


SEPTEMBER '11 NEWSWIRE

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GENERATING A RETURN FROM WEBINARS

As business owners and managers dedicate more time to running their businesses and keeping their heads above water, they have less time to leave the office in order to attend presentations and seminars. As a result, webinars are finding favour with business people who still want the benefits of attending a seminar without the hassle of leaving the office in order to attend.

Running webinars gives you and your business an opportunity to reach out to customers, demonstrate your expertise / the effectiveness of your products and engage with customers. Webinars assist your business in:

- Generating new leads
- Educating new and existing clients on the benefits of your products/services
- Reaching prospects and decision makers who are generally not easy to get in touch with

Choose Relevant Topics that your customers and prospects care about. Identify an issue or challenge in your target market and develop a webinar which demonstrates how your firm can help businesses to address the issue. Developing a webinar that addresses this issue and illustrates how your firm can help will really engage with your target audience.

Be Tactical and develop a game plan for your webinars. In running a webinar you are giving a certain amount of information and advice away to your clients and prospects for free. You need to get a return on this investment. Decide on which tactics you will use in order to develop new business from your webinar. For example, capture all email addresses of your webinar attendees. The day after the webinar send an eZine / eNewsletter out to those who attended the webinar and attach a link where the attendees can download the notes from the webinar. Record those who click through and download the notes (these people are obviously interested in your products / services). Pass these contact details on to your sales people and ensure that they follow up on the leads within a couple of days.

Use Email and Social Media sites such as LinkedIn to invite clients and prospects to a webinar. However this is only the beginning. The day after your webinar you should link to all attendees on LinkedIn – they should be receptive as a result of your webinar. Next, you should email all attendees thanking them for attending the webinar and informing them that you will add them to your e-newsletter list. (They can unsubscribe themselves if they wish – just make sure to give them this option). Stay in regular contact with these new prospect clients – a monthly e-newsletter should be sufficient. Keep a list of these prospects and make sure that your sales team follows up on potential leads.

CUTTING EMPLOYEE TRAINING COSTS IN A RECESSION

As businesses further tighten the purse strings the likelihood of training budgets being cut increases. However, employees still need to learn new skills and keep up to date in order to realise their full potential. As such here are a few ways to reduce your training spend without neglecting training entirely.

Use online training courses

The availability of online training courses has increased and you can now use these courses to train staff on anything from computer software packages to money laundering. Online training is generally cheaper than getting a trainer on site and your business won't suffer - since staff don't need to visit a training session of site – instead they can do it at their computer in the office. Whichever online training provider you use, ensure that they provide a certificate upon completion of the course for your staff training records. While eLearning offers other benefits as well, the cost savings alone can make it worth your while to find online courses that will meet your business's training needs.

Cut all unnecessary training

Many businesses waste money on unnecessary training. For example, an experienced sales manager most likely won't need a sales training course if they have been competent in the role for the last 10 years. Equally, time management or personal effectiveness courses may not be necessary for experienced staff and your business can save money by allowing these staff members to opt out of such training.

In-house training

If you have some experienced employees your business can achieve cost savings by allowing the experienced staff to train in any new recruits rather than sending the new staff on a training course. This will also help your new staff to develop good *rapport* with their new colleagues and they will become more aware of the prevailing corporate culture within your business. In order to support in-house training you can develop handouts, tip sheets and reference materials that staff can refer to in the future.

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DON'T JUST WORK "IN" THE BUSINESS – WORK "ON" THE BUSINESS

Today's business manager is short on time and therefore must prioritise the most important tasks. However, many business owners and / or managers become caught up in the day to day "workings" of the business such as closing sales, invoicing, staff rosters and so on but neglect the strategic aspects of running the firm.

Many managers can be accused of being a bit short sighted when it comes to their goals for the business. Marketing is often seen as "non chargeable time" and may not be prioritised as a result. As such it's important to focus on the impact that marketing has on the business. The goal of the marketing function is to generate business / sales – after all, if nobody knows who you are / what you do, you won't have any customers!

Successfully marketing your business entails focusing on what you want the business to achieve, what type of clients you want and the way you target these clients. There are many different strategies for achieving your business targets but the question we are asking here is can you afford not to increase your firm's profile?

The answer to the above is inevitably no – you need to increase your firm's profile in order to attract new customers. Therefore business owners / managers need to devote time to working "On" the business.

If you don't already invest time and resources into marketing then it's time to build a marketing plan for your business.

The plan should include the following

- Identify your target market
- Identify your goals for the next 12 months (sales targets, market share, etc)
- Identify strategies for achieving these goals
- Build a month by month marketing plan to enable you to successfully implement these strategies
- Identify the likely cost of the above activities and set this in stone (this is your marketing budget)

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

As business people, many if not all of us have been contacted at some stage by a salesperson offering to "optimize" our company's website in order to improve the site's ranking on search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc.

These sales calls can give the impression that search engine optimization (SEO) is a once off, quick-fix deal. This is certainly not the case. Each and every website is different and in order to optimize your website you need to devote time to analysing your own site, your target audience and your competitor's sites.

You can use free services such as Google Analytics to help you monitor your website's search engine ranking and develop strategies to improve the effectiveness of search keywords that you may be using on your site. If you used a web design company to build your business's website it may be worth asking them to provide a free SEO review of your website. This will enable you to gain an understanding of how to develop a suitable strategy for securing that illusive "top ranking" on Google!

If you don't have the in-house expertise, you can then retain your web designer to manage your SEO strategy on an on-going basis. Remember, it will take time before you really start to see results from SEO. It is very much a matter of trial and error. Your web designer can advise you on a suitable budget for a Google "Adwords" campaign which allows you to bid on keywords and can have a positive effect on your search engine ranking, albeit for a fee.

Set your SEO budget and stick to it – don't be tempted to increase the budget if you don't enjoy immediate success. The approach must be fine-tuned first, it's not just about the budget. If in doubt, hire in the appropriate expertise – there are plenty of web design firms out there who can manage your SEO for you.

