

# CREATIVE COMPOST



Where Great Marketing Ideas Grow

Vol. V, No. 10

## Marketing Your Way Out of Tough Times

Holding off on executing a marketing plan until the economy improves? You could be in for a long wait.

Instead, why not look for ways to beef up your efforts without increasing your cash outlay? That way, you'll still be top-of-mind when a customer's ready to buy, rather than completely off their vendor radar screen.

Try these six sure cures for the economic downturn marketing blues:

**1. RENEW RELATIONSHIPS** with lapsed customers. No-brainers like making a quick phone call, sending a handwritten note, or inviting a past customer to lunch are sometimes all it takes to rekindle a business relationship. Or, try a "We Miss You" discount via email.

**2. CUT OUT THE** institutional advertising in favor of more highly targeted efforts. View every ad as a direct-response vehicle, and make them work hard for you by spelling out your value proposition and including a compelling call to action.

**3. SHARPEN YOUR PENCIL** and submit an article showcasing your area of expertise to the trade magazines regularly perused by your target audience.

**4. TRY SAMPLING.** Who doesn't love a freebie? As long as your efforts are intelligently targeted, sampling can be a highly effective tool. Think those sample

cheese cubes in the trendy grocery chain are an accident? Or the free consultation offered by the local business coach?

### **5. NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK.**

According to Nick Faragasso, founder of ING/Integrity Networking Group in Short Hills, NJ ([www.INGnetworking.com](http://www.INGnetworking.com)), the most effective lead generation groups are the ones that don't focus on member-to-member selling. "I may not be your ideal customer, but I probably know more than a few people who fit that profile. By getting to know and trust each other — and becoming knowledgeable about each others' markets — members of a good networking group become evangelists for each others' businesses." What business couldn't use an unpaid sales force?

**6. FINALLY, ENLIST THE HELP** of your customers. Two things to request: testimonials and case studies you can use in your marketing efforts. And don't forget to ask for referrals!

Tough economic times needn't put a crimp in your marketing style. Weather the storm with a little creativity, and you'll be in prime position when customers' budgets come bouncing back.

## Streaming Video: Animating Your Website

Have an engaging story to tell your customers, but can't quite make it work

on a two-dimensional website? Whether you sell B2B or B2C, the explosion of broadband subscribers across the U.S. has turned streaming video into a highly viable new option for content delivery that's fun and effective.

According to videographer Robb Kushner of ZAP Streaming Video, on-demand streaming video doesn't require lengthy downloads — clips launch within seconds of clicking "play." When combined with advances in technology for capturing and editing content, this opens up a world of possibilities for new ways to engage prospects and creatively communicate your sales message.

Have a unique manufacturing facility? Now you can deliver a behind-the-scenes tour that makes every customer feel like

(see p. 2)

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## ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES

### Junior.com — High-Tech Tools for Self-Expression

According to "Children, Families and the Internet," a survey by Grunwald Associates, more than two million American children ages 6 -17 have their own personal websites — a threefold increase since 2000. Guess nobody settles for keeping a diary anymore.

### Seniors Lead Internet Growth

The Internet audience is slowly become more representative of the general population, says a new survey from Nielsen/NetRatings. Senior citizens 65+ were the fastest-growing age group online, leaping 25 percent to 9.6 million surfers as of October 2003.

### Bigger Bandwidth, Bigger Bucks

Broadband households spend more online, according to Forrester Research. Studies have shown that while 37% of dial-up consumers have shopped online, that figure jumps to 61% for broadband users. And while dial-up users spent an average of \$324 online during the three-month period studied, broadband users typed in their little credit card numbers to the tune of \$552.

## Web Video (from p. 1)

an insider. With streaming video, you can also quickly showcase tough-to-explain product applications, walk prospects through a successful case history, or simply put a highly personal "face" on your product or service.

In Kushner's experience, a duration of around three minutes is what most web surfers are comfortable viewing — an eon in the online world. In terms of content, he recommends bypassing the hard sell approach in favor of a more documentary-like feel — relatively informal interviews combined with supplemental video footage, narration, and music. "Our goal is to capture people talking about who they are and what they do, and to show them actually doing it. It's friendly, fun, and informative — and extremely effective from a sales perspective," says Kushner.

ZAP focuses on putting interview subjects at ease — working in a familiar setting and establishing a conversational rapport. Standing interviews are of particular appeal because they tend to have a more informal, impromptu feel — sort of like a discussion on a street corner.

Advances in technology have made it possible to capture broadcast-quality video using fairly simple equipment and lighting, so a video shoot might involve a single

cameraperson on site rather than a whole video crew. This approach offers an effective alternative to pre-scripting and using paid on-screen talent. The result also offers more of an independent feel when compared to the typical corporate video.

Once a video is shot and edited with music and narration, it is encoded for streaming. Using a special program, the digital video is compressed into a file that can be watched as it is being sent "downstream" from a web server.

As Victor Hugo once said, "An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come." Could streaming video be that business-boosting idea whose time has come for you?

**Source:** Videographer Robb Kushner creates powerful short-form videos for web sites to help marketers get across their key messages. Reach him at 973-762-0708 or [robb@zapstreamingvideo.com](mailto:robb@zapstreamingvideo.com).

## 24/7 Site Sentry

Does your site suffer from the embarrassment of link rot? You know how annoying it is to find just the information you need, click on a link, and, bam! Page not found. The automated web-checking services of SEVENTwentyfour.com shield your customers and prospects from these petty annoyances by alerting you to broken links, downed sites, and ISP backbone problems. SEVENTwentyfour also offers fine-tuning to optimize rankings, including guaranteed top 10 or 20 listings, indexing by all major search engines, and research to determine your optimal search phrase. Weekly email reports keep you updated on your ranking in major engines, including Google, Yahoo!, Lycos, Teoma, AlltheWeb, Excite, Hotbot, MSN, AOL, and Ask Jeeves.

**Source:** [www.SEVENTwentyfour.com](http://www.SEVENTwentyfour.com)



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## Coloring **OUTSIDE** the lines



Glean some inspiration from innovative marketers who took the road less traveled to create these savvy sales-builders:

### Line extensions translate into sweet sales — Candy

makers are thinking beyond the candy counter with forays into...cosmetics? Makeup manufacturer Added Extras has licensed such venerable brands as Mike and Ike, Gobstoppers, Peeps, and Bazooka, reproducing their flavors and fragrances into lip gloss, nail polish, and body glitter for the tween set. Brands get exposure in new retail venues, such as Claire's and The Limited, and maximize sampling opportunities by including candy in the packaging.

**Doggie happy hour sets tails wagging** — How can man's best friend increase exposure for a hotel property? The Old Town Holiday Inn Select in Alexandria, VA,

hosts a "Doggie Happy Hour" twice a week in the hotel courtyard. Locals and visitors alike bring their canine companions for al fresco happy hour specials and complimentary hors d'oeuvres, plus gourmet doggie treats and water for the four-legged guests of honor.

## Open, sesame!

Who's most likely to open an email solicitation? Customers of marketing companies and retailers, according to new research by IMN Inc. Marketing firms achieve average unique open rates of 63%, with retailers a close second at 55%.

Customers of financial services firms were third on the dependability list with an open rate of 48%, followed by manufacturing (43%), nonprofits (41%), and software developers (41%).

Once they open your e-mails, subscribers primarily seek out product-oriented content, the study showed. Some 64% of e-newsletter subscribers read at least some of the content in each issue. Content billed as "tips and tricks" is not opened nearly as much, with just 11% average click-through rates.

## Magic Number

Want an easy way to boost sales? Try increasing your prices so they end in "9." According to a study presented at the European Catalogue & Mail Order Days (ECMOD) in London, a U.S. cataloger tested the same item priced at \$44, \$49, and \$54, and discovered the \$49 price had a one-third greater response. Further testing found that the ideal price point was, in fact, \$59. Prices ending in "9" suggest that the item is on sale and a bargain even when it's not.

Another quick tip courtesy of ECMOD: make sure your catalog, website, and ads include the logos of the credit cards you accept. Promotions featuring credit card graphics had consistently higher response rates when compared to those that only mentioned the credit cards in text. Why? Apparently, credit card logos act as subtle yet effective cues to purchase.

## RETAIL REPORT

**WHO DOESN'T LIKE** being waited on? Maybe your customers, according to a recent Forrester Research survey. More than half of U.S. shoppers polled prefer to use a store's self-checkout when offered. Other popular in-store technologies include kiosks and rechargeable gift cards.

Respondents were also hot on radio frequency identification (RFID), making this touchless information and payment system the upstart technology to watch in coming months.

Not surprisingly, the more high-tech the toys, the younger and more affluent the fans — overall, they're younger by three to six years, earn 8% to 24% more annually, and are more likely to have a college degree and kids under 18 at home.

**Source:** [www.forrester.com](http://www.forrester.com)

**DOLLAR STORES ARE ONE** of the fastest-growing retail channels in both sales and number of outlets, according to a new report from market research firm ACNielsen. In less than a decade, the number of dollar stores in the U.S. tripled, with combined sales of more than \$13 billion. Nearly two-thirds of American households (62%) admit to regularly shopping at dollar stores.

**Source:** [www.americandemographics.com](http://www.americandemographics.com)

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How can a simple  
number have a  
dramatic impact  
on your sales?  
See page 3!



## Off the Bookshelf

In celebration of a brand-new year — hopefully one filled with fresh and innovative marketing opportunities — it seemed appropriate to revisit a creative classic: **Guerrilla Marketing** by Jay Conrad Levinson.

At last count, Levinson's seminal 1983 work has spawned close to three dozen derivatives, from guerrilla negotiating and finance to PR and the Internet. However, none comes remotely close to the savvy and readability of the original.

From creating a marketing blueprint to using psychology in your sales efforts, Levinson takes on a remarkably broad

expanse of subject matter and manages to do it all justice in just over 300 pages. Time and again, **Guerrilla Marketing** reminds us to view limited budgets not as a curse, but as an opportunity to be creative. As a guerrilla, you're reeking with flexibility, not hamstrung by bureaucracy.

Some selected words of wisdom from **Guerrilla Marketing**:

**Create marketing tools that are both emotional and sensible.** Successful guerrilla marketers are students of human nature. They recognize the psychology of the sales process, and go out of their way to make every customer feel special.

**Each media has its own unique strength.** Billboards are great for reminding people of your existence, but they don't offer much room for a detailed sales pitch. Radio, on the other hand, allows for more talking points, but

requires a memorable call to action. Choose a careful mix of media, then maximize your results by tailoring your pitch to play to the strengths of each individual medium.

**Don't have the budget for large ads with detailed product descriptions?** Run small ads offering a free brochure. Those who request it have pre-qualified themselves as serious prospects, and a well-designed brochure gives you plenty of room for more detailed sales copy.

**Finally, recognize that your best marketing investment is in yourself.** Dedicate the time necessary to educate yourself in the intricacies of your marketplace, so you can recognize and capitalize on subtle shifts miles ahead of the competition.

See you in the trenches!