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Preparing Your Online Strategy for the Coming Economic Recovery

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In a recent WSOCTV.com report, University of North Carolina economist, John Connaughton suggests, "The recession is just one to three months from being over," forecasting a modest recovery for the remainder of 2009 and still stronger improvement in 2010. While not everyone would agree with Connaughton's prediction of the timing and strength of the coming economic recovery, many area businesses are starting to see real signs of progress.

In response, industry leaders are strengthening their Internet communication tools and fine tuning core business processes to take full advantage of the potential rush of new sales and marketing opportunities. Businesses that can emerge first with a quicker, smarter, leaner, proactive Internet strategy will be in position to grab a greater share of the emerging new marketplace, while conserving costs and leveraging new online resources all at the same time. Is your business ready to shift gears and compete in the new recovery?

Think "FAST FORWARD."

Speed up sales and service processing...In the post-recession marketplace, successful businesses will move faster by employing semi-automated "virtual" sales and customer service applications. Offer convenient "short-cut" service request forms, allowing customers the ability to quickly retrieve and resubmit repeatable orders, linked to pre-established billing and delivery instructions. Create an intelligent email "reminder calendar," programmed to prompt patrons to renew seasonal purchases or set to offer automated, one-to-one incentives to recharge customers whose recent buying patterns may have slowed. Convert customers into proactive "sales agents," by offering a self-service, online registration program to facilitate and track email referrals, as well as issue immediate online "appreciation rewards" to participants in the form of vouchers or instant printable coupons.

Shift business functions into high gear...Outpace your competitors by getting to prospects first, using a wide array of online communication tools. Meet with customers and prospects any time, regardless of location, using such affordable online services as GoToMeeting.com or WebEx.com, starting at less than \$60 per month. Invite visitors to travel to you instantly, by offering a "virtual tour" or product field demonstration through online video. Simultaneously plan and brainstorm with associates from multiple venues with affordable and easy online collaboration tools, like Basecamp (basecampHQ.com) and Conceptshare.com.

Go digital and reduce operation costs...Businesses that leverage the Internet to accelerate day-to-day tasks while also reducing costs will emerge as leaders in the new economy. Abandon faxed correspondence in lieu of digital messaging. Utilize email invoicing, online bill pay, or automated bank drafts. Automate client-reporting functions using online widgets, dashboards or RSS messaging.

For more information, 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.

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