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Online Marketing for Your Buy Here Pay Here Operation

Web Roll Call - Are You Present?

Hopefully, by now, you will be present when they call the Web roll. If not, you are costing yourself good old-fashioned money.

Ninety percent of all consumers start their search for the product or service they are looking for on the **Internet**. Think a Web presence isn't a necessity? I guess not if your target customer is the other 10 percent. That's a pretty small pool to fish from and one that I can assure you will dry up in the coming years. So having a Web presence to not only increase business, but to simply sustain it, is very important.

In the past, I have discussed the difference between **advertising and marketing**. Advertising is defined as the action of calling something to the attention of the public especially by paid announcement, and marketing is the process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service. When it comes to Internet, marketing is what you need to be doing to increase your BHPH business.

So, what is it you need to satisfy your Web marketing needs—a website? As my teenage daughters would say, “Duh!” The days of just having a website and that being enough in and of itself are definitely gone. The content of that webpage has become ultra important.

From a marketing standpoint, your website home page and message should be simple and concise. As with most things in life, first impressions are very important. A cluttered and complicated home page can cause prospective customers to simply click back to their search results screen.

Now, I'm not going to tell you what you should or should not have on your homepage. There are simply too many variables involved. Your market area, target customer and budget are just a few. Of all the BHPH dealers I have the privilege of working with either in our 20 groups or in consulting and training, I don't think I have ever seen two websites that are the same. But I have definitely seen some that are more effective than others, and the effective ones seem to be simple and concise.

There are many resources available to help track the effectiveness of your website. Resources such as Google Analytics (which is free by the way) can track things such as number of page views, visitors and time spent on your site—all very important pieces of information. They can help you determine the keywords prospective customers are using to find you. They can also tell how long prospective customers are on your site, which tells you whether or not your content is effective. Lastly, such resources can tell you how many key clicks prospective customers are making, which can help you determine the ease of use of your site.

From a marketing perspective, the key to an effective home page is prospective customers must see something they are looking for right away or can spot very easily on the first page. Your home page is the perfect place to tell who you are and what you are about. It can almost be your "About Us" page because that is what most of the prospective customers that land on your page want to know. They want to know what separates you from the rest.

Another effective Web marketing tool is social media. Initially, some dealers set up personal accounts and accepted current customers and prospective customers as friends. This was a little dangerous because unless someone was monitoring the postings constantly, a disgruntled customer could post some very negative comments that would be out there for all to see. Most dealers have gone to using business pages instead. Then, customer and prospective customers just have the option to like or not like you. Social media pages, like the home or landing page of your website, should be simple and concise.

Lastly, reputation management is something every dealer needs to focus on. Recent data shows that consumers are more likely to buy a product or service based on reviews found on the Internet than from friends or family recommendations. Sources such as the Yellow Pages and the BBB have been replaced by source like Google Maps and Peer Reviews. Resources such as Google Alerts (also free) can notify you of any postings in regards to your business via e-mail as they happen.

Web presence is a necessity to not only grow your business, but to simply maintain it. Web marketing is the way to establish that presence. The best and most cost effective ways to ensure you do have a presence is to set up Google Analytics to track your website effectiveness, Google Maps to help move you up on the search results page and establish a good reputation, and Google Alerts to monitor what is being said about your business. If you don't have time to set up these types of accounts, make sure that whoever is in charge of hosting your website is doing this for you.

Web roll call. Are you present and accounted for?

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