

Three Ways to Prosper in Any Economy

Use “value-added” techniques to get an edge on your competitors.

Separating your company from all the rest is more important than ever. Think like a customer to discover what you can do to dramatize your uniqueness. It's never the “value” you want to add that makes the difference. It's the “value” the customer wants to receive that is important.

Demonstrate a “we can do it” attitude.

You may have the best products or services, but that's not enough. Go the next step. Show enthusiasm for going out of your way to prove that you're service-oriented.

Use the magic word, “Sure.”

Since we're all in the problem solving business, respond to requests with a strong “Sure.” You may not have all the answers at the moment. That's not important. You can get them later. When you're talking to the customer, convey confidence and be 100% positive. It will get you more and more business.

Source: John R. Graham, president of Graham Communications in Quincy, Mass. www.graham.com. Reprinted with permission from The Selling Advantage bimonthly newsletter. To subscribe to The Selling Advantage, call 800-220-5000.

Free E-Newsletter Available for ALA Showrooms to Send Out

BiNational contributors now have access to a quarterly home lighting and décor electronic newsletter they can send to their consumer e-mail lists. Showrooms can drop in their contact information to personalize. The newsletter contains interesting home lighting tips, interior design ideas and other timely information for homeowners.

Showrooms interested in receiving the free e-newsletter should contact Larry Lauck at 800-605-4448, ext. 27, or llauck@americanlightingassoc.com.

E-Marketing – The Next Media

*By Dave Clark
Clark Communications Group*

Ask a thirty-something mother how she found out about your store, and chances are she'll say she “Googled” it. A savvy younger shopper is likely to compare products and pricing from several different competitors' Web sites. Because of the Internet, the marketing and advertising of your lighting showroom has become multi-layered and much more complex.

Gone are the days when you can run a small ad in the newspaper and expect customers to come pouring through the door, ad in hand. Today's strategic advertising plan depends on the Internet to deliver added value to the customers who see your ads in the newspaper, magazines and TV, or hear your message on the radio.

Sound complicated? It's true, you will need professionals or knowledgeable in-house people to help you create, implement and coordinate online marketing or eMarketing campaigns – but the long-term benefits of investing in e-marketing are considerable. There are no printing and postage costs, and each customer is addressed on a first name basis.

This article is designed to give you a series of steps to follow in building an effective e-marketing presence for your company.

1. Invest a marketing driven Web site.

Today's consumers expect to see more than a page with pretty pictures of lighting. They want information about how to light their home as well as the ability to search for lots of specific products. The more your Web site engages the customer's interest, the closer they will move toward making a purchase at your store.

To this end, it is critical that your Web site has the ability to gather information about the customer – primarily email address, first name, last name and phone number.

2. Gather e-mails.

Create advertising promotions that drive customers to the Web site for Bonus

Savings, Enter-To-Win Contests and other promotions. Before the customer can print out the Bonus Coupon or enter to win, they must provide information about themselves. Support these efforts with in-store e-registration boxes at the check out counter. This is the single most effective email gathering technique.

Another great way to add emails to your list is to advertise your bonus savings or enter-to-win contest in the online section of your newspaper, radio or TV station. The costs are negotiable. Try to spend less than \$10 per thousand impressions. You will need to buy hundreds of thousands of impressions to have an impact. Many radio stations and magazines will give you free online ads as added value to your advertising contract.

3. Communicate with your e-customer.

Once you have developed a list of 300 to 500 email addresses, it's time to start communicating. Web-based bulk e-mail programs are everywhere these days (just Google “bulk e-mail marketing applications”). They are inexpensive, relatively easy to set up and give you the ability to communicate with your customers on a first-name basis. Whenever we run a promotion, we send out an “e-card” to let the customer know about the sale. We also send out e-cards to provide information about energy efficiency, LEDs and new product arrivals.

How do you pay for these new services? Many retailers are finding that they do not need display ads in the Yellow Pages. Because of the emergence of search engine technology, Google, Yahoo, AOL's Net Find and other well-known search engines are rapidly replacing the Yellow Pages.

Dave Clark is owner of Clark Communications Group, an agency specializing in advertising and marketing for lighting showrooms and lighting manufacturers throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1992. ALA members may contact Clark at 800-886-2522. For more information on the company, visit www.lightads.com.