

## Word of Mouth Marketing

With most marketers faced with the prospect of doing more on a smaller budget, one tactic that cannot be overlooked is word of mouth marketing.

Looking for guidance on executing a successful word of mouth campaign? The AMA's web site ([www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com)) features three case studies of successfully executed word of mouth campaigns. While the companies featured are non-profits, all businesses can learn from the approaches that were used.

**New Jersey State Library** – The library ran an online contest that generated over 17,000 online votes generated strictly through word of mouth.

**DePaul University** – The university launched its online community for parents and gained nearly 1,700 community members through word of mouth.

**American Society of Health-System Pharmacists** – The ASHP achieved a membership growth of 10%, after several previous years of no growth, by implementing a word of mouth campaign.

To view the complete case studies, visit <http://tinyurl.com/co562d>.

Written by Bob Goricki  
Public Relations Specialist at Skoda Minotti (AMA Member)

## Top 10 Media and Marketing Books

*More than 300 readers of Ad Age took the time to list their favorite media and marketing books of all time. The list below was published in Ad Age on March 1, 2009.*

- **Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind** – by Al Ries and Jack Trout
- **Ogilvy on Advertising** – by David Ogilvy
- **The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding** – by Al Ries and Laura Ries
- **E -** by Matt Beaumont
- **Hey, Whipple. Squeeze This: A Guide to Creating Great Advertising** – by Luke Sullivan
- **Where the Suckers Moon: The Life and Death of an Advertising Campaign** – by Randall Rothenberg
- **Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't** – by Jim Collins
- **The Book of Gossage** – by Howard Luck Gossage, Jeff Goodby and Bruce Bendinger
- **Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion** – by Robert B. Cialdini
- **Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking** – by Malcom Gladwell

## Online Coupon Sites Are On the Rise: Don't Overlook This Cost Saving Resource

The current state of the economy has made just about everyone think twice about their purchasing habits. Whether you're looking to make large cut backs in your personal budget; or you've suffered a significant cut to your company's marketing budget; it seems "cuts" are just about everywhere.

However, this challenging time also brings an opportunity – to target consumers that are also conscious of cutting costs...coupons that is! And although the traditional methods of cutting out coupons from the Sunday paper may still work, the world of online coupon websites is literally booming. Check out these interesting statistics, according to a recent study conducted by Simmons/Experian Research and Coupons, Inc.

- The number of people turning to the web for coupons has soared to 36 million in 2008; an increase of 10 million people from 2005
- 25% of the 148 million people that use coupons now find them online
- Nearly 50% of "coupon clickers" are between the ages of 22 and 44
- 58% of those surveyed say they believe a brand providing coupons online is more likely to provide new products that they will enjoy
- More than 70% of coupon clickers would provide their email address, first and last name and answer survey questions for a \$2 coupon
- 73% of coupon clickers are more likely to open an email if a coupon is offered
- 64% are more likely to click on an ad banner or search listing if they know a coupon is offered

Many websites offer user-based communities where general consumers (opportunity knocks for brands to try this as well!) post coupons and provide feedback and reviews. This information not only gets the word out, but also provides an arena for consumers to give their own opinion of their experience. Talk about added value; both to the customer and to the marketer.

The world of online coupon websites is continuously growing; but check out some of the most visited sites for opportunities to post (and find!) your coupons online. Most websites also offer advertisers data on how many times their coupons were viewed, clicked on and/or printed. Several sites also offer the option for coupon codes; which can be especially effective for companies that conduct a lot of business online.

Here's a list of a few coupon sites to check out – and save on your bottom line, both at work and at home!

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <a href="http://www.retailmenot.com">www.retailmenot.com</a>       | <a href="http://www.shopittome.com">www.shopittome.com</a>     |
| <a href="http://www.coupons.com">www.coupons.com</a>               | <a href="http://www.pricegrabber.com">www.pricegrabber.com</a> |
| <a href="http://www.couponmom.com">www.couponmom.com</a>           | <a href="http://www.couponcabin.com">www.couponcabin.com</a>   |
| <a href="http://www.coolsavings.com">www.coolsavings.com</a>       | <a href="http://www.smartsource.com">www.smartsource.com</a>   |
| <a href="http://www.couponmountain.com">www.couponmountain.com</a> | <a href="http://www.mycoupons.com">www.mycoupons.com</a>       |
| <a href="http://www.dealio.com">www.dealio.com</a>                 |  |

Written by Katie Fete (AMA Member)

**Check Out the Cleveland AMA's Social Networking Profiles:**

**facebook**

**Linked in**

## Spring Clean Your Website

'Tis the season for spring cleaning! Your first thought of this seasonal task might be cleaning your house from top to bottom. There is, however, another very important home that you may desperately need to tidy up... your home page! Just like any house, websites can get stagnant and outdated. If it's been a while since your site has been updated, it's time to get serious about clearing out all the clutter. Regular enhancements to your site will not only make it more enticing to visit and easier to navigate, but it may also help drive more traffic and secure more sales.

Here are some useful steps to help revitalize and reenergize your website:

- **Maximize branding opportunities.** Your website is your virtual office. It's the place where visitors will gather their first impressions of your company and what you have to offer. Review your site and make sure you maximize every opportunity to deliver your brand. Your brand is your company's unique value proposition. This proposition is your business – not just a marketing statement. Every word, every image and every component on your site should reflect your brand.
- **Stay consumer focused.** Your website might already effectively establish your brand, but is it revealing how you deliver on your brand promise? Be certain you describe how your product or service benefits the visitor. You can brag that you have the best product or service in the world, but consumers want to hear how it is going to make their lives better or solve their current problems. Review the focus of your copywriting and make appropriate edits to include consumer benefit statements. Add some customer testimonials to add interest and confirmation.
- **Give it a facelift.** Just as a fresh coat of paint makes any room more exciting and inviting, so can a background color and current photos on your site. If you've had the same look online for the past year, it might be a good idea to change things up on occasion. Consider using the seasons as a time line for modifying key elements. Quarterly updates communicate to your visitors that the site is current and that there may be some exciting enhancements or novel ideas to come back for. Remember to keep it simple. Avoid clutter so visitors can easily navigate.
- **Revive content.** Recharge your site by adding new content. Modify copy to assure you have the most effective key words for search engine optimization. Check all links to make sure they are live. Once visitors click on dead links, you've lost credibility. And don't forget to update your contact information with appropriate phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- **Promote new products or services.** You may have visitors that come back to your site for the same product or service each time, but these visitors might also be interested in something new. You will increase visits to your site and improve sales by advertising new products and services on the home page of your site. This is prime real estate for advertising so why not take advantage of it?
- **Make it interactive.** Ninety two percent of internet users do not go beyond the third page according to a 2008 study conducted by Search Marketing Firm iProspect. This is why it's important to provide what visitors want on your home page or within a few clicks. Streaming videos, pod casts and blogs can help keep your site interactive and keep visitors interested. Blogging also increases your placement on search engines relevant to the topics that you're discussing.
- **Add a survey or poll.** Offering a survey or poll on your website can provide you with useful information on what visitors find worthwhile. This valuable insight will help you with future enhancements and new product/service development. Results from a survey or poll can be used to promote your company. Simply use the results you've gathered and issue a press release for a local trade publication or pitch a story to your local radio or news station.
- **Create customer retention strategies.** Develop initiatives to effectively generate repeat business. One strategy is to obtain e-mail addresses for ongoing e-mail communication. You can accomplish this goal by designing a monthly newsletter or weekly e-mail subscription. Promote the benefits of signing up for this ongoing communication (such as discounts on future purchases, exclusive "members only" events, etc.) on your home page.

Regular maintenance of your website takes time and effort, but getting in the habit of keeping it current and competitive will reap many rewards. If you're trying to tackle this time-consuming task alone, consider creating a website committee to brainstorm ideas and share responsibilities. Many hands make light work and this is a company initiative that is certainly worth everyone's time.

*Written by Cheryl Gillette Roche (AMA Member)*

## Gaining Customers from Struggling Competitors

During these trying economic times many companies try to save their budgets by cutting their marketing efforts...but it is well-known that during a recession is the best time to advertise. When the economy turns around you have already positioned yourself with the consumer. However, another good reason to maintain or even increase your advertising spending is to gain customers from your struggling competitors.

While many industry sectors suffer during a recession, not all businesses within that sector are seeing the same downturn. It is those operations that stand to benefit the most within our current economic state. For example if your competition is struggling financially, odds are they have slashed their advertising efforts which will leave them susceptible to your efforts. The key is to not stretch from your target market in order to pursue customers from struggling organizations but rather target your direct competition with point messaging. For example Starbucks, just like many other companies, has been struggling over the past 12 months. In 2008 McDonalds created an ad that simply stated "Four bucks is dumb". This is a direct attack aimed at the Starbucks' pricing strategy, and as a result McDonalds saw a 30% increase in the coffee sales over the same time period. There are many subtle ways in which to direct the consumer, but please remember, it is not wise to give a direct name reference in your messaging. Some organizations such as Alltel have managed to successfully attack their competition without the perception of harassment.

Another aspect to consider when pursuing your competitions customer base is whether to focus on price or product. Generally speaking it is best to focus on product and product innovation. Ron Sargent, CEO of Staples told Fortune magazine "By offering more value, we were able to expand our market share." This was in reference to their \$3.00 coupon offering for empty ink cartridges, which was used to combat FedEx. Therefore if you are maintaining or wanting to increase your advertising spending you may want to consider what your competition is doing...because now may be the best opportunity for your organization to gain market share from your toughest competition.

*Written by T.J. Ausflug - Associate Project Implementation Manager for Micro-Retail (AMA Member)*