



# THE LIVERMORE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Business Journal

Dedicated to Advancing the Economic Vitality of the Livermore Valley

## Marketing in the 21st century – A whole new world

The business world as we know it – even from just a few years ago — has drastically changed forever. Many business owners may subconsciously understand this, but on the surface, they may not fully realize it.

To be clear: this is not about the sagging economy. Everyone is painfully aware of that, and it will recover. What we're speaking of here is that many of the advertising rules that have traditionally been taught and practiced have disappeared forever. They don't work, and a new set of rules has replaced them:

- The public is increasingly intolerant of and oblivious to advertising messages pushed to them.
- Business owners no longer have control over their image, brand or message.
- Online relationships drive more sales than advertising.

Why is this? It's partly because the proliferation of free tools on the Internet gives everyone the ability to publish content about any subject (including your business) at any time to anyone in the world. There's no stopping it, and business owners can't control these online conversations.

This frightens most business people, and it's a daunting idea to try to figure out how to manage it themselves. There are so many choices, lots of buzz, but it's difficult to know where to start: SEO? Facebook? Twitter? Social media?

Fortunately, there is a solution.

Thomas Petty is a Certified Internet Marketing Consultant with WSI ([www.wsismart-solutions.com](http://www.wsismart-solutions.com)), a Web consulting company in downtown Livermore.

"We work with Google every day to help businesses find new clients," he says. "People haven't stopped shopping. They're just doing more research online before making a final decision. The Internet is their research tool, and if a business can't be found there, they just don't exist."

Many businesses have some sort of Web presence. It used to be that having a Web site was enough. Now it's starting to dawn on business owners that the Web may be their most powerful marketing tool they have. Translating it into something that generates money for them is something they don't have the time to try to figure out though. They're too busy just running the day-to-day operation of the business.

WSI's first step with any business is to do a thorough analysis of what they have now, and what kind of on-line competition the business is up against. "They may need to have their Web site refreshed, which could need a more modern look and design, or simply a refresh of the content," he says. "Until we know where they are today, we can't build the map to the destination."

Based on their goals, product or service spectrum, geographic target market, and competition on the search engines, WSI puts together a plan that may include search engine optimization (SEO), business blogging, online news releases, or even things such things as optimized videos or podcasts. Once it's put in place, they measure the response.

"Our clients like seeing the new traffic reports, but even more, they love it when their phone rings! We help them build the on-line relationships with people who are searching for answers to their problems. That's the key," Petty says.

Most of the on-line tools help people build

relationships with people all over the world. People naturally want to do business with those they know and trust. Building on-line trust and relationships is an important aspect to any marketing plan, and it must be implemented carefully.

However, sometimes business owners want a more hands-on approach to marketing themselves on the Internet — they like having that control, or just want to limit their costs. Last year, Petty started a second business which fills this very need. The Bay Area Search Engine Academy ([www.bayarea-sea.com](http://www.bayarea-sea.com)) is designed to work with business owners and Web designers who want to learn to get on the search engines like Google.

"We hold hands-on workshops around the Bay Area where people can bring their real-world problems, and work on them right in the class," Petty says. The Web site offers free daily SEO e-mails to anyone who wants to learn.

Petty believes that the days of putting out an ad and waiting for business to walk in the front door are gone. The Internet has leveled the playing field between the big companies and the small, but it also means that everyone has to participate to make it work. "Smaller niche businesses can very effectively compete with much larger, less nimble competitors, but it takes work to get there. We just help them figure out the right road to take to get there."



THOMAS W. PETTY  
CERTIFIED INTERNET CONSULTANT  
WSI INTERNET CONSULTING & EDUCATION



## LIVERMORE CHAMBER 2009 Corporate Sponsors

### Platinum

- ▶ California Water Service
- ▶ Checkers Catering & Special Events
- ▶ Comcast
- ▶ Concannon Vineyard
- ▶ FormFactor
- ▶ Lanlogic, Inc.

### Laboratory

- ▶ Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- ▶ Pacific Gas & Electric
- ▶ Sandia National Laboratories
- ▶ Waste Management
- ▶ Wells Fargo
- ▶ WSI Smart Solutions
- ▶ 101.7 KKIQ

### Gold

- ▶ Courtyard by Marriott Livermore
- ▶ Livermore Area Recreation & Park District
- ▶ Livermore Valley Plaza / Colliers International
- ▶ Topcon
- ▶ UNCLE Credit Union
- ▶ Wentz Vineyards

### Silver

- ▶ US Foodservice

### Bronze

- ▶ Amos Productions
- ▶ Hoge, Fenton, Jones and Appel
- ▶ Sandia Laboratory Federal Credit Union
- ▶ Valley Health Care Systems
- ▶ Zephyr Grill & Bar