

Do you know enough about your customers?

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**Do you know enough about your customers?**

**By Wynn Wilder**

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Who are you selling too?

You have a great product, fantastic website, financial backing, and the undeniable urge to succeed. But, you are not making any money through your website. Why? The answer is you haven't directed your product to the people who are looking to buy it. You have shoe stores that sell handbags and socks, but they specialize in shoes, and that is what you'll see displayed up front. Then you have shoe stores that sell athletic shoes along with athletic equipment and clothing, but they specialize in shoes. Every store specializes in something, that is its selling point, it's profit maker. How do you know what a store specializes in? Just look around, do you see more teenage oriented shoe's/clothing/jewelry or are the items geared more toward the 25-35 age range?

What keeps these stores going is the fact that they know whom their audience is, specifically who they are selling to. They know their demographics. Do you know yours?

Demographics

A website is no different than a storefront. You place your best products, aimed at your target audience, in the display window to draw your customers in. Then you show them your "other" products, possibly fulfilling other needs that they may not have considered. For example, you sell athletic shoes. You entice a customer into your store by placing images of the newest and hottest shoes on your index page. You then add a blurb saying: "Freedom is faster than the wind when you wear - such and such shoes." They click on the blurb and are instantly taken to the page that provides the details for that shoe. But wait! On that page you add images of your top selling shorts and items with the American flag imprinted on it. Their patriotism has been psychologically invoked by the word freedom and running by the phrase "faster than the wind." You've made them consider multiple products simply by adding a blurb and image.

Is that all it takes? No. Anyone can sell a product using this method, and they are likely to be successful, to a point. Everyone who sells any kind of product knows this, but what makes some companies stand out and others just get by? If you took those same shoes and built a whole page in a

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style that appealed to single women, age 25–35, with no children and a love of country and nature, you've created a site-specific sales market. You have pinpointed exactly whom you want to sell your product to.

Athletic shoes are not just gender or age specific and that's partly why I choose them. The same concept can be adapted to a male audience, teenagers, sports enthusiasts and your everyday consumer. It is all a matter of changing the demographic styling of the page. This can be as simple as adding baseball bats, footballs, and jerseys to entice a male audience. There is more to it than simply changing the items you offer, color, sizes, and images have to be considered as well. You wouldn't display a pink and gray shoe on a page aimed toward men.

Let's take a deeper look at demographic profiling.

### Customer Profile

Your customer is the person who will be buying your product. They are not always the people who will be using your product. For example, parents buy toys but the children are the ones who will be playing with them. The challenge is to think about how to reach both parties. What will appeal to each of them? A toy that is known to be hazardous, to children, is not likely to be purchased by an adult, this is common sense. Its salability decreases with this knowledge.

One important area that will need to be defined is; will you be dealing with individuals or businesses? Who is your product truly geared toward?

### Individuals

When defining your individual customers it is best to answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

1. What is the sex of your customer? Are they male or female?
2. What is the average age range of your customer? 13–22? 22–32?
3. Is the product aimed at a younger customer but bought by an older customer?
4. Is the product aimed at an older customer but bought by a younger one?
5. What is their average income level? Less than 14,000 a year? More than 15,000 a year?
6. Is there a specific career or aptitude the product relates to? (i.e. is it aimed at the medical profession, legal profession, etc.)
7. What other interests could this demographic group possibly have? Do you have other products that might be relevant?

### Businesses

When defining the possible business customers, similar questions come into play.

1. What is the industry you will be selling to?
2. Is there a specific sales level?
3. Who are the top names in that industry? Locally? Nationally? World Wide?
4. What would be relevant data in the industry?
5. What else do you know about the businesses you will be selling to?

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### Geographic Profile

Thanks to the Internet all businesses can now reach the world and not just their backyard. This can sometimes make geographic profiling hard. It also makes it very important. Remember that Chevy sold very few Novas in Spanish speaking counties because no va means "no go" - quite an unintended message. Unintended messages can pop up rather easily if you do not define your geographic sales area. What does it take to define your geographic sales area? Let's start with the basics.

1. Where are your customers located? Will they be in your backyard - within your town, county, or state? Will they be in your country? Or will they be worldwide?
2. How many customers are there in your market? Are you marketing to a specific group or does your product have mass appeal?
3. What is the dollar value of the sales that occur in your market each year? Is it possible to make the income necessary for your lifestyle?

### Other Considerations

Basic demographics can often be fun and interesting, because you learn more about your product,

your customers and the way your customers think and perceive your product. Sometimes the basics are enough to increase your sales potential and yet, there are times that the basics provide too little information. The possibility of customers worldwide creates the need for more information. Will there be shipping and handling issues? Language, communication, issues? Cultural differences? What will someone else see that we don't?

Demographics are very important when it comes to site design. We no longer live in the age where our backyard is truly our backyard, and even when we design a site for our local area, the world has the option to view it. "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" didn't start with Neil Armstrong on the moon, it really started on the Internet.

## **Keeping Customers With Communication**

**By Claire Cunningham**

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You work hard to attract new customers, right? Mailings, phone calls, ads, publicity. You have an annual marketing plan devoted to bringing in new customers.

What about the customers you already have? What are you doing for them? Of course, you're delivering a top quality product or service at a competitive price. But that's not enough.

Business wisdom says current customers are your best source for new sales. After all, these folks have already established a dialogue with you by buying from you. It's up to you to keep the conversation going.

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Here are communications programs that work well with customers.

1)NEWSLETTERS - If you have expertise and information customers want and need, send it out in a newsletter. Remember, successful newsletters are published on a predictable schedule, provide useful information, and are quick-to-read and attractive.

2)TIP SHEETS - Not sure you have enough content to keep a newsletter going, but customers still need good information? Tip sheets on specific topics may be the answer for you. This lets you package and brand key information so your company becomes known as the expert. Make sure your employees know about these tip sheets and use them.

3)WEBSITE - Set up a special customer section of your website that's password protected. Fill the section with information customers need - newsletters, tip sheets, a way to post questions and get expert answers, downloadable forms, handbooks, documentation, etc. Not sure what to include? Poll some of your best customers.



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