Appliance Sales Plus and AdRocket™ Boost:
Increasing Awareness and Building a Third-Generation Brand in the Digital Age

In 1970, Karl Thimm and his brother-in-law Lenny Losito started an appliance business with the help of Karl’s wife, Janis, in Somers, N.Y., with a distinct advantage: Deep product knowledge. The brothers-in-law had spent careers as field servicemen for General Electric’s major appliances while Janis started her career working in an appliance store at age 17. Thimm and Losito spent their days going on service calls and fixing appliances to their customers’ satisfaction, and in the process, customers often asked their opinions about major appliance purchases.

A natural extension of their service and repair expertise, the brothers-in-law sold appliance parts during their first decade in business. Along the way, an increasing number of customers from Northern Westchester County, north of New York City, came to them for advice before purchasing major appliances for their homes.

With a reputation built on customer trust, professional service and their comprehensive product knowledge of kitchen and laundry appliances, Thimm and Losito began selling new, major appliances in 1979. And with a new name, Appliance Sales Plus, their business grew quickly, serving New York’s Hudson Valley, given their credibility as product and service experts—in essence, the genuine relationships they had established with a growing base of satisfied customers.

Thimm also credits Janis, who “has worked by my side since we opened,” as playing an instrumental role—and taking on many roles—in helping to grow the business.

The “Plus” in the store’s name meant superior service. This philosophy has evolved over time from reputable appliance service (the store maintains its reputation as the region’s solution to appliance repair problems), to exceptional customer service.

“We’re taking care of our customers’ problems, taking the worries off their shoulders,” explained Thimm. “I tell our staff, it may not be our fault, but it is our problem to correct for the customer.”

Today, Appliance Sales Plus is a second generation business: The Thimms’ daughter, Dena Gruppuso, oversees the finances; Losito retired in 2010 and his son, Kevin, manages sales.
Third Generation Channels Brand Awareness

Thimm understood that awareness of Appliance Sales Plus was much more than simple name recognition. Yes, he wanted consumers to think of his store first when they needed to purchase an appliance, but he also wanted prospective customers to relate with his store on an emotional level. Featuring his grandchildren in the ads became a powerful way to keep Appliance Sales Plus top of mind with consumers and underscore the store’s long-held, primary message: “For all the comforts of home.”

“People came into the store, talking about seeing me on TV or asking about my grandchildren,” said Thimm. And to this day, they still do.

Ads for Appliance Sales Plus still run on cable TV and feature Thimm’s grandkids though they’re not babies anymore. Over the years, the store’s messages have remained consistent: lowest price, largest inventory and the best service. However, technology has changed everything, “particularly, how you go to market.” Shifting demographics and the need to find different ways to reach a new generation of Appliance Sales Plus shoppers would pose a new set of challenges.

A Complete Digital Suite

While the majority of Appliance Sale Plus shoppers are between 40 to 60 years of age, still “reachable” via cable, the occasional holiday flyer, direct mail and email blasts, reaching the 25 to 40-year-old demographic—or, as Thimm calls it, the “instant satisfaction generation”—has forever changed the business Thimm and Losito began nearly 50 years ago.

“Thanks to belonging to Intercounty, that’s where Retailer Web Services (RWS) came in,” said Thimm. “Partnering with RWS gave us the knowledge to reach a customer base we didn’t have before—and in ways we had never imagined.”

Thimm is quick to point out that appliancesalesplus.com is the “focal point of the business and a powerful tool,” driving both online awareness of the store and sales. “Our website (WebFronts® Level 4) is the No. 1 reason our phone rings,” said Thimm.

“When people call with their questions, they’re either on my website or have been on my site—or customers walk in with a spec sheet they’ve printed from my site. If I didn’t have the website, I simply wouldn’t be in business.”

The WebFront site was just the beginning. Today, Appliance Sales Plus uses the RWS complete digital suite which also includes WebFronts® Review™, RetailDeck® and AdRocket™.

“I sell washing machines,” said Thimm. “I need experts to take care of technology, and RWS takes that burden off me.

“They are visionaries and innovators, never settling and always changing. RWS’ ability to create and help me maintain a price structure on my website is remarkable. Their focus on the appliance industry is second to none.”
Integration of Base and Boost

When RWS launched AdRocket Base in the summer 2018, Thimm says, “It opened up another avenue at our fingertips.” Prior to AdRocket, an online marketing agency was running digital ads for Appliance Sales Plus. The difference was, he explained, they were generalists without any knowledge of the appliance industry.

Through AdRocket Base, Thimm seized the opportunity to tap into large-scale digital advertising campaigns with other appliance and mattress retailers at no cost to the independent retailers. The ad spend of several thousand dollars was funded by Intercounty and retail partners such as Whirlpool, LG, Samsung, GE, Bosch, Electrolux and Frigidaire. The successful inaugural campaigns simultaneously executed hundreds of unique Google Display, Google Text and Facebook ads by harnessing the power of automation through smart software design.

“The AdRocket technology brings scale by automation,” said Jennie Gilbert, RWS chief operating officer. “It places more ads faster and more accurately, freeing retailers—and advertisers—from placing ads by hand, which avoids costly human error and delays in starting time-sensitive promotions. AdRocket does all the work prior to the ‘go live’ date and then programmatically places the ads within minutes.”

For Appliance Sales Plus and the other participating retailers, the campaigns generated calls and navigations to the store and filled the store’s online shopping cart.

“AdRocket Base geared my business around national manufacturer promotions, a first and something that would require a fulltime employee,” said Thimm. “AdRocket Base evolved into AdRocket Boost, which opened up another world entirely.”

As soon as it was available, Thimm signed up for AdRocket Boost, too. With AdRocket Boost, he works one-on-one with a Digital Advertising Advisor at RWS to create customized digital marketing content and strategy to promote the store’s unique value propositions, build the brand and promote special sales events.

“Karl’s buying group, Intercounty, does a significant amount of group-led advertising via AdRocket Base,” said Gilbert. “It’s really convenient that our team is knowledgeable about the manufacturer promotions that are funded and directed by his group. We can use that knowledge when we build his customized AdRocket Boost plan to supercharge and complement these events to drive even better results for him.”

AdRocket Boost may be used to fill in advertising for brands or products that the buying group isn’t funding, or to augment what the group is funding.

“Everything executes well together because AdRocket’s smart technology knows what ads are being run for Appliance Sales Plus for both Base and Boost and ensures a retailer is never bidding against himself,” said Gilbert. “That allows Karl to maximize the impact of his own funds and the funds he gets from the buying group, instead of having to manage all of them and worry about them working against each other.”

Performance Report Results

AdRocket Boost gives Appliance Sales Plus an opportunity to reinforce the store’s core “comforts of home” branding, according to RWS Digital Advisor Courtney Sutton. “A large set of evergreen ‘branding’ ads were created to keep the store’s name out there in a consistent, meaningful way.”

The Boost ads went live for Appliance Sales Plus in February 2019. With an ad spend of $2,000 per month, the custom digital ads are placed on Google Display, Google Text and Facebook-Instagram. A snapshot of the top ad performers, February through June, reveals the effectiveness of the branding ads:

**MOST IMPRESSIONS:**
- Branding Facebook image at 305,085

**MOST CLICKS:**
- Branding Facebook image at 1,104

**HIGHEST CLICK THROUGH RATE:**
- Branding Google Text at 6.89%

**LOWEST COST PER CLICK:**
- Samsung Appliances Google Display at $0.40

**HIGHEST REACH:**
- Branding Facebook image at 25,163

**TOTAL SPEND**
- $5,755.84
  - Google total spend: $4,646.15
  - Facebook/IG total spend: $1,109.69

**TOTAL IMPRESSIONS**
- 850,953
  - Google total impressions: 545,868
  - Facebook/IG total impressions: 305,085

**TOTAL CLICKS**
- 4,053
  - Google total clicks: 2,949
  - Facebook/IG total clicks: 1,104

**AVG. COST PER CLICK**
- $1.42
  - Google average CPC: $1.57
  - Facebook/IG average CPC: $1.00
“Overall, the ads are reaching a lot of people and after they click on an ad, they stay on the page,” said Sutton, noting the performance of Google Text ads. “Google is showing how Appliance Sales Plus ads compare to other big players in the same space, for example Frigidaire.com, Home Depot, Amazon and Lowes. The Appliance Sales Plus ads are showing at the top of the page—I love to see AdRocket helping land Appliance Sales Plus at the top!”

Sutton reviews Boost Performance Reports with Thimm on a regular basis, making modifications to existing campaigns and creating new ads as necessary. New branding ads to begin running in the summer 2019 include Facebook video ads of Thimm’s grandkids, encouraging online shoppers to “Come to my papa’s store.” The Facebook videos were created from recent TV spots, showing the grown grandkids in disbelief of how young they were in the original TV ads from the 90s.

The keyword strategy for Appliance Sales Plus is also closely monitored, according to Sutton, who explains consistency is the key to “not allowing a competitor to get in there.”

“I have complete trust in the RWS team,” said Thimm, who appreciates the “one-on-one personal relationship” he has with Sutton. “We go over the Boost Performance Reports, whenever needed, to determine where in the market I need to be. I also use Google Analytics, so I’m able to look between the two of them.”

Over the years, Thimm’s primary advertising goal has always been to generate top-of-mind awareness. “Today, that’s what AdRocket does for us,” explained Thimm. “It keeps our name out there and creates a constant flow of traffic to my website. I didn’t used to know where people where coming from to my site. Now I do.

“Whatever we can do to increase awareness and in turn, increases sales—RWS has given us this ability and it’s been a great partnership,” he said.

“If an independent doesn’t embrace digital and understand how it can give your store an edge against major players, in due time you’re doing yourself an injustice and you will go out of business. Trust me and go with the experts on this.”

**Testing, Testing...Google Shopping Ads**

As an AdRocket customer, Appliance Sales Plus was selected by RWS and Intercounty to participate in the first beta test of a new type of ad via AdRocket: Google Shopping ads. These image ads appear within the results of Google searches, featuring a specific product and the price at which a retailer sells it on their website.

Funded by Intercounty, the beta test focused on nearly 400 Whirlpool family products featured on NECO exclusive rebates in June—giving consumers good reason to purchase from their local appliance retailer instead of big box competitors.

RWS handled all the complexities of setting up the backend for the Google Shopping ads to go live, including setting up individual Merchant Center accounts for each retailer, and upon completion of the test, will measure the effectiveness of the ads for potential use as a future AdRocket ad type.