



It's **TUNE-UP** Time

Use these tips to better promote your company and capture more business.

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

WE WORK IN a fast-paced and highly competitive decorated apparel market. Those who understand how to use the latest technology and harness the power of the internet are growing by leaps and bounds.

Here are some ideas on how to maximize your opportunities.

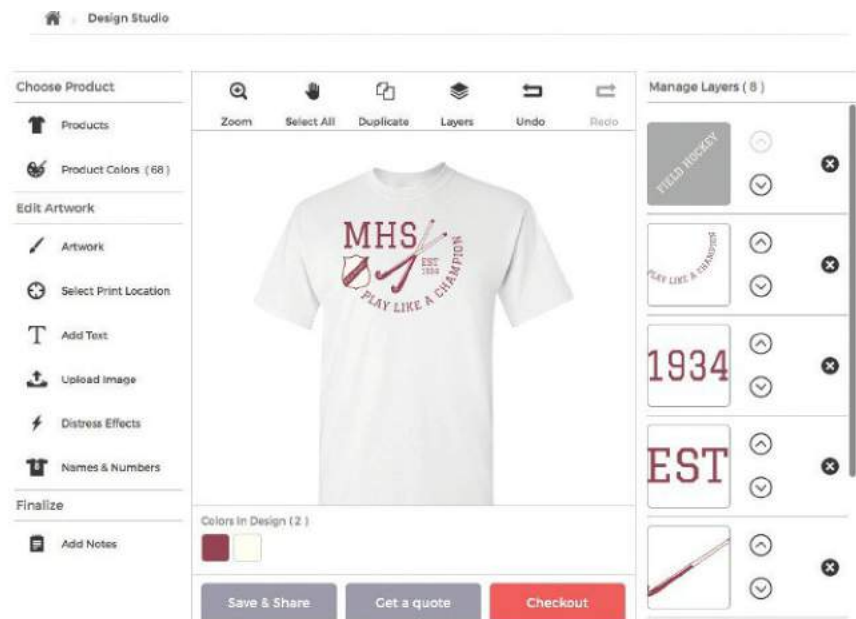
1. Use software to streamline your business. Software has the potential to increase the efficiency and speed of your business and will impact your bottom line in multiple ways. A good software program can do much of the legwork of day-to-day operations, such as design creation, art approvals, quotes and invoicing. Integrated software that combines all aspects of production and sales reduces steps and simplifies daily shop management.

When a customer's order is completed quickly and accurately, there is greater satisfaction and repeat orders. Also, when you do things more quickly, you can get more done.

2. Make use of the cloud. The cloud is a remote server that stores data and related computing operations. Most software suppliers are now moving to this type of service instead of having customers download a program to a hard drive. It allows end users to have access to anything from anywhere there's an internet connection.

Cloud-based software expands your business beyond your shop's walls. It's easy to see

the advantage when you have a rep who's meeting with a coach in his office. The salesperson can show him an online catalog and gallery of designs, create a custom design and prepare a quote from his laptop or tablet during a single visit.



Software has the ability to streamline many day-to-day functions.

The cloud also is a safe and secure place to back up and store valuable assets and company data. Local devices like servers and hard drives can suffer physical hardware failures, and if a shop experiences a natural disaster, all of its data can be lost. Cloud-based solutions avoid data loss as services like Google Drive and Dropbox have redundant backups and extra layers of security.

This solution is less expensive and easier than ever, and you can have all your local file storage automatically backed up to the cloud every night, which provides peace of mind.

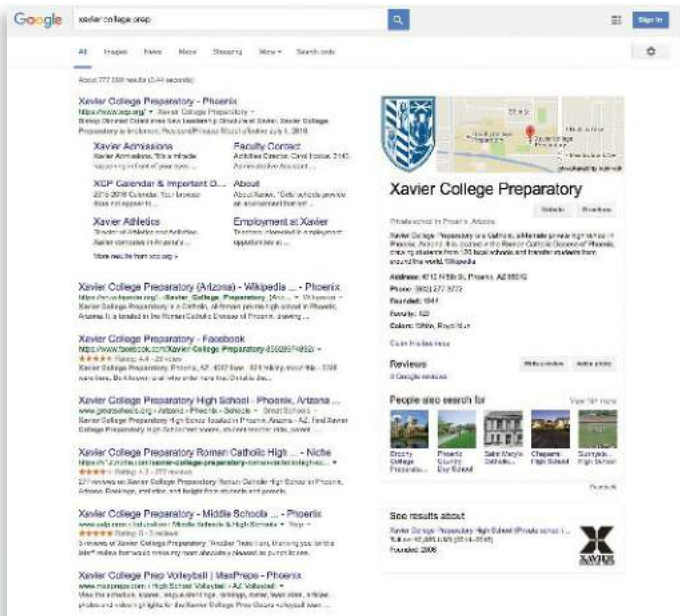
3. Make your site intuitive. You want your website's visitors to have a good experience. Whether it is to simply see the products and services you offer, design a custom shirt or get questions answered, if prospects have to spend too much time searching, you will lose them.

Ideally, your site should offer many ways for customers to quickly get help if they aren't computer savvy and don't understand how to use your pages. Well-designed navigation bars with keywords for links are a must.

Setting up prompts is another way to lead someone through your site. If a person gets stuck at some point in the sales process, a live chat allows him to immediately get a question answered to complete the sale. A frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) section also is critical to providing information so that a client does not have to make a phone call or send an email.





Your business should be listed on Yelp and you should explore the tools it offers to ensure you are capturing the greatest amount of potential customers.



When you make a sales call, come armed with as much information as you can get about the company and its markets so you can tailor your presentation to the prospect's specific needs.

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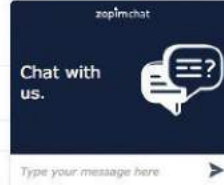


Product Categories

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New Cat



Offer prompts, live chat and other helps so anyone can easily see and understand how to navigate through your pages.

Make your website a safe and comfortable environment, enabling your customer to understand what different areas do and allow them to use the site to its full potential. Solicit feedback from visitors to find out where you are lacking and constantly strive to improve.

4. Use Yelp to boost your online presence. Yelp is an online directory that hosts and markets businesses and publishes crowd-sourced reviews. Essentially replacing the Yellow Pages of the past, customers searching for goods and services use Yelp at a rate of about 168 million times a month, according to its website. It also is integrated with iPhones and tied in with Google, Facebook and most social media platforms.

Yelp can be a strategic means of directing traffic to your business, and it offers a free suite of tools to connect you to the purchasing community. It's a great way to receive feedback, and it allows you to

see where your customers originate. If your competitors are already on Yelp, you may be losing sales; if not, then you will be ahead of the curve.

5. Use the internet to prepare for sales presentations. When cultivating new business, the internet is an underused tool. Whenever you are preparing to approach a prospective client, you should use Google and social media to learn as much as possible. Research what the company does, which markets it is trying to reach and which current resources it is using.

Armed with this information, you can tailor your sales presentation and other communication to specifically address client needs. The more knowledgeable you are about a specific company, the more impressive you can be when trying to get its business.

6. Follow through and get feedback to boost online sales. While

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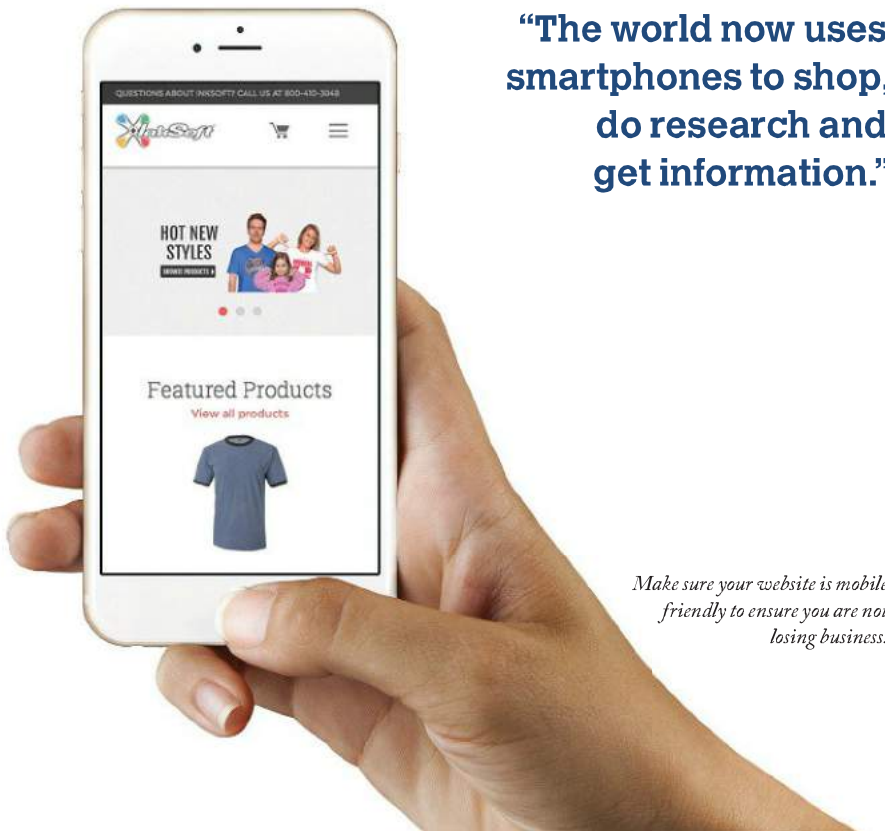
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offering e-commerce or a webstore greatly reduces the amount of labor that is needed to make a sale, follow-through still is a necessary part of establishing and keeping a customer relationship.

You want to ensure that the shopping cart you use allows you to gather information from online clients so that you can confirm their orders and send subsequent marketing emails about other products in which they may be interested.

Another important function of a shopping cart is the ability to discover why the customer didn't make a purchase or left the site in the middle of one. This allows you to follow up and make changes that may result in a sale next time. ☐

J.P. Hunt is one of the founders of InkSoft, a company that offers a comprehensive business suite including an online designer, e-commerce platform and other business tools. He also is the vice president of sales and marketing. For more information or to comment on this article, email J.P. at jphunt@inksoft.com; visit the website at inksoft.com.



“The world now uses smartphones to shop, do research and get information.”

Make sure your website is mobile friendly to ensure you are not losing business.

Make Your Website Mobile Friendly

Because so many of today's consumers search for goods and services from their smartphones and tablets, it's important that your website is mobile friendly. A mobile-responsive website optimizes and displays content so that it is suitable for the smaller screen size. The goal is looking professional no matter where a prospect is viewing your website.

Today's modern web design standards consider mobile responsiveness and have this built into the site design. The website code detects which browser and device the visitor is using and will display the appropriate website presentation.

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