

The Key to Converting your Marketing Online

For wine stores moving online for the first time, it can be a pleasant surprise to realize how much business can be conducted solely on the strength of the store's inventory and pricing. However, given other pressing demands on the resources of a small business, listing their inventory could represent the full extent of some stores' ventures into ecommerce.

With more ambitious stores however, the benefits of having an online presence don't stop with an inventory list. They have discovered new markets hungry for products that move slowly in the store, there are opportunities to turn inventory quickly with targeted investments, and in the case of "virtual inventory," to sell product without any upfront investment.

A more aggressive approach to selling online involves mastery of a new set of marketing tools. This online marketing mix includes, email, organic search, paid search, banner ads, comparison shopping feeds, and any number of opportunities to place an offer in front of new customers. Obviously, the store that can drive traffic from new sources and convert this traffic into profitable sales is positioned to grow a substantial online operation.

It sounds simple, but many have tried and failed to get this right. It takes a disciplined marketer to focus on the sales path from initial message to landing page and on through the shopping cart. One such marketer is Dr. Flint McGlaughlin of Jacksonville Beach, FL-based Marketing Experiments, who conducts systematic research into what works. To summarize his findings, basically you need to nail your "value proposition".

Now this little phrase, "value proposition," is one of the ugliest pieces of jargon I ever encountered in my short career as a management consultant.

Unfortunately, it is also the accepted "term of art" for describing the key selling points that you must make to your potential customers: why this product is different and better, and why you are the best store to buy it from. A strong and compelling value proposition must match the alternatives on the important selling points and exceed them on at least one important factor. Restating generic winery tasting notes is not going to make the difference in whether potential customers take the plunge. You need to come up with a clear message that explains why your offer is the best choice.

In 2006, Marketing Experiments implemented a competition offering \$100,000 for the best value proposition that could fit on the back of a napkin. With over 400 submissions, there were very few effective ones. The good news is that your competitors probably don't have one either, so developing a strong value proposition will give you a big advantage.

The highest performing landing pages do really well at matching the motivation of the ideal prospect and then clearly stating the value proposition. Your prospects' motivations will be different depending on how they hear about your promotion, so you need to target your message based on the source of the traffic. Email recipients already have opted in to receive promotions from your store, so will weigh recommendations based on previous experience. This is very different from new traffic that comes from online ads where the prospect doesn't know your store.

Whether the term value proposition strikes you as a term of art or as ugly jargon, it represents the key to converting sales from your online marketing programs.

To learn more about how the Beverage Network can help with a website for your store, contact Ian Griffith at (212) 571-3232, or visit www.bevnetwork.com/retailweb.