Creating a Successful Retail Website

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In today's retail market, retailers are looking for more ways to attract customers. One of the best marketing tools for your business is a website. Retail websites are designed to get the user's attention and then direct them into a buying decision. Many companies are looking at websites to increase their customer database.

So what are these retailers doing to their websites to increase their customer base? Here are some of the top trends that retailers are utilizing.

Be an expert source

Successful online retailers use their websites to give expert advice. Many consumers do online research before making a buying decision. You don't have a chance to get them into your store to give them your expert advice, so successful online retailers are using their websites to do this and position themselves as an expert in their field. This kind of expertise can set a web retailer apart.

Make your website customer friendly

A good website should be customer friendly. It should be easy for your customer to navigate through your website to find products and information that they seek. Make sure your navigation links are clear and concise. If a customer has to spend too much time navigating though your website to find information, they are likely to abandon the search and go to another company's website.

Pictures are worth a Thousand Words

While we have all heard this saying before, using images of products on your website is a powerful marketing tool. Pictures allow your customer to see the product and make sure it is what they are looking for. Pictures are placed right on specific web pages or by using a gallery or even a flash page.

Personalize the experience

If you want to increase your conversion rate, your website personalization is key. Successful websites like Clinique.com let shoppers take a 10-question survey, and then see recommendations of skin care products that match their profiles. Setting up your website to show customers products that are relevant to them, along with recommendations to related products, will help them see a product that appeals to them and therefore make a purchase.

Market yourself

How many times have you looked for a customer review on a hotel before deciding on your holiday destination? This is no different in retail. If you have customers raving about your products and services, get them to give you a testimonial and put it on your website. If you have years of experience and expertise in your field, tell your story. Using a video testimonial is even more powerful. Let potential customers know your company will provide them with both quality products and customer service.

Location, Location, Location

Your potential customer has done a search and found your website. They have looked through your website and now want to visit your store. Do they know how to get there? Many retail sites not only provide their address but also provide an online map linked to sites such as Google maps or MapQuest. Registering your business with Google Business is also a good idea. When someone searches your business in Google, your business listing with description and map will show up. Google offers this service free of charge.

Connecting your website and store

Many businesses create their excitement by sending registered consumers daily e-mails with product offers. They setup sign-up boxes on their websites. This increases your pros-

pect database. Then by using email marketing, they are able to stay top of mind with their database and increase their conversion rate. Staples sends online coupons to customers to redeem in store or online. Some websites create excitement by using their website to offer web promotions. This is a great way to use your website to drive traffic to your store and vice versa.

Online Shopping

Many retailers offer online shopping. When creating online shopping, it is important to make sure that is easy to use. Providing clear, accurate and detailed product information, prices and additional charges like shipping, is a key way to reduce a customer from leaving your website.

Connecting with customers

With the popularity of the Internet, consumers are communicating more and more online. With so many people using social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, many retailers are using these sites, and linking them to their websites, to market their business, to introduce new styles and products, to receive feedback and testimonials and to stay top of mind with their customers.

Website Linking

Successful websites don't just sell; they provide a customer with useful information. One way they do this is by linking their websites to other company sites that offer products and services that suit their target market. For example, a good women's clothing store might link to a shoe store. Creating these reciprocal links not only allows your customer more resources but they will also increase your online web rankings.

You can create a successful retail website by following the ideas in this article but the main thing to remember to be creative and informative. Just think of what you look for when you visit other websites. Make visiting your website is as unique and exciting as visiting your store. ∎

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