Translating Brick and Mortar to the Internet

Case study of a small brick and mortar retailer and how they are working to translate their unique store onto the Internet.

Petaluma, CA (PRWEB) November 13, 2005 -- It's a very common problem. People do not shop the same way online that they do in a physical store. They don't locate the store the same way, they don't browse its contents the same way and they certainly don't make buying decisions the same way. The following is a case study of how a small "Mom and Pop" street front store is working to stimulate sales online. Haus Fortuna's Website can be viewed online at: www.hausfortuna.com.

Haus Fortuna is a unique gift store located in the recently-renovated, historic downtown center of Petaluma, California. Its specialty is handmade Italian ceramics imported directly from Umbrian towns like Deruta & Orvieto created by artisans such as Giacomini, Gialletti Giulio and Originali.

From the beginning, Karla Schikore, the owner, has maintained both a brick and mortar store as well as an online presence. When she recently relocated the physical store to a new location it caused her to re-examine her online store. The new store location is a visually striking space packed almost to the ceiling with eye-catching merchandise. A great deal of work was put into the location to give it the appropriate feel that would appeal to their target market and encourage sales. The new store is located on a corner just across from Petaluma's newly popular multi-screen cinema, which virtually guarantees a high level of street traffic most days of the week.

When customers enter the store, everything about it - from the design of the shelves and they way products are displayed tells a "story" so that they "get it." That is they can immediately understand "what the store is about" from the type of products they carry and the type of person that they are designed to attract.

Though not exactly an after thought, the online store has not received the same level of attention and little effort was put into attracting Internet traffic to the site. Initially, when a visitor enters the site they encountered a very long list of product types and many thumbnails images for each category. As a result, the "personality" of the store wasn't effectively communicated. In other words, a visitor didn't "get it" they way they would if they walked into the physical store. To address this and other issues, Karla Schikore brought in the team of Steve Rustad of www.rustadmarketing.com and Brian Petro of www.bpwebdesign.com.

The first challenge was to identify the qualities of the store that make it so unique. After much soul-searching the answer came: the Haus Fortuna "difference" can be traced to its owner: Karla Schikore. Karla has a fantastic sense of style and extremely choosy about what products she imports into her shop. She builds and maintains direct relationships with her artisan vendors in Italy. The store's merchandise reflects that "Where did you get that?" quality because she chooses each piece personally. While the physical store epitomizes this quality, it was virtually absent from the online store.

Although www.hausfortuna.com is an on-going effort, here are some of the changes which are designed to reflect the owner's personality throughout the on-line store:
* Navigation of the site has been streamlined and a "Senora Fortuna Picks" section has been added to emphasize her brand on all products in the shop.
* Karla has added brief descriptions in product categories using her own "voice" to explain why these products
are chosen to be part of her collection.
* Product Categories have been re-arranged to allow visitors to shop by brand and to keep all categories looking full. Haus Fortuna's physical store always looks like it's bursting at the seams but her website often used to have categories with only a few items leaving an "empty shelf" feeling.
* Many products have been added to the website. The brand names include: Blenko, Chiliwich, Cucina, Deruta Ceramics, Lu Lu, Serge Lesage Rugs, Soho, Tea Forte, Thomas Douglas, & Victoria Gourmet.
* An online marketing campaign has been launched to drive qualified traffic to the site.

As the seasons change and new merchandise arrives from Italy, Karla adds new products to her on-line as well as her physical store. With the efforts we've just described she's also bringing her dynamic personality and tasteful aesthetic to the Internet.
For further information please contact Karla Schikore (707) 283-0166 or visit the website at http://www.hausfortuna.com.

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Online Web 2.0 Version
You can read the online version of this press release here.