

## Selling Smarter Part 2

A **VIEWPOINT** article  
from **bricksNclicksPROFITS.com**

In Part 1 of this series about using proven retail best practices to sell smarter online, we discussed important do's and don'ts when implementing customer loyalty programs and when implementing personalized shopping systems. Fundamental to both these best-practice opportunities is the need to put your customer first, to focus program planning and implementation on what best serves your customers. These opportunities will only serve your business if and when your customers recognize and respond to the service values being offered.

In Part 2 of the **VIEWPOINT** Sell Smarter series, we will discuss the importance of making the best possible use of the prime "real estate" in your webstore – making a great first impression on first-time, infrequent, and regular visitors and maximizing sales and gross profits from prime webspace. And as with every smarter-selling opportunity, making the best possible use of your webstore's prime real estate will only benefit your business if and when your customers recognize and respond to your team's smart merchandising of this high impact webspace.

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**Getting online "window shoppers" into the webstore:** Today's ever more experienced online shopper has developed online shopping habits that are increasingly reminiscent of the well-established shopping habits that guide her real-world shopping activities. Time spent shopping in a mall or on a busy downtown retail street is a combination of quick in-and-out peeks at most stores that she encounters interspersed with lengthy explorations of the product offerings and promotional activities of a favored few retailers. This pattern is the logical and not-surprising combination of getting an overview of what's new in fashion, entertainment, cuisine, recreation, and other lifestyle trends, while spending quality time with merchants that our experienced and busy shopper has come to know and to trust.

Online shopping today encourages and supports exactly the same pattern, particularly when our shopper is using a search engine to guide her shopping activity. The majority of retail websites visited will only get a cursory glance unless something catches our shopper's eye. And she will spend the majority of her time perusing one, two, or at most a small number of familiar online stores. This shopping behaviour is playing out tens of millions of times every day across North America and around the world. This emphatically underscores how critical it is to the success of your online store to make a compelling presentation in the webstore's first page or two of the products and services your store has to offer.

Sound familiar? The tactics used for making a great first impression online are the same ones you use when building storefront and show window displays in your real-world store. Presentations of just-arrived products, best selling items, thematic presentations, and seasonal favorites in seasonal displays work as well online as they have for many, many years offline. Make it easy for your customer to impulse buy items from your webstore's high-traffic landing page merchandise displays. It is not clever and, in fact, it is terrible customer service to make your customer navigate deep into the webstore to add an impulse purchase to a shopping cart. Never allow your transaction processing systems to defeat your customer's desire to be in and out of your webstore with purchase completed in just a few clicks of her mouse.

High impact equals high performance: As the tactics for effective webstore merchandising mature, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the gross profit potential and to measure the gross profit contribution of each major piece of your webstore's "real estate" - your retail web space - as you already measure gross profit performance for each section and each product facing in your real-world store. The fact that there is only a nominal hard-dollar cost for installing an additional webpage within an established webstore has encouraged too many online retailers to add pages without sufficient consideration of the gross profit potential and the actual gross profit production of each piece of online retail web space.

The need to understand and measure turnover and profit productivity is particularly true for the above-the-fold portions of the first few webpages that a customer visits when she clicks through to your webstore - whether from a search engine, from an outside website link, from a bookmark, or from directly entering your webstore address into her browser.

If the purpose of your webstore is to contribute to the overall bricks 'n' clicks profits of your multi-channel retail business, then you must have product turnover and gross profit performance objectives in place for your webstore's landing pages, and you must have a plan in place for achieving these objectives. Every real-world retail store - from car dealer to clothier to convenience store - has merchandise available for sale as you enter the store. Don't let the ease of creating web space lull you into thinking that sales and profits per square foot - or per square inch - are not equally important for your webstore's high-impact web space.

Lastly, if your webstore landing pages are not intended to make product presentations that begin your persuasive selling process, then it is imperative that you establish click-through objectives for your webstore's landing pages. This gives you the opportunity to measure the success of your webstore merchandising and navigation at pulling traffic through your webstore and directing this traffic to the merchandising pages that you have created with the purpose of achieving the sales and profits budgeted for the webstore.

In next edition of **VIEWPOINT**, we will look at smart online merchandising techniques for presenting and selling one-of-a-kind items, out-of-season items, hard-to-stock items, and clearance items from your webstore. These product categories can cause merchandising challenges but they also can create pleasantly surprising incremental sales and profits for your Internet integrated retail organization. As always, be sure to regularly visit [bricksNclicksPROFITS.com](http://bricksNclicksPROFITS.com) to get the latest comments and advice from many of the foremost online retailing experts.

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