

frank talk

Every week, I hear success stories from retailers sharing thoughts about how their businesses are doing. They describe how well the consumer is responding to new products and talk about how new brands are motivating their customers to buy. And while no one describes the current business environment as a “turnaround”—that implies a degree of permanency that most don’t yet feel exists in the economy—the consensus is that things are decidedly improving. This is great news!

So if the business stars are really beginning to align, **how can a business owner put their foot on the accelerator and really drive their business from a sales and profitability standpoint?** The last few years have forced us, often kicking and screaming, to relearn core business strategies like inventory reduction, employee cutbacks, better cash management, etc. So how can you get the most out of the current upturn to restore some of the lost sales and lost profits left on the table during the downward cycle of the last few years?

Opportunity is at hand for you to get on board the Growth Express and move your sales and profits forward at a rate that was unimaginable just two years ago. Buckle your seat belt to see where these marketing techniques will take you. The key point is that by bringing your efforts and awareness to the strategies below, your competitors simply won’t be able to compete and your store will stand out as excellent on every measure of success.

1 Focus. Making the growth of your business and its profitability strategic imperatives will better position you to achieve these goals. Communicate what is important to you. Explain to your associates what you want to do and how you are going to get there. It will give those around you a clear path

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by Frank Brady



Return Of The Customer

prepare your store to leverage growth

to success. Most companies never do this and it results in more employee dissatisfaction than anything else. Sometimes employees complain about their salary but the reality is that most employees don’t understand what the business owner’s vision is and they feel left out.

2 Establish a clear goal and commit to it in writing. Explain it in a way that motivates people to help make your goal their reality.

3 **Expand the reach of your store beyond your local trading area.** There was a time when retailers felt that all they had to do was find the perfect spot in town, pay the landlord rent and the customers would flock to their door. Today, customers can come from every angle. Social networking is the relaxed way people today learn about products, personalities, brands and yes, your store. If you just don’t get it, spend a little time with the 17-year-old stocking your shelves and get a lesson on Twitter and Facebook. It is a culture that

moves you out of your town and into the national scene overnight.

4 Know your top customers personally and make them feel important. Make them want to shop your store over your competition. This task is not impossible. It is a matter of recognizing that the 80/20 rule even applies to your customers. Give them a call after they make a big purchase and say thank you. You will make friends for life that way.

5 Sell ideas, and products will follow. Like most consumers, I really don’t need anything new to buy. However, every time I bring a recipe or meal idea with me to my favorite retailer, I walk out not only with a new olive oil but also new tools that I have to have to make my recipe turn heads. **Make ideas the biggest part of the reason consumers shop at your store.** It makes selling fun, defines the personality

of your store and turns browsing shoppers into repeat customers.

6 **Re-evaluate your selling staff’s incentive programs to incentivize products or lines that help you make the most profit. Simple and smart.**

7 Stop buying from a price sheet. Instead base the products you buy on competitive intelligence gathered from visiting your competition. Search out products that are topical in the press and on TV and grill your local reps about what is selling locally or being featured in the local newspaper or magazines.

8 Constantly evaluate the results of your sales, marketing and merchandising efforts against their cost. Stop doing things out of habit or because they have always been done that way. Get proof that each activity you invest in is paying off or change it.

9 Tap into the free publicity network. Come up with a big story regularly about what is happening in your store and get it published. Let your employees write a story about your business and business activities.

10 **Train your sales associates to listen. Seems simple but it isn’t. Great salespeople are always, without exception, great listeners who get to “yes” via the shortest route.** Smart salespeople take information and use it to give the customer exactly what they want. All of these strategic points are based on making sure your customer always wins. That’s the way it should always be. Being creative is fun and now that things are looking up, having fun and growing your business at the same time makes it even sweeter. Enjoy it and make a difference for you and all around you.

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