

Business Slow? Ten Productive Projects to Fill the Gap

By Heather Reimer

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Times are tough. Business is sluggish. Blame world politics, corporate debacles or a general lack of consumer confidence. Whatever is driving this lull, it's causing the people who would normally be fueling the economy (and our businesses) to sit on their wallets.

If running away to Margaritaville isn't an option, here are some productive and inexpensive ways to spruce up your enterprise and gradually get those wheels of commerce grinding again:

=Upgrade the website. Maybe it's time to consider adding e-commerce or experiment with ways to harvest new sign-ups with, for example, exit pop-ups.

=Send out a special mailing to your opt-in list offering a freebie or a seasonal sale.

=Is your mailing list undernourished? Schmooze. Get out there and shake some hands at local business group meetings. On the way over, practice your 15-second elevator speech so you can get your message out fast, even in a noisy, crowded room. Don't forget the biz cards!

=Start jamming creative ideas for a newsletter. Your inbox is flooded with ezines, right? Design your own made up of the elements you like best in other publications. But keep it short, at least for now, as a kindness to your readers and to whoever has to write the content - likely you!

=Learn a new skill... maybe some aspect of web design or marketing that has eluded you. Visit htmlgoodies.com and choose a topic you know nothing about. Take a course at Barnes and Noble Online University. Subscribe to a few quality business newsletters like Clickz.com or Addme.com and learn from the experts. It'll keep those brain synapses snapping during the veg times.

=Get out the tool kit and fix those nagging little annoyances once and for all: the email client that isn't performing up to snuff; the buggy instant messenger. Create folders and organize your documents, your desktop, your emails, etc.

=Contact the local media and find out which editors/program directors can help you get publicity for your business. Make a file of all contact names and numbers so you'll be ready when you have a story to pitch about your product or service.

=Even if you think there's nothing new to say about your business, write a press release linking your product or service to something in the news or a current business trend. CyberAtlas.com and Nua.com/surveys are excellent resources for this.

=Take a super critical look at your online copy and your ads. Are they working as hard as they could be? In an economic slowdown, it's even more important to use the best sales copy you can afford. Find out if your content needs a boost by requesting a free content analysis from TheWriteContent.com

=Be assured you're not the only one suffering through an unpaid holiday right now. Take advantage of that fact and barter some services/products with other business owners in the same boat.

As with all recessions and economic slumps, this too shall pass. Spend the time wisely and you'll be ready to swing into action when those wallets start to squeak open again.

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