



Consistency Counts

In this month's installment of our ongoing series that profiles growing companies in the industry, we take a look at one New York distributor that's keeping up a 10% growth rate by using smart customer service and marketing tactics.



By Betsy Cummings

*t*his month, Allied World Assurance Company Ltd. will launch its online company store, so that employees can “purchase branded items for themselves,” says Faye Cook, vice president of marketing and communications for the Pembroke, Bermuda-based insurance company. It's an effort Allied wanted to put in the hands of only one particular ad specialty distributor. “They by far exceed the expectations of anyone else,” Cook says.

“They” would be Corporate Values (*asi/169054*), a distributor Allied has worked with for three years. In that time, says Cook, the company has never run short on ideas, products or strategies to promote Allied's brand and vision, either inside or outside the company.

That might be why, even in a difficult econ-

omy, Corporate Values, headquartered in Roslyn Heights, NY, is seeing sales increase by 10% a year, with \$1.7 million in sales in 2008. “I have a tremendous support team,” says Woody Kaye, the company's president.

What's most impressive is that Kaye's support “team” consists of only two people; their



roles are so strategically spread out that the company's operations, customer service and marketing methods have become seamless. In addition, the company isn't afraid to leverage outside vendors to prop up marketing and sales efforts.

"Lots of times sellers and managers have so much on their plates and are flying from one task to another that there isn't that much breathing room in their schedule to sit and think" about strategies, prospecting, marketing and other time-consuming tasks, says Yoon Cannon, president and CEO of Paramount Business Coach, a business consultancy in Philadelphia. That's particularly true of small distributorships where there simply isn't enough manpower to focus enough time on various company operations.

Setting A Foundation

When Kaye started Corporate Values in 1999, he knew structure was going to be of utmost importance for success. He implemented ACT! customer relationship management (CRM) software from the beginning so that he would have detailed information on every prospect and client. While plenty of companies have a well-managed database, Kaye knew CRM was only a start. ACT! alone wouldn't be enough to make his company thrive. When your sales team is essentially a one-man show (Kaye does virtually all the selling) you have to sell smart. Kaye knows he has little to no time for prospecting, so he farms cold calls out to a telemarketing firm. For less than \$500 a month, they call area companies that might need promotional products, and when they develop warm leads, they pass them on to Kaye.

A recent hot lead sent Kaye to an advertising agency that needed not only promotional products but an online store as well. With this store, Kaye saw a chance to create a new sales model – something he could leverage at similar agencies for



Woody Kaye is using a comprehensive communication and marketing strategy to grow his business – a little outsourcing also pays off on the expense side.

continued revenue generation, rather than a one-time deal. Unlike Allied's store, where traditional transactions mean a straight sale between just one company and Corporate Values, the ad agency's orders would come through a new URL (that incorporates both Corporate Values' URL and the agency's name) with a 10% to 15% share of each individual end-user sale going to the agency. Setting up such a site gives Corporate Values access to the agency's many end-user clients in a way that doesn't require Kaye to cold-call all of them individually. Kaye says he hopes to market the same business model to dozens of other agencies as soon as the first store is launched. He believes that constant collaborations with clients are crucial to his company's continued growth.

Getting Marketing Support

More than anything, it's Corporate Values' backup and support systems that keep the firm moving forward. Take marketing, for example. Kaye knows prospecting is a full-

Growth Profile

Name: Corporate Values (*asi/169054*)

Location: Roslyn Heights, NY

Founder & President: Woody Kaye

2008 Revenues: \$1.7 million

Average Order Size: \$2,100

Annual Growth Rate: 10%

Secrets Of Success:

- Exceeding customers' expectations
- Outsourcing job functions to keep expenses low
- Smart marketing tactics

time job, and he can't afford to hire a marketing director just yet. "You could easily spend three hours a day wandering around the social media and e-marketing world," says Nancy Shenker, founder and CEO of theONswitch, a marketing strategy firm in Thornwood, NY.

Instead, Kaye pays Kim Beckers Services, based in Centereach, NY, \$400 a month to be his virtual assistant. In that role, Beckers writes monthly articles, a half dozen blog posts and a once-monthly e-newsletter that goes to nearly 1,400 Corporate Values customers. None of those communications are sent without Kaye's review and approval. But while he's out networking for new clients or pitching existing customers, Beckers is busy creating new pitches for online marketing opportunities.

"People still need goods and services in a recession, and they're going to buy stuff from people they see out there," says Kaye, who thinks distributors' marketing efforts should be ramped up in a slow market, not slashed from the budget. He just started using Beckers in January, so the jury's still out – along with tracking results – on the service's effectiveness, he says. That said, Corporate Values' "opti-



Anne MacInnis, left, and Felicia Maley keep the Corporate Values office humming on a daily basis.

mization results are improving” on Web searches, causing the company to “get higher visibility on Google as a result.”

As for the company stores, “I wouldn’t say it generates a lot of money, but it pays

for itself” in orders, Kaye says. “It’s worth us doing it because it’s part of relationship strengthening between Corporate Values and its clients. And it certainly has done that.”

LEARN IT LIVE!

Want to hear success secrets from some of the fastest-growing distributors in the industry today? Head to ASI Chicago, July 21-23, where a panel discussion of successful distributors will offer sales, marketing and operational ideas for how to oversee a growing business in any economy. We’ll see you there!

Building Lasting Client Relationships

Efforts to build relationships and rapport among clients are a key factor in the company’s growth, says Felicia Maley, office manager at Corporate Values. For example, Maley says she’s always on the lookout for products that might be intriguing to specific clients. When she thinks she’s spotted one, she sends it – unsolicited – to the particular client with a note. For instance, one supplier rep recently visited Corporate Values with a “great aluminum flashlight that had amazing power with a halogen bulb,” Maley says. She snatched up the sample

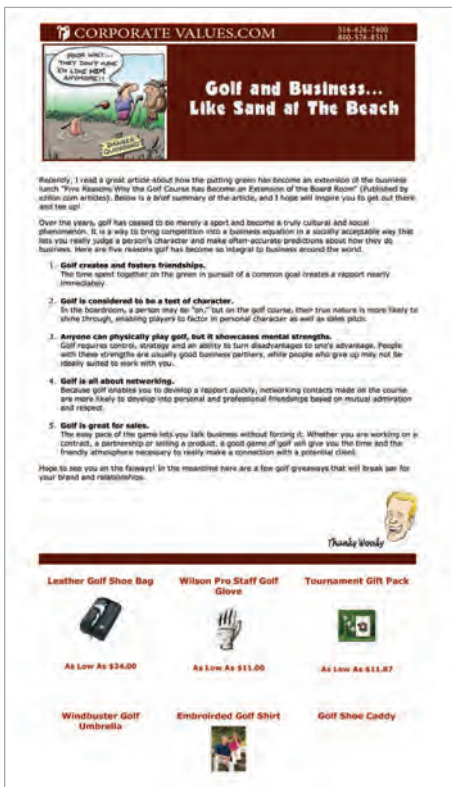
Mastering E-Marketing

These days e-marketing is about far more than an occasional e-newsletter touting a company’s hottest products. Distributors who want to market aggressively need to be covering all of their online bases. After all, having a greater Web presence can boost search engine results for distributors, build closer client relationships, land more deals and forge a company’s path as an industry expert, says Kristine Bruner, founder and CEO of Pristine PR & Marketing, a marketing consulting firm in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Here are a few tips to do just that:

- **Blog with a purpose.** Too often, blogs, e-newsletters and other Web-based communications contain useless information and are sent out randomly. Bruner says companies should always distribute online communications on the same day each week or month so recipients know when to expect news and updates.
- **Tease readers effectively.** Headlines should be catchy,

concise and no more than two or three words long, Bruner says. “You want to give readers an overview so they’re prompted to read more,” she says.

- **Interact with readers.** The most powerful blogs ask visitors to post comments, click on survey links and otherwise get involved in the online discussion at hand. Facebook pages, Twitter efforts and other social media should have a similar focus, Bruner says. Doing so “increases the likelihood of bringing visitors back to your site,” she says.
- **Track your efforts.** There’s no point in blogging or e-mailing unless you can track how many orders those efforts bring in – or at least to what degree recipients are interacting with those marketing efforts. Google’s FeedBurner, for example, helps bloggers track subscribers and statistics surrounding blog activity.



In constant contact: An example of the newsletter that Corporate Values regularly sends to customers.

and sent it to a construction company in New York that she had worked with before. Corporate Values got three orders for 1,000 flashlights each, Maley says.

What's more, each client who places an order receives a thank-you note after the order is complete, along with a gift – anything from a top-of-the-line steak kit to a first aid kit or eco-friendly tote bag. “Each Friday we print out invoices we’ve prepared” and send out gifts based upon the size of the order, Maley says. “Of course, the more you spend the nicer the gift is,” she adds. Those thank-yous, Kaye says, run anywhere from \$12 to \$25 each – a justified expense when you consider that his average order is \$2,100, well above the industry average of about \$1,000.

These tactics keep orders coming in the door from current clients, and help to build a strong referral system so that Corporate Values can grow its network of new clients from existing ones. But it won't guarantee rapid growth for decades. For that, Kaye says he is looking to acquire “distributors who are, for whatever reason, near retirement or frustrated with the recession, and



Lone Star: Woody Kaye is the sole salesperson for this \$1.7 million operation.

might be interested in selling their distributorship. My goal is to buy five in the next two years.”

Once a grower, always a grower. ○

Betsy Cummings is senior writer for Counselor.

Servicing Sales

Woody Kaye, president of Corporate Values (*asi/169054*), has created a solid sales support system using both inside and outside staff. That starts with monitoring and mentoring sellers. Particularly in a slow economy, it's important for managers to catch sales slippage early. Yoon Cannon, president and CEO of Paramount Business Coach, a business consultancy in Philadelphia, offers the following tips to avoid sales issues.

Create Daily Reports: It sounds tedious, but even the most basic Excel or Word sales report can account for each sale made every day and can keep managers abreast of daily and weekly sales activities to produce better forecasting results and sales efforts. Included in the reports should be “sales variables,” Cannon says, such as the company name, contact's title, the pitch description, buyer objections and the status of potential orders or business.

Check In Daily: Especially with small sales teams of less than five or 10 people, managers should check in individually with sellers each day, even if only for five minutes. During that time, they should cover one sales tactic or strategy to make sure reps are on the right track.

Hit The Road: Now is the time for managers to be out in the field supporting sales teams by going on calls to clients and prospects. It puts another face before clients and gives managers a better idea of where a seller's strengths and weaknesses lie.

Keep Reps Informed: A weekly internal e-newsletter is a great way to remind sellers about what to focus on during sales calls, such as which products to push over others. And weekly sales reports recognizing salespeople who excelled in the field that week go a long way in motivating sellers, particularly in a tight market.