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**Small Businesses Reveal Romantic Side to Attract Customers**

**By Sharron Senter**

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Small businesses can make sales soar this Valentine's Day just by exhibiting some of Cupid's matchmaking qualities. The moment a customer enters your retail store or Web site you should smother them with love. Immediately reinforce that they've come to the right place to find the perfect Valentine's Day gift. Here are six affordable marketing strategies small businesses can use on and offline to hook Valentine's Day shoppers.

Use The Language of Love -- There are a variety of audiences shopping during Valentine's Day. Talk how your customers talk. For example, if your products and services appeal to teens, then you may want to consider using the word "like" instead of "love."

Under \$20 -- It's imperative you stock items for less than \$20. This is the cut-off for impulse shoppers. Anything more than this and your customer may have to think about it. February 14 will be here before you know. There's not enough time for customers to ponder. Make your customer's decision easy and price it right the first time. What's more, most shoppers are not afraid to spend \$20, especially online.

Customized Note Cards -- Offer all customers the ability to include a personal note with their gift. Whether you're doing business online or in-person, always make available attractive note cards customers can personalize. Take it a step further and stock at least 10 prewritten love [and like] messages for customers who lack the ability to express themselves. They'll appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Gift Wrapping -- Even if you're selling a simple box of chocolates, receiving a wrapped gift makes the recipient feel more cherished. She'll think warm thoughts such as, "Oh...he took the extra time to wrap it. That's why I love him." Ultimately, she'll love the gift and this will increase your chances of your customer returning to your store or Web site to purchase her birthday, anniversary, "I'm Sorry" and holiday presents!

Create a Mood -- It's Valentine's Day. Even if you sell wood for a living, remember to build-in a mood of romance throughout your customers' shopping experience. Try hanging red streamers over rafters,

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displaying complimentary chocolates at the counter alongside your Valentine's Day special offer POP, or a simple Web site page boarder with connected hearts. For lucky business owners with roadside signs, try using red light bulbs and wrapping the sign with an enormous heart or cupid. Passersby will get the hint that you have some great Valentine's Day gifts inside.

Provide Variety — It's important to position at least one of your existing products and services as a great Valentine's Day present. For example, let's say you're a restaurant. Rather than just advertise your restaurant as a place to take your lover for Valentine's Day, instead, sell a premium-priced packaged dinner. For example, "Now accepting reservations for Valentine's Day. Spend the evening with Chef Thomas as he prepares a private menu, created exclusively for our Valentines' Day clientele. You'll also receive a complimentary bottle of champagne and passed hors d'oeuvres. Join us and only 30 other guests. Elegantly priced at \$229 per couple."

### **Getting down to basics with a web site.**

**By Tristan Jud**

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#### **What is a web site?**

A web site is a associated collection of web pages on the world wide web, consisting of files that are organised into a hierarchy. Each file/document can consist of a combination of graphics, text, audio video and other dynamic or static material. A website is most commonly used as a communication medium between a business and client or business and business. They can usually be accessed by using a search engine or typing in the web site address or domain name into an internet browser.

56% of businesses surveyed identified that they had already recovered their investment in e-business, with 22% of businesses that have recovered their investment achieving a greater than 50 percent return on that investment.

In July 2003 some 49% of all small to medium enterprises indicated a potential to use e-commerce to sell their products.

#### **What are the benefits?**

A website is a dynamic and cost effective way to reach new and existing customers, on a local, national or global scale.

A carefully constructed website, like those developed by Able Net Design, can attract the right users and may thus establish the following benefits.

**Visual Display** – Showcase of products services to likely customers

**Sales** – Bring forth additional revenue and greater awareness

**Information** – Supply further information to new and existing customers

**Enhanced service** – By providing a further contact method for customers

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### **Other great facts**

68% of all small to medium enterprises surveyed indicated that their expectations for all e-commerce have been met.

32% of all small businesses and 63% of medium businesses surveyed, use the internet for receiving payment.

45% of small and 64% of medium businesses surveyed use the internet to make purchases.

44% of small and 84% of medium businesses surveyed have a web site.

82% of small to medium enterprises surveyed who are connected to the internet search for information regularly.

93% of internet-connected small to medium enterprises surveyed use email as a form of

communication.

81% of small and 98% of medium businesses surveyed are connected to the internet.

Source: 2003 Yellow Pages ® Business Index – Special Reports July 2003

Getting down to basics with a web site.

Who Are Your "Most Likely" Customers

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Revitalize Your Business To Increase Your Sales

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The Art of Kissing

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How to Gain and Retain More Customers

Valentine Day Recipes

Wonderful Wedding Favors and Wedding Gifts



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