

Leap For It: The Web is Changing the Way We Sell



Google has changed sales. Why? Access to information and the advent of high speed Internet access. Could you imagine downloading a YouTube video clip on dial-up? With this newfound speed, consumers and businesses have flocked to the web as their primary source of information – regardless of the topic.

Access to information has had a profound impact on selling. The most obvious change has been on prospecting. Sure you can still cold call, but guess what your customers are doing? They're Googling to find products and services they want to buy. Mr. Customer is not waiting by his phone hoping you will call. He is on Google looking for an answer to his challenge. He will peck away at sites until one catches his eye. And if all the stars align he will call that company and request more information. If you had made a cold call at the exact same time he was searching for an answer you would probably get the lead, but chances are you didn't. Wouldn't it be much nicer to have the website that he found and decided to call?


Having a website is only a minimum requirement. What is more important is being in the path of your customer's searches. The auto companies are really savvy in this arena. Not only do they have incredible websites for consumers to evaluate their vehicles, they also have a whole industry talking about them. You can read auto reviews on Edmunds (www.edmunds.com), watch videos on YouTube, read road tests on Car and Driver (www.caranddriver.com) and read thousands of owner comments in the blogosphere. If you Google "BMW 5" you will find a plethora of information on the BMW 5-series in seconds. Most people buying cars today know exactly what they want and where they will buy it from long before they ever speak to a salesperson.

When a customer does find your website and is motivated to call, they are already extremely well educated. This means the window of opportunity to influence the buying decision is very short. You have to be on your A game when you're dealing with an Internet lead. Why? Quite often the customer knows as much or more about the product as you do. When the customer does make the call they have an agenda. They have specific questions. They are looking for a buying experience that matches their online experience. Anything less and they will find another solution online – it's just that easy for them.

The Internet is changing sales at an alarming pace. Google has been in use since 2000. Facebook was launched in 2004, and

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YouTube launched in mid-2005. Look at how quickly these sites have permeated our Internet usage and become tools in our day-to-day shopping habits. As salespeople we need to adapt quickly to how the web is influencing our customers' buying decisions.

Does your company have an Internet strategy for attracting, engaging and converting searchers into leads? If not, get working on it. This should be a top priority in every company. The companies with the best web experience and the most Internet chatter will fare best. Within my own organization, we attract two new customers per week simply from our website. We haven't cold called for new business since 2005. Embrace it. 

Jeremy Miller is a Partner with LEAPJob, a sales recruiting firm in Toronto. LEAPJob recruits sales professionals and sales leaders for many of Canada's most recognized companies. Their clients range from the Top 50 Employers to smaller organizations building their first sales force. You can reach Jeremy at Jeremy.Miller@LEAPJob.com or (905) 281-3090, ext. 22.

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Contact: Jodi Terry
Ph: 1.888.836.6697 Email: jterry@timeplus.ca
www.timeplus.ca