

Word of Mouth

By Bob Osgoodby

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The one year anniversary of the start of your web business rolled around, and you had 8,126 hits to your web site by 3,712 people for the calendar year. That averages out to about 10 visitors a day. In analyzing these figures, it shows that some of those people were intrigued enough to visit other pages on your site during their visit. Like a robust meal, some came back for seconds and maybe even thirds.

Statistics show, that only a small percentage of the people visiting a web site actually buy something. Now if you're selling a "high ticket" item, that could have resulted in thousands of dollars worth of sales, and may be perfectly acceptable. A "low ticket" item, on the other hand may have only netted a small amount, and made a small profit or barely recovered the costs.

The web site selling the "high ticket" item must balance their production capabilities with the demand. Maybe they can't handle any more customers. The person selling the "low ticket" items has their work cut out for them.

So let's concentrate on what the "low ticket" person has to do. The pundits say that you must sell yourself first, and the product or service will be an easy sale. Well this is true to a certain extent. You must however have something that is saleable, at a competitive price.

Let's talk about price. Yesterday I was browsing through an online Garden Supply Store - yes it is getting to be that time of year. Common items were typically priced at almost double what I could get them for in our local store. While I got some good ideas, that vendor lost a sale. Prices must be competitive - and if you add shipping and handling, the differential is even higher. So, the concept of selling locally available items at a higher cost just doesn't make sense. The online entrepreneur is going to have a very difficult time competing with the chain stores.

So does that mean that there is no market for an online entrepreneur? No! There must however be a product line that is not normally available in local outlets - in other words a niche market.

Services are usually strong - especially online services. Find a niche here and you will usually succeed. But what kind of services sell? There are many kinds, but they usually don't take the form of affiliate programs that thousands of others are trying to sell. But, you might argue, affiliate programs are a great deal. With very little investment, you can be up and running in a very short time.

But why should someone buy from you, something that is being hawked all over the web? This is

where the advice of the pundits comes into action. You must sell yourself first, and do something that sets you apart from the others who have exactly the same product or service.

Your own web site is a great start. You can have your picture there, a short bio and list your reasons for joining the program. If you can sell yourself, the affiliate sale is a lot easier. But to do this, you must be able to entice your visitors back. If you can get them there enough times, the odds of you making a sale greatly increase.

There are a number of ways to get them to return. Content that is continually updated is a great start. If you have information of interest to them, they will come back. A guest book where you can capture their email address is a real plus. You can then notify them when the content has changed, and you are building a valuable mailing list. Running a contest is also a good draw.

If you can get your visitors back for seconds, or even thirds, you have a much better chance of selling your product or services. Who knows - you might also get a lot of new visitors by "word of mouth" which is always one of the strongest forms of advertising available.

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