

Want Bigger Profits? Think of Your Web Site as a Catalog, Not a Store

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**Want Bigger Profits? Think of Your Web Site as a Catalog, Not a Store**

**By Al Bredenberg**

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For years people have been talking about web sites being storefronts. The truth is, web sites have little in common with traditional stores. Thinking of your site as a web storefront can take you down the wrong path from the start.

This is a topic I delve into in my new book "Profitable e-Marketing: Success Strategies That Pay Off."

Look at how customers use stores. It is a social experience for many. Teens go to the mall to be seen. A work-at-home parent may go to the store just to get out of the house. People like to touch items and talk to the clerk. I even see some entire families going to the store so they can argue with each other over what to buy. A store is more than just a place to get supplies -- it's a social, entertainment venue that only works the way it does because it is a real place with real people.

How does that change when the store moves online to cyberspace? People use a web site very differently, much more like the way they use a catalog than the way they use a store.

Customers are almost always shopping alone, and anonymously. Suddenly other factors become important. For example, people want a deep selection. Unlike Kmart and Walmart, which tend to have just a few choices in a great many product categories, web sites can offer a big and varied number of choices in a single product area. Walmart might give me a choice of three different toasters. A kitchen appliance site could easily extend that selection to 20 toasters. Or maybe your site features only three

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toasters, but those three are unusual and not available in stores.

Just as in catalogs, customers want product photos and detailed descriptions. They also like to read what other people who have purchased the item are saying about its usability and reliability. Give those who own the item a chance to log their comments online for all to see. Don't worry, those who have purchased usually say good things about their decision to buy.

Deep selection isn't the only thing customers crave. They also want speed. Speed drives the Internet, and is one of the main

reasons people shop online. Customers should be able to quickly find the products or services they are looking for, learn as much as they want about them, then buy within a few seconds using an online shopping cart. Depending upon the size of your business, you need fast, automated inventory information and online customer service to make your site accurate and helpful.

Here's a word of warning about technology. Don't add the latest online automation just because it is there. Think hard about whether the technology makes the shopping experience faster and easier, or just adds another layer of complication. Simplicity is often your site's best asset, so be careful not to destroy it with too many bells and whistles.

Some of the things that will make your online catalog a big success are very simple. Make sure people know what you sell and how you can help them from the very first glance at your home page. Make your site easy to navigate. If customers can't quickly find what they are looking for, they will click to a competitor.

Finally, don't try to make all your sales on the customer's first visit. Real profits come when the same customers return to your site again and again. Offer to send customers valuable information or updates via email. Build your house list of names and addresses, then work your list to remind people you are there. Keep them coming back.

Al Bredenberg is a leading authority on making money online. His new book is "Profitable e-Marketing: Success Strategies That PayOff." The 610 pages are packed with a detailed blueprint for designing and implementing an integrated online marketing program, based on time-tested methods developed by Internet entrepreneurs since the mid-1990s. Get your copy at <http://www.profitableemarketing.com>

Reach Al atab@copywriter.com or 203-743-1946.

### **3 KILLER WAYS TO IGNITE YOUR PROFITS!**

**By Larry Dotson**

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##### **1) BACK END CATALOGING**

Send your customers a catalog of add-on products for the original product they purchased. This could be upgrades, special services, attachments, etc. If they enjoy your product they will buy the extra add-ons.

You could charge other businesses for including their products in the catalog too. This'll help to pay for postage, packaging and producing the catalog. If you want to cut costs, produce the catalog in email or ebook format.

##### **2) GIFT CERTIFICATES**

Sell gift certificates for your products. You'll make sales from the purchase of the gift certificate, when the recipient cashes it in. If the recipient never uses the gift certificate, it adds up to a huge profit.

When people do use their gift certificates they may also buy other products you offer while they are shopping around your web site.

##### **3) PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS**

Add free products in with your customer's product package. The freebies should have your ad printed on them. It could be bumper stickers, ball caps, T-shirts, etc. This'll allow other people to see your ad.

You also could spread your advertising by including two to five samples in your product package. They can give them to their friends and family.

##### **QUICK READ SUMMARY**

Want Bigger Profits? Think of Your Web Site as a Catalog, Not a Store

- 1) Send customers a print or electronic catalog of your add-on products with their product package.
- 2) Use gift certificates to increase back end sales, your advertising and profits.
- 3) Give your customers promotional products and samples so they will spread your advertising.



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