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7 Ways to Create a Recession-Resistant Website

By Kristi Stangeland © 2009

It's tempting to make the same mistake countless other website owners make: maintaining the status quo. But according to John Quelch of the Harvard Business School, "In a recession, consumers become value oriented. But a downturn is no time to stop spending on marketing." What do Quelch and other marketing experts recommend? Making adjustments so you spend more wisely and most effectively.

Here are 7 tips for making your website recession resistant. You'll notice that none takes an enormous amount of time or money to accomplish, but all practically guarantee positive results.

#1 - Review Brand/Product/Service Positioning - Considering the current (and projected) economy, are your products and services (and the branding that backs them) in the best position possible?

John Foligno, President for Cubism Group, advises, "Now more than ever, evolving your brand's products or services is crucial to meet your clients' changing needs. In today's difficult economy, it's just as important to update your website to reflect these new offerings. This will increase the likelihood that prospects will not only find you but also sense your relatedness to what they're going through."

Tweak corporate/product branding strategies to better reflect your desire to support your customers through this challenging time.

#2 - Adjust Copy - Just because you aren't adding or changing product/service offerings doesn't mean copy should remain static. Take a moment to reflect on your current copy. Does it still sound relevant in the current climate? Are there ways you can adjust the copy to portray a clearer message of value and trust to your clients?

#3 - Refresh Graphics/Images - Jerry Froehlich, graphic designer with Froehlich Bonini Design, gives some sage advice. "Make sure you back up your message with appropriate graphics and that the image/images/feeling helps to support your words." How cohesive would it be to have slick, flashy images on the same page with copy that speaks to the value and longevity of your products/services?

#4 - Use Email to Increase Sales - Some estimates state that it takes 7 points of contact before a new client buys from you. In strained economic times, it may take more exposure than that. This is where the good ol' standby, email, comes into play. This economical and fast medium lets you stay in touch with new customers as well as refreshing existing, but perhaps dormant, relationships with previous customers.

#5 - Give Away Something for Free - Offer visitors to your site something of value free in exchange for their contact information. A detailed white paper, a free report or a series of tips or tactics for improving their businesses/lives can go a long way to developing strong relationships with site visitors. Once they've opted in to your email list, continue to prove your worth by offering great advice along with offers rather than just bombarding list members with sales messages.

#6 - Get Social - Stacey Cohen, President of Co-Communications, Inc., offers some timely advice about social media. "With the explosion of social media and online PR, it has become critical for businesses of all sizes to effectively manage their online reputations. This begins with a relevant and current website

which positively reflects a company's brand. It is counterproductive to embark on a social media campaign or a PR initiative until the website is fit."

Don't just jump into social media blindly. Take time to firm up your website, so it will support your social media efforts.

#7 - Optimize for the Search Engines - Is your website already optimized for the search engines? If not, it's not too late to start. Obtaining organic search rankings is something that will pay off now and in the future. But don't delay. Depending on how competitive your industry is, it may take a while to secure good positioning.

If you've already reached the top of the organic ladder, do some additional keyword research. Have you missed any opportunities to reach customers through new keywords? Adding a few new pages to your site can open the doors for new, highly targeted clients to find your site via the engines.

Whether you take a course, attend a seminar or hire a professional to make these changes to your site, it will certainly pay off in higher conversion rates... that's the name of the game. Because, after all, a site that converts more visitors into buyers is priceless in any economy.

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