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## Take people's pain away

Written by [Kevin Coleman](#), on 24-02-2009 00:00

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When was the last time you evaluated your product range? Is it still relevant to your customers or are there other competitors' products that are taking money from under your nose?

In these difficult times, is it likely that your customers will be trading down to save money? Will customers be buying pre-owned (used)? If so, should you put new products in place with fewer features but at a lower price to compensate? You may need to cut products out of your product portfolios too, so you know which are the most profitable. Can you accurately track customer demands?

In a downturn customers tend to buy smarter, which means that quality own brands often gain at the expense of the better known. In some sectors, customers prefer products and services separately priced and multipurpose goods may be favoured over specialist products.

Share people's pain and make the incentive big enough so that they do business with you now. There is money out there and it just needs to be spent with you. It is better to give people a deal today on your own terms than have to hold a fire sale or call in the liquidators later. Be wary of gimmicks and concentrate on features such as long life, reliability, safety and performance. Emphasise quality and value and, if finances allow, continue to introduce new products that reflect this. New products will allow you to target changing customer requirements and put pressure on competitors, who may not be able to respond.

So what do you do if you are a services company? Start by looking at existing clients. Do you know your clients' plans and can you help them to get there faster? Do you offer services to some clients that may be of value to others? Can you find a reason to talk to them to offer new things?

Surprisingly, some companies have reputations for only doing one thing, expanding people's business in Japan, market research for the IT market, print-based marketing communications, or outsourced development. In these examples, the companies in question offer general business consultancy, market research across a range of market sectors, or full marketing services including online, and the outsourced developer sells its own online products as well as developing for others. Make sure you are not incorrectly pigeonholed.

There is much talk about search engine optimisation and the way that the web can help you to get more business. SEO is important for making sure your website gets to the top of the list, but for many companies a good web presence has to start earlier than this. We once surveyed over 120 websites for a client in a creative sector; interestingly most (but not all) of these creative websites could have belonged to any of the companies.

There was little differentiation. Does your online presence represent you properly? Is it correct, spelling checked and jargon free? I always find it amazing how many websites are poor at targeting new clients. Companies assume that people must know their industry, understand the products they produce and how to contact their sales teams. Does your website give you credibility, allow people to contact you with minimum fuss?

So, given all that I have said, do all of your sales systems work correctly? Do you generate leads well and then handle them professionally? Do you invoice speedily with the right terms and conditions? Check your processes by acting like a customer or as we say, walk the customer's journey – it might save your business in the long term.

Kevin Coleman

[kc@alliantus.com](mailto:kc@alliantus.com) [kc@alliantus.com](mailto:kc@alliantus.com)

FCIM, Chartered Marketer, B.Ed (Hons) Bristol



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