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Northwest Communicator

In This Month's Newsletter...

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The Office will be Closed...

April 22nd, 2011 in observation
 of Good Friday

Featured Business of the Month

JRG Supply

JRG Supply has been a part of the Northwest Communications' Business Solutions family since 2006. With Business Solutions, they are on the Deluxe Maintenance Plan, which allows 4 hours of updates by the Northwest staff. They have a shopping cart which gives them the ability to add and remove products.

JRG Supply Animal Health fills your Biological, Pharmaceutical, & Equipment needs under one roof. They offer antibiotics, wormers, rehydration products, vitamins, prescriptions, disinfectants, wound treatment, identification tags, & much more for your cattle, swine, horses/equine, & sheep, as well as your dogs, cats, & other companion animals.

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Disaster-Proof Your Business

by Jeff Wuorio
 used with permission from the Microsoft Business Site

If you're a business owner, you need to know how to protect your business.

Try as we might, there's often no way to skirt disaster - whether it's national, personal or weather induced. But there are strategies to cope with it as best we can, no matter if its source is a burst river levee, a thoughtlessly discarded match, or the deranged actions of others. Knowing what to do in the event of a disaster is crucial for anyone, of course, but particularly for a small-business owner, whose livelihood may depend on a small storefront or home basement office. Start with some strategies. Here's a checklist that can help you set up an effective and comprehensive small-business disaster plan:

1. First, map out a disaster plan. Many business owners haven't given a thought as to what they might do in the event of a fire, earthquake or some other sort of catastrophe that could damage their business severely. So, work up a detailed plan, taking into account as many variables as you can imagine. Take planning for earthquakes and other natural disasters seriously. You should know where you can move your merchandise to safety and where you can reach your insurance agent in a hurry. Draw up a map of shut-off valves for gas, electricity and other utilities. Draft the same sort of plan for other emergency situations, such as floods, fires and even civil unrest. For example, one note to yourself might be that in the event of riots, or even just a rash of robberies, you would leave your lights on at night so the police could spot anyone trying to break in. "It's an old barber shop trick, but think about leaving the cash register open and in plain view," says Gayle Marco, an associate professor of marketing at Robert Morris College in Pennsylvania. "That way, everyone can see there's no money in there."

2. Back up computer files somewhere else. Any business owner with extensive computer files and records needs to back them up on a regular basis. But take that bit of common sense a step further and make certain your backups are located somewhere other than your business. For instance, look into mainframe computer services that offer backup space - those might be located across town or across the continent, but just make certain that, should something happen to your business, your



JRG Supply 800-354-7433

<https://www.jrgsupply.com>

1357 3rd Ave NW
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

backup files are safely ensconced somewhere else. Even better: Ask anyone with whom you work, such as an accountant or attorney, how they back up their files that pertain to your business. Another option is "cloud" storage, in which your essential data is backed up on a network of remote servers, through services such as Windows Azure.

3. Don't forget to store physical papers and records off-site, too. Don't overlook the safety of tangible records, such as printed client lists, bills and receipts. Unless your stacks are the size of hay bales, a safety deposit box at the bank should be perfectly adequate. In fact, safe storage of business records of all sorts protects you from another type of tragedy, namely, disaster that occurs somewhere else but which affects you. "Those records are your business's identity," says Marco.

4. Keep insurance current. Growth is wonderful, but prosperity without commensurate insurance can be disaster knocking at your front door. Meet with your insurance agent on a regular basis to make certain that your coverage is up to date. That's particularly true with a home-based business. Since many homeowners' policies might not cover business equipment and supplies, check with your insurance company so you're certain that your business gear is protected. If need be, obtain extra policies or insurance riders. Finally, try to spend the extra money to get guaranteed replacement coverage. That way, you won't have to reach into your own pocket to make up for any coverage shortfalls.

5. Set up an emergency cash reserve. Personal financial experts routinely suggest that families set aside three to six months of living expenses for use in emergency situations. If possible, take the same road with your business. That way, should something nasty happen, you'll have money available to pay rent, meet your bills and keep payroll flowing without having to resort to layoffs.


6. Let others know your disaster strategy. Don't treat your disaster planning as a state secret. Make sure your employees understand what they need to do should the worst occur. Take that even further, and let your clients and customers know what you'll likely do in the event of some sort of disaster. Telling customers that you've got contingency plans in case of emergency will increase their confidence in you; they'll know you plan to keep your business up and running, no matter the circumstances. "You need to let all sorts of people know what you're going to do so they don't panic," says Marco. "The more they know that you're ready, the less likely they'll panic if something does happen."

Featured Website of the Month

Buscher Bros

With the Web Solutions Team at Northwest Communications, Buscher Bros has a Content Management System, which allows them, among many things, to self edit.

Buscher Bros sells generators, RVs, and lawn & garden supplies. With generators, they sell Generac, Yamaha, Kipor and Briggs & Stratton. With RV's, they sell Cedar Creek, Wildcat, and Rockwood, and with lawn & garden, they sell Cub Cadet, Troy Bilt, and White Outdoor.



<http://www.buscherbros.com/>

1015 N Main St
Algona, Iowa 50511

Increase Your Marketing Response

by Kim T. Gordon
used with permission from the Microsoft Small Business Center



Technology in Business Symposium

Here's a plain fact: Marketing exists to support sales. Sure, it's also used to create awareness and build a brand image. But ultimately if your marketing doesn't motivate customers to take action, it's probably not doing its job. If you're experiencing less than stellar results when it comes to getting customers to respond to your marketing messages, it may be time to take a hard look at your campaign. Here are six factors that may stand in the way of customer response, plus tips on what to do to improve your response rates.

1. Ads are out of context. Due to the proliferation of specialized media, it's easier than ever to reach prospects in the right place at the right time. For marketing success, your customers must be exposed to your message when

Northwest Communications attended the Carroll "Technology in Business Symposium" as a vendor on Thursday, April 7th, 2011. This event consisted of about 20 vendors and about 50 attendees.



The event focused on current and future IT Networking along with web and telephone systems. In today's world, it is important to stay on top of the newest and latest technology. Northwest Communications focuses on being a leader in the technology world, using top-notch equipment and services.

Information

www.ncn.net

To speak to our Outside Sales Representative email Andrew Carter at acarter@ncn.net,
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C: 712.922.9646



Havelock & Algona Store Hours

they're in a receptive frame of mind. Suppose you owned a landscape nursery. You wouldn't place your newspaper ads in the Business section-you'd run them in Home and Garden, because readers there are more likely to be interested in landscaping their properties and would find your ad relevant. You'd follow the same principle if you used local cable TV advertising by running your ads during gardening shows, not general programming, in order to present your message in the right context.

2. Benefits are weak or missing. Sometimes marketing campaigns that reach prospects in the right context fail nonetheless because their message is all wrong. No matter whether you're running advertising, sending direct mail or even placing PR, it's vital to create a benefit-oriented message that will capture the attention of your target audience and motivate them to take action. What specific benefits will your prospects derive by responding to your marketing? Benefits may be tangible (such as saving money) or intangible (such as peace of mind) and they should help to differentiate your company or its products and services from competitors.

3. The offer is off-target. When a campaign fails, the real problem may lie with the principal offer, such as when the product or service that's being marketed lacks the right appeal. This can often be overcome by bundling in additional features that meet the special demands of the target audience. And if a special offer is used to motivate responses, it's not unusual to test several different versions to find the one that pulls best.

4. The execution is poor. Many forms of marketing are not do-it-yourself projects. Creation of advertising is something that should be left to experts. And even then, it's important to enlist the right people. Some designers and copywriters specialize in direct mail and collateral materials, while others create ads for magazines. Marketing failure is often the result of poor copy or design execution. At other times, the advertising or materials may look great, but they just don't work because tried and true rules have been ignored. It takes experience to create marketing that produces results.

5. Your marketing is invisible. Your prospects can't respond to your ads or place orders on your website if they never see them. When it comes to advertising success, business owners tend to underestimate the amount of frequency required for their ad placements to be remembered by prospects, or to achieve "penetration." The exact ad frequency required for each unique campaign will vary, but the bottom line is that multiple placements in a single publication or within specific broadcast programming are absolutely essential. And if you want to make sales on an e-commerce website, you'll need an effective online advertising campaign to send prospects there. It's unrealistic to expect high traffic volume without one.

6. It's too hard to buy. No matter how compelling you make your marketing campaign, if you ask prospects to take too many steps, or if there are other sales barriers (such as uninformed salespeople or out-of-stock products), you'll lose them. For example, suppose you send out a direct-mail package for a service business. Interested prospects respond by calling your toll-free number, but get voice mail-and most hang up. Only a few, highly motivated prospects leave messages on your voice mail. Then you call them back, miss them and leave messages of your own. At this point it's unlikely your prospects will return your call. Get the picture? For best results, walk through your sales process to eliminate any unnecessary actions and to make sure the prospects that respond can quickly take advantage of your offer.

Meet the Crew!

Havelock:
Monday - Friday
8am - 4:30pm
Saturday & Sunday
CLOSED

Algona:
Monday - Wednesday & Friday
9am - 5:30pm
Thursday
9am - 7:30
Saturday
9am - 3pm
Sunday
CLOSED

MEET CHRIS TOMLINSON!



- 1. What is your position at Northwest Communications?**
My position at Northwest is Internet Support Technician.
- 2. What do you like about your job?**
I like helping customers with their problems as much as I can.
- 3. What would you like the customers of Northwest Communications to know about you?**
I want the customers to know that I am willing to help out and go the extra bit to get their problems resolved.
- 4. If you won a million dollars, what would you do with it?**
I would invest most of the money and then pay off all of our debt.
- 5. What would be your ideal vacation?**
My ideal vacation would be to travel around England, then Europe with my wife.

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