



REINVENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS ONLINE

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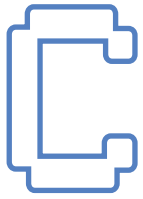
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REINVENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS ONLINE | HEATHER LUTZE



WITH THE POPU-
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CIAL NETWORKS,
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BE POSTED FOR THE
WORLD TO SEE. ENCOURAGE
THIS **FREE "ADVERTISING"**
BY CONNECTING WITH SITES
LIKE FACEBOOK AND DESIGN-
ING YOUR OWN WEBSITE TO BE
FRIENDLY FOR YOUR CURRENT AND
FUTURE CUSTOMERS.

SOMETIMES YOU JUST NEED



Companies spend millions each year paying agencies and marketers to brand their companies in order to reach more prospects. But how often do these same companies look carefully at the brand that is already built for them by their loyal, current customers? Like it or not, your “fan base” already has built your brand and holds your company’s reputation in the palms of their hands. Through an aggregate of blog posts, review sites, videos, and social media platforms, they state what they love and hate about your brand.

In the event that this is prominently positive, how do you get everyone to collectively support your brand as a community of evangelists for your company? The answer is to start loving your devotees, and to give them what they want: a place to network, talk, share advice and continue to preach about your brand. In end, this is what large corporations pay the big bucks for, but reverse marketing is done by and for your already-loyal customers, and it’s something you can get started yourself.

Take, for example, a small company in this predicament. Company founders had built a tremendous brand and had a huge following, but the brand was fragmented and uncontrolled online. For years, the owners had been known for their passion and love of their business, but they had struggled to produce a website that would not only support their loyal fans, but also perpetuate a brand that would speak to new prospective customers.

Their problems stem from an incomplete vision of their online audience and its potential reach. Their

website spoke to current brand enthusiasts, but it did not provide enough of a forum for their fans to express their devotion. As such, YouTube videos, blogs, unofficial Facebook fanpages, etc., were appearing across the web and were, in many cases, pulling away from the core values and mission of their business. Additionally, unless a prospect knew to search for their specific company name or slogan, they would not find any official webpages in the search results.

Building Customer Loyalty

How do you build and “feed” a community of loyal customers from the inside out, as well as open the market and build brand awareness to new, valuable prospects?

Sometimes you just need to go big or go home. In an effort to establish your online brand, you may have to redesign your website, rewrite all the content for SEO (search engine optimization) and start aggressively utilizing social media to congregate followers. It can be a big job, but it can have a big payoff. Here are some suggestions for recreating your online image.

Tip #1: Love your domain name, and show the search engines you care. Select a domain name for findability; it really matters! What is your current domain name? Does it reflect who you are and what you do? Does it reflect how your customers are trying to find you? Does it include any of your keywords for SEO?

Tip # 2: Build your new website to look and feel consistent with your company’s mission. Did your old site lack focus, with too much going on? The website for



TO GO **BIG** OR GO HOME.




the small company in the example above included more than sixty “options” on its homepage for what the user could do. So essentially, the established action for a user to take was “do everything ... now,” which is certainly not focused. Also, their home page would be used as a clearinghouse for products on sale, projecting their image as the Wal-Mart of their industry. People who came to the homepage needing help with a specific subject would have to search over several pages to find the answer. This was very confusing messaging overall, and it was not consistent with their mission.

Their new site has cleared out the clutter and cuts to the chase. Four primary conversion opportunities are presented on *every page* of the website. Additionally, their background is consistent with their product lines on the homepage and every interior page. The goal is to present a cohesive user experience that appeals to both the longtime devotee, as well as the first-time visitor looking for guidance.

Tip #3: Set up social media for a huge community of followers waiting for your lead. Have you established

a social media presence? Large communities of devoted followers are building their own Facebook pages and are looking for someone like your company who already has a presence. Establish the one credible, official place on social media sites that your followers can trust.

Taking the dive and reinventing yourself or your business is scary, but even scarier is the inability to adapt and change over time. The Internet is a very fast-paced environment and you must monitor the success of your branding messages – and be willing to change, if necessary. Ultimately, you’ll see big payoffs and great findability for being bold and standing up for who you are as a company. 

HEATHER LUTZE has spent the last 10 years as CEO of The Findability Group, formerly Lutze Consulting, a Search Engine Marketing firm that works with companies to attain maximum Internet exposure. A nationally recognized speaker, she is the author of *The Findability Formula: The Easy, Non-Technical Approach to Search Engine Marketing* (Wiley and Sons). For more information, visit www.FindabilityGroup.com