

## HOW TO INCREASE SALES IN A RECESSION

There is no doubt that a recession can translate into business gloom and possibly even doom. However, in tough times such as we are currently experiencing, success lies in the attitude of the business owner and by extension his or her employees. Oftentimes, when the word “recession” hits the presses, business owners tend to buckle down, cut costs (including marketing) and hope to weather the storm by staying conservative. Worse yet, some give up all together. One internet shopper mentioned that he sent an email asking for a quote to five different businesses, and four days later only one of them replied. Another experience involving a website inquiry yielded a similar disappointing result.

There is good news. You do not need to sit back and hope to weather the storm, nor do you need to surrender your business to the recession. With a positive attitude, creativity and a proactive approach, there are ways to maintain and even increase your sales during these tough times. According to marketing and sales expert Ron Romano, the following actions can help you achieve the seemingly impossible during an economic downturn:

Look for new ways to re-position products or services you provide to attract a new market segment. This creative thinking can open up a whole new segment that you previously had not considered. It can lead to new products and new ideas, and give you an edge over your competition.

- Find new distribution channels for your products, whether it's through the internet or other retailers who are selling complimentary products or services.
- Know the numbers in your business. Find out what products and services make the most profits and which ones make the least. Start promoting or up-selling those first.
- Position yourself as the “Knowledgeable Expert” in your field and write articles for the newspaper or trade journals, and consider doing radio interviews.
- Join a Mastermind Group or Coaching Program to improve your skills as a marketer. A business and marketing coach can help stop the downhill slide before it becomes uncontrollable.
- Build a stronger relationship with your customer base through frequent contact, special offers, and newsletters. Find out what really matters to your customer base and concentrate your efforts in those areas. You can also add extra value by delivering that “something special” that they weren't expecting.

- Most importantly, differentiate yourself from the competition. Give the consumer the “reason why” they should do business with you versus your competitors.

The internet is a powerful tool. Use it to your advantage. Keep your business website current by updating regularly (some experts recommend refreshing content on a weekly basis). Provide useful information on your website, such as in-depth articles and links to other informational resources. Furthermore, email marketing can prevent your business from being forgotten. A potential customer may not be ready to buy at the moment, but may change their mind next month, next quarter or even next year.

Amidst these efforts to ramp up your marketing and target new customers, it is vitally important to remember to reward your loyal customers. Provide superior customer service, discounts, and minor services free of charge. Let them know that their business is appreciated. These efforts will pay off by way of quality referrals and a strong business relationship that is apt to survive through even the toughest of times.

Above all, a positive attitude is key to survival in a turbulent business environment. It is likely that one or more attempts to increase your sales will fail; however, persistence and determination will eventually pay off and can result in a stronger business model to carry your business through the ups and downs of our economic climate.