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Drive Sales By Making Your Location A Destination

When you think of a destination, what comes to mind? Probably a vacation spot. A place worth going out of the way to get to. A place worth planning to go. A place you'll brag about going to. "We're taking the kids to Florence this summer."

When you return, you'll brag about the visit to friends, family, and co-workers. And, you'll show-off your pictures on Facebook and Twitter.

Wouldn't it be great if your business had these qualities? To be worth going out of the way for? Worth the wait? An experience that is so out of the ordinary, people take pictures and tell their friends? It is possible. You've been to restaurants and stores like that yourself.

So, what does it take to be a destination?
There are two situations...

- You are perceived as the first, the best or the only in what you offer. Customers already go out of their way to come to you
- You've got to *make* yourself the first, best, or only.

First, Best, Only

The **first** bakery to serve a [cronut](#)? The **best** home theater store in the area? The **only** authentic Korean restaurant in town?

If you are the first, best, or only – good for you – now you need to promote that specialty to drive people to your location and transform that traffic into sales.

More than likely, you're like most of us, not the first, or only, and, while you may think you're the best, your customers do not necessarily perceive you that way.

So, for us, we need to do programming and host regularly scheduled events that help us stand out. (And ultimately, help you become the first, best or only).

Destination Events & Programming

There are at least seven different types of programming you can host, and countless events. Every day offers an excuse for hosting events, programming, or other fun ways to entice customers to your location. Consider:

1. **Special Days & Holidays** – If not traditional celebrations like Valentine's Day, President's Day, First Day of Spring and Thanksgiving, consider that nearly every day of the week, and every month of the year has some special occasion. In June alone we have:
 - Iced Tea Month
 - National Doughnut Day (3rd)
 - Strawberry Shortcake Day (14th)
 - World Gin Day (15th)
 - The First Day of Summer (21)
 - and more...

Use dates like these to promote and host fun in-store events. Visit the [Marketing Holidays Calendar](#) for more ideas.

2. **Insider Events** – Host invite-only special events. Use your e-Newsletter and hand-delivered invitations to build awareness. Everyone loves to be treated as a VIP and receive exclusive offers.
3. **Educational Events** – Offer classes related to your products that help customers gain expertise. Wine tasting, knife skills class, dress for success, building a home theater, how to make a latte at home. Share your expertise and help customers become experts.
4. **Games & Contests** – Host trivia nights. Invest in a few Wii Game Consoles and host virtual leagues – bowling, darts, etc. Have fun prizes and have teams compete weekly. Buy a bunch of classic board games – the ones best for groups to play. Have your staff keep them happy with drinks and munchies!
5. **Arts & Culture Events** – Host in-store music, author readings, or bring in a table magician to wonder and delight your customers. Use your wall to exhibit the work of local artists. Do this and, each time you change out the artwork, you can host an Art Opening, which is an excuse to bring people in and sample your new products and offerings.
6. **Charity & Giving** – Find a local group or charity in need that matches with your brand, and partner with them on a long-term basis. Host in-store events and events around the community.
7. **Groups & Clubs** – If you’ve got the space, allow local groups and clubs to reserve space in your location. If you don’t rent it to them, create special offers for your products and services while they’re there. Give them special access to what you do.

Transform Traffic

Terrific, now you have events to host at your location. Getting people to the entrance and into your shop is only half the job. The second part is transforming that traffic to something meaningful.

And, it is important to add, it may not be transforming directly to sales. Prior to making the sale, you may need first to build trust and reduce perceived risk. So we recommend:

- **Trial: Sample and Demonstration** – Auto dealers sell cars through a test drive. Homes are bought via house tours. The expensive brand of pasta sauce flies off the shelf when sampled at the grocery store. Letting customers try before they buy reduces perceived risk. It often helps to sample a low-priced item, like a seasonal flavored latte, because people don’t want their day to start on the wrong foot with a cup of coffee they may not like. Sampling, and allowing customers to test products, allows them to understand – without the risk – that they do like the product. Sampling and demos lead to increased purchase rates.
- **Create Insiders: Newsletter Sign-Up** – Offering a monthly e-mail newsletter is a great way to get potential customers to know you better and keep existing customers engaged. Create a way for your customers to sign-up in your location. A simple page printed with “Name” and “e-Mail” will do the trick. By signing up, customers are giving you permission to communicate with them. In every message to your customers find a way to provide value to them. I don’t mean a coupon or sales offer. Give them what they want to know. If you sell stereo equipment, keep them on top of the latest trends. If you are a bakery, give tips to hosting great kid’s or office parties. Sure, let them know you have a special offer on stereos or cupcakes, but make your sales message a second priority over helping customers feel good about themselves.

- **Make The Sale** - Everything mentioned so far leads to “making the sale.” The important thing to remember is that the “sale” is the end result of doing the right things for your potential customers. Create meaningful, relevant reasons for them to visit you.

On a final note any event needs to be supported by awareness-building tools. Make sure customers, and potential customers, know when you've got fun programming.

By implementing these ideas, your location will become a place worth going out of the way for. A place worth planning to go. A place your customers will brag about – to their friends and via social media!