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Better Online Communication Makes Business Sense

By Mark Ramirez

How you communicate with your online customers will make or break your company. What are you doing to improve your customer relations?

Many companies are now doing the majority or even all their business online and foregoing the "Brick and Mortar" storefront. It is easy to see why that trend has happened. For one thing, the cost of setting up such a business is relatively inexpensive and easy. There is no need to pay for the overhead of a physical building. Also, the cost of maintaining a Web site is minimal. Moreover, the Internet provides a convenient and efficient way of marketing products. As more and more people are spending time on the Internet, the market of online customers continues to grow.

But when businesses shift from face-to-face customers to anonymous online customers, there is a loss of personal connection and trust. All the online spamming and scamming hasn't helped the matter at all. That has eroded the trust in E-commerce and the credibility of many companies. How are you gaining and maintaining customer trust? What are you doing as an online vendor to communicate to your customers?

In an online world, business just doesn't stop after hours and on weekends. What are you doing to answer your customer's questions? Here are a few things that you can do to improve communication with your customers:

1. Offer a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page and online product support information. This is an excellent way of answering basic questions that may otherwise flood your support email. For example, our voice-changing product, MorphVOX, has a FAQ on the common issues that customers may come across. We also have provided detailed online documentation on topics that users may want to explore more. This takes care of roughly 95% of the questions people may have.
2. Add a support email link on your Web site for issues that can't be resolved by the Web support. At Screaming Bee, we try to answer our customer questions within one business day. More often, we'll answer questions within an hour of receiving the email. I believe that we have gained many loyal customers because of our aggressive efforts to meet needs in a timely manner.

3. Provide a message board or forum for customers to voice their opinions, add comments, and interact with each other. Remember that people are social creatures and like to be heard. This also helps to build up a community of users that are empowered and have a say in the products and services that you provide.

4. Write a personal email to each customer. Have you followed up on your customers after they have made a purchase of your products or services? This is essential, not only from the perspective of getting feedback on how to improve your offerings, but more importantly, maintaining the trusting, long-term relationship with your customer. Send them an email within 3–4 weeks of the first purchase. In this way their experience with your products and services is fresh in their mind. Remember, a customer who is ignored is a customer who is lost.

Spending time and effort on better communication with your customers will pay off. Your company will

rise and fall not on the customers you gain, but on the customers that you don't lose. Loyal customers will be the ones that give you the best testimonials. They also provide you with the richest, organic, word-of-mouth marketing. Remember that every happy customer is a testament of your company's success.

Mark Ramirez is CEO and co-founder of Screaming Bee LLC, a leading provider of voice software and solutions for online games and messenger applications. For more information visit:

<http://www.screamingbee.com>

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To Have Your Own Product or Not To Have Your Own Product? That is the Question!

By Denise Hall

If you've been working online very long you've probably noticed different people will give you different advice for earning money and building your business.

Some will say you have to have your own product to sell. Others will claim you absolutely *don't* need your own product.

So who's right? In this case, I'd say both!

I'm sure you're wondering what I mean because that doesn't seem to make any sense. How can both be right?

It's simple. Think of it this way. Let's say you create innovative software to help internet marketers increase their profits by automating their businesses. You have a great product and your sales are

decent.

But, what about the potential customers who visit your website but don't need your product because they don't yet have a business? They're still exploring the marketing world. Maybe they're trying to find products to sell or learn how to build an online business. Away they go! After all, they don't need software to help them with their business if they don't have a business, right?

Wouldn't it make sense to offer other products to benefit them? Maybe you don't write e-books about how to market on the internet, but other people do. Why not offer some of those at your website to entice your visitors?

If they purchase an e-book today and learn how, where and what to market, don't you think they'll return to your website and order *your* software that will now help them automate their brand new business?

Makes sense, doesn't it? Having your own product is great. But offering other helpful resources to your customers builds your sales even more. You'll make money from the e-book, then from your own product. Two sales to a visitor who almost left!

Offering products and resources that compliment your own products makes your website an invaluable resource for your customers.

This is why so many internet marketers say you *need* multiple streams of income. There are those who swear by it. And maybe they're right.

Denise Hall is the owner of Home Business on a Budget which specializes in tools and resources for your home business needs. Visit

<http://www.home-business-on-budget.com>

today. She just released

her new e-book Get Inside the Minds of Scam Artists! to teach you how to avoid being ripped off.

<http://www.rapidtracker.com/t/control/redirect.php?id=108>

dmh0226@voyager.net

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