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**5 Ways to Encourage Impulse Purchases**

**By Bobette Kyle**

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I just bought six square pieces of spongy fabric for \$20 and walked away happy – "victim" of an impulse purchase.

I was at one of those big show events and walked past a demonstration booth. I even knew it was coming. About 50% of the people walking out were carrying two bright yellow cylinder-things.

As we walked toward the convention center, I told Tim (my other half), "There's one of those guys with a microphone in there, doing a demonstration. He gets people so excited they think they have to buy those things. They over-pay then never use them." I said this a bit smugly. I know of such things, so I wouldn't succumb.

Yeah, right. This guy was good. So good, I came away with five ideas for increasing sales from impulse purchases. Next time you evaluate short-term sales and marketing strategies, think about and apply these five impulse purchase lessons...

Impulse Purchase Lesson 1: Demonstrate an impressive, relevant feature.

If the product is chocolate, sold at a retail checkout stand, you have no need for this one. Human nature takes over. When you are selling unrecognizable cylinder things, people need some encouragement.

You would never know it to look at them, but these things were super absorbent shammies. They can suck 8 – 10 ounces of soda out of your carpet in nothing flat AND it makes for an impressive demonstration. When the demonstrator mentioned they could dry a sweater in three hours, I was hooked. Never mind we have about two spills a year in my house and I don't own any "lay flat to dry" sweaters.

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This ability to get people to "live in the moment" is one key to a successful impulse purchase demonstration. The salesperson has a lot to do with it, of course. Repetition of an incredible, attractive feature, however, is key as well.

Think of any infomercial or "Billy Mays" product. There is always an "AMAZING!" feature – cooks in minutes, instantly removes stains, easily pulls dings from your car, etc.

2: Try to "time it right".

Quite coincidentally, one of those semiannual spills in my house happened the day before I bumped into the yellow cylinder guy. I was thinking "If I'd had these yesterday, right now we wouldn't have books stacked in the middle of the living room floor." Quite by accident, he had related to something that was top-of-mind for me.

Fortunately, you do not have to rely on coincidence. At any one time, there are usually six or eight generally popular "themes" you could tie into. Better yet, your target audience is likely to have it's own unique interests.

On the Internet, you can "time it right" by associating complementary products or services. If someone is researching monitors, for example, perhaps they need an ink cartridge for their printer.

Showing or highlighting ink cartridges on the screen along with the monitors may incite an impulse purchase. Better yet – and this is impossible unless you have order histories or detailed profiles – show them the exact cartridge they need.

3: Make it easy.

It turns out the cylinder thing costs a flat \$20. There was no change to mess with, no stopping to fill in order forms, and no multiple pieces of currency. As people pulled \$20's out of their pockets, the demonstrator took them and handed over the shammies in a single motion.

On the Internet, you can make it easy in two ways – ordering and delivery.

Make the order process as simple as possible. Amazon's "Quick-Click" links are a good example of making ordering easy. Impulse purchasers simply click on the "Buy from Amazon" button and order straight off a pop-up window. You can see how it works here, in the left column under "Amazon 'Quick-Click' Example":

Easy delivery is another way to encourage impulse purchases on the Internet. Immediately downloadable digital items are an example. For physical items, quick delivery – overnight, same day, or local store pick-up – can increase sales.

4: Give an enticingly presented discount.

A roll of three shammies was \$21 something, but the guy was taking care of the sales tax, which made

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it an even \$20 (But wait, there's more!). Because it was early he would throw in another 3-roll for no additional charge. Caught up in the moment, we nodded agreement. We were getting a deal – no sales tax plus three free.

The way a discount is presented can make a deal sound either appealing or "not such a deal". Which sounds better?... "Buy One, Get One Half Off." OR "Buy Two and Get a 25% Discount." "3 for \$5.00" OR "\$1.67 each." "40% Off Sale" OR "On Sale, \$12.00 each." (Assuming \$20 item.)

Another way to encourage impulse purchases is to give a discount by bundling. Offer to reduce the price on a second, related item (Like in example #1, above.).

Online, I have seen this done with books. Some booksellers offer you a chance to save money on shipping and/or book price if you also purchase a related item.

5: "Keeping up with the Joneses."

Instead of putting the shammies in a bag, the demonstrator rolled them up into a cylinder. This way, people at the show would see others carrying them around and wonder what they were missing.

The same concept can be applied to the Internet. I have seen messages like: "Others who bought 'x' also bought 'y'" on order forms, at check out, and on product screens.

So there they are – five tactics the yellow cylinder guy used to convince me (and nearly everyone around me) to happily walk away with six shammies. By correctly applying these same techniques you can see your sales soar as well.

Bobette Kyle has more than a decade of experience in Corporate Marketing; Brand and Product Marketing; Field Marketing and Sales; and Management.

She is author of the Marketing Plan and Promotion Guide "How Much For Just the Spider? Strategic Web Site Marketing", named one of the top 15 books of 2002 by NonFictionReviews.com. Read more about the guide here:

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**Will Your Home Business Succeed Or Fail? It's Your Choice.**

**By Ian Canaway**

You may operate a home business selling services or products, but no matter which kind of business you're in, there's always a question in the back of your mind: will my home business succeed or fail, or do I have the motivation it takes to keep it afloat?

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Whichever type of home business you have, it's important that you know ways that you can keep your business going during slack times and/or economic downturns. If cash flow is a problem in your business, you should be sure to make certain that your money management techniques are on target and well refined.

Some of the things you can do to make sure your business will survive in the 21st century is to avoid impulse expenditures. There are many reasons for impulse spending, even as it applies to business. We may fall under the persuasive spell of a salesperson who has talked us into buying things we don't need.

Maybe we simply made impulsive purchases because we had a little extra money, or perhaps to keep up the appearance of prosperity. Then you realize a few days later that you've committed some of your business funds to products or services that are not necessary for the success of your business.

"It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that they are difficult". — Seneca

Here are some tips to help you avoid these impulse purchases and make certain your business succeeds:

1. You can help control impulse purchases by requiring two (or more) signatures on all company checks over a set amount. This will give you time to seriously consider whether or not you really need the product or service you are about to buy.
2. If you are vulnerable, you can get yourself out of the grasp of an insistent salesperson if you explain that all purchasing decisions are contingent upon the approval of a second party. This so-called second party can be anyone – a partner or a department head or even a family member.
3. If you are the sole owner of your business, you won't need to worry about these impulse spending patterns because you normally have three days to cancel your purchase if you decide you don't need it or that you can't afford to spend the money. However, be sure that you don't skimp on services or products that you really need.
4. When business is slow, you must learn to say "no" to anyone, even friends, who are trying to sell you unnecessary items. When business is good, you will probably allow more vendors to show you new equipment or new lines of so-called "new and improved" merchandise; otherwise, concentrate on your basic needs. However, take particular care that you are courteous so these vendors will consider you a friend.
5. If you commit yourself without investigating all details and charge ahead, you may be setting yourself up for failure. Be certain that you are prepared for all situations and emergencies that could arise.

It pays in the long run – regardless of cost – to ask for professional advice before you start on any plan;

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it may prevent failure of your business. A business without a plan is like a boat without a rudder, you may be lucky and drift safely shore but most likely you'll end up on the rocks with 90% of other home business owners who fail because they don't have a plan and goals.

6. Another way to assure the success of your home business is to be sure of the direction your business is heading. You should be aware of your daily progress and monitor what your competitors are doing. Stay abreast of business trends and sales information for your particular industry.

Whether your home business succeeds or fails is dependent upon good money management, having decisive goals and a definitive plan on how you will achieve them. Also your motivation and the ability to foresee and solve any problems if and when they occur, is a deciding factor as you whether you succeed or fail.

Take the bull by the horns and decide now where you want to be at the end of the year, in two years time, in five years and set about following a precise plan of action to achieve your goals. Take daily action to ensure success; if you truly want to succeed you will take daily action, work hard and persevere.

"Through perseverance many people win success out of what seemed destined to be certain failure." — Benjamin Disraeli

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