



Brands... now's the time to focus on your online shopping experience

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Brands....now's the time to focus on your online shopping experience. With the high street gloomy, age-old favourites closing their doors or looking for buyers and even the previously buoyant M&S announcing 1,200 staff losses and 27 store closures, now is the time to consider stepping up your online strategy to maximise sales and leverage your brand says Nick Gill Digital Planner at Five by Five.

With over £46bn spent online and consumers likely to be spending more effort searching online for the right product at the right price, you can no longer ignore your online presence.

Converting online shoppers to your brand will not only help market share, you may even be cutting costs and ultimately, polishing up your brand profile in the process. To make the most of this, ask yourself, is your online shopping experience user friendly and up to scratch?

Here are my top tips for improving the online shopping experience:

1. Clear product descriptions and price information so users are reassured that what they wanted to buy has magically found its way to their basket.
2. Images to re-enforce the product description because people think visually too, especially when it comes to colour choices.
3. Easy removal, amendment or addition of items, because they're allowed to change their minds.
4. Clear navigation to proceed to purchase or back to similar products, back to home, or a new search as these are users' typical next steps.
5. Clear labeling of the basket during the entire shopping experience so the user can see what's in it at any time.
6. Ability to save and return so the user doesn't have to re-do it all again later.

Consider regional online activity supported by email where stores are closing to help steer



shoppers in the right direction. When they get there, hit them with a targeted landing page, maybe even with an apology, it's amazing what us humans will respond to.

And lest we forget social media...

Take advantage of your customers discussing the closures (because you know they will over coffee) and give yourself the chance to respond positively online, and let them hear your point of view (rather than dictate it).

Being part of the conversation is even more important now.

Consider the negative reaction to the wholly unsporting gesture by Zavvi that they will no longer be accepting gift vouchers for payment against goods since going into administration. But will, of course, accept hard cash in store for discounted stock.

A rather wordy explanation hidden on the site does nothing for goodwill and makes reclaiming your money both difficult and "unlikely". Ironic that the information is hidden under a "business as usual" heading, which it most clearly is not.

Now really is the time to put yourselves in your consumers' shoes, consider their feelings and engage with them.

And with a well-planned online strategy, it's easier than ever.