

4 Sure Ways to Keep Your Customers Coming Back

By Jean Lam

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You may already know how important it is to drive qualified prospects to your web site. What's even more important, though, is finding ways to keep them there once they've arrived.

After all, what's the use of spending all that time and money on securing top rankings on search engines, setting up a network of affiliates, and building a 100-page site if nobody stays once they arrive? That's the hard way to learn the value of "sticky" content.

The easy way is to keep reading. The information I'm about to share with you will show you how to use content to turn visitors into shoppers and shoppers into repeat buyers!

I've boiled it down to 4 sure ways to keep your visitors coming back for more. Put these tips into practice, and watch your sales start climbing almost immediately.

1) Take charge of your content

It's important to spend a few minutes thinking about how often you really need to update your content. If your site sells reports on e-commerce issues, your visitors may expect new content about the e-commerce market on a fairly regular basis.

If your site isn't going to need content changes on a regular basis, think about writing the content yourself. Nobody knows your product as well as you do, so who better to write about it? Of course, you'll want the content to have a strong focus on the features and benefits of your product or service, so here are a few ideas for articles you could post on your site:

Three ways your product can save your customers time.
Three ways your product has saved your customers money.
Interesting or unique applications for your product.

Ok, ok. I can already hear some of you saying "I'm an entrepreneur -- I'm not a writer!" My answer: Why don't you give it a try? You'll probably surprise yourself. Even if your writing isn't as clear and flowing as something crafted by a professional copywriter, your enthusiasm for your product will go a really long way.

There are a couple of situations where I would recommend hiring the services of a professional writer. If you simply aren't comfortable writing your own content, then this is definitely the way to go.

You will also probably want to look into the services of a professional if your site is going to require frequent content updates. Writing can be very time-consuming, and as a business owner, you'll need to decide on the most profitable way to spend your time.

Here are a few of the better resources I've found for tracking down copywriters:

<http://www.elance.com>

<http://www.marketingtool.com>

2) Check "All" of Your Content

Remember, when we talk about content, we're not just talking about the text on your site. We're talking about every single word, image, link, logo, and e-mail address.

One of the most important things you can do to keep your site current (and drive sales) is to rotate your features and specials. Is your best-selling product featured prominently on your site? If not, visitors won't find what they came for and that's costing you profits!

Always keep your catalog up-to-date. Nothing will drive customers away faster than receiving an e-mail from your company saying that the product they ordered yesterday is no longer available. It never ceases to amaze me how often I come across sites with outdated, unavailable products still posted online.

Check all of your links. Every last one of them. Even that one at the very bottom that links to your privacy policy. If the link through to your "Satisfied Customers" page isn't working, how comfortable is a customer going to be entering their credit card number?

And while you're at it, make sure that anything labeled "Coming Soon" will be actually coming soon. If it's not going to be ready within a week, take it down.

I'd also highly recommend that you go through your web site on a computer other than your own. It's amazing what you'll learn. That image that looks so great on your computer may actually be broken when viewed on someone else's! Make sure you take note of how long content and images are taking to come up.

If it takes more than 10 seconds for the image of your product to appear, you're probably losing customers by the truckload!

The idea here is to make your visitors comfortable enough to make a purchase from you. There is a direct correlation between how comfortable people are and how likely they are to make a purchase. And a web site where everything works is a comfortable place to be.

3) Check Out Free Content Providers

In a word: YES! Believe it or not, there are actually a number of places to find content on just about every topic imaginable that you can post on your site at no cost. Of course, the quality of this content varies tremendously, so be sure to choose carefully.

You should be aware that some free content providers will try to take visitors away from your site. You may find, for example, that the news headlines you've posted on your site whisk visitors away as soon as they click on them. Obviously, this is not what you want.

If you want to look into free content for your site, here are a few good places to start:

<http://www.allnetarticles.com>

<http://www.ultimateprofits.com>

4) Never Throw Anything Away

Want to know an almost effortless way to make your site 50% more useful to your visitors? Archive your content. A study by online usability guru Jakob Nielsen showed that an archive of past content increases a site's usefulness by about 50%.

And since you've already produced the content, it's no hassle to simply index all of those articles in an archive. And, believe me, your customers will be glad you did.

As your archive grows, you'll add credibility to your business, because your customers will be able to see how long you've been around. With all those extra pages, your customers should be hanging out at your site a little longer -- making them more

comfortable and more likely to buy.

Having fresh content isn't about having today's news headlines scrolling across the top of your homepage. As always, keep your eye on the bottom line and ask yourself, "Is this content helping my sales"? If the answer is YES, you know you're on the right track.

Keep your site current and your content relevant, and I guarantee that your visitors will start spending more time there. And the longer they stay, the more dramatic the impact will be on your profits!

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