

PERSONAL SERVICE IN AN ONLINE WORLD

With the rise of on-line marketing, online sales and social media, is personal selling dying out, asks Bopla Gehäuse Systeme's sales manager, Thomas Lüke?



Bopla Gehäuse Systeme's sales manager, Thomas Lüke, examines current marketing trends

In order to take a close look at marketing strategies, it is essential to define where online marketing starts. In my opinion, it begins as soon as a company has its own website, which is where interested parties and customers

So how are we, as manufacturers, to approach a customer in the individual way they deserve? Alternatively, how is a customer supposed to find his or her way around our products? Of course, we provide a clear, well-structured online catalogue which contains a lot of information and answers many questions. We quickly realised, however, that it can never replace advice provided in person by our on-site salesperson.

Choosing an individual enclosure, adapted to fit the electronic assembly and the needs of the customer, in-depth information about the materials used, or even discussions about a special enclosure – all these are something that a webshop can never provide.

We are happy for customers to get to know us through our website and learn more about us, but the final step in the purchasing process will be arranged by an on-site salesperson and this is something of which we are proud. We are pleased to say that we, as a German company, still believe in values which are not self-evident nowadays: the relationship with the customer, and with the end product, and time for a discussion in person.

Over the last two years, another marketing instrument has emerged in the form of social media. With around 800 million people worldwide on Facebook, the potential is enormous, however, we have found that unlike the B2C market, our customers' in the B2B sector have only limited interest.

To summarise, the topic of social media is becoming increasingly important, but it is not suitable for every product and every market. Thanks to our daily contact and dialogue with our customers, we shall continue to monitor the market, and, when required, to expand our chains of distribution in flexible ways. But let me make it quite clear: for Bopla, personal contact will always be at the forefront!

form an opinion of the company before placing an order.

Current EU statistics show that nowadays more than two-thirds of all the companies based in the EU have their own website and of course, all the major companies in the field of electronics, including Bopla, have a website. We update it on a regular basis, adding new products and information on the company, to help customers get to know us better. They can learn which certificates we have, which services we offer, or where and how our products are manufactured. Developing and servicing the Bopla brand name, in addition to product presentation, are clearly in the foreground.

A web shop is something different. Bopla does not have one, but we have spent a lot of time discussing this, both from a sales and a marketing point of view. We have analysed our competitors and the behaviour of our customers, and we have concluded that our B2B market is not right for selling online.

Bopla products are very sophisticated with a choice of plastic or metal enclosures, in desktop, wall-mounted or handheld versions, in a wide range of sizes, colours and shapes. Our customers are normally medium-sized manufacturers of electronic products from all sectors and operating worldwide, so it is hardly surprising that the demands made of our products are varied.

 www.bopla.de