How to Beat the Economic Downturn with your Web Site

In the current economic down turn many business owners are looking at how they can make their businesses more efficient. Read on to find out how to make your web site more efficient and turn prospects into sales.

- Efficiency is the Key
- Convert Visitors to Enquiries to Sales
- Make sure your web site is usable
- Find Niches you didn't even know about with Keyword Research
- Get an Injection of Customers with PPC
- Track your traffic and identify areas for improvement
- Follow up

Efficiency is the Key

Efficiency

Efficiency is key to making an effective web site. In general web site users are impatient and lazy so you need to address this by making a simple and easy to use web site.

An efficient web site will make the most out of the traffic it gets. Its all well and good having high rankings and lots of traffic but if your web site is not efficient you will be losing out on a mountain of potential business.

Simplicity

The KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) theory is very applicable to you your web site. Simplicity equals success.

Some of the most successful products and businesses are incredibly simple. Simplicity is a tried and tested approach so Keep It Simple Stupid! Simplicity equals Success!

Download Time

One of the biggest turn offs to any web user is a slow loading web site. If your site takes more than two seconds to download you start losing visitors at an exponential rate.

By the time you get to 7 seconds if your page isn't fully loaded you will have lost around 90% of visitors. Think about that, you have lost 90% of visitors. Thats not 90% of potential visitors, that's 90% of people who tried to view your site that clicked back because it doesn't load quickly enough!

Can you really afford to lose 90% of potential customers?

The majority of web sites have incorrect or non W3C complaint code and common errors that cause a slow loading web site. What is surprising is that many of these errors are surprisingly easy to rectify.

[W3C Code Validtor / Checker](#)

Make it Easy

OK, so you have visitors to your site and it loads quickly, great! That is the first hurdle taken care of.

But is your web site easy to use? It sounds like an obvious question, but getting someone out side of your company to find a product on your site might highlight some problems. Just because you know where something is located doesn't mean a potential customer will.

If its not easy for a customer to find a product and purchase it within 3 clicks from your home page you stand a high chance of losing that potential customer.

This is called the 3 Click rule and is something that all web sites should try and adhere to.

Don't try and do too much

Many websites fall down by trying to do too much. Your corporate logo might look nice dancing around the screen but the reality is nobody cares about it!

People generally want information and they want it now!

Don't over complicate things by asking lots of questions or requiring lots of clicks. Why should someone have to click through 5 menus to see a standard price?

Convert Visitors to Sales

Converting Visitors to Sales

OK, so you have kept hold of your visitors with an efficient and simple website that loads quickly. Good job!

Now you have to convert those visitors into sales. That's easier said then done!

This next section explains some of the things you need to be aware of when trying to get visitors to convert into sales.

Types of Traffic

Some search terms just plain don't convert to sales well. You may have a new hi tech product that the world needs to know about and you have checked that lots of people are searching for it. The trouble is, these are all research based searches that have no intention of purchasing anything!

This highlights the fact that you need to know your market, research your keywords and understand the commercial value of a search term.

A good indicator of the commercial value of a term is its competition score and value in CPC in Google AdWords. If people are paying to get listed for a term then it is likely that it will be a good commercial term.

Google's useful Keyword Search Tool

Call to Action

People are emotional beings that act on impulse rather than logic. Ironically, one of the most important yet over looked areas of on-line marketing is incredibly obvious and logical.

Ask your customers to buy your product. Better yet Tell them!

You need a "Call To Action".

You literally need to say things like "Call us Today!" or "Buy Now!" Think about how many times you have clicked a link that says "Click Here". You did it because of the call to action.

Click Here

Make sure your web site is usable

One of the biggest causes for leaving a site is a site that is not very user friendly. I recently came across one such travel site that looked good, I liked the product. It offered unlimited travel around Europe. I thought "this looks good for my trip, I don't have to work to a time table and can pick and chose where and when I travel". I would very likely have purchased a ticket if I could have found out how much it cost before I had to buy it.

As far as I could tell I would have had to enter all my personal and payment details before finding out how much it was. Further more it had a map on the home page that said "select your country of departure". Well, I was planning on starting in Paris, France so I clicked France. It took me to the French version, so I had to click back again. I wanted an English version but that had trips departing from France.

This site was also split across several "partner" sites.

So here I am, a qualified buyer who want's their service and they didn't get my business! Why? The site was very irritating and not very user friendly so they didn't get any business from me.

I also went looking for some contact details so I could tell them about my experience - couldn't find that either! The end result was that someone else got my business! Don't let that happen to you!

<u>Usability Audit</u>

My experience with the travel site could have easily been avoided if the site had addressed a few fundamental issues.

This highlights the necessity for conducting a usability audit of a web site.

Website usability is a whole subject in its self and is out side the scope of this article. The following bullet points will point you in the areas you should be looking at.

- Download Time
- Page Layout
- Browser Compatibility
- Headings
- Navigation
- Search Function
- Static Site Map
- Content
- Simplicity

Find Niches you didn't even know about with Keyword Research

Keyword research is, in my opinion, the single most important part of an SEO plan. It is surprising that most business owners have never had any proper keyword research done and do not really know the search market that relates to their business.

Find Niches you didn't know existed

With keyword research you can often find some useful niche market areas that are an untapped resource with a decent amount of traffic and little competition. Thats a keyword gold mine and many business completely overlook this kind of research and analysis!

Don't assume you know your keywords

The fundamental principle behind keyword research is that you shouldn't assume you know the keywords people use to find your web site. You may well know what keywords you use to find it, but not what your customers are searching for.

I was asked by one company to get them the #1 rank for a machine that they made. The machine had a generic product machine name and number. This was what they asked me to rank them for.

They were horrified to learn that nobody searched for that keyword. They knew that the machine was an XT40, but nobody else did!

So, I could have got the #1 spot for the term and they would not have received a single enquiry for their new machine. Imagine if they had spent £5K on on-line advertising targeted at that keyword!

There was a specific application that this machine catered for, and that was what people who wanted the machine searched for, so this is what we targeted.

The moral here is DO NOT assume that you know your keywords.

Its not all about volume

Another major mistake in keyword targeting is going after top level generic keywords that have the most amount of searches in your industry.

Get the number one spot for Insurance and you might get lots of traffic but it is not highly targeted traffic. For example, if you sold pet insurance and got ranked for insurance, the majority of people searching for insurance are probably not looking for pet insurance so your site will be of no use to them.

Some of the best converting and most valuable keywords are surprisingly easy to get, you just have to determine which ones are the best to target. This is addressed in the next section. Targeting key phrases with 3 - 4 words are usually better because they are easier to rank for and are much more specific.

Proven KEI Analysis Technique

Keyword research will usually involve a KEI analysis. This is something I am a big fan of because it uses reliable data and proven metrics on which to calculate the value of a keyword.

KEI stands for Keyword Effectiveness Index.

There are lots of ways to calculate your KEI value but all methods hinge around the basic principle that more searches and less competition gives a higher KEI value and thus a better keyword to target.

To tie in with the 3 - 4 word key phrase it is often the case that 3 - 4 word key phrases will have something like 1/5th of the search volume of a generic term but only 1/10th or 1/20th of the competition. This highlights the benefit of keyword research. Find more people more easily!

Get an Injection of Customers with PPC

Given the current economic climate sometimes you just need business NOW!

With Organic Search Engine results (the normal results you get in a search engine) you will have to wait a period of time (usually several months) before your efforts come to fruition. That might just not be viable for you right now.

If this is the case, then PPC (Pay Per Click) tied in with Keyword Research could be the answer for you. With PPC, you can start getting targeted traffic right away!

Use Specific PPC Sales pages

PPC or sponsored search pages can be sale targeted pages that are more "hard push" and graphical in nature. They do not have to follow the same rules as search engine optimised pages.

You can create a set of specific pages that you can track success of though a web analytics program such as Google Analytics.

PPC Sales pages can be tailored, tweaked and made to convert better in a much shorter time frame than normal web pages in Organic Search Results.

Track your traffic and identify areas for improvement

Using Web Analytics will help you identify areas of your site that are not performing well which can tell you that you need to fix an error or rewrite a page.

You can try and monitor the success of different page titles, layouts and colour schemes etc. You can get results in quite a short time meaning that you can quickly capitalise on your existing traffic levels. That means you get more business for the same level of traffic and advertising spend.

This feeds back into the whole Efficiency principle outlined at the beginning of this article.

Follow up

There is just NO excuse for not following up a web enquiry form an email or form but it happens a lot! I just refuse to give my business to anyone who doesn't want it. I should not have to try to get you to take my business, it should be incredibly easy for me to pay you my hard earned cash so don't fall down at the first hurdle!

Respond to all enquiries!

You might be very busy, and that's OK, but at least let me know you got my email!

Set up auto responders to web forms and sales email addresses ensuring your potential customer that they are important to you and that someone is looking into their enquiry and will get back to them shortly.

If you get an enquiry make sure you follow it up! Anyone is a potential customer.

Why wait for an email or web enquiry to come in? Add an on-line chat assistance to help customers on your site. You can get a sales person in touch with someone on your site before they leave and can also convince them to purchase where as they may otherwise click back.

This section can be summarised by a phrase I like a lot - "Look after the customer of someone else will!" - and that is very true!

Summary

There are many ways that you can make more out of your web site for very little cost.

By following a few of the fundamental issues outlined in this article you will be able to drastically increase your conversion to sale ratio without spending any more on advertising and without getting any more traffic.

That almost sounds like something for nothing! Well its not! You have a lot of hard work to do but if you do it properly you will make your web site much more efficient and be generating more business to help you get through these difficult economic times.

Go forth and be efficient!

This article was written by Trevor Stolber. For more information on any or all of the above outlined steps go to www.Ikroh.com for practical and useful Search Engine Marketing advice.