

RETAILACTIVITY™
CONSULTING SERVICES



VSN STRATEGIES
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About:

V S N S T R A T E G I E S

— Retail Market Expertise — Multi-Channel Strategy — Content Development —

VSN STRATEGIES is an independent business strategy consultancy founded by James Tenser in 1998. Its primary focus is on assisting technology companies in bringing their products and services to retail and brand-marketing clients. VSN also directly assists retail and marketing firms in evaluating online business strategies and integrating these activities with those of their core (traditional) businesses.

Our approach may be summed up in a word: RetailativitySM, a combination of “retail” with “relativity”. Understanding consumer behavior and loyalty depends not only upon geopsycho-demographics but also upon frames of reference we define as “Consumer Need States,” which vary constantly with time and type of purchase. Internet enabled retailing and communications has made understanding this factor possible and therefore essential for retailers and brand marketers. Providers of services and applications to the field must master these issues to optimize their offerings to client needs.

VSN consulting background includes extensive participation in strategy development, pre-sales planning and presentations to retail and consumer goods marketing firms, gained in go-to-market experience on behalf of Nexgenix, Inc. (an e-business integrator and consultancy) and its strategic partner, Hewlett Packard.

Clients for whom Tenser has delivered services during the past three years include:

- **Interactive Edge** div. Cordiant Communications Group (positioning, Web content, white paper)
- **Armature Inc.** (white paper)
- **Fountainhead Communications, Inc.** (business development, member of advisory board)
- **The Partnering Group** (white paper)
- **Del Monte Fresh Produce** (e-business opportunity and strategic planning)
- **PRN Networks** (online media concept development, design and go-to-market strategy)
- **Gourmet Award Foods/Tree of Life** (e-business opportunity and strategy study)
- **Blue Martini Software** (advised on software startup business positioning)
- **VirtualGroceries.com** (business model definition and strategy for startup)
- **CPM International** (study of third party field merchandising services in the U.S.)

VSN also produces **VStoreNews.com**, a business knowledge Web site focused on strategy, analysis and opinion for retailing and product-marketing decision makers.

VSN maintains access to a network of highly qualified independent professionals, who bring skills in research, marketing communications, technology strategy, database modeling and design, direct marketing and other disciplines. These resources are brought into projects on an as-needed basis, according to client requirements.

— Hands-On Experience — Depth of Knowledge — Thought Leadership —

Consulting Services:

Technology and Service Companies

Software application developers and technology service providers are generally adept at communicating their value propositions for the IT project manager or chief technology officer. However, business development opportunities at retailers and brand marketers often depend on persuading marketing, sales and/or executive management.

Vertical market expertise has always been in short supply in the tech world, and recent market experience has led many firms to further reduce their resources in this critical area.

VSN Strategies is a resource for firms that require this depth of knowledge. We provide a range of services for tech firms that help translate your value proposition into meaningful advantages for retailers and brand marketers. Drawing upon two decades of close involvement in the field, we bring perspective to your go-to-market strategy and help you articulate benefits that reassure and persuade your prospects.

As an independent consultancy, VSN is supremely flexible in tailoring projects to client's specific needs and budgets. Following is a brief summary of services we provide:

Positioning Study

We examine your existing application/service offerings; analyze their "fit" with respect to business needs commonly articulated by retail and brand marketing client prospects; identify gaps; perform a competitive SWOT analysis; and deliver a clear go-to-market roadmap, including updated positioning statement(s) and accompanying nomenclature.

Feature Set Analysis

We study your robust application or service offering, analyze its feature set, and provide a report which identifies which features are most meaningful to the present business concerns of executives at targeted retail and brand marketing firms. Results are compared with current marketing research, yielding a gap/opportunity analysis, which may be applied toward aligning features and marketing story to match the needs of targeted clients.

Web/Content Development

We apply your positioning, themes and principles to development of sparkling and persuasive short and long copy for the corporate Web site and sales collateral materials, working with your designers or ours.

Go-To-Market Strategy

We examine your company offerings and develop a top-down view of your go-to-market approach from a fresh, knowledge-based perspective. Process includes detailed interviews with your senior management team and internal experts, interviews with your present clients, third-party research. Mid-way through the study, VSN facilitates an executive study session, during which your senior management tackles key decisions that will factor into the final recommendations. Final deliverable may incorporate a complete positioning study.

White Paper Development

We help your organization demonstrate its thought leadership and unique understanding of business issues in the targeted industry. We develop one or more White Papers to use as marketing tools for your consultative sales process. Each White Paper will carefully frame a specific business need or issue common to targeted retailers and/or brand marketers and propose a general strategy for resolving that need or issue.

Position Paper Development

Similar to the White Paper, we help your organization demonstrate its integrity and intellectual courage regarding key business issues in the targeted industry. Position papers take a strong stand on a matter of controversy or uncertainty among targeted groups of retailers and/or brand marketers. Designed to be highly persuasive, these documents will set your business approach apart from the pack and help you make news.

Sales Training

VSN develops and facilitates a training session or series designed to empower your business development professionals with the tools to effectively communicate your value proposition to retailers and brand marketers. Typically run after completion of a Positioning Study, Feature Set Analysis and/or Go-To-Market Study, so as to provide your sales people with a consistent message and strategies for success.

Seminar Development

VSN develops and facilitates an educational session(s) of high-perceived value, designed to persuade client prospects of your organization's knowledge leadership and enhance this perception among existing clients. We assemble a theme, session plan, curriculum and faculty appropriate for the your message and target audience, in consultation with your marketing and sales leadership. Very important are the articulation of goals for this activity and measuring results against those goals subsequent to the event.

VSN On Call

VSN principal James Tenser is available on a retainer basis for telephone and/or email consultation with your senior decision-makers for a set number of hours each month. He also will assist in client pre-sales preparation and presentation development. Terms of these agreements are tailored to client needs and may be bundled with other services.

Consulting Services:

Retailers and Brand Marketers

A core expertise of VSN Strategies lies in the realm of retailing and brand marketing of consumer products. Since 1996, VSN Principal James Tenser has devoted much of his effort and energy toward understanding and explaining the strategic and tactical requirements of the New Retailing that has emerged since the advent of the virtual store.

As virtual — or online — selling becomes further integrated into the fabric of the retailing enterprise, a cascade of implications emerges for retailers and brand marketers. While many born-for-the-Web, dot-com retailers are now failing, they collectively have had a significant and irreversible impact on the way traditional retailers interact with consumers.

This is best understood in terms of what some experts now call “multichannel” retailing — a business model in which a retail operator may interact with consumers through stores, catalogs, kiosks, and Web sites, and a host of other communications media. Managing this rich spectrum of consumer contacts is a non-trivial challenge, with implications for technology strategy, marketing tactics, pricing, loyalty programs — even trading partner relations.

We help retailers understand the wide-reaching implications of their consumer interactions over the Internet — whether they actually sell merchandise online or not. We help brand marketers understand how their channels of distribution and communications have been altered by Web-based business processes and communications, and how best to meet this new challenge.

Drawing upon two decades of close involvement in the field, VSN brings perspective to your strategic decision-making process with respect to the New Retailing. Following is a brief summary of services we provide in this area:

Opportunity Analysis

We examine your company business activities, map them, and develop a top-down view of your e-business opportunities from a fresh, knowledge-based perspective. We then apply a multi-dimensional analysis to assign priorities to each opportunity, based on strategic and economic considerations. Process includes detailed interviews with your senior management team and internal experts, interviews with your present clients, third-party research. Mid-way through the study, VSN facilitates an executive study session, during which your senior management tackles key decisions that will factor into the final recommendations.

e-Business Strategy

Often performed as a follow-up to the Opportunity Analysis, the e-Business Strategy study applies those learnings to the development of specific strategic plans for one or more of the most promising opportunities. We assemble technology, marketing, and creative experts as the project requires and present one or more strategic alternatives to your executive team. Mid-way through the study, VSN may facilitate an executive study session with your senior management.

Consumer Relationship Strategy For The Retailer

As retailers integrate multiple selling and consumer communications channels, they face new implications affecting their traditional business activities. We apply principles of RetailativitySM to develop an understanding of the implications for your business. We deliver points of view regarding technology strategy, loyalty programs, one-to-one and one-to-some marketing, cross-channel pricing and service policies, category management and trading partner relations — all with a focus on how these activities leverage and strengthen your consumer relationships.

Consumer Relationship Strategy For The Brand Marketer

The inherent characteristics of the Internet may allow brand marketers to economically establish and maintain direct value-added relationships with consumers. This activity may or may not include direct sale of merchandise. In many instances, the consumer information and insight gained is benefit enough from relationship management activity. We help brand marketers to synthesize a more complete understanding of their most loyal and most profitable consumers then segment them and target groups for communications. This activity will enhance co-marketing programs and inform category management efforts.

Consumer Need States Analysis For The Brand Marketer

We believe that most product manufacturers should be cautious about direct sales of their products to consumers from a Web site. Not only is this activity more complex than it may first appear, but it puts your retail channel relationships at extreme risk. We apply our proprietary Consumer Need States analytic methodology to examine whether your products are among the few which may lend themselves to successful direct sales on the Web.

Seminar/Webinar Development

VSN develops and facilitates an educational session(s) of high-perceived value, designed to advance your organization's knowledge leadership and enhance this perception among trading partners. We develop a theme, session plan, curriculum and faculty appropriate for the your message and target audience, in consultation with your marketing and sales leadership. Very important are the articulation of goals for this activity and measuring results against those goals subsequent to the event.

Web Content Development

We apply your branding, positioning, themes and principles to development of short and long copy for the corporate web site, working with your designers or ours.

RFP Development

We develop a request for proposal document for your technology or marketing project, and help research and identify the various consulting resources and application providers you might choose to invite to submit proposals. We design a scorecard for evaluating their presentations and facilitate the decision-making process, if required.

Consulting Services:

Marketing & Sales Agencies

Advertising and promotion agencies, manufacturer rep firms, field merchandising services firms, and other service providers to the consumer goods go-to-market system are constantly adapting their strategies to meet the ever-changing demands of their clients. Maintaining content expertise is a challenge. Getting up to speed on issues for new clients takes supreme effort.

VSN provides support services that help you maintain thought leadership in your dealings with retailer and brand marketer clients and prospects. We tailor projects to your specific needs and budget. Following is a brief summary of services we provide:

White Paper Development

We help your organization demonstrate its thought leadership and unique understanding of business issues in the targeted industry. We develop one or more White Papers to use as marketing tools for your consultative sales process. Each White Paper will carefully frame a specific business need or issue common to targeted retailers and/or brand marketers and propose a general strategy for resolving that need or issue.

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Industry Situation Report

VSN conducts an extensive study of a targeted industry or sector and develops a proprietary report and/or presentation of findings. A comprehensive picture is synthesized from a combination of third-party research, direct interviews with industry experts and leaders and Retailativity analysis. Primary marketing research may be coordinated as part of the work, depending on client requirements. Study content may include: industry definition; industry size; key players; trend assessment; future-scape; e-business implications; consumer issues; recommendations; etc.

Industry Briefing

VSN develops and facilitates a training session or series designed to empower your business development professionals and senior executives with the knowledge and insight to effectively communicate your value proposition to retailers and brand marketers.

VSN On Call

VSN principal James Tenser is available on a retainer basis for telephone and/or email consultation with your senior decision-makers or account executives for a pre-set number of hours each month. He also will assist in client pre-sales preparation and presentation development. Terms of these agreements are tailored to client needs and may be bundled with other services.

Profile:

James Tenser



James Tenser is the founder and principal of VSN Strategies, an independent business strategy consultancy he founded in 1998.

A consultant, analyst and author, Tenser has more than 20 years of industry experience in the retailing and brand-marketing field. He most recently was Principal, Retail Strategy for Nexgenix, Inc., Irvine, CA, a leading provider of e-business strategy and technology implementation for large companies.

His book, *Tenser's Tirades: Essays on the Dot-Com Retail Phenomenon 1996-2001*, will be published in Autumn 2001.

Tenser founded *VStoreNews*®, a monthly, paid-circulation email journal of strategy and opinion in 1998. At present, this knowledge business incorporates a related web site, <http://VStoreNews.com>, and other information products. VSN is focused on providing business thought leaders with analysis and strategic insight about virtual (online) retailing.

He is a seasoned business analyst and journalist who has closely covered consumer goods retailing and marketing. His hundreds of by-lined articles have helped establish his reputation as an astute observer and commentator on the consumer goods marketing and retailing industry.

In the earlier part of his career, his activities were focused on a succession of business periodicals at New York-area publishing houses. Those publications included:

- *Brand Marketing* (Fairchild Publications, N.Y.) Launched 1994. Managing Editor
- *Supermarket News* (Fairchild Publications, N.Y.) Section Editor
- *Fabrics & Furnishings International* (Sipco Publications, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.) Launched 1991. Consulting Editor.
- *VisionMonday* (Jobson Publishing, New York) Launched 1986. Executive Editor.
- *Discount Merchandiser* (Macfadden Holdings, New York), Managing Editor

Tenser has been a sought-after interview subject and has been quoted in numerous mainstream magazines, newspapers, business journals and on radio and television. He is a frequent speaker at industry trade shows and conferences. He was a three-term president of the New York Business Press Editors, a professional association.

Tenser received his bachelor's degree in English Composition from Cornell University and pursued post-graduate studies in media, technology and culture at New York University and science journalism at Columbia University.