

Things you Must know to Boost your Business

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Marketing is important to every business's survival, whether it's for the local business up the street or the mega-corporation that spreads across all continents. Unfortunately, for the former, marketing is often put on the back burner as a small business owner has so many other things to deal with.

1. Learn From Your Competitors

As a small business, you should start by looking at what your direct competitors are doing in the area. Find out how they are attracting customers and, more importantly, what is and is not working for them. It's time to start or revisit your competitor research. "If you are opening a location-based business, like a restaurant, that competitor research might involve visiting other venues in person to judge quality, service, aesthetics and other factors through which you want to differentiate your own business", Score says. This is also a great time to introduce yourself to other local business owners. On the other hand, if you have an e-commerce business, you will be conducting a lot of research online.

Make sure to document your findings you can create a chart to show your strengths and weaknesses alongside your competitors. For instance, you might find that you are the only restaurant in the area who isn't offering a loyalty program to attract customers, it is time to jump on that bandwagon.

2. Build a Strong Online Presence

An important part of marketing today is developing an online presence. You might think your local restaurant has no benefit of being online, as customers are usually local. To the contrary, you will be able to attract new customers in the area and beyond by being present online. It's important to remember that one-third of all mobile searches are related to location and 78% of local-mobile searches result in offline purchases. You want people to find you online when they are looking for a business in the area, whether that's on Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter.

From your competitor research, you already have an idea of how other businesses in the area are presenting themselves online. Now dig a little deeper, asking questions like Which businesses show up in Google's local pack? Which keywords are often targeted? What social media platforms are they using? What type of online content are they sharing? Take inspiration from your competitors and improve upon their efforts in order to stand out.

3. Collect Reviews & Testimonials

An important piece of your online presence is online reviews. Reviews are crucial when it comes to ranking in local searches and acquiring new customers. Research shows that 72% say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more. What's more, 92% of consumers say that they will use a

local business if it has at least a 4-star rating.

Having positive reviews of your business name is an incredibly strong tool, so part of your marketing strategy should be directed towards collecting reviews from current clients. Pick one or multiple platforms that you want to direct people to (e.g. Yelp, Google My Business, Tripadvisor, Facebook). It is important to actively ask your customers to leave reviews to these platforms, as people often need a little nudge to share their opinion. You can ask this in person, through your website, or with the help of mobile Prompt customers at the right time, after they have enjoyed their meal or received their order in the mail. Lastly, don't be discouraged by negative or mediocre reviews, these are valuable insights into what you can do to improve your business.

4. Get Press Coverage

You don't have to do all the marketing yourself, in fact, one way to get the word out about your business is getting local press coverage. We are not talking about getting covered by Forbes or the New York Times, but starting with the media outlets in your area who are always looking to cover local news.

Share your story with different media outlets. Many small businesses have heartfelt origin stories, so craft up a narrative that shows who you are and what your business' mission is. You want to be able to supplement this great story with amazing visuals. Professional photos will help you get featured in news stories you can also repurpose these photos for your social media profiles. Depending on your industry, you can also put yourself in front of reporters by sending out samples of your product. The most important thing is to make a memorable connection with a few writers and journalists to secure your time in the spotlight.

5. Make Your Customers Say WOW

You do not need to do all the marketing yourself, turn your best customers into brand advocates who will market for you. In fact, word-of-mouth is 10 times as effective as traditional forms of marketing and advertising. So how do you generate that word-of-mouth marketing? You need to exceed your customers' expectations!

The Missouri Business Development Program states that: "All successful small businesses seem to have an edge. They have found a way to distinguish themselves, to rise above the commercial fray, to put the WOW into their business." In other words, you need to delight your customers and make them say (or think) WOW. Maybe it is sending them or giving them a special gift with purchase. Maybe you have a life-long warranty or know all your customers by name. Think of the most creative way to surprise your customer and they will not only become loyal customers, but they will also spread the word for you.

6. Build an Email List

According to eMarketer, 80% of SMB retail professionals report that email marketing is the best marketing tactic for driving customer acquisition and retention. Email marketing is a great way to build lasting relationship with your customers. But in order to get the full benefits of email marketing,

you need to build out a substantial email list first.

Start by setting up a lead magnet. “Lead magnets are essentially tempting offers that provide consumers something of value in exchange for their contact information”. For local businesses, this might include asking for an email address in to sign up for a VIP loyalty program; or signing up for the email list to receive special discounts.

Once you have an email list, you can create an email marketing strategy. Decide what types of emails you would like to send out, ranging from newsletters and industry-related news to promotions and recommended purchases. The types of emails will depend on the goal you want to achieve, such as improving brand recognition, increasing customer retention, or boosting sales.

7. Add an App to Your Portfolio

An app is not just a mobile application, an app is a complete mobile marketing solution. It is a powerful marketing tool if used the right way. You can use an app to draw new customers in by offering mobile ordering or a loyalty program. You can re-engage existing customers by sending out messages with promotions and news about your business. You can set up a lead capture form within the app to start building out your email list. In addition, an app can also help you collect reviews, as you are able to prompt customers to share their opinion on social media, produce online reviews, or send a referral.

If you want to get even more creative, you can pull out all the stops with an app launch party. This will, in turn, trigger word-of-mouth and draw more people to your business.

Wrap Up

All of the above marketing strategies can help small businesses gain new customers and increase repeat business. Many of them also overlap and work together in order to set your business apart from the crowd: adding a “WOW factor” to your business can trigger positive reviews and, in turn, strengthen your online presence. A new app can help you build an email list, as well as get you local press coverage and so on. These are straightforward and attainable ways to boost your small business marketing.

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