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Experience Branding" ? How to Survive as an Online Retailer

By Jake Gorst

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"Are You Experienced?" asked guitar player Jimi Hendrix 35 years ago. Jimi wasn't talking about e-commerce ? but his question is appropriate to today's economic climate. These days many retailers, including online retailers, are discovering that their business suffers if they do not implement an "Experience Branding" strategy. What is that?

"Experience Branding" is a way to describe a method of linking an identity to a business or product that involves customer interaction. In the long run, this method leaves a longer, and in most cases, LASTING impression on the consumer.

Here's an example:

100 years ago, a person would buy coffee beans and grind them himself. Then came along pre-ground coffee. Eventually, you could go to a vendor and buy a nice hot pre-made cup of coffee. Today, companies like Starbucks not only give you the hot coffee, but they provide you with a nice comfortable soft chair to sit in, a paper to read, music to listen to, and an eclectic setting to enjoy these things in. They provide an EXPERIENCE. This is why people are willing to fork over \$4.00 for a cup of coffee!

An early case of this branding method put into practice was the Macy's Department Store Leisurama homes of 1963. Back then you could actually go to the 7th floor of the Herald Square store in New York City and see a full-blown house – completely furnished. You could buy the house there – then 3 months later move in (these were built in Montauk, New York). The finished house was furnished right down to the toothbrush and everything was included in one single price. This method of experience branding was so successful that, down to this day, the owners of many of these houses still own the towels, dishes, etc. that came with the house. They enjoyed the experience and wanted to preserve it.

Today, this method can be applied to anything – including web based businesses. An online vendor can give an experience to the viewer that will make a lasting impression. Some provide games for their viewers to enjoy. Most find that providing special information – an article giving the background of a given product presented with a human-interest slant ? is sufficient. Viewers can be invited to "register"

– giving them access to an area of the site that the general public does not, where special information can be presented. This gives the viewer the feeling that they are part of something special – a private club.

One example of this method of online "Experience Branding" is WeightWatchers.com. A registered user has access to message boards and a special catalog of diet recipes. A registered viewer becomes part of a community. It's an experience that will keep them coming back!

"Experience Branding" is also helpful to non–profit organizations. JohnTaylorGatto.com, an alternative education resource, provides an online discussion forum that attracts teachers and parents, encouraging them to debate educational topics and share war stories. The Odysseus Group, the organization that owns JohnTaylorGatto.com, reports that interest in their web site skyrocketed when

the forum was launched.

So what do we learn from this? Gone are the days of impersonal service. If you want to survive ? offer your customers an experience!

Shopping Offline And Online...

By Ryan Ginster

Shopping is an activity that almost of all us have to endure rather we like it or not. Not everyone was born to shop, while if you ask most of us women, we were! Shopping can be extremely fun, especially when you find that perfect item, you have been searching for or find a great deal. When you want to shop online, there are a few things you should be mindful of so you do not make wrong choices or become confused. This article is geared towards helping you have an enjoyable shopping experience online.

The first thing you want to make sure of with any online retailer is to make sure they are extremely secure. There are a few things you can look for to ensure this, first you should look for some sign of a digital certificate in use by that specific retailer. Shopping online is a great resource for those without a lot of time to spend in a department store, but it should be with a retailer that has the consumer's best interest in mind from beginning to end. When being transferred to the screen to make the transaction, look at the bottom of the webpage and make sure you see a symbol that resembles a "lock" it should be closed. If you click upon this, it will provide you with all details about the security and its verification. Another strong indication will be the web address; it should begin with https and not http

Another thing you should look for is the shopping standards the online store has with their procedures. You should have ease in shopping and checking out, everything should run smoothly beginning to end. You will required to provide shipping and billing information, occasionally you could be asked to think up a password and username to ensure that you will have easier access in your future shopping ventures.

You should also check that the website offers a high level of customer service and support. Email only is not efficient; they should clearly publicize their business telephone number, email address, and physical address. You should not be afraid to call them prior to doing business with them if you want to make sure they are a reputable and real company. Make sure you feel comfortable in shopping with any online retailer prior to any transaction.

Ginster–Web Shopping,

, is a specialized electronic outlet,

offering many of all the latest in electronic technology available today. By shopping directly with their online shopping guide you will have all the convenience, flexibility, and discount prices that shopping at home should bring you.



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