

10 Ways to Sell Boring Products in eCommerce

Jan

Think there is nothing exciting about your 'boring products?' Think again, and out of the box.

Do you feel that your inventory is full of boring products that are hard to sell? It's a fact of life in the world of eCommerce that some things (cars, gadgets, entertainment electronics, etc.) have much more appeal in of themselves than others (spare parts, tools, office supplies, etc.).

However, if a product were ever truly boring, you would never buy it anyway, would you? Think about all the boring products you buy in daily life: mops, cleaning supplies, replacement piping under the sink, printer paper, and the list goes on. So you must honestly ask yourself: Why did you buy those particular products over others in their same industry?

Odds are you saw an advertisement for those boring products or were otherwise marketed to by the company that makes the products. They must have caught your interest to get you to buy one brand over the other. So what's in the secret sauce for marketing these seemingly boring products to you and everyone you know? The answer is simple, yet multifaceted: content.

What kind of content, you ask? The kind that goes beyond the product itself and establishes a very real connection with its target audience. You are not simply telling people "Hey, I have this product I want you to buy"—you are solving their problems, creating opportunities, identifying with their life choices, and making life a little better by having purchased your "boring product."

You've heard over and over again from marketing experts that you need to "create engaging content," but for those who don't have a flair for the dramatic, how can you achieve conversions? Here are a few ways you can get through to your audience if your products don't quite do it themselves:

Fully Flesh Out Your Audience

It's an age-old notion that if you want to sell a product (especially boring products), you need to learn everything there is to know about your customer: their wants, needs, desires, problems, etc. This kind of information is invaluable to any business, but especially if you are struggling to garner interest in your product. You can find this information out by obtaining industry reports, conducting your surveys and research, and just ask your current customers for feedback. Some business models are very cut and dry about who their customers are.

For example:

- Forever 21 targets women that wish to maintain a youthful look and are interested in the latest fashions
- Gillette targets men looking for that sleek, clean-shaven look, hence their slogan "Gillette: The Best a Man Can Get."
- Levi's Jeans has shifted its focus since its inception in the mid-1850s from simply targeting labor workers and rustic types to appealing to people from all walks of life, offering many different cuts to accommodate as wide of an audience as possible

The things you need to know about your target audience are the following:

- Who are they?** To determine this, you need to employ a mix of logic, common sense, and creativity to extrapolate on what kind of person would most benefit from using your product. This concept can be as simple as male vs. female, or as complex as life roles, hobbies, interests, relationships, and the list goes on. To tap into ways to reach your desired customer, you need to create a full profile on the type of person you want to attract.
- What do they want?** This query ties directly into why they would want to purchase your product. If you are Gillette, you are probably targeting guys who want the cleanest-looking shave so they can be attractive to women, appear more professional to get ahead at work, or even be able to reach up and touch their own smooth face. You must ask yourself "How will using my product help my target customer get what they want?"
- What are their problems?** This issue goes hand-in-hand with what they want; people have problems, big and small, and they are always looking for a way to solve these problems. By offering to solve their problem using your product and getting a positive result, you have convinced them to at the very least take notice of your company and your products.

Problem/Solution Content

What makes a product truly successful, regardless of its industry? Even for boring products, it's their function and role in your target audience's life. For home theater systems, it kills boredom with an elevated experience. For particular clothing brands, it's making you look more desirable, smart, sexy, etc. For seemingly boring products such as dish soap and cleaning supplies, it's how they make your dishes and utensils look, feel, and smell afterward for a clean feeling of satisfaction. Behind all of these concepts is a problem being identified and solved through the use of the product. Some of the most successful marketing campaigns get personal and tap into people's emotions to evoke a robust response to make that particular product stick in their minds long after they saw the ad.

Explore the Verticals to Your Business

Sometimes, particularly if you work in an unexciting industry, limiting yourself to content strictly within your purview can turn stale quickly; this can bore you just as much as an audience, so it never hurts to start looking beyond the horizon. Exploring verticals that are relevant to your audience can expand your breadth of content you can create, and may also draw in customers you may have never thought of before.

For example, an eCommerce site that sells car parts might capitalize on creating content around popular or exotic cars and how the products the site sells could be put to good use in such cars. This concept instills in the reader the notion that by buying these car parts, they can have high performance like a classic hot rod or performance car.

Other verticals for car parts could also include other aspects of cars such as performance enhancement, racing, fuel efficiency, and less maintenance as a start. Brainstorm all the things that could be related to your product and start generating ideas from there to increase your content potential.

Tell a Relatable Story

Regarding adding in the human or emotional element back into a company, telling a story that people can identify with can go a long way for influencing customers to take notice of your business, or even buy from you over a competitor. Instead of a standard "About Us" page giving a general description of your company, perhaps start with its origins and your idea behind the creation of the company. Moments like this is a golden opportunity to separate yourself from your competition by sharing your personal story that customers can relate to or find interesting. It may be even more impactful to have your photo available for viewing so you can put a face to your company and make that human connection.

Create Educational & Instructional Material

Another way to grab customer attention is to teach them something that they would find useful, mainly using your product. How-To guides, DIY projects, and information-filled articles give customers a reason to come to your site other than to just buy and can establish you as an excellent industry source that people rely on time and time again for issues that are solved by your products. In today's digital age, it's usually better to "show" rather than "tell," so creating short videos explaining things is a great way to get people to find your site and check out what you have in stock.

Take Industry Data & Simplify It

Presenting legitimate industry data to support why your product is a good solution to your customer's problem is a valuable sales tool as well as great content that you can brand through comprehensive simplification. Most of the time when you first receive industry metrics, analytics, and numbers, it doesn't mean too much to the average customer (most of which will not be an industry expert like you). Simplifying it into layman's terms makes the information more accessible for the people you are showing it to so they can wrap their heads around what point you are trying to make. Popular methods of doing this include colorful infographics, videos, and graphs to demonstrate the information visually for quick consumption of the concept.

Keep an Eye on Your Competitors, But Don't Copy

We all want to know what the competition is up to, but we shouldn't ever look to jump on the bandwagon. Checking out your competitor's websites, product reviews, and sales should only serve as inspiration for you to change things up if you are having a hard time selling your products. Copying them blatantly in a market that already doesn't draw too much interest from people can cause the average buyer not to differentiate between you and your competitor; this means that people may just choose you by accident or convenience instead of becoming a loyal customer, and your business merely plateaus. Use the suggestions on this list and think outside the box to make you stand out from the noise on the internet; you can offer better pricing, service, quality, shipping arrangements, helpful information, and more.

Create Multimedia Content

As far as media mediums go, people prefer to get their content in digital form more than ever. Videos, podcasts, and interactive media is among the highest viewed content in any industry, and will only grow over time. Producing helpful How-To or product feature videos can go a long way to draw interest to your company, particularly if you do so with regularity and high quality. YouTube is the second-largest search engine in the world, after all.

Contribute to Other Popular Sources

Sometimes the best way to extend your reach is to stand on the shoulders of giants and use them to make your voice be heard. Contributing content to industry publications, magazines, videos, and more can give your company exposure to a whole new audience and get some conversions along the way. Also, being published on a syndicated or popular site can be a badge of honor and can be marketed.

For example, putting up a button on your website that says "As Seen on [Insert popular publication] can do wonders in impressing customers. Being interviewed, appearing on a radio show or podcast, or writing an article regarding your product can also boost your company's awareness. Also getting industry experts (that are not competitors, of course) to contribute to your media channels in blogs, interviews, and video can also lend more credence to your company and make you look better in the eyes of potential customers.

Have Fun, Especially on Social Media

It's a fact: people are on their electronic devices more than ever today, so reaching them through the channels they utilize most is quintessential to pushing past the boring products and having fun with what you have got. Showing that you are a dynamic company that is full of ideas that can be posted on your social media channels can make the difference between boring product and life hacking.

For example, if you are a company that sells tools, nails, screws, etc., showing a multitude of DIY projects around the house can get people interested doing such activities, and therefore generating interest in purchasing your products to accomplish those products. Don't think of your product as boring, but rather what interesting things can your products be used for.

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