

Successful Retail Furniture Store

NEW MEDIA MARKETING

Part 1: Inexpensively Drive Furniture Buyers Into Your Store.

Furniture Marketing by Mike Root

Chances are, if you are using the same old advertising you have always used, your store will remain invisible to many consumers looking to buy furniture. They will not find your store or your offers. The consumers' evolving use of the Internet and all things related have caused a seismic change in the way customers pay attention to media and shop for furniture. So, if a complete internet, social media and "new media" strategy is not part of your marketing plan, you will be leaving sales in your marketplace to your competitors.

Back in the 80's and early 90's when I was a furniture retailer, most traditional furniture stores advertised primarily with newspaper ads, yellow pages, radio and TV if they could afford it. Bigger stores ran pre-print circulars and direct mail campaigns, but most marketing took a shot gun approach --- Spread the word and hope the message falls on the right ears.

Back then, there were not a lot of other options, but today, thanks to the Internet, there are many "New Media" marketing

solutions.

WASTING AD DOLLARS

Every month I paid out 10's of thousands of dollars for TV and Radio spots. It drove me nuts to not be able to determine exactly what advertising message was bringing in a specific customer.

For example, if we ran a hot priced room package and had a great response, did the TV spots bring them in, the radio spots or the newspaper? Or maybe somebody was new to town and did not hear any message, but rather saw an ad in the yellow pages. The advertising agency told me that it was the combination of all media that created the great sales, and they may have been right. But I knew that I wasted a ton of money on ineffective media buys. Does that sound like your dilemma?

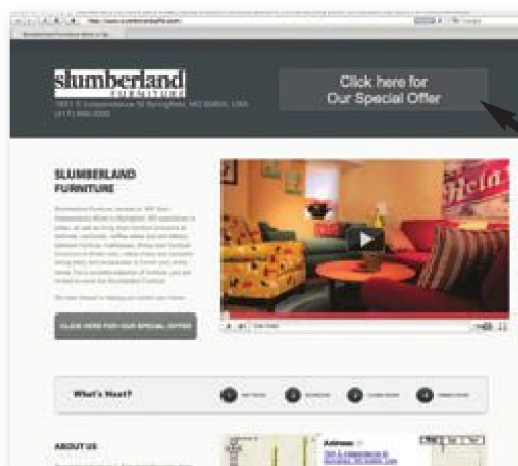
For many in the furniture retail business, an inordinate amount of money is still spent on mass media that is tough to track. Since my days as a furniture retailer, I've discovered some incredibly awe-

some "New Media" marketing ways to reach out to prospects and customers inexpensively.

This series of articles will share with you direct response strategies utilizing New Media marketing to nurture prospects and turn them into long time customers. First let's discuss what New Media marketing is, the power of the numbers, and how you should be shifting some of your marketing dollars out of traditional mass media communications into New Media marketing solutions.

Future articles will discuss specific cost effective marketing solutions like High Definition Web TV, hyper-active social media, integrated email campaigns and direct response websites. These topics sound formidable, but they are actually a lot less challenging than writing a big check every month to pay for traditional mass media advertising you are not sure works.

Most furniture retailers have difficulty communicating the incredible value and



Slumberland Furniture In Springfield MO, a franchisee of Slumberland has a video web page to help boost their search engine rankings.

When prospects click on the "Click here for Our Special Offer" link, they are taken to an opt-in form. After filling in name and email address, prospects receive a coupon for a really strong front end offer. Take a moment to visit www.slumberlandspfld.com and you'll see how it works.

“Future articles will discuss marketing solutions like High Definition Web TV, hyper active social media, integrated email campaigns & direct response websites.”

unbelievable benefits that consumers receive along with purchase of new home furnishings. Today's consumer has no idea how good a deal they are getting, and it is our job as an industry to help them understand the values. New Media marketing can cost effectively transmit this message while building customer relationships and helping to turn those prospects into buyers.

NEW MEDIA DEFINED

Now that we are all on the same page, let's first make the distinction between traditional mass media and New Media.

Traditional mass media communication is designed to reach and influence large numbers of people at the same time.

Besides blanketing every person in a market with your message, traditional mass media's biggest benefit is that it is a huge source of credibility. When customers see a store advertised on TV they assume that the store has a degree of dominance in the marketplace. When they see a storeowner being interviewed on "Good Morning America" or a local news station, they mentally assign a degree of expertise to that owner and his or her store.

Mass media's major drawback besides the ability to quantify results is its high cost in many markets.

New Media marketing, in contrast, is designed to reach and influence highly targeted prospects through the use of online resources like websites, internet advertising, social media, emails and online video. Not only can retailers control their costs better, but the results are more trackable. New Media marketing solutions like Google, You Tube, and Facebook are also much more effective in appealing to a younger generation of shoppers by providing the instant informa-



At left is a sample coupon for the Slumberland of Springfield website offer described earlier in this article.

"You can tell your story completely so that when customers walk through the door all they are coming to do is touch the product, sit on the sofa and finalize the sale."

tion and credibility they need and want in the shopping experience.

What is so incredible about New Media marketing is just that --- it's new. Less than 20 years ago most of what are the shiny objects in marketing today, did not exist.

Amazon was founded in 1994, the same year I left retail. In 2010 they reported \$34.2 billion in sales. EBay came along in 1995 and last year alone did

\$9.15 billion in net sales. Both now provide excellent market places for retailers to sell products and test new items.

Google was founded in 1998 and is responsible for 34,000 searches per second; 2 million per minute; 121 million per hour; 3 billion searches per day. Today Google is our most powerful advertising platform, matching customers looking for answers with companies and resources that can help solve problems.

Or consider the power of social media. Facebook was founded in 2004 and as of this writing has over 600,000,000 users. You Tube was founded in 2005, was bought by Google in 2006, and now over 2 billion videos a day are watched on the site. Finally, Twitter was founded in 2006

and now has 190,000,000 users.

Marketing and advertising opportunities have been created to monetize these Internet juggernauts. Only those furniture retailers who know how to use these New Media marketing tools will be able to, going forward, help potential customers to find their products and home furnishings solutions.

CREATING CREDIBILITY & MANAGING DOWNSIDE RISK

Most furniture retailers understand that it is important to have an optimized website to attract the attention of prospects looking for products. Unfortunately, this also allows very quick price comparisons that has the potential to turn many of your

NEW MEDIA MARKETING

products into commodity items.

If a customer is interested in buying a dinette set, she can search for it on Google, or alternative search engine, and find all kinds of dinette sets listed for sale. If she finds a compelling reason to visit your store, and decides to visit, she will be armed with information including the approximate item price.

On one hand, the technology of the Internet is awesome because it allows Main Street furniture retailers to effectively and economically get the word out about their offerings to potential customers. The negative, of course, is that Main Street stores need to be price competitive with a much larger group of retailers including big box and e-commerce shops.

If you are an independent home furnishings retailer that doesn't want to be put out of business by competitors, some not even located in your local community, you must redouble your efforts to sell your unique benefits. Your advertising focus should be less about selling products whose price can easily be compared, and more about helping prospects to want to visit your store instead of an unknown retailer they found trolling the Internet.

Some ammunition you can use to create credibility and goodwill are: the history of the store, your customer service philosophy, third party testimonials, customer referrals and how the store stands behind its products. These points should be repeated in all your advertising and marketing, but the credibility factor is even

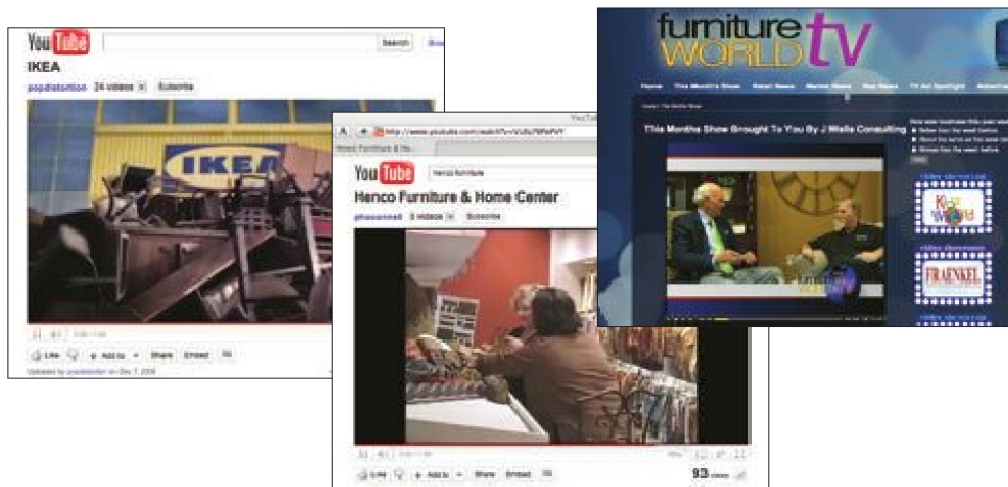
more important on the Internet. The customer searching for information there needs to know you are a legitimate, professional and friendly retailer and not a fly by night scam artist.

When making a purchase, consumers are always concerned about price, but that generally is not the most important concern, so please make a big effort to communicate the benefits of doing business with your store.

CONVENIENCE

New Media streams such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and even your own website serve one primary purpose: convenience for your customers. Nowadays customers are able to "shop" ten, twenty, and

New Media can be entertaining and or informative. Shown are screen shots from IKEA's many quirky and funny videos posted to YouTube. Also shown is a full length video interview with Henco Furniture from the FurnitureWorldTV.com website. More on using video to reach customers in later installments in this series.



more stores by simply doing a Google search and checking the websites that pop up on the first page. If they find you there and visited your virtual store presence through your website, Facebook fan page, landing page or other online media, they already have a good feel for your store and what you offer.

Social media is a way for customers to interact with the store owners directly. If a customer has a great experience at your store or is excited about a new purchase, then she's very likely to promote you via Facebook post, tweet to her followers, blogging or through one of the many ratings services (which also appear on Google's first page by the way). Unfortunately she can hold the same discussion with her friends online when she has a poor experience or gets poor quality merchandise.

Social media tools interact with each other to provide customers with real insight into your business: the products, the service, and the overall experience of working and doing business with you. People do business with people they know, like and trust. New Media marketing tools make it infinitely easier for customers to

"Tie your message into what's going on in the prospect's world, make it entertaining, and capture your customers' attention so you can begin that sales dialogue."

decipher who they know, like and trust. I like to think of it as word-of-mouth marketing 2.0.

There are some really important additional features of new media marketing that you should to be aware of.

THE POWER OF VIDEO

Once you have all your platforms established and synced, it's infinitely easier

and more cost effective to reach people in your target market. You get a lot more value for each dollar invested due to the high volume of traffic and exposure it creates for your store and your message.

Consider for example YouTube videos cost virtually nothing. On most social media platforms including YouTube, accounts are free to set up. Putting your first video up requires a minimum investment of about \$150 for an inexpensive Flip or Kodak camera.

If you do it right, video allows potential customers to enter your store already knowing more about your merchandise, your services, and people than any mass media advertisement could ever convey. You can tell your story completely so that when customers walk through the door, all they are coming to do is touch the product, sit on the sofa and finalize the sale. Consider also that your mass media advertising will drive prospects to your website to do further research and get the full story.

ENTERTAINMENT VALUE

New media marketing is as much about entertainment as anything else. People are on the Internet, playing online games, chatting in social media, watching YouTube videos and much more all for the sake of entertainment. Where possible, tie your message into what's going on in the prospects' world, make it entertaining, and capture your customers' attention so you can begin that sales dialogue.

The one absolutely critical element about this is that you must get started now. Every day there are many more new features, applications, and strategies that are being developed to inexpensively help retailers get messages to their target audience. Think about how you can redeploy some of your traditional "mass media" expenditures in favor of an investment in "New Media" marketing solutions.

The next few articles in this series will provide details about specific New Media marketing tools so that you can apply each one to your retail business. The next issue will detail one of the most interesting ways furniture retailers can showcase their products, store and expertise -- Web TV. Both Furniture World Magazine and my company are broadcasting WebTV shows. Additional tips and tricks from our experiences will be posted to www.FurnitureWorldTV.com and www.GetCustomers.TV.

Mike Root is Founder of Get Customers Right Now, a marketing company that provides online marketing systems, promotional campaigns, and premium incentive ideas. His techniques are designed to help retailers build sales through the use of low cost and no cost direct response marketing strategies. Visit his website GetCustomersRightNow.com to get a free resource for furniture retailers entitled "7 Little Known Customer Acquisition Strategies You Can Quickly Implement To Get New Customers And Explode Your Income That Your Competition Hopes You Never Discover."

Mike and his son, Jay along with Huey the Marketing Dog also host a free WebTV show called Get Customers TV (www.GetCustomers.TV) that spotlights the best of the best customer acquisition strategies for retailers. The show features helpful tips and tricks furniture retailers can use to spend less money on marketing while attracting more of new prospects.

Mike also is President of Furniture Sales of Mid-America, a furniture wholesale and rep company in the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states. He serves on the Executive Committee of the IHFRA and is a third generation furniture guy with experience in retail, wholesale and rental. He was recognized by the SBA as an Entrepreneur of the Year, and his furniture retail stores were honored by the Omaha Chamber of Commerce as one of the Top 25 Fastest Growing Enterprises three years in a row. He has been recognized by national furniture factories for sales excellence more than 15 times.

Free articles, blogs and instructional videos can be found at www.MikeRoot.com. Questions about this article or any advertising or marketing topic can be directed to him care of Furniture World at mroot@furninfo.com.