

# ONLINE MARKETING IN FIVE EASY STEPS

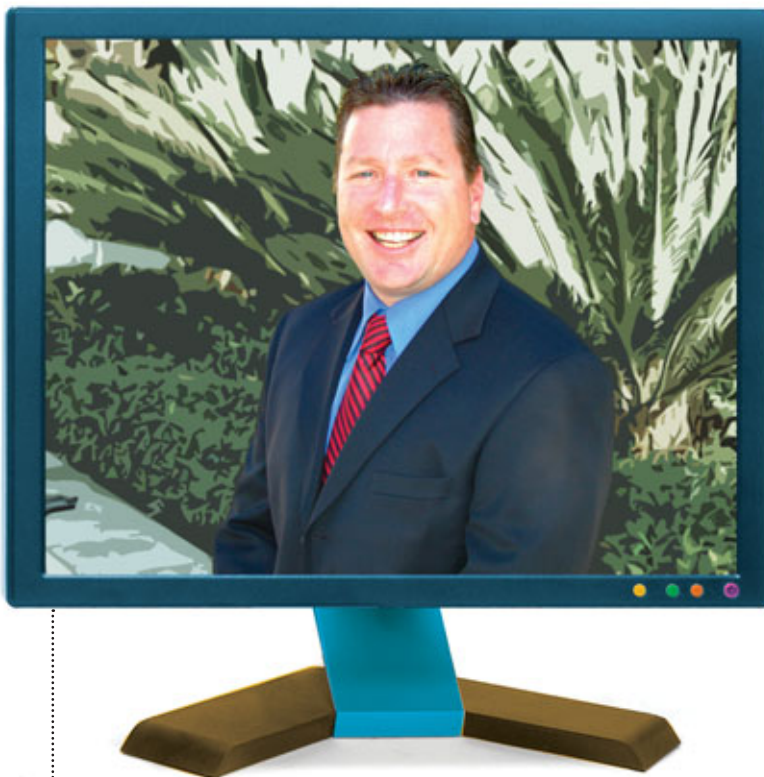
Operators must be marketing and promoting on the Internet to survive

By Arthur Messina

Increasingly, we are hearing bad news about tough times for individuals and businesses alike. More and more, “the economy” has become the catch-phrase reason given for dwindling commerce and an overall gloom over the retail industry.

But slower sales are no reason for businesses to cut on advertising or marketing expenditures. Actually, they should do quite the opposite. As consumers look for ways to stretch their dollars and explore less traditional retail outlets, such as the Internet, opportunities for successful marketing strategies abound. And many of these strategies come at little or no cost to your company.

In fact, beefing up your company’s online marketing is an excellent way to weather the economic storm of a recession — and to emerge from it stronger and more up-to-date than before.



• Marketing expert Arthur Messina offers five affordable steps to gain and retain market share during a recession and beyond.

## Five key ways to harness the power of online marketing tools.

### 01 BLOGGING

Having a company blog that is updated frequently and that includes personal input from company employees is an excellent way to put a human face on your company. This “insider peek” into the company engenders the beginning of a consumer’s relationship with a company — the first step in making them your customer. Blogging also serves to boost your company’s page rank. By blogging about topics relevant to your industry, the company’s site is in effect compiling content that is naturally keyword and key phrase rich.

### 02 E-NEWSLETTERS

Regular electronic newsletters, sent to customers who opt in to receive them, are another way to keep customers in regular contact with your company. Not only does this consistent contact keep your company fresh in the minds of consumers, but it also affords an easy way for them to find themselves back on your site. In addition, newsletter archives on your site are yet another inherent way to build your site’s search engine optimized content.

### 03 SOCIAL NETWORKING

There are a few ways to use the popularity of social networking sites to market your company. One way is to make a profile for your company. Alternately, or in conjunction, include links to your company’s site on your own personal social networking pages. For instance, you could post updates on your Facebook, Twitter, Plaxo or LinkedIn page with a link to the most current blog. Also, if your company offers a special coupon or holds another type of promotion, you can mention this and also link to the site.

### 04 E-MAIL BLASTS

E-mail blasts, sent at regular but not too-frequent intervals, are another way to stay connected with your customer base. One good strategy is to offer a weekly or bi-monthly coupon or promotion to customers who sign up to receive them. Special savings can spur consumers to buying action, and easy-access links in the emails will drive more traffic to your site.

### 05 REVIEW YOUR SEO

Search engine optimized content is invaluable in helping your company’s site have a high page rank, which in turn boosts traffic and then sales. Review your site’s content, and make sure it is relevant, well written, and makes the best use of keywords and key phrases. Include built-in, regular ways to add to your site’s SEO content, such as newsletters, a learning center, white pages, or blogs.

These five online marketing strategies are easy to deploy and are critical to obtaining an online presence. Using them is relatively simple and they are marketing tools that can help increase your company’s revenue without depleting your budget. **LCT**

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