

**“Ask SCORE” Column in Green Bay Press Gazette  
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### **“Necessary” Marketing Ideas**

Jewelry stores are among those that have been hardest hit in the recession. Likewise, upscale retailers and sellers of large ticket items like furniture have suffered. As noted in the past several columns, the businesses that are doing well are those that are considered necessary.

Dana Vanden Heuvel, marketing expert and owner of MarketingSavant, talked last week about the importance of being “relevant” as a business. He shared specific ideas that entrepreneurs may be able to adapt. To summarize some of those thoughts:

**TAKE ON A SOCIAL CAUSE.** “You see so much media pressure about cutting back and sacrificing,” Vanden Heuvel noted. “Tie in upper end goods with charity so customers will be doing something good when buying. That gives you the opportunity to help charity and stimulate business.” For example, a car dealership might set up charitable car washes to increase traffic flow. The customers will look at vehicles while their car is being washed and the group sponsoring the car wash will make money for its charity.

**REMOVE PERCEIVED RISK.** If your business sells upper end goods or services and customers are concerned that such a purchase could leave them in a bad financial situation if economic conditions worsen, Vanden Heuvel recommends that you follow the lead of companies like Hyundai and try to assuage the risk. With Hyundai’s “Assurance Plus” program, buyers were allowed to return their new Hyundai if they lost their job. As other car companies saw their sales slip by a third in recent months, Hyundai had narrow gains or minor losses. A software company that was rumored to be in the middle of a buyout offered customer refunds in the event of an acquisition. Other companies have offered extended warranties, free support or services, and flexible payment plans.

**USE GUERILLA MARKETING.** Vanden Heuvel says that companies tend to cut marketing and advertising budgets in tough times, and advises guerilla marketing techniques. These practices cost little but enhance brand awareness. This could include low-cost special events, informative blogs, emails to customers, specials on social media sites like Face Book or Twitter, participation in endeavors such as the Green Bay Chambers ‘Rev Up’ program, and cross couponing. “The worst sin of all is not to communicate,” says Vanden Heuvel.

**CHANGE THE ATTITUDE.** “We can be our own media by utilizing social media to some degree,” Vanden Heuvel noted. Whether that’s an effort to improve the image of a business or to encourage consumer buying, social media provides an exceptional resource to change the conversation in a positive manner. Even though the public media might be discouraging consumer spending and causing fear, Vanden Heuvel says that we can let people know that they aren’t stimulating the economy by holding on

to their money. He noted, “Get at the emotions that people have in parting with their money and let them know that, yes, it’s okay for them to take care of themselves, too.”

If you’d like to learn more about marketing your business, contact the Green Bay Chapter of SCORE. Visit [www.greenbayscore.org](http://www.greenbayscore.org) or call Cindy Gokey at 920-496-8930 for information.

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