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Nine No-Nonsense Tips: Creating Relevant Shopping Experiences

Customer-Driven Marketing and Merchandising Best Practices

Brought to you by Aggregate Knowledge and Bazaarvoice.

In 2008, it's time to turn the tables, once and for all. It's time to step away from traditional marketing and put your customers in control.

Your customers are drowning in “too much information,” they don't believe the advertising hype, and last year's site innovations are this year's commodities.

It's time to get personal. Put your customers in the driver's seat to help them serve up the information that's most relevant to them – now. Your customers know what they want. Your site just needs to give it to them.

Here, we'll show you practical ways to use discovery and social commerce to automate merchandising based on what your customers want.

It's time to stop thinking B-to-C, and start thinking C-to-C. Let's go.

Aggregate Knowledge and Bazaarvoice are excited to share this guide to making your website, marketing and merchandising stand out.

- Aggregate Knowledge's Pique Discovery Network enables retailers to drive highly relevant product suggestions on their websites and through their marketing channels. Aggregate Knowledge enables retailers to leverage the dynamic interests of their customers in real-time throughout their marketing and merchandising.
- Bazaarvoice combines leading social commerce technology with a team of dedicated pros who make it easy to turn your customer voice into serious business results. Bazaarvoice enables online retailers to capture the customer voice by integrating user-generated content – in the form of product opinions in Ratings & Reviews™, questions and answers in Ask & Answer™ or narratives with Bazaarvoice Stories™ – combined with programs and best practices to amplify that voice across the channel.



1. Hear What We Say

Listen to your customers. They will tell you – and everyone else – what’s hot, what’s not, and what others should think about your products. Give them a platform to speak and they will give you something very important in return – their input can lead to increased sales, more time on your site, a sense of community, and even lower product return rates. And user-generated content provides delicious fodder for search engines, with a tremendous potential to boost your site traffic.

Ratings and reviews give your customers a platform to express their opinions and share their thoughts and feedback with others. They also help customers quickly research and buy your products. Ratings and reviews are here to stay.

77% of online shoppers use reviews and ratings when purchasing.

- Jupiter Research

According to a global Nielsen survey of 26,486 Internet users in 47 markets, consumer recommendations are the most credible form of advertising among 78% of the study’s respondents.

- Nielsen, “Word-of-Mouth the Most Powerful Selling Tool”

58.7% of shoppers said they used product reviews to make decisions. Reviews rated higher than clearance sale pages (56.4%) and featured sale pages (51.3%).

- Shop.org, November 2007

Need a business case for reviews? Do the back of the napkin math for your business. For a \$25MM online retailer, if 7% of buyers spent 20% more, a reviews solution would pay for itself multiple times and easily fund investments in other site features. And this doesn’t even include the bump in natural search results, lessened customer service costs, and decreased costs due to fewer returns.

➔ **Ask about Bazaarvoice Ratings & Review™**

2. “I’ll Have What She’s Having”

One of the most powerful influencers in the real world is watching what others are doing, what they are buying and where they are going. People experience this all the time in the offline world. You see somebody order something interesting in a restaurant and decide “I’ll have what she’s having.” You see a crowd of people in a store, so you go in and buy something. You see somebody reading an interesting magazine and you buy a copy. Emulating offline shopping experiences on your site can be a significant differentiator and keep people coming back for more.

Discovery gives your customers a glimpse into what others have viewed, browsed or bought on the web at every interaction with your business. In other words, discovery makes it easier for your customers to find great products on your site and through your marketing.

Discovery is a well-placed recommendation on your product pages, or a highly targeted product placement in context of an interesting article or web content. Discovery is when your customers find a product themselves, instead of being shouted at in an advertisement. Discovery is when your customers find something they didn’t even know that they were looking for when they open an email or visit your site.

Trust in “a person like me” has tripled, from 20% to 68% from 2004 to 2006.

- Edelman Trust Barometer

“Nearly a third of consumers who notice recommendations on eCommerce sites reported purchasing a product based on such recommendations...”

- Forrester: eCommerce Optimization Engines Report - 2007

Help your customers help each other discover your products with every click on your site. What can be more relevant than that?

➔ **Ask about Aggregate Knowledge Pique Onsite™ Discovery**

3. Ask And You Shall Receive

You can count on it. Shoppers have questions before buying, such as “What features are important in an HDTV?” or “Do these plants grow well in Texas?” You can also count on the fact that if they don’t find answers to these questions, they will leave your site and search the web until they find an answer. You want to keep them right where you have them – on your site, on the product page.

Give your customers a place to ask questions and get answers from each other and you give them one less reason to leave your site and find somebody else’s products. Shoppers who receive authentic, credible consumer-generated answers to their questions make more confident purchase decisions.

What’s more, having this user-generated content on your site will help you increase natural search results, learn more about how your customers buy, and have the chance to quickly respond to customer needs. A question only needs to be answered once and it becomes a permanent, searchable asset for future shoppers with the same questions. You could reduce support call volume and allow support staff to focus on new or more challenging questions. Customers can answer questions, or you can have experts from your staff provide answers. You determine how involved you want to be, or let customers speak for themselves.

Enable your shoppers to post and respond to specific questions about products and services directly alongside standard product information. They will respond in kind by sticking on your site to learn more and buy more.

➔ [Ask about Bazaarvoice Ask & Answer™](#)

4. Skate To Where the Puck Is Going

Your business is everywhere. It is your website, your emails, your advertising, and in social networks. And, of course, it's within the walls of your physical store. Get your products discovered where your customers experience your business every day.

Use discovery and the customer voice to drive purchases beyond your website. Syndicate your product reviews out to search and shopping portals to attract customers back to your site. Place your products directly into relevant articles and content. You'll drive traffic – and conversions – to your site when customers see related suggestions.

Customers who see a top-rated product or a relevant product recommendation in an advertisement or email then, with one click, can be taken directly to that product on your site. They are now one click closer to making a purchase.

Discovery delivers relevancy through all of your sales and marketing channels, which creates the opportunity to delight and differentiate your products everywhere your customer touches your business.

➔ **Ask about [Aggregate Knowledge Pique Discovery™ Network](#) and [Bazaarvoice SyndicateVoice™](#)**

5. Connect The Connections

Marketing and merchandisers are human. It is nearly impossible to manually predict and know all the explicit and implicit connections between all of your products. So let your customers help you identify what products are relevant to each other. Once you know, you can use this knowledge in your marketing and merchandising to know when to place the right product, to the right customer, at the right time.

Customers make connections between products every time they visit your site. One day they look at item “A,” another day, item “Y.” Those products might not have an obvious connection, but if enough people follow that chain, there’s a connection. Don’t wait for reports to bring this to light. By dynamically modeling the connections between your products in real time you can immediately utilize this data into your marketing and merchandising. Discovery identifies shopping trends as they are happening and dynamically adjusts recommendations and product placements based on what customers are actually interested in at that moment in time. Combine this with your merchandising and marketing rules and your customers will always get a highly relevant and targeted experience when they visit your site or experience your marketing.

→ **[Ask about Aggregate Knowledge Pique Discovery™ Network](#)**

6. More Words = More Relevant

What do the following silly things have in common?

- 1. What is the approximate size of a banjo?**
- 2. Redheads and the men that love them**
- 3. How to hit the sasquatch**

They are all actual phrases that customers have typed in to discover various content on retail sites. Far from silly, these valuable pieces of data can help you understand how buyers search, helping you improve the user experience and marketing results.

The long tail of search engine data tells a fascinating story that smart marketers are listening to. These obscure and unique terms – perhaps used only once or twice – give insight into what your visitors are really looking for. Long tail search terms might not match your page titles or your carefully crafted page descriptions, but they do match some other combination of words on your page – even when you are not anticipating them. For many sites, the unanticipated terms account for over 80% of the search terms and over 50% of the referrals, and this makes it imperative to understand how best to target those terms. What's more, longer search terms often signify that a person is closer to a buying decision – the more specific the term, the more likely they are to buy.

No marketer can predict all of the terms that their searchers will use during a reporting period, but it is possible to identify the types of words that are most frequently associated with success – the words that are used most frequently in search referrals that lead to conversions.

➔ **Ask about Bazaarvoice SyndicateVoice™**

7. Show Me The Products!

Your content and product inventory is underused. It is hard to expose all of your products in your traditional marketing. Imagine a world where you can use your products as marketing and advertising creative, without lifting a finger. How great would it be to open an email and see what people are actually buying at that moment? How about a user review in that email to tell you what people think about that product? How about seeing a pair of hot shoes in advertisements versus an offer for shoes? Imagine reading an article about your favorite sporting team and seeing a product that was purchased by people who read that same article? This is relevancy incarnate.

Leverage email and affiliate discovery to populate your ads and emails with products instead of ads and marketing messages. Converting your products into creative is a way to boost results for customer acquisition and put more of your inventory to work for you – without any additional time or effort. Automatically load one of your banners with recommendations, personalized in real-time for each viewer, based on what your customers are actually buying on your site right now. Or populate your emails with the highest rated items from your site – the second the emails are opened. This is what discovery does. Each time your emails are opened, or an ad is served your customers see hot rated products. Work with companies that can distribute your highly rated items in context to related articles. Your customers will love it and so will your bottom line.

➔ **[Ask about Aggregate Knowledge Pique Discovery™ Network](#)**

8. I Don't Like Green Eggs and Ham

We have all heard the stories about what your Tivo thinks of you. Are you marketing to customers based on what they used to be interested in? Don't be the site that serves up Dr. Seuss book recommendations to the guy who bought his niece a birthday gift three years ago. Be the place that serves recommendations and places products that are part of a hot shopping trend on your site. Provide product feedback based on current customer opinions.

Leverage aggregate data that reflects your customers' interest. If you use the collective actions of what is being bought, viewed and clicked on your site you will never have to worry about serving a product recommendation based on who used a customer's computer last or a single discreet purchase. The collective data on your website can be used now to drive a differentiated, highly targeted experience for your customers. Utilizing discovery, customers can see the "Customers who bought this also bought..." and recently rated products, etc. This keeps your site relevant to current interests and your customers happy.

Oh, and don't forget the golden rule – do not market to profiles. They were written two years ago, they never get updated, and they often represent what people 'aspire' to be, not their current interests.

➔ **Ask about [Aggregate Knowledge Pique Onsite™](#) [Discovery and Bazaarvoice Ratings & Reviews™](#)**

9. Social Hour

You have read about it. You have ramped up on MySpace, FaceBook, Ning. You know that opt-out is evil. Let's do some social marketing!

Be relevant. Social networks are places people hang out, share stories, and share their lives. Remember, you want your customers to spread the word. Hearing opinions and feedback from friends is as important online as it is in our offline lives. Don't market "into" social networks, harness them. You have to blend into the fabric of the social networks and provide useful, relevant information. Word of mouth is alive and well in social networks, so monitor, but tread lightly with marketing.

→ **Ask about Bazaarvoice ShareThis™**

Your Customers Determine Relevancy

Providing relevant experiences for your customers takes a combination of tools and strategies, but it's always your customers' actions that determine if your marketing is relevant. By providing recommendations, discovery, and user-generated content, your customers get the best of all worlds. Pique Discovery from Aggregate Knowledge brings relevant recommendations based on actions and what others are doing on your site in real time. User-generated content enabled by Bazaarvoice solutions are instrumental to helping customers reach a decision about what products they want to buy. The combination keeps your customers engaged and returning.

Aggregate Knowledge and Bazaarvoice are partners and share several successful clients. The leading gift e-tailer Delightful Deliveries is using Pique Onsite™ Discovery by Aggregate Knowledge to drive gift suggestions for more than 2,500 varieties of edible gift baskets available on DelightfulDeliveries.com.

Eric Lituchy, CEO and founder of DelightfulDeliveries.com says, "Working with both Aggregate Knowledge and Bazaarvoice allows our shoppers to see what other customers are both buying and saying about all of our great Delightful Deliveries gifts."

Pique Discovery delivers the most relevant products in front of customers. Bazaarvoice tells them what customers are saying about those products.



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