship and protects a large variety of intellectual works such as movies, music, books, plays, paintings, poetry, sculptures, photographs and architectural designs. Under most circumstances, a copyright owner is granted an exclusive bundle of rights in their work, including the right to make and distribute copies of the work, lease the work, create derivative works, and perform and display the work publicly. More importantly, it is generally illegal for others to violate any of these rights. As this typically applies to e-merchants, they can be entitled to copyright protection for the text, photos and artwork appearing on their website, including product photos, product descriptions and other related content.

There are several basic requirements for a work to be entitled to copyright protection. The work must be original, it must be the result of at least some creative effort on the part of its author, and it must be fixed in a tangible medium of expression. Original work must be independently created by the author, regardless of whether the creation is similar to already existing works, or even if it is lacking in artistic merit. For a work to be the result of at least some creative effort, it must simply display a modicum of creativity on the part of the author. Finally, the work must exist in some physical form for at least some period of time, even if brief. Once these elements are established no other action is required for copyright and the work is essentially protected from unauthorized copying. However, registration with the U.S. Copyright Office provides advantages that are not automatically inherent at creation and are truly necessary to sufficiently protect the copyright owner.

Registering with the Copyright Office is worth the time and money. In most cases a copyright owner cannot even bring a claim against an infringer without first having registered their copyrights. Additionally, registration establishes a public record of the copyright. This puts potential infringers on notice and will establish evidence of the validity of the copyright in court. Moreover, if registration is made prior to an infringing use of content or within three months after publication of the content, statutory damages and reimbursement of attorney's fees are available to the copyright owner. Otherwise, the copyright owner will only be entitled to an award for actual business loss, which is difficult to ascertain and even more difficult to prove in court.

It is absolutely vital for e-business operators to register their copyrights in order to truly protect their interests. The Internet presents a myriad of challenges with respect to unauthorized duplication of copyrighted content and other forms of unfair competition. Increasingly, competitors are copying e-merchants' original content and using it for their own gain, resulting in lost profits, reduction in market share and other substantial damages, making copyright registration more important than ever.

Particularly important for e-merchants search engines allocate extra weight to unique content. If someone copies the content, it is no longer unique and can affect a website's search engine rankings. Also, unique content distinguishes websites from their competition. Therefore, e-merchants must register their websites and related content with the Copyright Office. Unique and quality content takes time, energy and money to develop and it is critical for e-merchants to protect it.   **eBiz**

By Jonathan D. Tenenbaum, Esq.

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PayPal Express Checkout:

Streamline the Checkout Process

We may be in cyberspace, but we are still battling the same battles for the hearts and minds and confidence of our customers. It is a fact; some shoppers will always be afraid. It was probably a similar fear of the unknown when credit cards first came out. If you don't understand it, you don't trust it and you're reluctant to use it. Last year alone retailers lost an estimated $2 billion because of consumer security fears. Nearly half were too afraid to conduct e-commerce business at all, according to a Gartner survey of US adults last August.

The continuing challenge for e-commerce operators is to reassure shoppers. Paypal.com helps to answer that challenge. PayPal.com enables any online business or consumer to send and receive payments online in a secure, convenient and cost-effective fashion. It serves as an electronic alternative to traditional paper methods such as checks and money orders. For a fee, PayPal performs payment processing for online vendors, auction sites, and other corporate users. PayPal.com has over 100 million regular users in 90 countries. PayPal.com started in 1998 and was bought by eBay in 2002. eBay had its own company performing payment security, but the vast majority of their customers were using PayPal.com. eBay bought PayPal.com because so many eBay bidders were already using it to shop.

The PayPal.com Promise

The company reassures shoppers through privacy, prevention and protection. PayPal.com keeps shoppers safe because they don't have to share their financial information with the websites where they're shopping. The PayPal.com number is all that is needed. PayPal.com prevents problems before they occur by using state-of-the-art technology to prevent fraud. PayPal.com staff monitor transactions 24/7. PayPal protects buyers 100% against unauthorized payments from their accounts. Plus, purchases are protected up to $1,000 on covered eBay items with PayPal Buyer Protection. Sellers display a "Free PayPal Buyer Protection" message if an item is covered.

Express Checkout from PayPal.com

Express Checkout allows customers to complete transactions in very few steps. They can use shipping and billing information stored securely at PayPal to check out, so they don't have to re-enter it on the merchant's website. It's an API-based feature that can be used along with the PayPal Direct Payment API, which allows merchants to process credit cards directly on their websites.

How It Works

1. After selecting products to purchase, a customer chooses to checkout with PayPal.

2. The customer is transferred to PayPal to select the payment method and the correct shipping and billing address and returned to the original website to complete their purchase.

3. PayPal automatically gives the merchant the shipping address, e-mail, and other customer information needed to fulfill the order.

How Express Checkout Helps Your Business

Convenience=Sales. Your customers simply log in to use information they've already entered with PayPal; they save time by completing transactions in fewer steps. This helps increase loyalty and sales.

More Upsell Opportunities. Buyers finish their orders on your website. This gives you more advertising opportunities.

Safer Customers Spend More. Buyers prefer to pay with PayPal because their customer information is kept safe. When they're confident about the security of their information, they purchase more.

Added Benefits

According to a survey of several of eBay's top sites, listings that offer PayPal are 6% more likely to sell and experience a 5% average increase in final price. This is because buyers prefer to purchase items that offer PayPal. Since they already trust their information to PayPal they can more fully concentrate on the business at hand—shopping! This ease of mind shows up at the bottom line.

The easier it is to buy from you, the more your customers will spend. PayPal.com's Express Checkout is worth a very close look! **eBiz**

By Kurt Illian

Kurt Illian has managed over 20 online stores for one of the largest pet retailers in the country where he gained a wealth of knowledge in e-commerce strategies, website design, programming and Internet marketing. Kurt can be reached at kurti@ebizinsider.com.

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