

A Business Lesson in Trust

By Deborah Collier



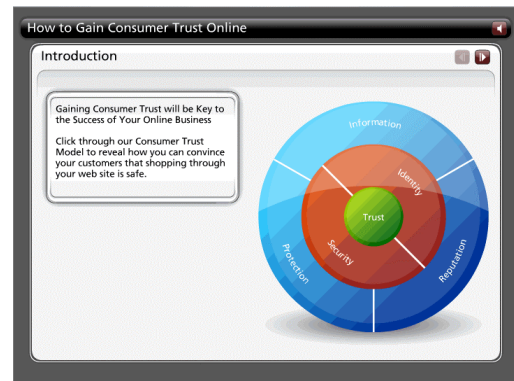
Businesses have been inspired by annual rises in Internet sales over the last five years. But more recently, increases in online purchases, and the turbulent economic climate have propelled more organisations to sell their products and services online. One of the biggest challenges they face with selling over the Internet is building consumer trust.

Deborah Collier Chief Strategist and Managing Director at Echo E-Business, discusses and offers advice on how organisations can meet this challenge.

Building Consumer Trust online involves assuring customers of your identity and credibility, as well as protecting the security of their information. When it comes to smaller businesses, and lesser-known brands, consumers are concerned that they are dealing with a bonafide business, which will not only deliver on its promises, but also protect their personal details.

Have a look at our Interactive Consumer Trust Model (http://www.learnebusiness.com/echo_consumer_trust_model.html)

This will show you what kind of details should be included on your web site, as well as advice on how to demonstrate credibility, but for now, I am going to focus on two key aspects of building trust over the internet:



Utilising User-Generated Content

Brand reality is entirely based on your customer's perception and if planned, built and managed well, a good online strategy can make a small business look like a mini-John Lewis. I always say that an online presence is like having your shop window in every living room in the country, so it is crucial to make sure it delivers what the business needs and equally what the customer has grown to expect from you in the offline world.

User-generated content is becoming commonplace in business because in modern society, people like their voice to be heard. We are no longer in a world where being broadcast to brands is deemed sufficient and people feel that their opinions, ideas and thoughts are valuable and they are equally stimulated by the contribution of others.

But, the real challenge for businesses in the modern world is how they can embrace the concept of user-generated content in a way that satisfies these basic human needs whilst also building brand loyalty. User-generated content has never been more important for brand building as it keeps

customers coming back and allowing them to post their own content and ratings, this installs a faith and trust that has not been possible before.

Personalising the Customer Experience

Personalisation has come to the forefront again recently, as organisations seeking the competitive edge, maximise the value of their online presence, strengthen customer loyalty and increase staff efficiency.

I have been working on strategies and solutions for web personalisation over the last few years, but it's nothing new. We were personalising content for customers and employees several years ago at PriceWaterhouseCoopers, but personalisation is no longer just for the big boys!! Technologies, and more importantly ideas around leveraging those technologies, have evolved, to allow smaller organisations the ability to engage their users in a personalised way.



Giving customers and users content that is relevant to them at all times, is the ultimate in personalisation. So the key questions on most business leaders minds are

- Is personalisation for us?
- What level of personalisation do we need?
- How do we best implement it?

Web users already personalise their own content. Just take a look at the BBC web site where visitors can choose what content is displayed to them. RSS feeds (The facility which allows you to choose what news feeds you receive) are another excellent example of how individuals personalise their own content.

You see, personalisation is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Even the smallest of organisations can add a more tailor-made experience to their web site visitors. It comes down to old-fashioned selling – who are your customers and what is relevant to them.

I hope my article about building consumer trust was helpful to you! If you would like any advice or help with your online strategy, web content strategy and management training or other team training, call us today on:

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Or contact us via www.echoebusiness.com and www.learnebusiness.com

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Deborah is the founder of Echo E-Business, a consultancy specialising in e-business strategy, marketing and e-commerce.

She has worked with a number of blue-chip organisations, as well as SME's and is regularly consulted by the press. A public speaker, author and trainer, Deborah's creative and strategic insights will help you increase your profits using the Internet.

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