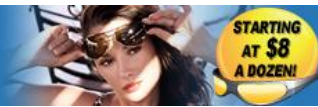




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Forward

Let's face it, recent years have been extremely tough for retailers. Economic challenges have caused customers to think longer and harder about what they spend their dollars on... and where they spend them!

Things are certainly looking better now, but many hard working retailers are struggling.

That's why I was immediately interested, when my friend, CTS Wholesale Sunglasses C.E.O., Kirk Bachelder, contacted me to help his retailers improve their sales. I went on to write a number of popular marketing articles on the CTS Wholesale Sunglasses website, for Kirk's retailers.

Kirk then asked me to put a retail marketing guide together in the form of an ebook, as a way to get all those retail marketing ideas, tips, tactics and strategies together in a single package.

Those original, popular articles form the base of this guide, but they have been expanded on and improved. There's lots of great fresh information in this guide, so even if you read the original articles, you will find it useful.

I Have also changed the format. Every article now ends with a look at the key lesson learned.

The guide is divided into the following 5 areas of retail marketing:

1. In store sales.
2. Customer experience.
3. Window displays and signage.
4. Email marketing.
5. General marketing.

In total, there are over a hundred ideas spread across over fifteen thousand words. All written by me, Jim Connolly. For those of you who don't know me, I write one of the world's most popular marketing blogs and I've been quoted or interviewed in; The Wall

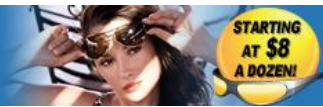


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Street Journal, The New York Times, ABC News, Time, Market Watch, Mashable, Fox News and on Good Morning America and The BBC.

Getting the most from this retail marketing guide

When presented with this many marketing ideas, suggestions, tactics and strategies, it can be a little overwhelming. The key to getting the most from this guide, is for you to only focus on the sections, where you need to improve.

Work on the most pressing areas first, then look at the less important areas. This will help you avoid getting overwhelmed and ensure you get the maximum benefit.

As with all marketing, those who will get the best results from this guide will do the following:

- They will identify the areas where they need to make improvements.
- They will then weigh the cost, (in both time and money) against the potential value the business is likely to achieve.

If you do this, unless your marketing is already fully optimized, you should be able to achieve some impressive, measurable results.

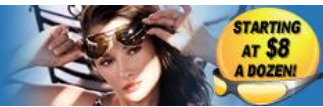
Before we get into the detail, I'd personally and professionally like to salute Kirk and the people at CTS Wholesale Sunglasses, for the way they have invested in helping their retailers grow their businesses. It's very forward thinking for a wholesaler to put their time and money into helping their retailers in this way.

So, let's start with the very first retail marketing section.



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In-store Sales

How to sell more by selling less

Let's start by looking at one of the most powerful, yet least understood opportunities in retail sales. It's something called "The Educate and Inform approach".

To understand how this can work for you and your business, you need to consider 2 important factors:

1. Customers hate (and resist) being sold to.
2. However, customers love to buy things. Some even call the joy of buying things 'Retail Therapy', because they enjoy it so much.

Selling to customers vs. customers buying from you

Traditional retail sales training has always been about finding ways to persuade the customer to buy from you. It's almost like a game of chess, with the retailer trying to out maneuver the customer.

Old school sales manuals and sales training courses, used to tell salespeople how to overcome objections, how to turn a 'no' into a 'yes', how to close a sale, etc... The list of sales tactics, psychological tricks and persuasion techniques were huge. Back then, the customer was seen as an opponent. They were referenced in sales training almost as if they were there to be battled with until they parted with their money.

Today we know better!

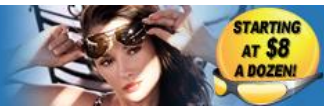
Years of research has proven that the most successful retail salespeople in the world use a very different approach. They don't push. They don't hard sell. In fact, they don't really sell in the traditional sense of the word.

It looks like this: Instead of selling to customers, they educate customers, who then buy from them. They put themselves on the side of the customer, rather than battle the customer using sales tactics. I call this the **Educate and Inform** approach.





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Educate and Inform rather than pitch and sell

Many of the most successful salespeople in the country have not sold a thing in years. Sure, they have masses of people who buy from them, but they don't do what would traditionally be known as selling.

How come?

These successful salespeople have figured out, that customers know the instant they are being sold to. They also realized that as soon as customers sense a retail sales tactic is being used on them, they put their sales shield up.

So, rather than act like a salesperson, they act like a product expert or consultant. They Educate and Inform, rather than pitch and sell. As a result, they encounter very little buyer resistance and find customers connect with them far better. They listen to what the customer wants, then advise, not sell, based on the customer's need. BTW: In business to business sales, this approach is called Consultative Selling, such is the emphasis on a consultative approach.

Yes, this approach requires the retailer to learn about his or her product lines, but the payback can be huge. It can lead to not only more sales, but bigger volume sales too. It is also a great way to attract word of mouth referrals.

Allow me to explain.

An example of how this works in retail

Here's an example of how this works. For the purpose of this example, let's imagine a potential customer is in a store looking at the sunglasses display.

The traditional sales approach

The salesperson would greet the customer and ask if they can help. The customer would either say they were 'just looking' or the

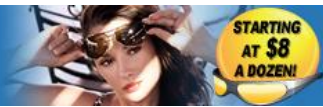


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customer may find a pair of sunglasses they like, and walk to the checkout.

- If the customer was just looking, the salesperson may suggest a few popular sunglass designs to look at. If none of the sunglasses appeal to the customer, the customer will leave.
- If the customer found a pair of sunglasses they like, they would take the sunglasses to the checkout.

In either case, the best scenario is that the customer buys a new pair of shades. This common approach under-serves the customer and massively reduces the potential value of each customer to the store owner.

The Educate and Inform approach

The same potential customer would be looking at the same sunglasses display. However, everything else changes from the previous approach.

The salesperson says hello, then asks a relevant question, something like: “Are you looking for a particular type of sunglasses?”

If the customer replies with: “I’m looking for a pair that I can wear when I’m driving”, the salesperson might say, “These polarized sunglasses are great for car use as they minimize glare. They also have a wide arm, which stops the sun hitting your peripheral vision when it shines through the driver’s side window”.

The Educate and Inform salesperson, might then ask if the customer drives a convertible. If the customer does, the salesperson would advise them to make sure they use a good quality sunscreen, as the cooling effect of driving a convertible often makes us less aware how strong the sun’s rays are.

Note that the salesperson has not tried to sell anything with sales techniques. The salesperson has simply offered great advice to someone... someone who feels like they were being helped, rather than pestered.

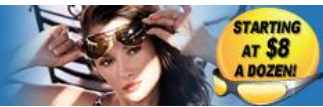


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The customer's 'buyer resistance' is extremely low, because they are not being sold to in the traditional way. What happened here, was that the salesperson positioned them self as an adviser, rather than someone looking for a sale.

The payback?

As long as the merchandise the salesperson advises on are stock items, they can hand them to the customer, so the customer can take a closer look. The salesperson lets the customer know that they are happy to answer any questions the customer may have. Finally, the salesperson asks the customer; "What do you think?"

The customer is left with a decision. To buy or not to buy.

- Will 100% of customers then go on and make a purchase that day? No.
- Will some of them buy from you that day? Yes.
- Will you have just massively increased the chances they will return to your store? Absolutely.
- Will lots of them be so delighted with the service you gave them, that they tell their friends on Facebook, Twitter etc? Definitely!

The Educate and Inform approach is something that some retail business owners can immediately see the benefit of, whilst others do not. If you are still undecided, give it a try. Test the kind of feedback you get, both in sales numbers and the number of additional new customers you see, through word of mouth recommendations.

The lesson here

People love to buy things, but they hate being sold to. Resist the old school approach, where the customer is sold to and instead, try to help them.

Yes, you will be offering your products as solutions, but there's a world of difference between selling to a customer and helping them.

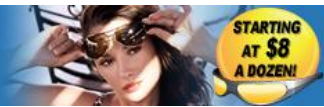


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In-store Sales

Boost retail sales, with this customer-focused marketing approach

Let's now look at a way for you to avoid a very common retail marketing mistake. Get this right and it will help you increase the number of sales you make, across your entire store.

Marketing to ourselves

When I visit a typical, independent retail store, what I usually find is that the marketing of products in-store, is optimized by the storeowner. He or she positions their merchandise and organizes shelf displays and window displays, in a way that would motivate the storeowner to buy, if he or she was the customer.

The challenge with that approach is obvious: The storeowner is not the customer. We call this approach, **marketing to yourself**.

The challenge with **marketing** to ourselves, is that we're not **selling** to ourselves. What's needed is for everything to be optimized, so that it is as attractive and motivating as possible for our customers.

Customer focused marketing

When you look at the big, successful retailers you will find they adopt a very different approach. Everything within their stores is optimized, based around what is most compelling to their customers.

This is the approach I'm going to suggest you consider, in order to get the very best sales results.

Where to begin? Here are two great places to start.

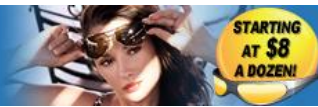


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Firstly, put your merchandise where customers expect it to be

When customers take longer to find their purchase than you would expect, pay attention to the first place they look. If you notice that people often look in the same [wrong] place, for a product that you have situated in a different part of the store, consider moving it where your customers expect to find it.

Why?

Because by making products easier to find, you get them in front of a prospective customer quicker... when they are most eager to buy.

You will also be arranging your stock, in a way that's optimized for the customer, which means optimized for maximum sales. Yes, this process takes time, however, by testing and measuring the changes you make, it's possible to see significant improvements.

Secondly, ask your customers for feedback

This is extremely important. Never miss an opportunity to talk to your customers, so you can learn what they want from you.

Retailers will often invest in certain stock items because they think, if they were the customer, that's what they would want to buy. This is another example of marketing to yourself. Stock needs to be driven by the wants of the customer if you want it to sell.

Also, retailers will often miss something, which really bugs their customers. I recall working on this with a retailer, who always played music when the store was open. He was a huge jazz fan. I suggested he asked his customers what they thought of the music. The vast majority said they either disliked it or worse, it irritated them to the point where they spent as little time in the store as possible.

That's an expensive mistake, if you want people to browse your merchandise and make additional purchases!

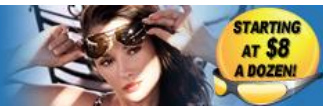


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It turned out that the retailer had limited hearing and wasn't aware the music was so loud. By switching to a local radio station and adjusting the volume, he created a far better customer experience.

The payback

By finding out exactly what customers really want, you can make sure that what you're selling is in line with what your customers want to buy. This is a great way to:

- Improve your purchasing
- Move merchandise faster
- ... and improve your cash flow!

You will be amazed at the results that can be achieved, when your in-store marketing is developed around the way your customers want to buy things.

The lesson here

Unless we want to limit our sales, to customers who are very like ourselves, we need to stop marketing to ourselves.

Stock should be positioned in the most optimized locations within the store – based on where the customer expects it to be.

Speak with customers. Listen to their suggestions. Sell them what they want to buy and/or provide.



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In-store Sales

A human approach to retail success

In recent years, one of the biggest threats to traditional retailers has been the surge in online retailers. Lower overheads and fully automated systems have allowed some online retailers, to compete in a way that's hard for traditional retailers to match.

Thankfully, you have some powerful advantages over the Internet retailers. So, let's look at how you can increase sales, by playing to your strengths.

Note: Whilst what I am about to share with you has a huge, positive impact, it's maybe the easiest tip I have ever shared. I was prompted to write about this, after an experience I had recently when visiting a local, independent store.

“Hi Jim!”

I needed a new saddlebag (or pannier) for my mountain bike. So, while I was in town I went into an independent cycle store and started to look around. I knew the style and size I wanted and was trying to find it.

As I looked around, I made eye contact with the guy who owns the store. As I did, he welcomed me by saying, “*Hi Jim!*” I don't use the store very often and I was really impressed that he remembered my name.

Obviously, once he'd greeted me by my name, it started a whole conversation, which would not have happened had he'd not used my name.

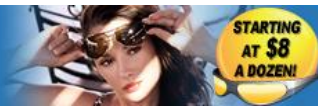
Humanizing business is good for business!

Here's the thing: Initially, the conversation had little to do with me buying anything, but it had everything to do with building a relationship with me, the customer.





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As a result, I asked him where his panniers were and he showed me. However, because we were engaged in a general conversation, it was easy for me to ask his advice on replacing my bike's tires. I wanted to know what were the most puncture-resistant. These tires were something I wasn't looking to buy yesterday, but they were in stock and I had my car with me, so it would be easy to get them home. So, I bought them too.

Around 10 minutes and \$200 later, I left the store. Moreover, I left the store with a great customer experience story to tell my friends. That's a level of connection and customer care that simply is not available online.

Bonus tip: It's also a great example of how to increase the profitability of customers. When you develop a non-pushy conversation with a customer, it's easier for you to uncover other requirements they have. Remember: The customer may think that they have bought everything from you, which you stock and they need. You, on the other hand, know your stock. By finding out more about their needs, you can create highly profitable additional sales and render a better service to your customer too. Win – win!

A closer look at what happened there

By starting my customer experience, with the storeowner welcoming me by my name, a number of things happened:

- 1. It humanized my shopping experience.** I immediately felt a lot more comfortable, which is extremely valuable to a retailer. When customers feel at ease, they feel safer. When the customer feels safe, their natural “buyer resistance” is lower. This leads to a more enjoyable experience for the customer and allows the retailer to speak to the customer, without the usual barriers. Natural conversations are then allowed to develop, creating the kind of relationship, which customers come back for again and again.
- 2. It provided me with something I can't get online.** This is huge! No matter how smart online stores are at using software to “greet” you with your name, it's still just a

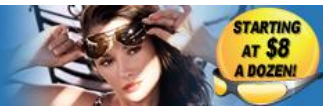


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computer. It's nothing like as powerful as making eye-to-eye contact with a real person, who greets you with your name.

- 3. It opened a channel of comfortable communication.** In other words, the storeowner was able to learn a little about me and my needs, but in an effortless, non-pushy way. We were just talking about bikes, which is something we're both passionate about.

All this started, because of something as basic as a storeowner remembering my name. Those 2 small words he greeted me with, transformed a customer experience AND increased what I spent in the store, by around \$170.

It's worth remembering that some of the most valuable gains we can make in retail sales, come when we do the simple things, correctly. Business is all about people, so the more we can humanize the shopping experience, the better it is for the customer and the retailer.

The lesson here

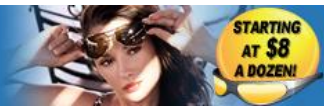
Thankfully for traditional retailers, business is all about people. This is one major area, where Internet based retailers can't compete with traditional retail stores.

You get to speak with customers face-to-face. You get to have conversations with them, which helps you connect with them. That's exactly what the retailer did in the earlier example. Play to your strengths and deliver a great, personal customer experience.



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In-store Sales

Standing in line and optimizing the experience

No one likes to stand in line. You don't like it. I don't like it and your customers don't like it.

However, it's possible for retailers to transform standing in line into a powerful retail sales opportunity. That's what I'd like to share with you here.

In line opportunity

Think about it: By the time customers bring their purchases to the checkout, they have already walked around the store and may have spent some time trying to find exactly what they need. The last thing they then want, is to be left waiting in line for too long.

A great example of how to get this process right, is Starbucks. Whilst they are a multinational business with coffee shops all over the world, there are a few lessons smaller retailers can learn and benefit from.

Lessons from Starbucks

Though you may not be a fan of Starbucks' coffee, the way they manage to serve people during the busiest times of the day is extremely effective. Given that the nature of a busy retail store means there will often be a number of people in line ahead of you, what Starbucks have done is to make the experience as swift and profitable as possible.

Not only has Starbucks optimized the standing in line experience, they have utilized it so that the line is boosting their profits.

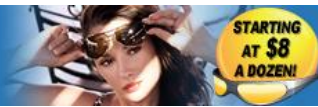
Here are some ideas and lessons from the coffee giant.

More hands on deck





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The first thing you'll notice when Starbucks is busy, is that there are always plenty of people serving. The store manager will pull baristas from other duties, to make sure there are enough people to cope.

Fast, effective cash registers

The next thing you may notice is that Starbucks invest in cash registers or EPOS systems, which are designed to work smart and fast. We all know how annoying it is when we're waiting to get served and the person operating the cash register is taking a long time, because there are so many things to press in order to process a simple payment.

Clear signs

Starbucks also use clear signage, in order to make it extremely clear where you need to go in order to pay.

Depending on the size of a retail store, it can often be confusing to find exactly where the checkout is. I was in an independent coffee shop recently, which had two different lines of people waiting to be served, with one line in completely the wrong place. This led to some unpleasantness, as people who stood in the wrong line realized they were now behind others, who arrived later but stood in the correct line.

Impulse purchases at your check out

Finally, Starbucks are very good at placing so-called "impulse purchases", so they are right next to customers who are standing in line. I watched this working beautifully earlier today. Of the 6 people in front of me, 5 made a purchase from the impulse buys next to them. These impulse purchase items are typically low to medium cost items that are highly profitable.

This is also a great spot to place items that you want to move quickly—older stock or stock that's time sensitive [Halloween candy, etc.]

The lesson

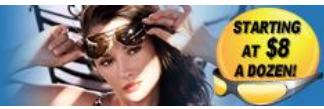


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There are actually quite a few lessons here.

Make sure that whenever possible, you get additional staff serving when there's a long line. Also, consider how many of your team are currently able or authorized to use the cash register. Ask yourself if it's worth training more people, so that you have that extra cover when you need it.

Whilst a good quality, efficient cash register isn't cheap, it can be a great investment. Depending on what you currently use, you could find that you save a lot of time and get even better reporting for stock control, etc.

Make it clear exactly where you want people to pay. This helps avoid confusion and ensures people can move through your store as easily as possible. This becomes very useful during periods when you're very busy.

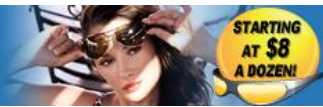
It makes sense, whenever possible, to have impulse purchases close to the cash register. Whenever possible, these should be alongside the space where people stand in line – rather than stacked at the cash register. That way, customers spend more time standing next to the items, rather than seeing them only when they are at the very front of the line.

Now let's look at section 2 of this guide: External signage and display.



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External signage and display

Getting the most from your store sign

It always amazes me how little is written about the signs we have outside retail stores. It's a really important marketing subject. Think about it... the sign outside your store is the most visible opportunity you have as a retailer, to capture the attention of customers.

So, in this section I am going to share lots of ideas, to help you optimize your store sign, so you get the very best results from it.

Let's talk about color

One of the most important things you need to get right with a store sign, is the color or colors you use. It's important to get the correct contrasting colors, so that the message on the sign stands out.

The easiest color combination for people to read is black text on a white background. However, that isn't the color combination that stands out the most. It's also not necessarily the right color combination for your business.

Allow me to explain

Studies have confirmed what psychologists have known for years... that color has a significant impact on the way we feel.

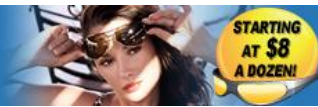
For example:

1. Blue is seen as soothing. A clear blue sky or the crystal blue waters of a lake make us feel relaxed.
2. Red is a color we're drawn to. It catches the eye and we're programmed to notice it. Red is associated with physical attraction, whether that's a person's red lips or their face when they blush. Red is also associated with blood, something we're instinctively alerted to notice.
3. Yellow is associated with fun and happiness. It's the lightest hue in the color spectrum. From when we're kids painting a





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big yellow sun in our first pictures, to the yellow colors that are included on almost every kids toy, yellow makes us feel happy.

There's a story behind pretty much every color. The key thing to know is that it pays to give consideration to the colors on your store sign. So, how can selecting the right colors help you create a sign, which attracts people's attention?

How McDonald's use color

A great example of this comes from one of the most successful retail signs in the world -- McDonald's. They have embraced the fun factor behind the yellow color and matched it with a red background; red being an attractive color we're drawn to. The combination works by attracting our attention and then making us feel happy

That isn't an accident. McDonald's is the home of the world's best-known clown: Ronald McDonald. They sell so-called Happy Meals. Kids can have parties there. Fun, fun, fun. You may not like the signage, the colors used or their food. However, it's proven to be very effective for the fast food giant.

So, think about the colors you use on your store sign. Make sure they stand out and that the message is clean, clear and super-easy for customers to see.

Illuminated store signs

Have you noticed that big retailers almost always go for an illuminated store sign? They do this, because it helps them stand out in low light conditions, bad weather and at night. However, the decision to get one is not as clear-cut as it seems.

There's often a significant investment attached to installing an illuminated sign. They can cost thousands. Then you need to factor in the cost of maintaining the sign when lights need replacing – plus the electricity cost.

Then, depending on where your store is located, there could be local regulations regarding the use of illuminated store signs.

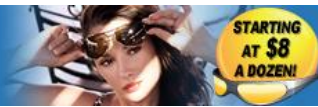


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Certain areas allow them, but they need to be within strict confines. This often reduces the effectiveness of the sign.

In short, you need to weigh up the potential additional custom you get from having the sign illuminated, with the investment required. It can be very effective, but it depends a great deal on where your store is located, plus whether you're open for business when it's dark.

Clarity is King

The whole point of a store sign is for it to be attractive, clear and easy to read. There's no point attracting people's attention with the color you use and maybe the use of a illuminated sign, if your sign isn't clear enough for people to immediately know what you do.

When someone spots a sign, you only have his or her attention for a very short period of time. During this window of opportunity, you need to get the key message across as quickly and clearly as possible.

There are 2 elements when it comes to the clarity of a store sign:

1. The font you use. The font needs to be easy to read, rather than complex. The font also needs to be large enough for people to see from across the street.
2. The clarity of your message. Use as few words as possible. The job of the sign is to let prospective customers know what type of store you have. A drug store sign doesn't need to list half a dozen things it sells. When you're out looking for a drug store, you know what to expect. The key job of that sign is to tell you that you've found a drug store.

So, when it comes to creating a great sign for your store, keep it as clean and clear as you can.

The lesson here

Take your store sign seriously. Think about your current sign. Ask yourself if it's working for you. Is it capturing people's attention and attracting them to your store... or not?

Depending on your location there could be thousands of people passing your store every day. Even a tiny percentage increase in



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the effectiveness of your sign, could lead to a significant increase in customers into your store.



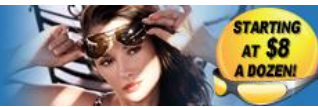
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External signage and display

How to get the most from your window display

It's hard to overstate how important a window display can be, when it comes to attracting customers.

For example, did you know that Andy Warhol was hired by some leading stores, to create their window displays? Well, he was and trust me, this was done as a commercial investment. The biggest retailers are obsessed with optimizing everything. And window displays are one area, where the retailer can see immediate, measurable results.

Understanding the power of your window display

In short, your window display can be one of the best marketing assets a retailer has.

It provides you with a way to promote key items of merchandise, right in front of a prospective customer. Hundreds or maybe thousands of prospective customers, to be exact.

So, here are some ideas to help you get the very best results from your display

Less is more

When it comes to window displays, less is more. Think of it like this: If you had just one item in your window display, that item would have 100% of the attention, of people looking at the display. If you then added a second item, each item in the display would have 50% of people's attention.

With 30 items on display, each one is having attention distracted from it, by the other 29 items. The key here is not to overcrowd the display with too many things. Put everything in the display that needs to be there, but nothing else. Remember, you can change the display to focus on different merchandise whenever you wish.

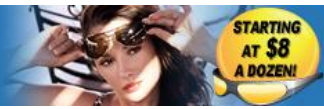


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This leads nicely into the next tip.

Keep your display alive

When someone looks at your window display over a period of a couple of weeks and nothing has changed, they are inclined to start ignoring it. On the other hand, when someone looks at your display and they notice it changes, there is a good reason for them to keep checking it out.

Whilst it takes a little time and effort to work on improving your display and keeping it fresh, it's worth it.

The shop window needs to be really clean

Why? Because not only will your merchandise look better and be more visible behind a clear window, stains tend to attract people's attention. In many instances, that window and the display will form the first impression a prospective customer will have of your business.

Make that first impression as positive as possible and keep them focused on your stock.

Get your lighting right

The lighting you use in your window display should enhance the look of your merchandise. It should make it easy for prospective customers to see the detail of the merchandise.

Lighting can also be used to direct people's attention to certain areas of your display. This is especially useful, if you are looking to promote a particular product line. Many retailers are too budget conscious with their lighting.

Get the best lighting you can afford. It will repay the investment, if you use it correctly.

Find your sweet spot

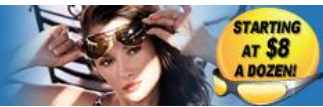


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Every window display has a sweet spot. This is the area of your display, which people look at first. Often, it is a central part of the display, but it can be almost anywhere, depending on the layout of your storefront.

Spend a little time observing where people look first, when they see your window. Then try placing the merchandise you most want to sell, in that sweet spot.

The lesson here

Your window display can be the most profitable area of your store. Constantly look for ways to optimize it. Each time you make an adjustment to the display, monitor the feedback. Make no mistake, this overlooked area of retail marketing can produce amazing results, if you give it the time and attention it deserves.

**OK, now let's look at section number 3 of this guide:
Customer experience.**



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Customer experience

Customer experience: The key to a great retail business

Why do some retailers grow super-successful businesses via word of mouth, whilst others really struggle to attract customers?

A big part of the answer can be found in something known as Customer Experience.

Why should you be interested in your Customer Experience?

In short, it makes sound business sense. It works like this: If a customer finds the experience of visiting your store remarkable enough, they are massively more likely to buy from you. However, that's not all. They are also far, far more likely to tell their friends.

This is vastly more important to you and your business today, than ever before.

Why?

Simple. Just a few years ago, a delighted customer would tell an average of 7 people when they received a remarkable customer experience. Today, everything has changed. Thanks to social networks like Facebook and Twitter, a happy customer can tell dozens, hundreds or even thousands of people how great your store is!

Just think about that for a moment...

Customer Experience is more than customer service

As I mentioned at the start of this section, whereas customer service focuses on the way a customer is served, Customer Experience covers their entire experience of you and your store, including customer service. It covers everything from your window display, advertising and lighting, to your customer service, the way

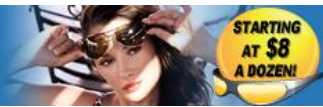


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you answer the phone to them and the promotions you offer and signage you use.

In other words, Customer Experience is the whole experience a person has with your business.

Another massive benefit of developing a remarkable Customer Experience, is that it encourages people to keep returning to your store. By retaining more of your customers, you build a stronger, more loyal customer base and a stronger business. This is one of the cornerstones of avoiding the dreaded 'feast and famine' trap!

How to make this work for you and your business

The best place to start, is to look at your business through the eyes of a prospective customer.

Here are just a small number of areas for you to review and, if needed, improve.

Assess the external impact of your store:

- How remarkable is your window display? Make sure your main items are easy to see and that the display isn't cluttered.
- Do you have a large, clear 'come in, we're open!' sign to greet people? If not, you will be amazed what can happen when you add a highly visible 'come in, we're open!' sign.
- Is the exterior of your store in good condition? This may sound obvious, but people are far less likely to enter a store if it looks untidy from the outside.

Assess the impact you create when a prospective customer enters your store:

- Is your lighting nice and clear, too bright or too dark? Good quality lighting helps prospective customers find what they want. It also creates a better atmosphere, than a store that's too dark or too dazzlingly bright.
- Are your shelves stocked, so that your main items are at eye-level and easy to find? The easier it is for prospective



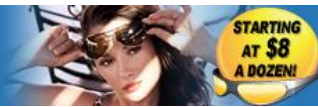
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customers to see and reach your stock, the more you will sell.

- What fragrances / smells greet people when they enter your store? Smells such as coffee and vanilla are known to attract people and make them feel relaxed.
- Is there music playing? If so, who decides if this is the right kind of music and the correct volume? If you use music, make sure it's the kind of thing that the majority of your customers will like.
- Is the temperature of your store set at a comfortable level? You want people to feel comfortable when visiting your store. If they are too hot or too cold, many will leave before buying anything.

Consider the way you look after prospective customers:

- Do prospective customers get a chance to come inside and start looking for what they want? Some salespeople confront people within seconds of entering the store, asking if they can help. This may feel like great customer service to the salespeople, but prospective customers often find it intimidating or needy. Make eye contact, greet people, but wait until they have had a chance to look around before you offer to help.
- Are customers offered help, to get heavy purchases to their vehicle?

That really is just a quick overview of a few things to consider, which can significantly improve the experience you give your customers.

Learn from what already works

One of the best ways to build a remarkable Customer Experience, is to find what already works... then adapt it to your own store.

Allow me to explain.

Think about the stores you have used in the past, which you were so impressed by that you told your friends. Preferably, these should be stores that are in a different marketplace to your own.



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What you are looking for, are elements of their Customer Experience, which you can adapt and apply to your own business.

Something that is commonly used to delight customers in one area of retail, is often rare or non-existent in another. Just imagine the competitive advantage you could gain, if you're the only person in your retail sector offering that additional, valuable Customer Experience.

The lesson here

Your customers are more powerful than ever before. Facebook, Twitter and other social networks have made it easy for them to tell hundreds or thousands of people when something delights them. Conversely, they have just as loud a voice when a retail experience lets them down.

Work on building the best experience possible for your customers, so that they feel motivated to tell their friends how great your store is.



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Customer experience

Why you should create an approachable, helpful retail sales experience

One of the oldest sayings in sales is that people buy people. In other words, if somebody is going to make a purchase, they are more likely to make that purchase, from a person they like and trust.

This is very obvious in some areas of business. For example, if somebody wants to buy a beer, so long as it's the same brand of beer, it should taste pretty similar wherever you buy it. What makes somebody choose to buy it in one bar, rather than another, is often the relationship we have with the bartender and the atmosphere this creates.

So, how do customers feel about you and your business?

I'm not talking here only about your repeat customers, but those people who came into your store today and met you for the first time. What kind of an impression did you create with them?

The most successful retail businesses create an atmosphere, which customers find approachable and helpful.

Here's why being approachable and helpful is so important for you and your business.

Being approachable

It's really important that the people who enter your store, feel comfortable about approaching you with a question. As you know, this is not always the case. We have all visited stores where the people working there looked bored or disinterested. As a result, we feel less comfortable asking questions... questions that could have led to us making a purchase.

It really doesn't take much to make customers feel comfortable approaching us. Simply by making eye contact with them, with a

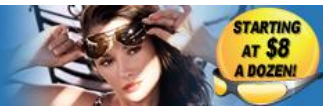


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friendly smile, and saying “good morning” or “good afternoon”, you show that person recognition. You also let that person know you are approachable and happy to help.

They are now massively more likely to tell you what they need and help you find the best product for them.

Being helpful

There is often a misunderstanding, when you look at the different ways a retailer and the customer view the buying process.

People love to buy things, but they hate being sold to. The retailers who misunderstand this and try to sell to customers, leave money on the table every day.

What the most successful retailers have found, is that when a customer enters the store, what the customer is looking for is assistance in making the best buying decision possible.

In other words, the customer is looking to somebody to help them, rather than sell them.

This is why it's so important to adopt a helpful approach, where the customer can see you are trying to be useful, rather than just trying to make a sale that benefits you.

Building better connections with your customers and creating a better atmosphere for them, can increase your profits, encourage customer loyalty and motivate customers to tell their friends about you.

The lesson here

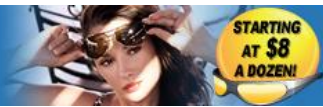
Customers are massively more inclined to speak to approachable store workers. These conversations can lead to additional sales and they allow you to build a relationship with customers. This helps establish the trust that customers value so highly.

Always look for an opportunity to establish eye-contact and when you do, a warm smile can be a powerful ice breaker. Remember, it's not enough for you to be approachable and willing to help — the customer needs to sense that from you, first.



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Customer experience

How to maximize sales and referrals from everyone who visits your store

In their eagerness to generate sales, many retailers make a mistake, which actually loses them money and turns prospective customers away.

Here's how to avoid making the same mistake, plus some tips on how to increase sales, using a far better approach.

How can I help you?

It happens all the time: You have just walked into a store and before you have had a chance to see or do anything, an over eager person confronts you and asks you *"how can I help you?"* Your initial thought is that the best way they could help, is to get out of your face!

Here's the thing: Unless the customer is in an real hurry, confronting them the moment they walk into your store asking how you can help, is a really bad move.

Here's why.

People like to make purchases **THEIR** way

Even if you have the right product, at the right price, you stand a good chance of losing the sale if you confront the potential customer before they are ready. As I've mentioned previously, the most successful retailers know that a store's atmosphere is a key reason why people buy from you and keep coming back.

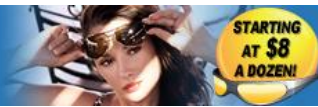
Yes, make eye contact immediately and smile. Just make sure you give them a chance to start looking around for themselves... before you ask how you can be of service to them.

People often go to the store for 1 item and buy 5





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How many times have you gone to the store for something specific, only to find you have bought a number of additional things? You didn't head for the store looking for those additional purchases... **you bought them as you walked around the store looking at the products on offer.**

By confronting a customer the moment they arrive at your store asking how you can help, the customer will tell you what they are looking for. You then show them where it is and in many cases, they will pay for it and leave.

By pressing them to tell you what they came to the store for, that's all they focus on. You can lose a fortune in additional sales like that!

Relationships matter

One of the reasons we use and recommend certain stores, is the relationship we have with the people there. Polite, approachable and helpful store staff, make visiting a store an enjoyable experience. As we get to know and trust the people there, we buy with confidence and tell our friends how great the store is.

IMPORTANT: By asking customers how you can help them the moment they arrive, the subtext is that you are rushing them. That you want them to quickly make their purchase and leave. Not a smart move.

Getting the balance right is simple

It's extremely easy to get the balance right, between ensuring the customer knows you're happy to help and making them feel like you're rushing them to make a purchase.

It starts with timing

As I mentioned earlier, greet them with a smile immediately, but give them time to get into the store and have a look around. Keep an eye on them and if they look puzzled, seem unable to find something or have been looking around for too long, walk over with a smile, before asking if there's anything you can help them with.



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That approach is friendly, professional and massively more likely to ensure you get the maximum sale income from each customer. **It also creates a less pressurized environment for customers, which improves the way they will feel about using your store and recommending your store to their friends.**

Bonus: It also gives them space to see what stock lines you carry, so they know where to come **the next time** they need those items!

The lesson here

Whilst it may be tempting to ask potential customers how you can help them the moment they enter the store, in the vast majority of cases, it's a bad idea.

It rushes customers, making them feel unwelcome. It also gives them less time to stumble upon other purchases, thus lowering the average customer spend.

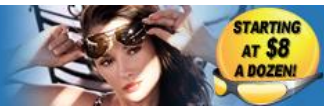


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Customer experience

The smartest way to outsmart your online and offline competitors

As I have mentioned previously, traditional retail stores have a number of advantages over cheaper Internet retailers.

One major advantage, is the value customers place on face-to-face advice. No matter how great a website is, it can't compete with the human interaction that happens when 2 or more people connect.

Customers love to see a product and then have the option to ask you, the retailer, any specific questions they have. **As online retailers continue their race to the bottom, by trying to be cheaper than their already cheap competitors, quality becomes an issue.**

Even if a product is cheaper online, in many cases the customer is willing to pay a little extra for the peace of mind that comes from being able to see the product in good condition.

The power of reciprocity

There's also a powerful persuasion principle called reciprocity, which comes into play when we help a customer.

Reciprocity is the name given to the feeling we have, when we want to do something for a person, because they already done something for us. By offering advice and being as helpful as you can be, it's harder for the prospective customer to walk away.

No, this principle does not work on everyone, but it works extremely well on many people.

It's not only the online retailers you can win against

This approach allows you to not only gain a competitive advantage over the online retailers, but also the traditional retailers who are less able to answer specific, customer questions.

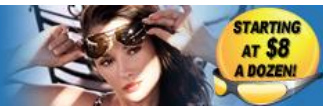


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Of course, in order to benefit from this, you need to invest some time learning as much as you can about the products you sell. If you do, you will be able to provide the answers that customers value and also position yourself in their minds as the go-to person, when they need advice on the type of products you stock.

No need to know everything

Obviously, there's no need to be an expert on every product line. What I'm talking about here is spending a little time learning the most relevant things.

As I was invited to write this for you by my friends at CTS Wholesale Sunglasses, I will give you an example based on sunglasses.

Here's an example

If you stocked sunglasses with polarized lenses, a common question from customers would be;

“What's the difference between polarized sunglasses and regular, tinted sunglasses?”

By knowing the core difference, you would be able to give the prospective customer the advice he or she needed, in order to make the purchase. Letting them know that polarized lenses filter out horizontal light, which causes glare, whilst allowing vertical light in, which makes things clearer and brighter, you make it easy for them to decide if polarized sunglasses are what they want. If you also explained that polarized lenses were ideal for fishing and water based sports, you'd give them even more reasons to buy a pair!

Now consider this: If the prospective customer asked you that same question and you weren't sure exactly what polarized sunglasses did, you'd probably lose the sale. By knowing the answer, you not only stand a great chance of making the sale, you also position yourself in the customer's mind as an informed, helpful provider.



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This makes them massively more likely to recommend you to their friends and to return to your store when they next need something, which you provide.

The lesson here

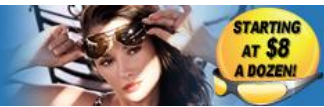
Invest the time required to learn a little more about your main stock items. By being better able to answer customer's questions, you make it easier for customers to make an informed purchasing decision.

You also get to benefit from the power of reciprocity.



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Customer experience

The marketing power of clarity

One of the oldest and most accurate saying's in marketing is this:
"A confused mind always says NO!"

What this means to retailers is simple. If you want people to see your marketing and then make a purchasing decision, they have to be clear on precisely what you're saying.

Why is clarity such a big deal?

By default, if someone asks us to make a decision, especially one involving money, before we have all the information we need, we say NO. We either say no to whatever they ask or we say no to making the decision itself. This makes perfect sense. Rather than risk making a bad or costly decision, it's generally safer just to reject the marketing offer.

In short: Marketing that lacks clarity will lose you potential sales.

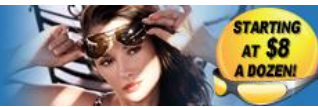
Here are 3 powerful, proven tips, to help you create clear, compelling marketing!

1. Use as few words as possible

The fewer words you use, the easier it is to avoid confusion. Many marketing messages and advertisements fail, purely because the retailer used 500 words to say something, which could have been said more effectively, in 100 words. So when you write an ad, a marketing email or the wording for a flyer, etc., look to keep it as short as possible.

A useful tip here, is to write an initial draft of your marketing message. Then, look for words, phrases or sentences, which add bulk rather than meaning to your actual message. These are what professional copywriters call Redundant Words. The key here is to keep everything that needs to be kept, but nothing else.





By the way, a great example of how powerful a message can be, when using just a small number of words, came from Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway once wrote a story, which contained only 6 words. Even so, the story resonated far deeper with some people, than many 500 page books.

Here it is: “For sale. Baby shoes... never worn.”

2. Use their language, not yours

Avoid using buzzwords or industry terms when marketing to the general public. Instead, use the same kind of language they use. This will vary from retailer to retailer depending on the type of customers you want to attract.

Also, be mindful of regional variations, as words and phrases often have different meanings in different States. For example, an advertisement that works great for a store in Austin, Texas, may have very different results when used to advertise their store in Brooklyn.

Pay close attention to what your customers say and then match your messages as closely as possible, to the way they prefer to communicate.

3. Give clear, specific requests

One of the finest ways to ensure your messages are clear is to be as specific as you can.

For example -- Think about the following 2 sentences:

1. “Our sale starts next week, don’t miss out!”
2. “Our sale starts on Monday, August 7th at 9:30am – be there!”

The first sentence provides quite vague information (what day and what time?) and gives a vague statement, (“don’t miss out”).

The second sentence provides very clear information (the date and time) and a direct request (“be there!”). This is easier for people to connect with and understand.





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The lesson here

Clarity sells. Clear, specific marketing messages are easy for your customers and prospective customers to understand and act on.

Take time to go through all your marketing material, from; flyers, website content and marketing emails, to print ads and radio ads. Look for ways to clarify your marketing, by removing buzzwords, redundant words and adding clear, direct requests.

Coming up next, section 4 of this marketing guide: Email marketing



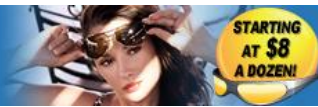
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Email Marketing

How to make massively more sales, using email marketing: Part 1

Imagine having the ability to click a button and get your marketing message in front of hundreds or thousands of interested people. Now, imagine being able to do this without spending a dime on advertising.

It may sound too good to be true, but that's exactly what email marketing can do for your business, so long as you do the right things correctly.

I'm referring to the value of building an email marketing list, from people who visit your store and / or website. Many business owners have found this to be the most effective form of marketing they have ever used.

Permission is the key

If you want to get the most from your email marketing, you need to get permission to email the people on your list. Just because someone gives you their business card, doesn't mean they have given you permission to add their email address to your marketing list.

Instead of just adding people to your list, try this: Ask customers if they would like to receive occasional emails from you, with special offers and advance notice of new stock items. If they say yes, add them.

These people have just given you permission to contact them. They will welcome your emails and are massively more likely to read them. Professional marketers call email marketing lists a Permission Marketing Asset. The value is in the *permission*.

This leads on nicely to the next tip.

Build your list... don't buy it!

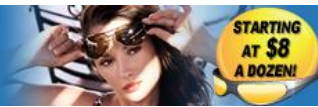


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It may seem easier to just buy an email marketing list, rather than build one. However, there are 3 really good reasons not to buy your list:

1. The people on the list have no relationship with you or your business. You can't even be sure they have a requirement for your products.
2. Although these lists are sold as "opt in lists", none of the people on that list have given you permission to email them. Your email will be regarded as spam and you will be seen as a spammer. This is why permission is so important.
3. The people on these lists have had their email address sold to thousands of other businesses. As a result, they get deluged with spam email. So, they either set up a strong junk mail filter, allowing only white-list emails through (emails from people they know) or they will have abandoned the email address completely. As a result, you may think your email marketing messages are reaching 10,000 people, when few if any people will actually see them.

So, build your email marketing list and shoot for quality not quantity. A marketing list, with 50 people who asked to be on the list, will be of more value to you, than a bought list, with 5000 strangers who have no idea why you're spamming them.

Make your marketing emails more than an advertisement

Whilst it may feel tempting to just email people a list of offers and deals, it's not the best way to get the most from your email marketing.

Humanize your emails, with news about your business, your industry or the area where your store is. This helps people connect with you and makes them feel like you're talking to them, rather than just selling to them.

Then, once you have covered the news part, you can tell them about the products, deals and offers you have.

How to grow a great list, as quickly as possible

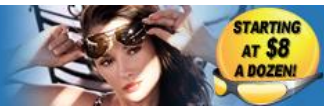


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Back in 2008, I had 45000 people reading my marketing newsletter. One of the things that helped me build that list, was something I added to the end of every newsletter. Here's what it said:

"If you found this newsletter useful, please share it with your friends. If you have had this newsletter sent to you by a friend, click here to receive your own, regular copy."

What that did was remind people to share the newsletter with their contacts. Then, it gave their contacts an easy way to get on my list. When they clicked the "click here" link, it took them to a page on my site, where they could add themselves to the list.

That simple addition to the bottom of every email, was pivotal to the growth of my list and the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which that list generated for my business.

The lesson here

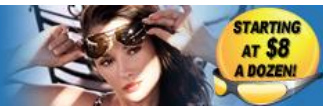
Never underestimate the power or value of an email marketing list, which you have built and have permission to use. By investing the time required to build a list and write useful marketing emails, you can boost sales and profits.

Email marketing is one of the most powerful marketing tools on the planet. It makes no sense to miss out.



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Email Marketing

How to make massively more sales, using email marketing – Part 2

In part 1 of this 2-part email marketing guide, I gave some of the main benefits of email marketing. I also shared some tips, on how to build a great list. Here in part 2, I want to show you how to get better and better results with each mailing you do. **(I strongly recommend you read part 1 before you continue.)**

How to improve your email marketing results, time after time!

All successful, professional marketing has something in common: It's based on a process of testing and measuring. Email marketing is no exception!

Here's how it works.

Let's assume you have just started email marketing and you have sent your first marketing email to your list.

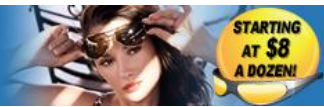
You would begin by measuring the feedback, for example, how many sales, sales leads, new subscribers or visitors to your store it generated, etc.

After your first email marketing has been sent and it's results have been measured, we start the process of improving.

It looks like this:

- You send the second piece of email marketing, but change one element -- let's say you change the title or subject line of the email.
- You then measure the feedback, with the new title.
- If it gets better results than the original title, you keep the title for the next email.
- You then change a different element of the next marketing email and measure that in the same way.





- If you make a change and the results are worse, you focus on improving that element until it's as effective as you can make it.

Through a process of testing (trying new elements) and measuring your feedback, you can consistently improve your email marketing results.

Only change 1 element at a time

This is really important: Only change 1 element of your email marketing at a time. If you change more than 1 thing at a time, it's hard to know what worked and what didn't.

What often happens when you make simultaneous changes, is that one great change is hidden by a poorly performing change.

For example, if you simultaneously change the title of the email and also change the time of day you send it, you may see similar results to your previous email and assume nothing improved.

So, a GREAT new title, which would have improved your results massively, can be wasted, because you sent the email on the worst hour of the day, and very few people opened it. Testing those elements individually, would have allowed you to immediately spot that great title.

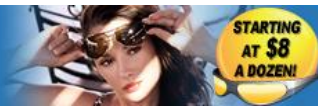
What elements should you test and measure?

You should test and measure everything. That's the only way to fully optimize your email marketing.

Here are some of the main areas to focus on:

- The title or subject line. Certain words and phrases work far better than others. Experiment with compelling titles and titles that make the reader curious... curious enough to open your email.
 - Avoid using all capital letters, exclamation marks and percentage signs. These are often blocked by junk mail filters, because spammers use them.





- The length of the email. Most marketing emails are far too long. The fewer words you use, the better the chance your readers will read everything.
- The font style and size.
- The length of your paragraphs. Shorter paragraphs tend to do better because they are easier to read.
- The day you send your emails out. This can make a big difference to your results.
- The time of day you send your emails out. This is huge. I have recently seen a 175% improvement in email open rates, by getting the time just right.

Use a professional email distribution provider

You may start by sending your marketing emails yourself. However, it's worth finding a professional email-marketing provider. These guys know how to get your emails delivered, reliably. Many of these services are free of charge, until your list reaches a few hundred.

Professional email marketing providers also provide you with statistics on how many of your emails were opened, when they were opened etc.

Those are just some of the areas, which you can test and measure in order to improve your email marketing results. **Incidentally, that same test and measure approach applies to all your marketing – not just email!**

The lesson here

Email marketing has huge potential. However, for you to get the best results from it, you need to get it right.

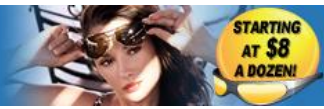
Testing and measuring your email marketing is essential. This is the only way to improve its effectiveness and for you to get the volume of sales possible.

Remember that the value of your email marketing is based on your list. Look after your readers. Don't send them too many emails and try to make your emails as valuable to them as possible.





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If you spend the time required to get the balance right, it's amazing what you can achieve.

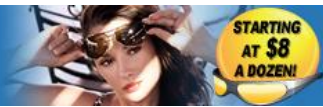
Now let's take a look at section 5 of this guide: General marketing.



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General Marketing

How to get the very best value from your wholesalers

As this free retail marketing ebook has been sponsored by a wholesale company, it seems appropriate to look at the marketing value of a good wholesaler.

The thing about value

We have all heard that saying, that if something seems too good to be true, it usually is. However, when it comes to retail, we find many store owners are prepared to go for the cheapest wholesaler or supplier.

The most successful retailers tend to take a very different approach. This successful approach is what I want to share with you here.

4 Core areas of retail success

There are many elements required for retail success. Right now, I'd like to focus on the 4 core areas, where the most successful retailers are extremely strong.

It looks like this:

1. They have a great team of salespeople.
2. They have effective marketing.
3. They have valuable customers, who buy from them and recommend them.
4. **They also have great suppliers who, partner with them.**

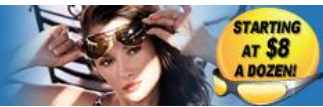
Most retailers get the first 2 elements right

They work hard on building a great team and they invest in marketing. However, many retailers end up letting their customers down, because of the shoddy service they receive from the cheap or bargain basement suppliers they rely on. They want the best for





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their customers, but fail to get the backup they need from their wholesalers.

By doing this, they fail on the 2 of those 4 core areas of retail success.

Paying the real price

What the most successful retailers have discovered, is that there are usually significant, hidden costs attached, when buying from the cheapest suppliers.

Here are just a small number of the most common problems, which can cost retailers dearly:

- Low quality merchandise.
- Merchandise that is not as advertised.
- Incomplete orders / missing parts.
- Unreliable delivery times.
- Poor or non-existent customer service.
- Missing paperwork.
- Unexpected price increases.
- Lack of transparency.
- Broken fulfillment promises.

The list goes on.

Yes, by keeping your costs low you can improve your profit margins. This makes those super-cheap wholesale prices seem attractive. However, for this to work, it presupposes that the price you were quoted is the actual price you pay.

As you start to encounter problems, such as those mentioned above, any gains you make from the low prices can be more than wiped out. Then there are the other costs, such as the cost of disappointing your customers, because a cheap supplier let you down. Let's not forget all that added stress, too.

A better value alternative

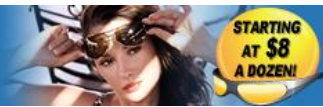


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I'm not suggesting you ignore great deals. Finding the best value deal is an essential part of building a great retail business.

What I am suggesting, is that there is a world of difference between something that is cheap and something that offers you great value.

Value is about the whole package:

- The merchandise.
- The quality.
- The reliability.
- The customer service.
- The transparency.
- The longevity.
- The trust.
- And yes, the price.

The price needs to be great. It needs to represent real value. However, price needs to be seen as a major component of the overall value and not the single, driving factor in picking suppliers to partner with.

Time and again, we find that success in the medium and long term comes from this: Buying from suppliers who offer you great value, allowing you to offer your customers great value – and at a great profit to you.

Suppliers who partner with you?

I used a term a moment ago, 'suppliers who partner with you'. That's not just a throwaway line. It's the way that the most successful business owners I know consider their suppliers. They build great, long-term relationships with their suppliers and know they can rely on them, when (not if) things go wrong.

They don't need to get stressed or waste time dealing with low grade or non-existent customer service. Instead, they can plan ahead, with confidence.

They can focus on looking after their customers, rather than chasing suppliers.



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Here's a suggestion

Take a look at the suppliers you currently use, because of their low prices. Now consider if they are offering you real value or just cheap prices. Think about any problems you have regarding the quality of the service you receive or the quality of the products they supply. Weigh up the overall cost and make sure you're getting amazing value.

The lesson here

The cost to a retail business of an unreliable wholesale provider can be considerable. Even without things like hidden costs and a poor returns policy, a cheap retailer can impact your bottom line. Time spent trying to put their mistakes right or chase up part orders and late orders... it all adds up.

Prices are important. It's extremely important to get the best deal possible. However, we need to consider the whole deal and not simply the price a wholesaler quotes us.



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General Marketing

How to grow your retail business with Endorsed Relationships

There are certain elements to marketing, which are almost universally extremely effective. The subject of this section is one of them!

I want you to imagine something for a moment. Imagine there are other great businesses out there, proactively recommending your store to their customers. How useful would that be to you? Well, in today's article, I'm going to show you how to make that happen.

It's all about something called Endorsed Relationships.

What is an Endorsed Relationship?

In brief, an Endorsed Relationship is a relationship you form with another person / company / brand, where they endorse (or recommend) you and your services to their customers and contacts. **It's both one of the oldest and one of the most powerful forms of marketing out there.**

Why are Endorsed Relationships so powerful at driving sales?

The reason they are so extremely effective, is that people are far more likely to visit your store and buy from you, if someone they already know and trust has endorsed you.

Think about it: We have all made bad purchasing decisions in the past. As a direct result, we value the recommendations of those we trust, when it comes to spending our money. So, we use these endorsements as a short-cut in our decision-making process.

There are a number of things you need to do, if you want to build great Endorsed Relationships. Here are some of the key things you need to consider.

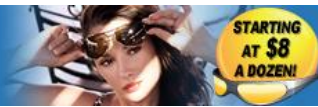


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Find the right partners

Clearly, you need to identify businesses, which offer non-conflicting products or services to the same profile of customer as you. You also need to find businesses that have a great reputation, as these have the best relationships with their customers and their customers are more likely to trust their endorsement of you.

Tip: Pay special attention to Endorsed Relationship partners, who provide a newsletter. They can reach their most engaged customers with a recommendation of your services in their newsletter, quickly and with amazing results!

What's in it for them?

Yes, you run a great business and provide tremendous value. However, that's not enough to motivate a total stranger to recommend you to their customers.

Endorsed Relationships are like all successful business ventures, in that they have to be **mutually beneficial**. So, you need to think about how you will reward them for recommending you.

Usually, this is done via mutual endorsements... they endorse you to their customers and you do the same for them. This is another reason why you need to be selective regarding who you choose as your partners. Clearly you don't want to recommend just anyone to your valued customers.

Here's a great example of how to do it right: A local decorating store formed an Endorsed Relationship with a local carpentry business. It turns out that lots of people who buy decorating products are in need of a carpenter. They just moved home, are renovating their home or remodelling it, etc. Equally, lots of people who need a carpentry business need to redecorate the room where the carpenter worked.

Both the decorating store and the carpentry business do extremely well from recommending one another.

The key is that both partners need to benefit. Take time choosing partners, where there is the best possible opportunity for you both to prosper.

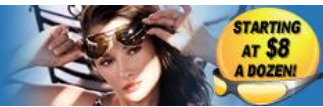


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What next?

Spend some time thinking of businesses, which serve the same prospective customers as you. Then, do a little research on them. Check them out online – a quick search of their company name is often extremely useful.

Once you have a potential Endorsed Relationship partner in mind, it's time to reach out to them. Whenever possible, this is something best done face-to-face. Yes, you can try writing or emailing them, but when it comes to relationships, you can't beat the personal approach. It also gives you a chance to make sure they are the type of people you are happy recommending to your customers.

Call the prospective partner, with a brief outline of what you are proposing and ask if they'd like to meet. Many will say 'no', but you only need a relatively small number of referral partners in order to significantly increase your sales.

Finally

Throughout the entire process, remember that all the referral partner is interested in, is what's in it for them. Focus your conversations around how they will benefit, how you will proactively recommend them. If they see the value and believe you, you stand a far better chance of getting the relationship established.

The lesson here

It's hard to overstate the power of forming endorsed relationships, with the right kind of partners. It can massively increase awareness of your store and drive sales that you would never have made otherwise.

Make sure you take the time required, to seek out the best Endorsed Relationship partners for your business. Whenever possible, partner with people / businesses, which you already know or those whose reputation and reach is already known to you.



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Just one or two partners can make a significant difference. The value of the partnerships is key. You're better with a small number of great Endorsed Relationship partners, rather than lots of lower quality partners. So make quality your primary focus.



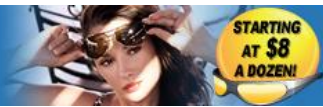
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General Marketing

How to beat the online retailers, with “click to collect”

Maybe the biggest threat to traditional stores, has been the advent of Internet shopping. In this section, I’m going to show you an extremely powerful way to gain a great competitive advantage over online retailers.

It’s all about identifying the advantages you have over online retailers and then exploiting these advantages to the fullest.

Shopping from home has never been easier

Let’s face it, online shopping has a number of great advantages. Thanks to sites like Amazon.com, we can now buy almost anything without leaving our chair.

However, there are 2 huge disadvantages to buying online:

Disadvantage number one: You place a huge amount of trust in the online retailer. When I say trust, I’m not suggesting the online retailers will rip people off, though it’s not unheard of. What I’m referring to is the fact that you have no guarantee that they will send you what you asked for or when it will arrive. (Let alone what condition it will be in, when it finally reaches you!)

Disadvantage number two: In many cases, you need to be in to sign for the package when it’s delivered. As I myself recently discovered, this can be extremely inconvenient. The delivery was 2 days late and I needed to make sure someone was in all day, both days! I’ve also recently had a package delivered to a neighbor’s home, which would have been fine if they were not on a 2 week vacation!

The power of “click to collect”

Store owners are able to benefit from those online shopping disadvantages, thanks to something commonly known as **click to collect**.

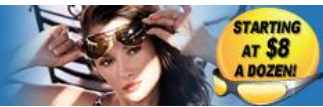


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Click to Collect is the term given to the process of ordering something online, which you collect from a traditional store.

Clearly, this offers massive advantages over online shopping.

These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The customer can pick their goods up at a time that suits them. This makes it extremely convenient.
- The customer will have a real person to speak to in the store, if they have any questions.
- The customer has the peace of mind of knowing they are dealing with a “real” retailer. Peace of mind is one of the most important elements of marketing.
- The goods are in great condition when they pick them up from you, so they know they will get exactly what they ordered.
- Should the goods need to be returned for any reason, it’s far easier to return them to the store, than it is to send them by courier. It can also be expensive to return goods to online retailers, as you will usually need some kind of proof of delivery, in case they deny receiving it.

How to set up your Click to Collect facility

If you already have a website, where people can buy direct from your online store, the process is simple. You just need to let your online shoppers know that they are very welcome to pick up their order, from your store. **Remember to tell them about the advantages of using your click to collect service.**

If you *haven't* already got an online store, there are many web design providers, who specialize in building relatively inexpensive online stores. They can start from as little as a few hundred dollars.

The best way to find the right web designer for your needs, is to ask people you know, who have an online store they are happy with, who they hired. Alternatively, visit some of the online stores you like the look of. Then, scroll to the bottom of the site’s home page. Often, there will be a link to the person or company who designed the site.



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Important note: If you don't have a website for your business, you're leaving money on the table. The advantages of adding an online component to your retail business is hard to overstate and the benefits are far too many for me to list here.

The lesson here

Every successful business plays to it's strengths and the same is true with retail. Yes, the online retailers have a number of benefits, but by offering a Click to Collect service, you can provide customers with 2 hugely, desirable benefits.

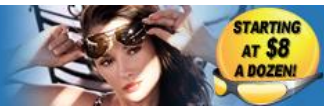
You can provide a level of convenience and trust, which the *online only providers* simply can't match.

I also strongly recommend you look at complimenting your retail business with an online retail facility. If you already have an online retail side to your business, make sure you're doing everything you can in order to attract customers and boost sales.



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General Marketing

How to make your special offers a lot more special!

When used correctly, a special offer promotion can be a powerful marketing tool. However, retailers often get the process wrong. They lower a price, promote the offer and then wonder why their special offer didn't work.

So, here are some ideas, to help you get the very best results from your special offer promotions.

What's the goal of your special offer?

The very first thing you need to do, is decide in advance exactly what you want to achieve from the special offer.

Here are some common examples:

- Are you doing it to raise awareness of a new product line?
- Are you doing it to move some old stock and make more space?
- Are you doing it to get more people through the door, so they can see what a great store you have?
- Are you doing it to help out with your cash flow?
- Are you doing it as a loss leader?

It's far easier to run a successful special offer, once you are completely clear about what you want to achieve.

Don't train customers to wait for your next special offer

Some retailers make the mistake of running special offers at predictable times throughout the year. Instead of helping you grow your business, this predictable approach to special offers can have the exact opposite effect.

Here's why: It trains your customers to wait for your next special offer promotion!





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You then find fewer people buying from you at the regular price, on what they think is the run-up to your next special offer. The net result is you end up selling the same amount of merchandise, but at a less profitable price.

How to do it wrong!

I recall speaking with the owner of a hardware store. One year, he decided to do a promotion on Father's Day. He lowered prices on some slow-moving stock, but also on some popular products in order to attract interest. He then advertised the Father's Day promotion and sold around 20% more stock, though with almost no profit.

The next year, he noticed that the month before Father's Day, sales numbers were terrible. Way, way down on previous years. He realized that people remembered his previous Father's Day promotion and were waiting until Father's Day, in case there was another one. He then felt forced to do another promotion, with the same items reduced. That was 3 years ago and his annual profits have been down every year, thanks to his highly predictable Father's Day special offers.

Whilst it's fine to run special offers during the main holiday times, mix things up a little. Don't become too predictable. Don't train your customers to wait.

Make your special offers... special

Your special offer will only work if it is *special* to your customers. Many retailers make the mistake of either:

1. Offering merchandise, which customers just aren't interested in.
2. Offering sale prices, which are just not attractive enough.

As a direct result, these not very *special*, special offers fail the retailer and fail their customers.

When putting a special offer together, the idea is to make it as attractive as possible. Focus on the word *special* rather than the word *offer*. Make it something you know people will value and be attracted to.



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Consider offering part of a set

A great way to increase the value of special offers to your business, is to offer something that you provide accessories for.

For example, if you were running a special offer on razors, it's likely you would find yourself selling far more (full price) razor blades, shaving gel and aftershave. So, think of special offer items, which people buy and then need to make additional purchases for.

The lesson here

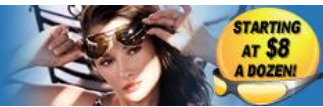
The key is to match your special offer to precisely what you want to achieve and ensure that your offer is truly special. Make sure that you mix things up a little, with offers on different dates and also changing the stock you decide to discount.

The more predictable your offers are, the less effective they will be. Absolutely embrace special offer promotions, but go into it with a clear end game in mind. If you do, you'll reap the benefits, improve cashflow, attract new customers and make plenty of full priced sales to more and more people.



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General Marketing

How to avoid spending too much on your marketing

Have you ever wondered how much you should be investing investing in the marketing of your retail business? It's an important subject. Spending too much hurts profits and spending too little does exactly the same. What you need is the sweet-spot. Well, that's exactly what I'm going to share with you in this section.

It's based on the format used by the biggest, most successful retailers.

Customer Lifetime Value

In order to attract new customers, in a way that's highly profitable for your business, you need to know what the average customer is worth to you. Moreover, you need to know the **average lifetime value** of your customers.

Why?

Because once you know your customer Lifetime Value, (sometimes abbreviated to LTV), you know the maximum amount to invest in acquiring them.

Example: Starbucks spend millions on advertising. They can do this, with great confidence, because they know what the average customer is worth to them.

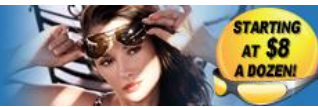
Avinash Kaushik did some research, which shows the LTV of a Starbucks customer. Here's an abridged version of what he did:

- He looked at the average amount that customers spent on a visit to Starbucks. They spent \$5.90 per visit.
- He then looked at the number of visits per week the average Starbucks customer made. They visited 4.2 times a week.





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- This told him that the average customer value, per week, was \$24.30.
- He found that the average Starbucks customer lifespan is 20 years.
- He then factored in the Starbucks profit margin, which was 21%.
- Other factors were taken into account, including things like projected interest rates for the next 20 years, customer retention rates, etc.

The end result was that the average Starbucks customer is worth over \$14000 in total. That's hard to imagine, if you focus on the short-term picture. However, by knowing that the LTV of a Starbucks customer is \$14000, Starbucks can make informed decisions about what they are prepared to spend to acquire a new customer.

What I wanted to do here, was show you the basics of how to estimate the true value of an average customer. Obviously, your business model will be different from Starbucks, with totally different numbers. However, the basics are the same.

The lesson here

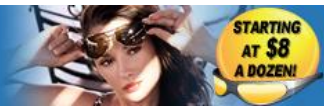
The only way to get your marketing investment right, is to look at the bigger picture. Without taking a longer-term look at the dollar value of a customer, it's easy to spend too much or too little on acquiring new customers.

Take the time required to do the research. Get as close as you can to your Customer Lifetime Value. The alternative is to guess and hope you get it right. Whilst hope is essential, it's not a business strategy.



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General Marketing

How to save money on your advertising and get better results

In this section, I'm going to show you how to get great results from your advertising. It's all about understanding the huge difference between the numbers that matter when it comes to advertising, and the numbers that don't.

Allow me to explain.

The thing about numbers

Most small business owners buy their advertising based on the number of people the advertiser claims their message will reach. In fact, many large businesses make the same mistake!

For example, when they buy advertising from websites, the cost of the ad is often based on the number of times the webpage containing the ad is accessed by someone.

On the surface it seems to make sense: Surely an advertisement that reaches 10,000 people will provide a better return than one, which only reaches 1000 people. The reality is that this is not the case.

It's not about how many people have the potential to see your advertisement, it's about who those people are!

Here's an example of what I mean

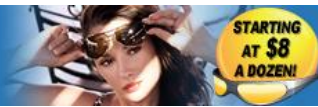
One of my readers recently contacted me to tell me that she had placed an ad for her store in a newsletter, which was sent to 125,000 people. The ad cost less than \$500 and she was convinced it was money well spent, even though the readership of the newsletter wasn't a perfect fit for her business.

The advertisement failed to generate a single sale or useful enquiry. It attracted just nine replies, seven of which were from people who saw her ad and wanted her to advertising *their*





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newsletter! Like many business owners, she made the mistake of being seduced by the numbers. She focused on the **number** of people her advertisement was being sent to, rather than **who** those people were.

The lesson here is simple: Before you make a decision where to advertise, ask for information on what kind of audience the person offering the advertising can provide you with.

This will help.

How to make better advertising decisions

Here are a few things to consider before deciding if an advertising opportunity is right for you:

1. Do they cover your area?

Does the advertising you are being offered reach the geographical area, where your store or stores are located?

For example: If a local radio station claims to have 100,000 listeners, but only 3000 are based within a reasonable distance of your store, your paying to reach 97,000 totally unsuitable people. Either negotiate a better deal because so few of their listeners are in your area or find a better alternative.

Look for advertisers who cover your geographical area.

2. Are their readers, listeners or viewers the right age for your business?

Does the publication, website, radio station, etc, offering you the advertising, have a readership, which is the same age as your typical customer?

For example: If the products in your store are aimed at people aged between 18 and 40, yet the publication offering advertising has a readership, which is mainly aged 35 to 65, the majority of their readers are likely to be of little value to you. Look for advertisers who provide you with access to people of the right age

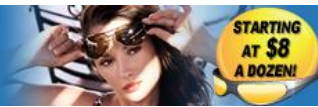


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range for your store. Does the advertising you are being offered, reach people in the correct income bracket for your store?

If your store is aimed at people in the middle-income bracket, there's little value in paying to advertise to people, in the low-income bracket. Advertisers can usually provide you with a breakdown of the income range of their audience. Make sure their audience is a good fit, before you spend a dime.

The people who sell you the ads

These men and women are very good at their job. In fact, advertising salespeople are among the most professional and highly trained salespeople out there.

- **At their best**, they will work hard to provide you with the best options available and they will steer you away from advertising, which is unsuitable for you.
- **At their worst**, they will sell you anything in order to earn a commission – and they can be extremely convincing.

You will need to use all your business smarts, to determine which type of advertising salesperson you're dealing with.

The lesson here

Before you invest a dime in advertising, make sure the advertising reaches the location where your customers are. Also ensure that the publication, radio show, newsletter or website is aimed at your target customer — those in the right income bracket, age range etc.

A bonus tip is to haggle! There's almost always a discount available, if you ask for it.

Advertising is a huge subject and this brief piece has only touched upon one element of it. I strongly advise retailers to make it a point to study advertising, as it can be a fantastic asset to your business, or a waste of time and money, depending on how you use it.

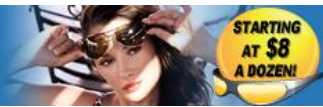


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Finally

I hope you found this retail marketing guide useful. It's based on work I have done with retailers worldwide, since 1995.

Clearly, as this information will be read by thousands of retailers, some of this will be relevant to your retail business and some of it will not. Every retail business is a little different. I have put this guide together, so that it addresses a number of the most common challenges retailers are facing today, when it comes to boosting sales and profits.

I hope you found this guide useful. More importantly, I hope you do something with it!

Thank you

I'd like to finish here with a "thank you" to Kirk Bachelder from CTS Wholesale Sunglasses for giving me the opportunity to write this guide for you. It's extremely rare for a wholesaler to invest their own money, to help their retailers grow their businesses. Yes, some wholesalers will offer ways to help you sell more of their products, but it's rare indeed, for a wholesaler to hire an expert to help their retailers grow their entire business.



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