

Welcome To The Slow Season

5 Simple Strategies To Increase Your Sales During The Recession

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Date: Thursday, October 22, 2009

Time: 07:23:40 AM

Pull up a chair and sit down. Relax! Relax! I'm not going to sell you anything. I'm going to give you some tips to make more sales in YOUR business.

And the best thing about it—it's not going to cost you anything.

And welcome to the slow season of marketing in general.

I saw an interesting news report on television yesterday. The news was that there are more new business start-ups during a recession than during “normal” business cycles.

I remember reading Dr. Joe Vitale's book *“The Seven Lost Secrets of Success: Million Dollar Ideas of Bruce Barton, America's Forgotten Genius”* where more businesses were started during the Great Depression of the 1930's than during the “good times.”

Think about it. Now is a great time to start a new business. Whether it's online or a “brick and mortar” business, people are finding ways to make an extra income, and eventually replace the job they once had.

I've been doing business—on and off-- for several decades. It has only been over the last 15 years that I've used the Internet in one way or another.

Every year it's the same: the months of June, July and August can be slow in relation to sales. September, October and November—one would think—start to see a “pick up” in business, but that doesn't hold true in all cases. There are still a lot of people experiencing slow cycles in their business.

Summer is a time when a lot of kids are out of school and families take vacations. Here lately, due to the economic downturn, people have tapered off some of their vacations and learned how to be more creative with their leisure time.

When it comes to marketing your business, have you thought of creative ways to get your message out to the buying public?

Over the years I've experimented with a variety of strategies to keep sales strong during slow months. If you're looking to keep sales up, consider trying a few of these strategies...

Strategy 1: Have a special promotion.

Have you ever noticed the increase in department store sales fliers during the slow season and holidays? That's because big stores need to get customers in during their slow periods.

What do they do? They have a **special sale** every time any day resembling a holiday comes along. *(You can actually get more sales during the holidays when you 'target' specific locations with a flier “tailored” for that holiday!)*

Example: Use a generic flier that can be inserted into the newspaper. If you're in a large metro area, this will cost you a lot of money, not only for printing/copying costs, but also for insertion into the paper.

If some of your local retailers allow you to place fliers in their businesses, then find some acrylic displays to fit your fliers and place them in a strategic location where people will take them.

If you can't find the right kind of brochure holder at your local business supply store, then go online to Displays2go.com and check out some of their offerings. I've been buying from them for years and they have some really great products that you can use at the Point of Purchase locations in stores.

Example: In a convenience store or a beauty shop, put your brochure holder next to the cash register. Always make sure to patronize their business and stop by to check on your brochure inventory.

You could even print something on the back of your retail offer and give them information how to sign up in your downline, if you're in a multi level program. Some will, some won't. So what!

The extra profits you generate during the holidays, and the extra commissions you make from building an army of sub-affiliates in your business can produce some pretty phenomenal commission checks.

Strategy 2: Put together a "joint venture" deal for a specific retailer.

Here's a strategy I used one time with a car dealership that worked like gangbusters.

I made a special promotion piece about the size of a door hanger and had it printed up to look like a gift coupon. The dealership, which was going to run an ad in the paper anyway, put a blurb up on the top right of their ad saying, "Come in today (or this weekend, or whatever) and receive a FREE Gift Certificate for ---- (fill in the blank for your promo)! No purchase necessary."

I had a special tracking number on the gift certificate that I knew came from sales generated by his dealership, and I made a deal with him to give him a percentage of my sales.

I just had to make sure I left enough of the “gift certificates” with him to give out to people as they came in.

It was a great way to get people into the dealership, and the salesmen made a lot of sales that day. Because once they got the people into the dealership, all they had to do was do their “car sales magic” and make some sales.

Some of the gift certificates ended up going home with people, whether they bought a new car or not. Some of the gift certificates ended up on the floorboard of the cars, and some made it home to get plastered up on the refrigerator.

Most of them generated sales for the promo I was running. At the end of the month, when I got a commission check, I would take out my agreed percentage and send a check to the manager at the dealership with a note.

Was he happy? You betcha! He didn't have to spend any extra money on the blurb in the ad because they were already spending \$10,000 on the full page ad in the paper that weekend. What's a few more lines of ad copy on the page?

Exactly!

Some people refer to this as a “joint venture.” Call it what you want. It works.

You can do this with your local Jiffy Lube, or your Midas Muffler Shop, or whatever. Pick a business that has a high traffic ratio either during the week or on the weekends and go talk to the manager and see what you can work out.

Get on the phone and call people around town and introduce yourself and tell them you'll be giving away free gift certificates for "_____" (fill in the blanks with your promo) at "such-and-such" business. No purchase necessary.

Just make sure you don't come across as trying to sell anything because a lot of people that you call might be on the National "Do Not Call" list. There still might be some stipulations, so check with local regulatory authorities.

I have one sub-affiliate that has used this strategy in tire stores. How many tire stores do you have in your area? How about mechanic shops that sell tires? You can develop a special promotion for them, too! The list goes on. And it's only limited by your imagination!

Strategy 3: Hold a contest for your sub-affiliates.

If you access to your sub-affiliate's emails, develop a contest for them. You'll have to crunch your own numbers, but maybe you can give them a \$1,000 **pre-paid VISA Gift Card** for making 100 sales. (Figure out how much money you're going to make, and if this is going to be cost effective for you!)

I had over 200 "inactive" affiliates become active and each one of them sold 1 or 2 units that month. Could I afford to give away a \$1,000 card?

You betcha!

CAVEAT: The only thing you DON'T want to do is spam your downline! Make sure, if you are offering a true contest for them, that you do it professionally and that you offer something of value.

Now, the question is, "What do I offer as a prize for my sub-affiliates?" Well, that could take on many forms, and whatever might fit into your budget.

As I mentioned above, it can be a gift card, or an iPod, a Nintendo DS, or a new Xbox.

I know several of my friends who like Amazon Gift Cards. I even gave away a Samsung Netbook laptop computer. Heck! It only cost me \$400 dollars. I got off cheap on that one!

You can even have "Second Prize" offerings to motivate all your downline. Second prize offerings can also be offered to the sub-affiliate who produces the second largest sales in your downline. The opportunities are limitless!

Give away cash or merchandise to the top 1 or 2 affiliates for a 4 week period, and you'll see a frenzy of sales. Use your imagination and come up with some irresistible prizes.

Believe it or not, your sub-affiliates will work just as hard trying to win something for their kids, such as a new iPod or Nintendo DS, as they will for cash prizes.

Strategy 4: If you can't beat'em, join'em!

Not everybody can afford to do these promotions. Sometimes you have to put money somewhere else where it's needed most. You might have some bills, or a mortgage note, or utility bill that needs to be paid. You might be down to your last ten bucks and need to buy milk and bread for your kids. I understand.

I realize not everybody can do these types of promos because times are tough out there. But if you can, then, by all means, think of something and **DO IT!**

The key here is taking action on your ideas and putting them into motion!

Strategy 5: Work in a few brochures when you're traveling.

I always make sure I carry business card sized ads in my pocket or briefcase when I'm flying around the country. When the person sitting next to me strikes up a conversation and asks me what I do for a living, I give them one of my cards. On the front side is all my contact info, and on the back side is my promo info.

Use both sides of your business card!

I also carry door hangers and brochures with me in my briefcase. A nice professionally designed brochure always speaks quality and professionalism to your prospect. Even if they don't turn into a customer, they might be able to give it to a friend or colleague who can use it.

When you're driving along the interstate highways from one state to another, stop off at the State Visitors "Welcome Center" and Turnpike Rest Stops and see if they will let you leave a brochure holder and some brochures.

You've probably seen them as you travel from one state to another. They're all over the country. You go inside, buy some chips and soda, take a "break" and use their "facilities" and browse around their shops. (*Truck Stops: another idea that comes to mind...*)

One of the things I've noticed about truck stops and visitor's centers: a lot of them have brochure racks with – sometimes – 50 to 100 slots with various brochures about sights and tourist attractions. If they don't, then perhaps you could spring for one at Displays2go.com and ask them if you can set one in their location—as long as YOUR brochures remain in the top slots.

If you come in sometime and find someone else's crap in your slot, there's probably a number of reasons: either you let them run out of brochures, or some jerk came in their and took your stuff out and threw it away, replacing it with their crap.

Guess what? You know “who did it” because it will have all their contact info on their brochures. Call them up and tell them that you've moved their brochures to a lower rack because YOU own the rack. And if you find your stuff gone again, then you will pull the rack and nobody will benefit from it.

I had an a**hole that tried that with me only one time. After I gave her a call (yes, it was a “her”) she didn't mess with my stuff anymore.

Since your brochure is in the most prominent position (on the top rack) you should have a high conversion ratio.

If you can get your display “set apart” in a more strategic location within the Welcome Center, truck stop or retail location, all the better.

NOTE: Make sure you take down the name, address and telephone number of the location, along with a contact name for the manager. Tape one of your business cards to the bottom of your display, or to the back of it, and tell them,

“If you start running low on these brochure cards, just give me a call or email me, and I’ll send you some more.”

If you don’t have a toll-free number on your business card, get one. You want to make this as easy as possible for them to contact you.

For about \$34.95 you can get set up with **iTeleCenter Pro** which will provide you with a toll free number which will roll over to any number of phones you assign to your system—so that you're never out of touch. You can set everything up in less than 5 minutes and do it all online.

With **iTeleCenter Pro**, you can get instant activation of your toll free number, and for about \$1.13 a day, you can sound like a giant corporation with automatic forwarding to your cell phone, your office phone, your home phone, your voice mail—or however you want to set it up.



What Is TeleCenter Real Estate Pro?

TeleCenter Real Estate Pro was originally designed as a **Toll-Free Real Estate hotline and lead capture system** for real estate agents and brokers. It soon proved to be a valuable tool for a variety of other businesses. Poke around on their web site and see if it fits into your business model.

If you already have a Toll Free number, you can probably use that with the iTeleCenter system by plugging it into the admin panel.

Always make sure that you have your email address on your business card. Most businesses and managers have email, or they can send you a quick message on their BlackBerry to let you know that they need more brochures.

Remember: Your business card is your ambassador. They will work for you 24/7 and never need a break.

Do some brainstorming.

Last, but not least: plan your next **BIG** project.

Dream up some new ideas. Plan a little downtime so you can open up your mind and get those creative “juices” going. You’d be surprised at how many new ideas flow in while you’re “taking a break”.

This is one of the reasons I always keep a journal with me. I'm always making notes and later, when I get back to my computer, I'll put them into my "swipe file". (*Much of what I have written you in this newsletter comes from my swipe file!*)

One Final Note:

Develop a joint venture with major retailers in the U.S. – Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal Mart, Sam's Club, etc. If you can think of it, you can do it. Figure out who is running the show from "the top down" and get in touch with them.

If you contact them to do a joint venture, make sure you outline who THEY are going to benefit from it. They're going to want to know "*What's in it for me?*"

If you have some sort of "pre-approval" with the home office, or at least a "blessing" on their part, you will have a much easier time getting in to the branch stores.

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