

Marketing Tip and Sales Cycles

Hello everyone and thanks for tuning in! My name is Sean and I am your host. Today's podcast is about stepping back and looking at the big picture of your annual sales cycle and how to plan marketing around it. I also have a few marketing tips to share. Online store and DollarDays distributorship owners are the primary audience for this podcast.

Let's start with a thought to remember: A good chunk of online sales success is contingent upon having a sales and marketing plan---and following it! Remember that!!

It's a no brainer about marketing sanctioned holidays such as Valentine's Day, Christmas or Mother's Day. We know we need to have the right products at the right price, available weeks ahead of the actual holidays to compensate for shipping times. We also know we have to plan our marketing for these holidays well in advance; plus we know the audiences and how to speak them.

But what about when there are no holidays? That's when you need to get creative. Jump around on the internet and see what other stores are offering---get ideas and adapt them for your business. Ideas are everywhere! Keep a "swipe" file on your desktop. Every time you come across an idea you like, "swipe" it! When you need an idea, look in your swipe folder! Also, follow a few online business blogs such as QuickSprout.com and SethGodin.com so that you will continue to learn, form opinions and plan.

With twelve years of online sales experience, what we know at DollarDays is that back to school supplies are our best selling products. We also know that buyers begin back to school buying as early as May or June. Our biggest seller is backpacks---we've sold millions. Knowing this is a huge sales event for us, we execute a lot of promotions over several months to get the word out and pump up the sales. As you grow in your business, you too, will learn what your best sellers are and how to prepare and increase their sales each year.

What do you think your biggest seller(s) are or will be?

Our podcast today is about understanding how to be successful with your online store sales or your DollarDays distributorship sales, in terms of marketing and planning. We'll use backpacks as an example of selecting a hot seller and marketing them to the proper audience. By understanding this concept, you can use it all year long, through different sales cycles such as holidays, seasonal changes that warrant warmer or cooler clothing or different sports equipment or home improvements, to name a few examples.

Not every marketing activity will make sense for every store. You need to do what makes the most sense in terms of budget, time and effectiveness. Here are some ideas:

- Online marketing, create a blog and write about your business (not only is this good information for potential customers, it can make you the expert in your field AND you are building your SEO like we discussed in last week's podcast), email campaigns, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc.), Google AdWords, search engine submissions, SEO, join free merchants' associations, etc.
- WORD OF MOUTH!!! It's free and you have the ability to make an indelible impression on someone by having a one on one conversation. And ALWAYS have business cards with you!

- Community/non-profit involvement. Make in-person visits to non-profits, give them your flyers and speak to the decision makers about what your business can offer them (why are you a benefit to them?) Churches are perfect, as they typically take on dozens of causes or missions throughout the year that require major purchases. Offering them goods and necessities at wholesale is a wonderful benefit!
- Effective in-store merchandising for those of you have an online store---announce specials on your home page. Distributors have the benefit of having DollarDays do that for them!
- Put flyers wherever you can. Never leave the office/house without business cards.
- Think about who might be a natural target audience for your wholesale products. School teachers are perfect and in abundance (elementary seem to need the most supplies). If you could make a presentation to teachers, that would be excellent! Hit a dozen schools and you could be making some decent sales. Teachers typically join together with a few other teachers and place one big order. Some teachers don't get a stipend for supplies, so it comes out of their pockets---they really appreciate wholesale.
- Know your products. If you are going to make a presentation to someone, study the products so you can be the expert!

PLANNING RECOMMENDATION: Create a 52-week program and schedule your marketing according to what makes sense for your business, your marketplace, and your products or services. Remember to include all the usual holidays, plus consider seasonal changes and what level of buying power is behind them (Summer: flip flops, beach toys, shorts, sports, back to school. Winter: jackets, coats, hats, gloves. Fall: sweaters, boots, jeans, jackets). You might even want to get a giant white board and create your calendar on it so you can see your year at a glance. You'll be able to identify all of your marketing opportunities, when you will launch campaigns, costs, etc.--- **at a glance!** The truth is, this whiteboard approach will help you keep your plans on track and be top of mind.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: If you are just starting your online store, it will be hard to evaluate an ROI (return on investment). That said, keep a journal of all your efforts---you can compare them with what you do next year...and learn! Always ask customers how they heard about you, if possible.

ROI comes in all sizes and shapes. Social media is not going to put money in the bank for you today but it's the easiest way to reach a lot of people. They, in turn, learn about your business and could become potential customers. Then you can say social media was the catalyst that put money in your bank!

Good marketing planning is not brain surgery. It's nothing more than understanding the basics, setting goals, establishing priorities and executing with discipline and appreciation of the value of marketing dollars. Be sure you put as much time as possible into marketing your store---that will get you the best results. Keep good records so you may evaluate how your marketing efforts worked during the year.

That's it for today's podcast. I hope I have given you the big picture of marketing and planning for your online store's success.

I've had a few of our distributors comment on the marketing advice we gave them. Here it is:

Sally Levinten from Akron, Ohio said, "I belong to several groups in my within my church. I was able to explain my wholesale website to everyone and hand out flyers. I was amazed at how eager others were to take some of my flyers and hand them about at their workplaces and in their

neighborhoods! My pastor said he would order general supplies from my site to save the church money! "

Fred Ruger, Love, Colorado said, "I had a fundraiser idea for a middle school or junior high kids who were interested in business. I approached the principal at three different schools and got three 'yeses!' I pitched the idea of creating a small student run store in the school that would be open after school 5 days a week and at special events. The school would buy the products for the store initially. With guidance from the business teacher, the kids would learn margins, managing money, inventory, buying and responsibility. All funds raised could be spent at the principals' discretion. I love the idea because I think it could help these kids in their futures and possibly keep them out of trouble today!"