



Building strength



In this *Toy & Hobby Retailer* exclusive, Joe Thymian, SLI Systems APAC regional vice president, shares his top five tips for grabbing a piece of the growing e-commerce pie.

DURING the past 12 months, Australian online retail sales have increased more than 12 per cent to \$19.9 billion. These figures, recorded by the National Australia Bank's Online Retail Sales Index, show that one segment gaining significant online traction is games and toys.

While physical toy stores have battled weak trading conditions, e-tailers have eaten into their territory, with sales up 41.6 per cent year-on-year in May 2016. With consumers increasingly moving their shopping habits online, how can toy and game retailers grab themselves a piece of this growing e-commerce pie?

Here, technology and services company SLI Systems' Joe Thymian shares five top tips for creating a tempting online offering that turns browsers into buyers.

1. ENSURE SHOPPERS CAN FIND WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR

According to the Nielsen Norman Group, most website visitors stick around for less than 59 seconds. So, if you don't capture the user's attention in less than a minute, you've lost them. Most importantly, users leave your site when they don't know what to do next.

More and more visitors are entering toy sites through product pages (versus the

homepage) from an organic search or paid ads. The best way to keep them on your site is to show them additional items related to their original search with a dynamic product banner. By displaying centrally located merchandising banners, you may be able to entice a visitor to stay on your site, and potentially make a purchase, even if they don't find the right product on the first try.

By implementing rich, auto-complete technology, you can also ensure relevant product images are displayed in a drop down under the search bar as users enter search terms. This functionality helps visitors quickly identify the products they are looking for, and has proven to dramatically increase conversions as much as 10 times.

2. MAKE THE EXPERIENCE HIGHLY PERSONAL

A few months makes a world of difference when it comes to what a child needs and what parents want to buy. For example, mums and dads of six-month-olds are searching for the perfect mobile to keep their child

entertained, while parents of a one-year-old are introducing their child to building blocks, musical toys and balls.

When parents sign up to receive emails, request the dates of birth, sex, and names of their children, tailor email campaigns and curate landing pages with products that match the baby's age and each exciting developmental stage. This can create a more valuable relationship with your customer, drive repeat sales, and avoid cluttering up your customers' inboxes with irrelevant messages about newborns when their baby is already a toddler.

3. SUGGEST OTHER RELEVANT PRODUCTS AND OFFER ADVICE

What the world's largest fast food chains do so well is up-sell. The phrase 'Would you like fries with that?' has almost become synonymous with the food industry, and is an example of one of the most effective ways of increasing sales – providing potential customers with relevant product suggestions. But who says this strategy can't be mimicked within other sectors?

According to SLI Systems' published research, approximately 25 per cent of site visitors will click on a search suggestion. By using learning technology that continually improves relevance, based on actual shopper activity, retailers can show visitors the products that are most likely to be paired or purchased in their situation.

Another way to do this is by sharing content that may lead to additional purchases. The truth is that parents shop for more than products; they look for advice they can trust. By incorporating educational content, parent-to-parent reviews, and advice, toy e-tailers can not only help





position their company as an expert resource, but can also encourage social sharing, conversation, and improve their SEO.

4. UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE TO FIT TODAY'S USER PREFERENCES

Technology is continually evolving – and retailers that are able to stay up-to-date and cater to user preferences will see results in the form of increased sales.

When targeting parents, bear in mind that shopping is either performed on-the-go, or while multitasking. Consider your site parent-ready if the desperately sleep-deprived can find what they're looking for while only using their thumbs.

You'll want to enhance the quality of smaller screens while delivering relevant results with speed. In addition, think about how best to streamline the purchase process for mobile shoppers. The fewer clicks, the better. Make sure shoppers have the option to save payment and shipping information so they only have to enter it once. By not

thinking like their target audience, retailers risk losing potential customers.

5. SHOW RATINGS, REVIEWS AND CUSTOMER ACTIONS

Now more than ever, consumers' purchasing behaviours are highly influenced by the opinions, feedback, and preferences of others who've shopped for similar products.

To stay on top of this trend and offer transparency to customers, most retailers now collect and display ratings and reviews for the products they stock. Since reviews have a positive impact on conversion rates, display the average rating in search results to help visitors determine if they want to know more about a product.

What's more, parents trust other parents' experience. By providing relevant recommendations, such as "customers who bought this item also bought" and "customers who viewed this item also viewed", shoppers explore products they may have otherwise missed. Also, adding "recently viewed" can be a great strategy for reminding shoppers where they left off.

There are many ways to ensure your online toy store stands out from the rest, and overcomes the challenges facing physical toy retailers. The question is no longer 'why invest in e-commerce?', but how to invest to help your business stay ahead of competitors and optimise your customers' shopping experience. ❄

SLI Systems enables e-commerce retailers to increase sales by connecting shoppers with the products they're most likely to buy. With proven search technology that learns from the activity of real site visitors, SLI delivers SaaS-based site search, navigation, merchandising, mobile, recommendations and SEO solutions that arm retailers with the tools they need for rapid growth. Visit sli-systems.com.au

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