

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

Zero Moment of Truth

Before Google and the Internet age, there was no interruption between the customer and the store shelf. Even in the early 2000s, retailers sold to a less knowledgeable consumer.

A consumer used to see a product on television or in a magazine ad. He went directly to the store and spoke with a salesperson. If the consumer liked the item and the price was right, he purchased the product. That point in the process, when product is exchanged for payment, is called FMOT, or Final Moment of Truth.

However, in today's connected society, the interruptions between consumer and store shelf are many. Consumers see products advertised, but instead of going directly to the store, people reach for their smartphones, iPads and laptops to search out the new wares. This disruption in the cycle between product discovery and FMOT is called ZMOT, or Zero Moment of Truth. In other words, all the activity that happens online between the stimulus and the sale is the zero moment.

Consumers may be armed with more knowledge than ever, but the information door swings both ways. The same knowledge used by the consumer can be harvested to your advantage.

CREATING A ZMOT STRATEGY

So, how do you put a ZMOT plan into action? First, put someone in charge. This person is responsible for your online presence and ZMOT campaigns. He or she also needs to understand advertising versus marketing and have a firm grasp on how to develop an online presence. ZMOT is the collective effort of all your online activity, including Facebook posts, Twitter feeds, blog posts and Yelp reviews, that gets digested by

the consumer. It works hand in hand with driving traffic into your physical store. I split the duties with a few employees, so we're always posting fresh information in several places online.

Once I figured out how to build our ZMOT program, I got to work on rebuilding our Google AdWords campaigns to make them more efficient. I set up specific ads with keywords that es-

entially drive traffic to my site when someone searches for a product or service.

If you type "guitar lessons" into your Google search bar, you'll notice that the bar drops down to show the most relevant keywords (in order of importance) that have been searched for in your area. I'm in Raleigh, N.C., so when I type in "guitar lessons," the first three search results in the drop-down menu are "guitar lessons," "guitar lessons online" and "guitar lessons raleigh nc." There's also a long list of other relevant results. Once I see them, I create AdWords with those phrases.

The key here is to try and figure out what the consumer may be searching for and meet that search with an ad that links back to your website, which then should provide information consumers need. If a parent researches "kids guitar lessons," you need ads that have some form of "kids," "guitar" and "lessons." If the parent finds your ad, researches your website and decides to take lessons from you, you just won the zero moment.

I urge you to download a free copy of Google's e-book, *ZMOT*, at zeromomentoftruth.com. It will help you gain even more insight on this revolutionary marketing tool. **MI**

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Consumers come armed with more information than ever. Use this to your advantage