

Ten key points to increase website traffic

Even with a poor outlook for retailers in 2008, many consumers looking to buy flooring will undoubtedly include the Internet in their product research. Using smart website marketing strategies — combined with other traditional media advertising — can make a big difference in helping

drive store traffic and increase sales. Below are 10 tips to help retailers get started:

1. Analyze your website's content, making sure each Web page contains relevant text content and stays on topic. Without relevant text content, search engines

have a difficult time determining what your website is all about. For example, a website that is all graphics (text within graphic images can't be read by search engines either) or all Flash have nothing for search engines to read.

2. Use well-thought-out "consumer-orient-

tated, keyword text phrases" that are specific to each Web page. If a page is about laminate flooring, use keywords "laminate flooring" and "laminate floor" within the page as well as in the title, meta description tag and any links pointing to that page.

3. Think "local" when putting together content for your website. With the enormous sea of websites, it's important to use geographically targeted keywords (called geo-targeting) to help consumers search the Web for local businesses.
4. Use "call to actions" to help motivate consumers to interact with you, either through e-mail, phone or by physically going to your store. Call to actions can include printable Web coupons, online versions of your in-store sale events, shop-at-home forms or specials for sales online.
5. Obtain quality links from other websites to your site. Links from other websites with similar themes are a cost-effective way to drive targeted traffic to your website. The major search engines also consider the incoming links to help determine a website's popularity and can boost your search engine ranking position (SERP).
6. Create "multi-channel advertising campaigns" to improve your overall site traffic. Whether you are using newspaper, radio, television, printed catalogs or direct marketing include your website address with all your ads. Many consumers go from traditional media advertisements to websites and become solid leads.
7. Get a website tune-up annually. The Internet and the search engines are forever changing and you need to make sure your website is up to date.
8. Have a good Web marketing strategy. Create a month-to-month Web strategy and budget some dollars to the plan. If you don't have the time or ability, hire a Web professional to assist you.
9. Think like a consumer and make the most important page elements easy to find and near the top of each Web page. When you look at a page, remember you can see what is below the browser's window without scrolling down.
10. Always try to measure the results of an online advertising campaign to help determine its effectiveness. If something doesn't work, why keep doing it? Make adjustments and start anew.

John Simonson is the president of Webstrategies Dynamics. He has designed websites and Web marketing programs for major flooring manufacturers and retailers throughout the industry since 1998. He can be reached through e-mail at john@webstrategiesdynamics.com.

