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Part 2: Preparing Your Online Strategy for the Coming Economic Recovery

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Despite growing signs of economic improvement, many businesses appear slow to leverage the emerging set of powerful yet inexpensive online sales, marketing and operational communication tools that would help cut costs and gain greater market share during the critical remaining months of 2009.

In a recent report, *Interactive Marketing Channels to Watch in 2009*, issued last March by Forester Research, only 20% of surveyed businesses expect to utilize new social media tools such as podcasts, blogs, or post content on community-based portals such as Facebook.com, Twitter.com and other outlets this year. Corporate use of web video and mobile marketing also seems likely to remain flat in the short term.

With new tools in hand and recovery in sight, will your business choose to remain on the sidelines or will you strengthen and position your organization for new, long term success? **Think "OPPORTUNITY."**

Build deeper, more interactive relationships with customers and prospects...It has never been easier (and more crucial) to establish an active and ongoing dialogue with those who may require your services. Consider hosting an online discussion forum, inviting individuals to discuss common issues and explore new business solutions in a friendly, support-group environment. Offer unique access to your own expertise, by inviting prospective customers to submit their requests for advice, as a way to build trust and plant seeds for future sales opportunities. Present a "tip of the day" via Twitter.com, helping existing customers learn how to get more from the services they have already purchased. Host online "brain storm" sessions with inexpensive applications such as GoToMeeting.com or WebEx.com.

Reach new prospective customers by sharing and repurposing existing sales and marketing content...Spread your product information to a broader audience by utilizing several online distribution channels at once. Post corporate video presentations and television commercial content on YouTube.com. Create your own "Fan Page" and upload images to a photo gallery on Facebook.com, demonstrating your product in action. Share links to interesting and useful 3rd party articles and helpful "do-it-yourself" white papers.

Empower customers to do more themselves, more quickly, online...Speed and convenience will play ever increasing roles for the leaders of the post recovery economy. Update your existing Ecommerce storefront, allowing customers a greater ability to convert on-demand orders into immediate sales. Expand online "self-help" resources, by adding searchable online document libraries and indexing public content within the search engines. Further, encourage customers to "pre-register" in order to gain online access to their account information when needed, and to receive personalized product news and service alerts via email.

For more ways to get ready for the new recovery, visit www.cccommunications.com/bizXperts/.

About the author:

As one of the region's earliest pioneers in the field of online communications, *Kip Cozart*, along with CC Communications owner/partners *Russ Husky* and *Loretta Cozart*, have consulted with hundreds of businesses and organizations to enhance and produce effective web, email, multimedia marketing initiatives and business process improvements for more than fourteen years. Contact kcozart@cccommunications.com or call CC Communications at 704-543-1171.