

BLOG

TO BOOK

PEEP LAJA

# How to Build Websites that Sell

## The Scientific Approach to Websites



conversionxl.com

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I.

Marketing

# Marketing With No Budget: Things That Work

Marketing with no budget—a familiar story for most small businesses and startups. When there's no money, there's usually time. Time is unfortunately also limited, so the question is—how to convert that time into money most effectively (get the biggest bang for the hour)?

You could come up with hundreds of free online marketing ideas, but in order to get results, you should focus on the few that really make a difference.

Note that these methods ain't quick fixes, but will make a significant impact if you stick with it.

## Blog

Blogging is one of the most effective marketing tools out there. It won't do much in the short-term, but you're probably in it for the long run. A great blog builds an audience that is looking forward to your messages, and that is invaluable. A year from now you'll wish you had started today.

If your website does not have any content besides your product information pages, you will never have a large amount of free traffic via search engines. The more content you have on your blog, the more natural traffic you get. A large amount of the people who get to your blog via search are your target market. That's pull marketing at work. A [study of 2,300 HubSpot customers revealed](#) that businesses that blog witness their monthly leads rise by 126 percent more than those who don't.

## Search engine optimized posts

Your blog can be your most effective SEO provider. In order to make your posts rank on Google and Bing, make sure to do these three things:

- The title of your post has to be worded in a way someone might use while doing a search. Do your research first on [Google Keyword Tool](#).
- Mention the same phrase as you have in your title one or two times in the body copy, too—depending on the length of the post.
- Have clean URLs: “http://bla.com/title-of-your-post” is better than “http://bla.com?id=123”.

## What to blog about?

“Instead of trying to out-spend, out-sell, or out-sponsor competitors, try to out-teach them,” say the guys over at [37Signals](#) (see [the video here](#)), and they're right. This captures the essence—use your blog to teach and educate your prospects and customers.

Use a casual tone in your blog. Nobody wants to read boring academic texts. If there's a sentence you wouldn't say while talking to your friend, don't use it.

Goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway—there is no substitution to great content and writing, so make it good. Further reading: [5 Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Outstanding](#).

Getting success through a blog takes time, so make sure you have persistence and patience.

A great way to speed things up is guest blogging on popular blogs. Check out a few insightful videos about guest blogging on [guestblogging.com](http://guestblogging.com). Any post you write, submit them on social bookmarking/news sites like [Digg](#), [Reddit](#), [Stumbleupon](#), [Sphinn](#), or [Hacker News](#). Where to submit depends on your field and target audience.

## **Create an online tool**

You might not have money, but perhaps you have programmers in your company or your best friend can code. If that's the case you can create a useful or fun tool to drive traffic and generate leads.

[Hubspot](#), an internet marketing company, created [a free tool](#) that assesses your website. The tool claims to have assessed close to three million sites, and your score on the 1-100 scale represents the percentage of those sites that your site tops. Now that's a pretty cool tool, and it's free. It has gotten Hubspot [a ton of fame](#), inbound links, and leads.

## **Online tests are tools, too**

You don't necessarily need to create a sophisticated tool. It can be as simple as a test—and people love tests.

[The One Question](#), a website helping people find their purpose has created a simple [life purpose test](#) which helps people reflect. They get around 100 people per day joining their mailing list through the test.

[Gemstone Shoppers](#) has created a [test where people find out what their gemstone is](#). Once they get their result, they can embed a banner with their personal gemstone onto their blog or website. The banner links back to the [shopgemstones.com](http://shopgemstones.com) website and so the test serves also as a link building tool.

Note: Make sure your tool can capture users' emails or generate leads in some way, don't waste the traffic.

So think—what useful tool can you create that would benefit your prospects?

## **Participate in relevant forums**

It's likely that people in your target audience are already talking about your field in some sort of forums. It might be an old school bulletin board or a group on some social media network such as Facebook or LinkedIn.

Your job is to join in on the conversation and start adding value. This will help you build relationships and show off your expertise and position yourself as an authority in the field.

Don't ever spam your product or trash the competition—that's the quickest way to turn the community against you. You have to become a member of your community, and you can do that by acting like one. What goes around, comes around. You can have a link to your website in your profile and signature, but don't go around posting your link on random forums.

If you're a hosting company, you might want to participate in [Web Hosting Talk](#). Sell info products. Check out [WarriorForum](#).

Go to Google now and find all the relevant forums and discussion groups.

## **Join Twitter and/or Facebook**

Get on the social media bandwagon. [Create your Facebook page](#) and sign up for [Twitter](#). Depending on your field, LinkedIn and YouTube might be great matches, too.

Remember—social media is for building relationships, not selling. You should only rarely shout “buy my product” on Twitter or Facebook (unless it’s a special campaign and it’s between a lot of great content). Make friends, follow great people (your prospects), and re-tweet their stuff. This helps boost the relationship.

### **Relationship bank account**

If you ever read Stephen Covey’s “7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” you might remember the term “emotional bank account”—similar to a bank account, you can make deposits or withdrawals from each of your relationships. This principle applies on social media, too. I called it the ‘relationship bank account,’ and it’s the key principle to understand if you’re ever to get success on social media.

Every time you share something useful, entertaining, or in other ways value-adding on Twitter or Facebook, you make a deposit on to your relationship with the followers. Every time you ask for a sale or issue any other kind of self-oriented request, you withdraw from the relationship.

Make sure you deposit enough before making a withdrawal: share useful content (can be links to your blog), link to great articles out there, give tips on how to use your products. It’s okay to ask for a sale every now and then, but share at least 10 pieces of great content for every time you ask for something. Nobody wants to talk to people who only want to sell them something.

How to market on social media? There’s a ton of great content out there. Check [Social Media Examiner](#) as one of the best resources out there.

### **Pitch your story**

If you have a great product unlike any other (or slightly different), you can try to pitch it to the media and popular blogs/websites.

I’ve compiled a [list of more than 36 places you can submit your startup](#) for some coverage.

There are also online press release distributors such as [prlog.org](#), [www.24-7pressrelease.com](#), [www.1888pressrelease.com](#), and many others like that—but these won’t actually get anyone to read your press release. They are useful for link building though.

What you can do is try to identify journalists that write on the field of your product and shoot them an e-mail. Don’t pitch your product, but the story of why it matters.

### **Have an affiliate program**

Help others help you. Somebody might come across your product and see that it’s a perfect fit for their audience (blog readers, newsletter subscribers, existing clients, etc). They might recommend it anyway, but they’ll push it harder if there’s something in it for them. Hence it’s a good idea to have an affiliate program where you pay commission per every client referred.

Don’t be stingy—if it’s a digital product, a commission under 30 percent isn’t gonna cut it. Have it at least 50 percent—most likely your margins will allow this. It’s money you wouldn’t otherwise earn at all—better half than nothing. Think long term—how much money you might make off of a client in the long run. The hardest sale is always the first one.

So there you have it—if you were looking for a silver bullet, sorry to disappoint you. You better hear it from me—it doesn't exist. There are no shortcuts and there is no substitute for hard work (and some luck).



# What You Need To Know About Marketing and Strategy

Anyone can create a product. That is not the hard part. The hard part is selling the product.

It is imperative that you understand key concepts of marketing before you start to market your product, or before you even start creating your product. The way you market it needs to be integrated to the product itself—it sets the tone for the whole thing. The business world is full of competition. There's a good chance that the market you want to enter already has some players in it, and you need to take that into account.

Here are the most important things you need to know about marketing and strategy.

## Understand Your Customer

Success starts with understanding who your clients are and what they need. This is crucial for two main reasons:

1. In order to create a product that truly delivers, it needs to address the needs of the buyer.
2. To sell your product successfully, you need to know your client demographics, their values, aspirations, and reflections of themselves.

When you know who your customers are, you will be able to better leverage your time, energy, and resources to pursuing the right customers. You can focus your advertising efforts. Especially if you are a one-person business owner, you need to reevaluate your customer relationships and make choices about how to maximize and effectively use your limited time and resources.

To cater better to the needs of your clients, ask yourself the following questions:

### 1. What does your client need and want?

This is the basis of everything. Your product needs to really address the needs and wants of the customer. If the needs are not met, everything else is meaningless.

### 2. Why does your customer buy from you?

It is important that you know what customers consider most valuable about your products or services. Ask and talk to your customers to find out. Once you have a list, ask them again if you are indeed delivering what they want. These two questions—what does the customer value with regards to your products and services; and how well do you provide that value—will determine the relationship that you will have with the customer.

### 3. What does the customer expect after the sale?

The hardest part of the sale is after the sale is made. It is the make or break period: the customer's expectations will either be realized or failed. It is the time where you will know whether the level of activity, delivery, customer service, and commitment to promises made all supported the sales effort.

Do you know what is the emotional value they are looking for? What is the emotion in them when

they are using your product?

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When people buy a Volvo, they buy safety. When people buy Versace, they buy glamour and wealth. Ask yourself what is the emotional need your clients seek, and communicate that in your sales copy and advertising messages.

Another thing is that you need to understand their demographics. If your buyers are women between ages of 20 and 30, it would be a very bad idea to show pictures of old men on your website. Show a picture of a person that is representative of your desired customer, and it helps other customers connect with your business. People in different stages in their lives have different needs. Men and women have different needs.

You might think that as you know a lot about your business, you know the needs and motivation of your clients anyway, and you don't need to ask. But here's the thing: all people make decisions differently from one another. And the thing that persuades you is unlikely to be the thing that persuades the next guy. Our personal outlook is a lousy indicator of what works for anyone else.

When thinking of what your clients want, here are things you can count on:

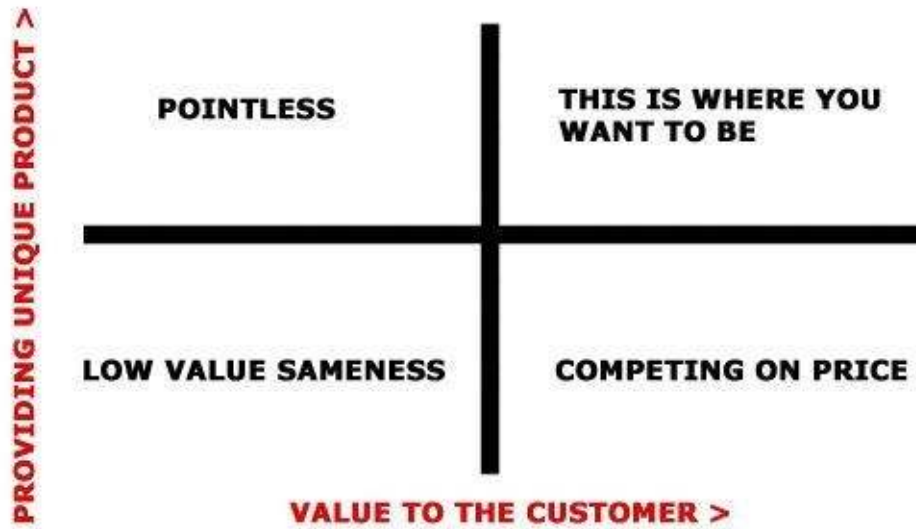
- They want you to really listen to them and not go on and on about yourself or your product.
- They want to know you really care about helping them solve their problems.
- They want you to be a knowledgeable resource so you can guide them through the process.
- They want to know you will charge a fair price for a product.
- They want to know you will stand behind what you sell.
- They want to know you won't fade away as soon as they've made the purchase.

More than anything else, prospects and customers watch what you do more than they listen to what you say.

### **Offer a unique high value product**

You want your product to stand out from the crowd, and you want people to really benefit from what you're doing. If you can't do it, save your time and don't go into business. The best thing you can do for yourself is to create something that is both of high value to customers and that few others are doing.

Let's look at this graph below. It's a matrix, with two parameters: value to the customer and uniqueness. This will teach you the most important things about marketing and product design.



Your business can be in one of the four quadrants. Let's start in the **bottom left corner**: this is where you provide a product or service that offers very low value, and there's a ton of other companies doing the same stuff.

The quadrant in the **bottom right corner** is when you provide something of great value to the customer, but so are 10 other companies. When there is almost nothing different about you and your competitors, or the differences are very subtle, you always compete on the price. Customers will usually buy the cheapest product.

The **upper left corner** is a place you will most definitely want to avoid. It's where you provide something totally unique, but it offers no value to the customer and thus nobody wants it. You are the only one doing this pointless thing, and soon there won't be any as you'll go bankrupt.

The place you want to be is in the **top right corner**, where you provide a unique product that delivers great value to the Customer. Now that sounds easier than it really is—so many businesses fail to do that. The uniqueness can be a multitude of things: features, design, price, location, business model, you name it. Figuring this out might not be easy, but it sure as hell is worth your time investment.

### **Be remarkable and worth recommending**

When you look at most of the internet businesses out there, then it seems that almost everybody's strategy is to be a little bit better than the other guy... while being mostly the same. Sameness is the predominant strategy. And that's stupid. Mediocre things will not get you anywhere, but will crush your business instead.

Create products that people will want to buy by building the marketing into the product experience itself, not by trying to come up with marketing after the product is done. If you fail to do so, you will struggle to find the time or money it takes to make your offering successful. If you make average products, you're going to fail.

The most reliable way to succeed today is to stay away from the average and the mediocre. Your product should raise eyebrows and get people talking about it (which is what being remarkable is). You want it to be so different in some way, that it will make people want to tell their friends about it.

This is the best way you can do advertising for yourself as the time of conventional advertising goes over.

People are becoming more and more resistant to advertising. Unless you're Coca-Cola or Procter and Gamble, who can throw a gazillion dollars at advertising, this is not the game you want to play.

So how to build this remarkability into your product?

**A good way is to go to the extreme with an aspect of your product.**

- **Cost.** Give everything you know away for free. And charge for support or live seminars. Prince—the singer—gave his new albums away for free. Every concert that followed sold out to the max for a very high price. Or do the opposite: price is so much higher than anything else on the market that it will intrigue people.
- **Design.** Make it look ultracool, or go out of your way to have no design at all. Being just average or good enough won't cut it.
- **Service.** Go out of your way to provide excellent service to your customer. Or treat the VIP customers significantly better than others, so that the desire to become one increases.
- **Go beyond core features.** Whatever your product does, it has a set of core features. These are the things people expect a product to do. What if you would do much more? A training company could offer personalized coaching for participants.
- **Change your target customer.** Repackage your product/service and target a non-conventional target group. Handbags for men. A chiropractor who offers his services to companies instead of individuals. Construction tools for women.

If you can figure out a way to make your business so unusual, different, and unexpected that people can't help but say something (good or bad, doesn't matter!), you have made it and saved yourself a lot of money. You're either remarkable or invisible.

# How To Set Internet Marketing Goals and Objectives

One of the hardest things for any internet marketer is to figure out what to focus on. Marketing is overwhelmingly broad, and you could pretty much do 10,000 different things. How to set internet marketing goals and objectives? What's most important? Answer: building marketing assets.

What are marketing assets? The terminology was created by Seth Godin, [who talks about marketing assets here](#). In his words:

“For a marketer, an asset is a tool or a platform, something you can use over and over without using up. In fact, it's something that gets better the more you invest.

Running an ad is an expense. Building a brand people trust is an asset.

Buying a trade show booth is an expense. Having a permission-based marketing list of people who want to get anticipated, personal, and relevant emails from you is an asset.”

The answer is right there. Your marketing goals and objectives should focus on building the following:

- building your reputation and brand,
- building your (permission-based) mailing list and building the relationship with the people on that list,
- building your blog/Twitter/Facebook/etc. audience, both in quality and quantity.

Now every time you ask, “what should I be doing?”, you can take action based on whether an activity helps you build a marketing asset or not.

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# 3 Ways to Increase Online Sales

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There are three ways to grow sales—online and offline both. Only three. However, most companies focus only on one—and are missing out on revenue opportunities.

So what are these 3 ways to increase online sales?

- increase the number of customers,
- increase the average order size,
- increase the number of repeat purchases.

## #1: Increase the number of customers

This is what most businesses do and try to get better at.

You do this by solving a real problem, [being remarkable](#), driving relevant traffic (free and paid), [boosting conversions](#), using referral programs and so on. It's the most expensive part of increasing sales.

## #2: Increase the average order size

They say the most profitable question of all times is “Would you like fries with that?” And that captures the essence of this point.

When you get people to that stage when they're ready to buy from you—you can ask them to buy more things, and there's much less friction. The reason being that getting customers to that buying point is the hardest part of the sales process. They need to trust you and believe in the value they're getting, they need to convince themselves they need or want it, and that it's the right thing to buy at this moment.

Once they've reached that step and made a conscious decision to give you money—they're also giving you their trust. So in that moment you are able to sell them more.

## Upsell a product that costs ~60% less

Question: When somebody buys a shirt, should you upsell them a tie, or the whole suit?

The right answer is “tie”—it's (usually) cheaper and hence seems like a small thing to add. If you try to upsell something more expensive, you'd counter the same kind of friction as you did with the initial product (doesn't mean it can't work, it's just harder).

The time-tested 60×60 rule says that your customers will buy an upsell 60 percent of the time for up to 60% of the original purchase price. Any upsell you offer must be congruent with the original purchase. This means that when they buy shoes, you offer to buy shoe care products, not a key chain.

Ever registered a domain name through GoDaddy? Let's see how many things they'll try to upsell you:



Here's the list:

1. different extensions (.net, .info etc),
2. domains you searched previously,
3. “variations you might consider”,
4. premium domains,
5. country/region specific domains,
6. “add 5 more domains and get bulk pricing”
7. popup banner with “get 3” or “get 5” additional extensions for a deal,
8. email plan.

Yes, that's 8 attempts to upsell you! I agree that GoDaddy is excessive, but it's been working for them. You should at least try to upsell 1 thing.

### Quantity discount

Buy more, save more!

[Vistaprint](#) does this:



## Offer an upgrade

Remind people that for just a little more \$\$\$ they can get a fancier product.

Most people won't need more than 16 GB in their iPad, but “just in case” and “it's just \$100 more” helps Apple make more money.



## Bundling

Offering something to go with the initial product for a special price is a great way of increasing the average order size.

Amazon frequently recommends you get a bundle:



Notice how in addition to offering the bundle, they're also pitching the Amazon credit card (upsell!).

I throw marketing seminars each time I go to Europe—and whenever I offer an online marketing course to go with the seminar fee (for some extra \$\$\$—but a very good deal), around half the people take the offer. Bundling ftw!

## Complementary product

“Do you need batteries?” Sometimes you can get the extra sale by reminding them of a new need they will have because of buying the product they have already decided on. This can be an easy sale because it is rational, “makes sense.”

This is how the [Phoenix Pendant](#) does it, on the page that appears after the customer has clicked the buy button:





Do you need a chain to go with the pendant?

Does she have a chain she can use to put her Phoenix Pendant on? If so, choose to buy her the pendant by itself.



We can offer you a beautiful, 18" sterling silver snake chain with a lobster clasp - the perfect length to showcase the pendant at a special price because you are buying the Phoenix Pendant.

It normally sells for \$40, but with the Phoenix Pendant, you can have it for just \$25.

Get the Phoenix Pendant PLUS the 18" Sterling Silver Chain for \$154

**Add To Cart**

[Add to Cart](#)



I will get just the Phoenix Pendant, without the chain

One interesting thing they do here is tell you not to buy it if you don't need it. This can reduce friction—if a customer is expecting to go straight to checkout and then they get smacked with an upsell suggestion, it's nice to word it in a way that makes them feel under less pressure and more control. The people at the Phoenix Pendant tell me that 60% of customers take the upsell.

### Longer commitment

Charge monthly? Get them to sign up for a longer time period. [GetResponse lures](#) with a 18% annual discount:

Plan	Subscribers	Price	Annual Discount
1,000 subscribers	1,000	\$15.00/month	\$12.00 with annual discount
<b>Most Popular</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>\$25.00/month</b>	<b>\$20.00 with annual discount</b>
10,000 subscribers	10,000	\$65.00/month	\$58.50 with annual discount

All plans include all features and unlimited emailing. [View more subscription plans](#)

**Save 18% with Annual Discount (\$54.00 OFF)**  
Annual Prepay Discount, 12 months recurring

You will be charged: **\$26.00**

**Continue**

### Extended warranty

If you've ever bought a gadget, you've been probably offer an extended warranty for a price. Even though statistically speaking it's a bad deal for the buyer, it [provides peace of mind](#).

Amazon example:

### Available Warranties or Services for This Item



## Add-on services

Ever go to Chipotle? You can get a good burrito for a decent price, but they offer to add tasty guacamole (right in front of your eyes) for \$1.80 more.

Get customers to add small things to their order for a small fee. They might just add up if you know what I mean.

Here's how [PSD2HTML](#) does it:



## Expedited delivery

If you sell physical products or do custom work (be it software development or engraving jewelry) you can get people to pay more for faster service.

[HP](#) ships your purchases faster if you pony up additional \$39:



## #3: Increase the number of repeat purchases

It's much easier to sell to an existing customer than to get a new one. You're spending a ton to acquire them—it's much [cheaper to keep them](#) than to go off finding new ones all the time.

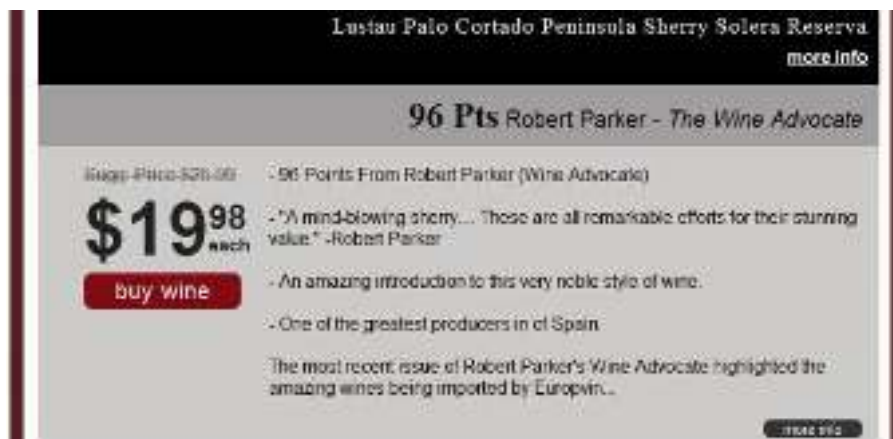
You don't want to keep all of them—just the profitable ones. So you need to be able to identify which ones are costing you, and which ones are bringing you bacon. (Some you might want to offload because of the emotional cost of servicing them, i.e. difficult customers that you spend a lot of support hours on).

Here are some ways to keep the existing customer buying:

### Offering promotions and reminding customers of what you offer

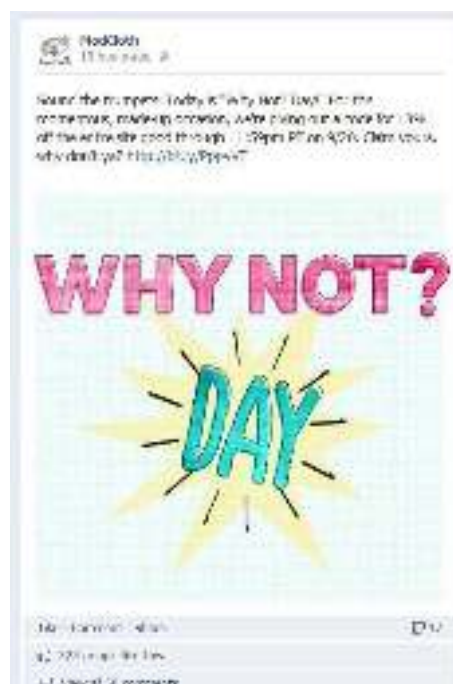
Send targeted follow-up emails to customers offering them a related product or service (you can do this automatically with a good email autoresponder and shopping cart). Notifying them of deals is also great.

Wine Library is constantly sending me wine offers over emails ('cause I've bought before). Even now and then I'll take it:



Companies do this with email marketing, but also all social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)—getting customers to follow you on one of these and offer special deals for just the followers.

Here's an example from [Modcloth Facebook page](#):



### Free shipping for a year (locking customers in)

Do you use Amazon Prime? It's when you pay a fee to get free 2-day shipping for a year (+ some other

benefits). Free 2-day delivery is nice, and so are free streaming movies. Apparently [more people use the 2-day shipping](#) now than their free Super Saver Shipping. People like it.

However, by giving you this deal they're essentially locking you in. Why buy from anyone else? Amazon ships it for free (get it in 2 days)?

[Wine.com does the same thing:](#)



If your customers buy frequently the kind of products you sell, come up with an incentive to keep buying only from you.

### Offer coupons with the order

Do you know what's the open rate of transactional emails? [Three times](#) higher than commercial emails.

According to [Experian's Transactional Email Benchmark Report](#)

- The average revenue per transactional email is 2-5 times higher than standard bulk mail
- Transaction rates are 8x higher than bulk mailings for order confirmations and 4x higher for shipping and returns/exchanges
- Customers tend to open transactional emails repeatedly

So when customers place an order with you and receive the "Thank you for your purchase" email—make sure you include some marketing in that email, such as a coupon code.

They just completed an order, so they probably won't buy immediately—hence a coupon code with an expiry date is a better idea than offering an additional product (you should have offered that as an upsell before completing the purchase).

I bought a gift for a friend, and the confirmation email had a coupon in it:

This email confirms your Beer of the Month Club shipment for May.

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To view tracking information for this order, please visit your order history page at:

[http://www.amazon.com/track](#)

\*\*\* PLEASE NOTE: It may take the carrier 24 HOURS to update its records with your tracking information \*\*\*

This was shipment number 2 of 6 total shipments.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 <<<FATHER'S DAY SPECIAL>>>

FREE SHIPPING & \$10 OFF Gifts for Dad!

Make Dad smile month after month (and give him something he'll actually love) with a personal gift of the month club!

Simply use coupon code FCDAD128 at checkout or when you order by phone at 1.800.507.9588.

That's in addition to FREE SHIPPING on every club!

Hurry, this offer ends June 10th!

### Save credit card details

I shop on Amazon all the time. The few times when I don't buy something from Amazon is when I'm after something specific and Amazon doesn't have it.

Of all the reasons I prefer Amazon, the biggest one for me is that my credit card details are already stored there. If I'd go buy from an online store I've never visited, I'd have to enter all the payment and shipping details—all over again! No, thank you—Amazon it is!

No it is not just me talking—data shows a sharp jump in per account spending (and the trend upward):



Investment in user experience pays off.

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Somebody [on Quora suggests](#) that [play.com](#) provides a great experience. I did a search on Twitter and it could be true:

### **Service is the new selling**

This is directly related to the last point. Once you get the customers in, provide a superior support and service experience. You can always impress people with excellent service since the average is very low.

Once you provide excellent service, people not only recruit new customers for you, but they'll be sure to repeat the experience.

### **Release a new, better model every year**

iPhone, anyone?

### **Conclusion**

When trying to increase your online sales, don't forget the other two ways besides getting new customers. Optimize for all three ways and enjoy growth thanks to untapped opportunities.

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# The Key to Customer Loyalty

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If you want to double your results, you can either double the number of visitors (very expensive), double the conversion rate (possible, but increasingly harder as there's a max limit to your conversion rate) or double repeat purchases—loyalty.

Jakob Nielsen [has mentioned](#) that 2010–2020 will be the loyalty decade. Investing in loyalty is as important as investing in usability and conversion optimization.

If you plan to be around with your business, you have to plan for loyalty.

## Shared values before interactions

A common narrative shared online is that you build loyalty by interacting with customers (sending them emails, social media, etc). It is only true when a critical criteria has been met first: **shared values**.

If you don't form relationships, your customers will just want discounts. If consumers share value with your brand, you can spend less on messaging, less on discounting, and you're less affected by the turbulent economy.

[In a study of 7,000 consumers](#) in the U.S., the UK, and Australia those who said they have a brand relationship, 64% cited shared values as the primary reason. That's by far the largest driver.

## Do you stand for something?

In order to have shared values with your customers, they need to know what your values are. If you're running a vanilla company trying to please everybody, you're not touching anyone's heart.

In 1983, Harley-Davidson was almost going out of business. By 2008 the company was valued at \$7 billion, being one of the top brands in the world. Central to the company's turnaround and success was Harley's commitment to building a brand that stands for something. Its customers organize around the lifestyle, activities, and ethos of the brand.

## Shared values lead to loyalty

What are consumers really loyal to? People at [Corporate Executive Board](#) were [looking into this](#) for over a year.

Long story short, what they found out was that people are not loyal to companies. **They're loyal to what the companies stand for.**

*We saw that emotional attachments to brands certainly do exist, but that connection typically starts with a "shared value" that consumers believe they hold in common with the brand.*

—Aaron Lotton

## Real thing, not stick-on emotions

If you're successful and/or original, your products, prices, and marketing messages will be copied. Those things are not your unique competitive advantage, nor will they create loyalty.

The companies who focus on values, community building, and relationships are building assets that can't be easily replicated. The best and most sustainable way to create emotion and build relationships: **mean it**.

You show hot women in your ads or feature happy families on your website, but those are mere stick-on emotions. The real thing is something intrinsic about your business.

A great example: [Toms Shoes](#). You buy a pair of shoes, they give a pair to a child in need. The company has been around only a few years, but has become a known brand people love—because they're the real thing.

Patagonia has a following. As does Harley-Davidson and Whole Foods. They stand for something real.

[Here's a good article](#) on the real thing vs stick-on emotions.

People will buy from you if who you are aligns with who they are. So make it known who you are and what you stand for.



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