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# EXPANDING Your Market Reach



To stay on par with the other segments in retail, lighting stores must embrace the digital marketplace in order to grow. BY MARK OKUN

**W**ith all the news about retail stores giving up physical spaces and how the ease of online shopping has fueled that fire, it is surprising that the response from this resilient group of merchants has been to hunker down and ride out the storm.

I am not a weather forecaster, but the digital storm that lighting showrooms have been experiencing will be turning into a tsunami if you are not prepared. Keeping your head in the sand or ignoring the changes will do nothing other than expedite your business into irrelevancy.

Simply put, the public is doing more digital shopping. This may sound like doom and gloom, but according to McKinsey & Company

(<http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-future-of-retail-how-to-make-your-bricks-click>)

“80 percent of all transactions will be done in a traditional brick and mortar store.”

The way I see it, due to the type of products and services offered by a lighting showroom, the percentage of stores continuing will be higher.

#### GEOGRAPHIC REACH

While some retail businesses have been flattening

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out and pulling in the reins, taking on the opposite approach by expanding your reach can help you survive – and even thrive – as we mount up against our local competition plus our digital competition, too.

Implementing a strategy to develop new market zones can be one way to keep your business moving forward. Every market changes over time; it is expected. Neighborhoods change, and building/development in nearby areas alter the complexion of the local markets we serve. In this “one touch, buy me now” world, customers are learning that the minute they want to own an item, buying can happen quickly.

As mentioned in my previous articles, we now see most of the customers coming into the showroom at the “trial & test” phase of their journey. Customers want to eagerly and easily try out and test the products they have seen online, and if they meet their expectations, they buy. Your goal is to get them to buy from you.

Retailers were once located in the busiest part of the city, but as the suburbs grew their clients wanted easier access and the shopping mall was born. Businesses that offered unique skills, products, categories, or specific knowledge to their customer base were still destinations for remote clients.

Today, we see customers – and many retailers – abandoning the shopping malls and shifting towards online purchases. Why? Time. The time it takes to “shop” is being absorbed into other activities. Everyone has busier lifestyles and time has become our precious commodity. When people can save time from performing any unpleasant activities, such as driving distances to shop, they will. Now buying clothes, gadgets, and even food is easily accomplished online, however, items such as lighting, furniture, and rugs – products that customers are less familiar with and that are tactile – still benefit from a physical location.

Besides rent, another major point to consider in expanding your “geographical” reach is the time it takes for your various types of customers to reach your business. When those clients arrive at your location, is there enough parking available to meet your sales goals?

#### THE DIGITAL MARKET

When it comes to expanding your reach, it requires yet another bow to the digital disruption we are in.



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“The more frequent a purchase, the less consumers are willing to travel.”

—Access Development:  
November 2016

Since lighting showrooms are selling items that are not “every day” purchases, the opportunity to draw clients in from an expanded market radius should be a 2018 goal. The trick is to let the public know *why* they need to travel for this rare buying trip, and promoting it digitally is the most efficient way to do that.

If we revisit how distance is measured, just how long will a customer travel in a car to get to your unique business? The answer is about 20 minutes. The urban consumer likes 15 minutes or less while the rural consumer will travel 50 minutes or more. That means that the same targeted geographic radius that will drive traffic in population-dense Miami will be smaller than that of Salt Lake City, *but the strategy is the same*. Offer the potential client base something they “must see” to get them in the door.

We are often reminded of the buzzwords that permeate sales and marketing cultures, such as “Customer Experience.” The truth is the complete experience we provide is what will make the difference when using a digital type of expansion.

Hosting extraordinary events is one way to separate your store from the crowd. Events can be planned, marketed, and promoted through digital media. While holding events in your showroom is not a new idea, the type of events held and the way you go about promoting the event is.

While holding events may seem run of the mill to people in the lighting industry, the everyday customer is often unaware of them. The titles of the topics must be compelling enough to have people get into their cars and drive to your store.

Here are some titles of events that will get attention:

- ★ “Control your home from your phone.”
- ★ “LED, the wild, wild west tamed.”
- ★ “Don’t ruin your interior design with the wrong light.”

I know from experience that events do not always draw those you are targeting into the showroom. No worries: Just record the event, edit it down to the best information, and then “share” it digitally via social media for those who “missed” the event.

The Internet knows no boundaries, and this means there are no geographical limits to your reach. While the cost of using digital advertising is increasing, it is still the best value for your marketing dollars — as long as it is done correctly.

When you are applying a digital strategy, do not try to replicate the methods you tried in the past using printed media. That’s like trying to send an email from Gutenberg’s press — it’s time-consuming and the anticipated results will not be obtainable as the two medias are incongruent in the battle for customers’ attention.

#### THE LIGHTING SHOWROOM FOCUS

As I see it, the importance of growing your market share as we move toward 2020 is paramount to continued success, or even continued existence! It means you can’t operate by the seat of your pants; it requires basic planning and action to reach the growth needed.

The basic actions a lighting showroom must engage in to increase market share are:

- ✓ Determine the targeted areas of your new market.
- ✓ Research the market and create personas that may vary from your current ones.
- ✓ Create a one-year plan to enter and dominate the new market.
- ✓ Investigate markets that are tangential to the new one you are targeting to further reach potential clients.

Each area of business has its products and unique service offerings. As we share more and more of those wonderful reasons that a customer

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## Owners and managers set the parameters and let the sales team have at it.

should be working with us, it aids in our market expansion efforts.

### PERSONAL MARKET GROWTH

The topic of growing your market share always seems to focus on the enterprise alone, but while every business owner must have his/her hand on that rudder, the members of the team need to help hoist the "sale." This principle stems from one of the original sales concepts: "Tell everyone what you do."

Before the digital age, the idea was to share what you do with all of the people you meet and that you are happy to help them if they ever need your services. Back then, we only had business cards and our local connections. This is still a very viable way of increasing your personal and local market reach, and with digital, you can 100x those efforts by reaching and reinforcing your position to a larger group of people and friends.

The ability to self-promote your staff's professional skills, vocation, and the reality that they are human beings is another arrow in the quiver of digital retail marketing that showrooms must embrace. Owners and managers set the parameters and let the sales team have at it.

### USE YOUR ADVANTAGE

Today's world of commerce puts the client in the driver's seat, and if we were truly just a transactional business, there would be greater fall-out. We have survived the big box stores, the rapid race to zero pricing, and we will succeed over the current digital disruption if we focus on the new game.

Knowing and sharing the uniqueness of our products, services, and people is the way to define ourselves, demonstrate our leadership, and promote why the local lighting showroom is important to the community and the industry. ❖

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