

Manufacturing pros look to leads

Tough times have industrial marketers looking for ways to improve ROI

BY MARY E. MORRISON

MARKETERS IN THE industrial space continue to face a number of significant challenges this year, most notably that their budgets have been cut; their target audience often isn't buying; and they're under more pressure than ever to prove—and improve—marketing ROI.

As a result, industrial marketers are heavily focused on lead generation and customer acquisition, said Chris Chariton, VP-marketing services and product management at GlobalSpec, a search engine and information resource for the engineering, industrial and technical communities. In fact, according to the company's annual Industrial Marketing Trends Survey, conducted during the first quarter of this year, 73% of respondents said customer acquisition or lead generation was their primary marketing goal. (The survey had 555 respondents—sales and marketing executives representing a variety of company sizes, with annual marketing budgets less than \$50,000 to more than \$1 million).

"When times are bad, things a lot of times shift from a branding perspective over to a lead-generation and hard-bottom-line focus on generating revenue for the company," Chariton said. "So we've certainly seen that as a top priority."

Mark Renschler, marketing manager at Makino, a global manufacturer of machine tools, said his company's goal is to find customers and prospects that are ready to buy equipment. "Even though we may continue to operate a fully integrated campaign, which includes all facets of print media, PR, events and so forth, we're focused on finding ways to reach those that are willing and able

to purchase equipment at this time," he said.

For Makino, one of the most important ways to find those buyers—or rather, to be found by them—is on search engines, Renschler said. "I think a studious and effective search engine optimization program is absolutely vital in today's world, given the way in which the engineering community now hunts for information," he said. "That is a requirement for marketers today."

Providing potential buyers with exten-

"Suppliers that don't have the content, the functionality and the searching capabilities to help buyers ... are going to lose out."

Susan Orr, senior director of strategic marketing, ThomasNet

sive information about products and services is critical, said Susan Orr, senior director of strategic marketing at ThomasNet, an online destination for buyers of industrial products and services. "Suppliers that don't have the content, the functionality and the searching capabilities to help buyers find what they need online and make a decision to buy are going to lose out," she said.

That product and service information should be easy to find and in multiple formats, said Brandon Rhoten, account supervisor at Cincinnati-based b-to-b marketing agency Gyro:HSR, Makino's agency of record. "[Potential buyers] aren't just seeking a brochure or just one contact. They're really seeking a whole host of information

because they know they can't purchase today; or, if they *can* purchase today, they have to be very, very careful with their dollars—so their selection has to be backed up with volumes of solid information," he said.

Makino and Gyro:HSR have made an effort to provide every type of information a prospect could want, he said. "If they're looking for information via Twitter, we're there. If they're looking for information that's video-based, we've got a webinar to help fulfill that. If they want a technical article, we have that," he said.

A manufacturer's Web site is a critical piece of the equation, said Mike Hannigan, managing partner of Koch Group Inc., an industrial marketing consulting company that works with small and midsize manufacturers and industrial service providers. "Today, if you don't have a site that will rank [high on search engine results pages] and provide information buyers are searching for, or if the site isn't easy to use, you're making a big mistake," he said. "It works 24/7, 365 days a year; and you're not going to get a salesperson to do that. It's a tremendous tool if used properly."

In addition to having rich, in-depth content, a manufacturer's site must load quickly, be user-friendly and be easy to read, Hannigan said. He advises against using Flash intro pages. "In the manufacturing world, more than 98% of people tell us they skip it immediately," he said.

Orr said ThomasNet recommends that clients evaluate their Web site the same way they would a sales representative. "You have metrics for your top salespeople—they need to sell this much to this target market, what the average sale is, how long did it take for that sale to be made, etc.," she said. "We recommend to our clients they look at their Web site in the same way. What do you expect the Web site to contribute to the bottom line? What are the metrics associated with it being successful?"

Webinars have been particularly effective for Makino, Renschler said. The company has run more than 100 webinars in the past three years and houses them in a library on its site. Makino hopes to expand this program going forward, Renschler said. □

industryoutlook

Be sure to look for decision-makers

BEREA, OHIO-BASED Sonnhalter is a b-to-b marketing communications agency that specializes in helping clients reach the construction, industrial and MRO (maintenance, repair and operations) markets. *BtoB* recently spoke to Matt Sonnhalter, president, about best practices for reaching manufacturing professionals and industrial buyers.

BtoB: What challenges do companies currently face in marketing to this audience?

Sonnhalter: One basic thing is trying to find the right decision-maker. Nowadays, a lot of these organizations are complex. For example, if you're selling something related to capital equipment that has a larger price tag, the finance people may be involved. If you're selling an everyday, lower-priced thing, the purchasing people might be involved. Green is a hot topic now, so you've got environmental specialists and engineers involved.

Each of those people has different hot buttons. The finance guy is a numbers guy, so he wants to know what the ROI is. The plant manager wants to know how quickly he can get the product. The purchasing department wants to know about price. You have to find the right decision-maker and make sure you're delivering the right message.

BtoB: What's the best way to break through to this audience?

Sonnhalter: It still comes back to basic marketing 101 stuff. It's clearly delivering your message and your end-user benefit to that appropriate audience. What's in it for them? Why should they buy your product or service? What's unique about it? It's also about building a relationship and credibility with these customers, which means you're not always selling to them 100% of the time. You should be constantly trying to serve up new and valuable information, and providing value to that end-user—whether it be white papers, or technical articles or education in safety seminars. And sure, you might have a product or service that helps deliver on that, but that's not the main focus. If you're trying to sell just on price, it's a losing battle, because there's always someone who will do it for less. So provide other things to those end-users that they see value in and build relationships with them. □



MATT
SONNHALTER
President,
Sonnhalter

Manufacturer moves catalog online to generate new leads

BY MARY E. MORRISON

INDUSTRIAL SPECIALTIES Manufacturing (ISM), Englewood, Colo., is a manufacturer and distributor of miniature pneumatic, vacuum and fluid circuitry components. The company, which has 15 full-time employees, sells its products to purchasing agents and specifying engineers at companies in a variety of industries, including academic research; automotive; industrial; maintenance and repair; marine; medical/pharmaceutical; and technology. The company was founded in 1982 and acquired in 2006 by James Davis, a former technology executive.

Since its founding, ISM had relied on a 300-page print catalog, which listed the company's 150,000 products in 12 product lines, to sell to its customers. Though the catalog had been effective, it was costly and

almost always outdated because the company's portfolio of products changed often.

So when Davis, ISM's president, took over the company three years ago, he set out to build a new, Web-based lead generation model. "I felt that we needed to migrate to an online business model and be able to take advantage of the various search engines and online marketing techniques, in addition to the more traditional channels of direct mail and paper catalog," Davis said.

ISM began working with ThomasNet, a division of Thomas Publishing Co., to move its product catalog online. ThomasNet helped ISM update its Web site (at www.industrial-spec.com), adding the entire product catalog and optimizing the site for search engines. It also added the product catalog to ThomasNet.com, an online destination that lists the products

Case Study

HOW INDUSTRIAL SPECIALTIES MANUFACTURING'S SHIFT TO ONLINE INCREASED SALES BY 15%

Objective: Industrial Specialties Manufacturing, a manufacturer and distributor of miniature pneumatic, vacuum and fluid circuitry components, wanted to shift to an online business model and move its product catalog online.

Strategy: Working with ThomasNet, ISM moved its product catalog to its Web site (www.industrial-spec.com) and optimized that content so it could be found easily by search engines. It also established a presence at ThomasNet.com.

Results: ISM had a 25-fold increase in conversion actions from 2007 to 2008. The number of links to the catalog from other Web sites grew 864%, and the number of user sessions doubled. Search engine referrals increased by about 12%. Overall, sales grew 15%.

and services of 607,000 industrial companies and has 1 million visitors a month.

ThomasNet organized and uploaded ISM's full product line with new SKU and custom part numbers, item photos and diagrams. Visitors to ISM's site can search for items in 12 product categories and drill

down to specify material composition, size, shape or function; they can also search by keyword or stock number. Users can compare items side by side, then request more information or quotes.

After moving its catalog online, ISM had a 25-fold increase in conversion actions—such as requesting

a quote or information; registering for e-mails; or making a purchase—from 2007 to 2008. The number of links to the catalog from other Web sites grew 864%, to 4,532 in 2008 from 470 in 2007, and the number of user sessions doubled, to 10,676 from 4,870. Search engine referrals increased by about 12%.

Overall, sales grew 15% in 2008, and the catalog was the single largest contributor, Davis said.

Because the catalog is easily accessible and searchable, it has helped ISM attract new customers, Davis said. It also has helped the company sell new products to existing customers, he said. "I think it's very difficult over the past two years for any business to be recession-proof," he said. "But we have been recession-resistant because of our online activities, with the catalog being the center point." □

VERTICAL VEHICLES

SUGGESTIONS ON WHERE TO REACH MANUFACTURING PROS

MANUFACTURING PUBLICATIONS

Publication	Publisher	URL	Est.circ.	Auditor	Audit date
New Equipment Digest	Penton Media	www.newequipment.com	202,283	BPA	6/09
Industrial Equipment News	Thomas Publishing Co.	www.ielonline.com	201,615	BPA	12/08
NASA Tech Briefs	ABP International	www.techbriefs.com	190,346	BPA	12/08
Design News	Reed Business Information	www.designnews.com	170,108	BPA	6/09
Machine Design	Penton Media	http://machinedesign.com	164,722	BPA	6/09
IndustryWeek	Penton Media	www.industryweek.com	126,250	BPA	12/08
Manufacturing Engineering	Society of Manufacturing Engineers	www.sme.org/manufacturing-engineering/	98,995	BPA	6/09
Modern Machine Shop	Gardner Publications	www.mmsonline.com	97,072	BPA	6/09
Mechanical Engineering	Am. Society of Mechanical Engineers	www.memagazine.org	92,599	BPA	12/08
Packaging Digest	Reed Business Information	www.packagingdigest.com	90,045	BPA	6/09
Purchasing	Reed Business Information	www.purchasing.com	89,530	BPA	6/09
Plant Engineering	Reed Business Information	www.plantengineering.com	86,705	BPA	6/09
Control Engineering	Reed Business Information	www.controleng.com	86,000	BPA	6/09
Plant Services	Putnam Media	www.plantservices.com	80,100	BPA	6/09
Packaging World	Summit Publishing Co.	www.packworld.com	77,170	BPA	6/09
IMPO	Advantage Business Media	www.impomag.com	75,018	BPA	6/09
Intech	ISA	www.isa.org	71,272	BPA	6/09
Control	Putnam Media	www.controlmag.com	63,029	BPA	6/09
Automation World	Summit Media	www.automationworld.com	61,149	BPA	6/09
Desktop Engineering	Level 5 Communications	www.deskeng.com	60,000	BPA	6/09
MetalForming	PMA Services	www.metalforming-magazine.com	60,000	BPA	6/09
The Fabricator	FMA Communications	www.thefabricator.com	58,089	BPA	6/09
Manufacturing Business Technology	Reed Business Information	www.mbtmag.com	57,000	BPA	6/09
Assembly	BNP Media	www.assemblymag.com	56,106	BPA	6/09
Motion System Design	Penton Media	www.motion-systemdesign.com	52,443	BPA	6/09
Maintenance Technology	Applied Tech. Publications	www.mt-online.com	52,110	BPA	6/09

*Note: This chart was compiled, using third-party auditing information, from the following SRDS categories: business; control & instrumentation systems; industrial; industrial automation; industrial distribution/manufacturing/industries, equipment, products; metal, metalworking & machinery; packaging (users); packaging manufacturers; plant/engineering, maintenance, repair & operations; product design engineering

MANUFACTURING TRADE SHOWS/EVENTS

Event	Date	Location	URL
FABTECH International & AWS Welding Show 2009	Nov. 15–18	Chicago	www.fmafabtech.com
New Chem Show	Nov. 17–19	New York	www.chemshow.com
WESTEC 2010 Exposition	March 23–25	Los Angeles	www.sme.org/westec
Design & Manufacturing New England NA 2010	April 21–22	Boston	www.devicelink.com/expo/dmne09/
Quality Expo South 2010	April 26–29	Cleveland	www.nashow.com
PTXi International	April 28–29	Charlotte, N.C.	www.devicelink.com/expo/qexpos10/
Rapid 2010 Conference & Expo	May 4–6	Rosemont, Ill.	www.devicelink.com/expo/ptxi08/
IMTS 2010	May 18–20	Anaheim, Calif.	www.sme.org/rapid
Design & Manufacturing Midwest 2010	Sept. 13–18	Chicago	www.imts.com
Spring World 2010 & Wire Forming IFPE 2011	Sept. 28–30	Rosemont, Ill.	www.devicelink.com/expo/dmmidwest09/
	Oct. 13–15	Rosemont, Ill.	www.springworld.org
	March 22–26, 2011	Las Vegas	www.ifpe.com

MANUFACTURING RESOURCES

Resource	URL
Association of Equipment Manufacturers	www.aem.org
Control.com	www.control.com
GlobalSpec	www.globalspec.com
Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership	www.mep.nist.gov
Industrial Directory	www.industrialdirectory.com
IndustryLink	www.industrylink.com
Kellysearch	www.kellysearch.com
Manufacturer4.com	www.manufacturer4.com
Manufacturers Resource Center	www.mrcpa.org
Manufacturing.net	www.manufacturing.net
MFG.com	www.mfg.com
National Association of Manufacturers	www.nam.org
National Electrical Manufacturers Association	www.nema.org
Society of Manufacturing Engineers	www.sme.org

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