



How I Doubled My Window Covering Business in Six Months

How does an established window covering retailer beat Budget Blinds, Home Depot or 3 Day Blinds **AND** double the business in 6 months?

Here's How I Did It

In 2009 I was wrestling with changing my business name from decoVan to ShutterNation.com. It wasn't just a simple name change; it was a complete 180 degree change in my marketing strategy.

I had started a company called decoVan, which provided measuring, ordering and installation of window treatments to designers, contractors and realtors. I owned all the samples, and the designer would make all the decisions. I did this so I could make my business duplicable, which would make it easier to franchise. I simply removed the need to train salespeople, because the designers became the salespeople. This marketing strategy was working with our key demo, but I knew it could be better.

I could tell from our Google Analytics data that shutters were the most searched for item in my market, and I wanted to capitalize on this trend. So I developed a new company specializing in shutters. Again, I wanted to develop a company that could be franchised. Shutter Nation would be a shop-at-home retail shutter business with a very powerful Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

Decision time!

- A) Run decoVan and Shutter Nation at the same time?
- B) Shut down decoVan and change my name to Shutter Nation? (My # 1 Choice)
- C) Stop working on Shutter Nation?

I had to ask myself a few question in order to make this very important decision.

1. **Was I going to get a competitive advantage by this shift?** Yes. By going direct to the consumer, I could attract more customers at a much lower cost and not have a third party (the designer) involved in the transaction.
2. **Did this move stimulate growth?** Yes. My marketing strategy allowed me to move into additional markets very quickly.
3. **Did this move help with a long term growth and expansion?** Yes. Since it was being set up as a franchise model, it would have a natural way to grow. I could choose either to franchise or to grow internally. The choice was mine.
4. **Would this shift improve the commitment to being innovative?** Yes. One of the goals was to generate 100% of my leads online. This meant I had to force myself to find better ways to get more targeted traffic to my site.

True Story: As a Christian, I was praying about the decision of changing my name. It was a rainy Saturday morning. I had just dropped off my son at a scouting event. I was turning right onto a main street, and at the precise moment I was praying, I looked to my left and saw on the side of a building "Look No Further". It was the name of an interior design store where I have visited many times. I always thought the store was called LNF, I had no idea it was Look No Further. Decision made!

You may have noticed I use the same setup strategy for each business. This is what I believe the key is to the start of a great business.

It has to be so good that your customers will ask, "Is This a Franchise?"



How I Doubled My Window Covering Business in Six Months

I based everything on *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber. I've been through the E-Myth Mastery Program. It's basically like getting your doctorate in small business.

From here, every decision I made was based on this one question, **Will it Look Like a Franchise?**

Shutter Nation had to be a different kind of retailer. I decided to become a Shutter Consultant. I would carry six different vendors and 17 different shutters. I would generate leads exclusively online. I would try to get to the client the very same day they called in. I would use technology everywhere, including my in-home presentations. I would not work weekends or evenings. My USP would be to make my products cost 35% less than Costco and 20% less than Home Depot. With a USP like that, it had better be true. I worked very hard to make this true.

If it wasn't duplicable, I didn't do it. This meant everything I did had to be scalable and available in other markets. Doing this makes opening new locations much easier.

My New Concept Drove My Actions

The strategy for a new image requires a marketing plan that matches the new image.

Now let's look at the marketing strategy.

- 1) Target Audience
- 2) Marketing Plan
- 3) Marketing Materials
- 4) Marketing Channels

Target Audience

When setting up a new company, you must determine who your audience is before you build out your image. Shutter Nation would attract upper middle class buyers looking for a Value-Driven Proposition. Notice I didn't say "anyone who needs shutters". The more targeted your ideal client, the better your return on investment. Yes, it is possible to have more than one type of client. GEICO Insurance is a perfect example. They run several marketing campaigns at the same time. One attracts young drivers, another attracts motorcycle owners, and yet another attracts military families.

Every decision I make about my marketing strategy must answer the question "Will It Attract Our Ideal Client"?

When you break down your marketing strategy to answer questions, it makes the decisions much easier.

When developing an ideal client profile, here is a simple list to help you:

- 1) Make a wish list. Who do you want to do business with?
- 2) Focus on one or two niches. You must be clear about this in everything you do.
- 3) Put yourself in your clients' shoes. What is their worldview, what problems do they want you to solve and how are you unique to meet their needs?
- 4) Evaluate your successes. Is it working?
- 5) Test everything.

How do you determine your avatar? (An avatar is your ideal client)

Start with an exercise I like to call "My Best Business." Write down everything you like and everything you dislike about your business.

Look back at the customers you have dealt with in the past. What did you like about them? What did you dislike about them? Who had the best ROI? Why did you attract them? Can you duplicate this attraction factor? Go back



How I Doubled My Window Covering Business in Six Months

and look at past clients. Hopefully you keep them in a database and have stats on all past clients. You can even define the territory you wish to work in, you can define the hours you want to work, and you can define the sales figures you want to achieve.

Then, write a short paragraph about what you want your business to look like, how you want it to operate, and your best practices. Many great businesses are built this way. Solving the problems ahead of time will make growth much easier.

Marketing Plan

This is where you get to choose what you're going to look like, what products you'll offer, how you're going to offer them, and your price points. From here on, every decision I make will have to answer the question, "Is this a franchise"?

I had to decide how I was going to market Shutter Nation. My goals are 1) to generate my leads both online and through a Strategic Partner Network (SPN) and 2) to look and act like a franchise.

Fortunately, this is much easier online. Since I knew most of my clients were searching for shutters online, my goal was to find more of them searching online for shutters in my target area of South Orange County, CA. Fortunately, I own an online marketing business (Blind Brokers Network).

Why did I choose to market online? Rarely do you see any direct mail or display ads placed by any of the big boys. They mostly generate leads online and through alliances. As an online marketing expert, I could use special software to estimate the traffic my competitors were getting. I could see the approximate dollars they were spending on Google AdWords, and I could see their search terms and keywords that were working best. I also could see they were spending very little on offline marketing.

The good news is I knew I could beat them online and offline. All I needed was an online and offline marketing strategy. I would use a Strategic Partner Network and an awesome online marketing strategy. These two strategies were the key for growing from \$102K in sales to \$298K in six months. (Shutter Nation is a part-time business for me, I also own Blind Brokers Network, an online marketing company.)

The dirty little secret is, the Internet doesn't care if you're big and clunky or small and nimble. The Internet wants relevance, which is where small businesses like you and me have the advantage. As Google and Bing move toward "relevancy," they allow anyone to become an authority on any subject. My goal is to become the expert on window coverings in my market. Once Google and Bing see this, they'll put me in the top 3 on the page for relevant search terms. Could I accomplish this overnight? Probably not, but I could get it done in 4-8 months with a lot of work. I knew the work would pay off if done correctly.

The next step was to do a SWOT analysis on my competition. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

I did this exercise for each company and a few others who are strong local competitors. What I found was a huge opening online. Since I own the SEO Company, I would be able to have a very low cost to develop leads.

Marketing Materials

I decided to invest heavily in a new website. This would become my most valuable asset. It made sense. I'm using the Internet to generate leads, and those leads eventually would find their way to my site. The site had to impress them and motivate them to call me. It had to educate and inform them. It had to be liked by the search engines, and it had to be mobile-optimized. This is where I had to look like a franchise. Everything from the logo to the photos had to be top notch. The videos had to be good but not too good. It needed to be optimized for my local



How I Doubled My Window Covering Business in Six Months

market. This meant the added expense of content creation and pages for every city and every product. If I wanted to generate my leads online, this meant I would have to spend dozens of hours setting up review sites, writing articles, making videos and setting up citation sites. I had to hire back linking specialists, writers, and engineers to do this correctly. (We now can do all this for you in-house.) Every written word had to reflect my image and avatar. Every blog posting is pre-written as a story and then broken up into parts. They tell a story of Shutter Nation. This now meant I would have to be consumed with SEO education, taking hundreds of hours. I did it and it worked!

Marketing Channels

To develop an online marketing system, first I had to decide which of the many channels I was going to use. Fortunately I have a lot of insider knowledge.

- 1) Website: All channels lead to here.
- 2) AdWords: A Must. Simply the best ROI.
- 3) Video: Drives much targeted traffic.
- 4) Review Sites: These become the portals to information.
- 5) Citation Sites: Very important to our back-linking strategy.
- 6) Blog: Critical to developing authority with search engines.
- 7) Articles: Excellent way to develop authority.
- 8) Social Media: Perfect for other recommending me to their friends.
- 9) Email: Still the best marketing form ever.
- 10) Back-linking: The most important strategy for my rankings in the search engines.
- 11) Free Report on Shutters: Good source of pre-qualified leads.

Trying to make all this work to my advantage was the most difficult and fun part of the growth.

Conclusion

There are many different recipes for success in the window covering business. This is the one I used, and it worked for me.

Please use this information to build your business. I know this is a radical approach to expansion, and it wasn't without pain. The simple fact is, our customers are online looking for us. If you want to be there, it will require work.

Let me say one last thing. One of the biggest reasons to do this was that the name decoVan optimized much differently than Shutter Nation. I left the decoVan site up for several years and compared the traffic and results. The two sites received about the same amount of traffic, but the Shutter Nation site produced 10 times as many calls. Had I just stopped at the decoVan site, I would have never known I could more than double my business in six months.

If you'd like to talk to me about expanding your business, please call me at 949-768-6695, M-F, 8-5 PM PST.

If you'd like additional information about developing your online image or a new website or taking advantage of our AdWords services, please call me or email at steve@myblindbiz.com