

Use Your Website to Leverage Your Store Sales



By Tema Frank, eMarketingMama, Frank Online Marketing

Not every business can move to web sales only. A client of mine has an amazing, outgoing, bubbly personality. It is that personality (combined with an astute business sense) that got her home-based business to quickly grow into a chain of home-based sellers and ultimately to a very successful retail store, with more stores probably coming soon.

So we were discussing how to grow the business to the next level. Should she open more stores? Should she franchise? Should she push web sales instead?

She has great products, no question about that. But they aren't unique. There's a lot of competition online in her category. Would her prices be the best online? Nope. They wouldn't be the worst, but bargain hunters could find similar products for less. And online it is hard to show the quality differences that justify a higher price.

So what role should her website play?

To a certain extent, her web presence (not just her site, but videos and social media too) can convey some of the great in-person experience you get from her and her staff. But not completely.

On the other hand, the web could massively increase repeat purchases and word-of-mouth purchases from people who don't live near a store.

Imagine: you've been to her store, loved it, bought something, and now you need a gift. It would be so easy to look her up online and place the order. Or a friend sees you wearing something you bought from her and loves it. Your friend may want to go to the store, but if she doesn't have time, just give her the website address. Because she's seen what you bought, she knows the quality.

Key lesson: Even if what you sell is very hands-on, you can still use the web effectively to significantly increase your sales.

Tema Frank has been using the Internet since before the Web was invented, and put up her first website in 1995. She was the first to apply the retail concept of "mystery shopping" to website usability, founding Web Mystery Shoppers Inc. in 2001. Her new internet radio show helps small businesses profit from the Internet:

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