

M LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

December 2021

Which Social Media Platform Is Best for Your Marketing Your Business?

*10 YouTube
Content Marketing
Ideas for Small
Businesses*

*A Guide to TikTok
Marketing for Small
Businesses*

*10 Planning Tips to
Prepare Your Small
Business for Expansion*

*A Small Business
Guide to Local
Email Marketing*



Infographic:
5 Ways to Maximize
Instagram

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LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

2021 continues to be a challenging year, with fires, floods, virus variants, labor challenges and supply chain issues. It is more important than ever to ensure you are maximizing your marketing efforts to grow your business in a cost-effective manner.

Our goal is to provide you information that can help. In this month's issue, we've included several interesting articles and tips that you can apply immediately to help you grow your business.

In this month's issue, you'll find articles on Email, Social Media, Content Marketing, Marketing Strategies and more.

As in every issue, you'll find new versions of our popular Marketing Calendar and Infographic.

If you like the magazine, and know other local business owners that could benefit from receiving our magazine each month, please do us (and them) a favor by forwarding a copy to them.

If you have any comments about this issue or would like us to help you with your marketing please do not hesitate to contact us.

Be Well!

David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions Inc

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A Little About Us

Local Business Marketing Magazine is proudly provided by LMS Solutions, Inc.



LMS Solutions was developed to give businesses of all sizes the ability to leverage the same cutting-edge marketing platforms that the Fortune 500 organizations use, at extremely affordable rates.

We offer an extensive catalog of cutting-edge Local Online, Mobile, Social, Pay-Per-Click, Video, Web and Direct Marketing Media Programs. Whether you're a small business, medium business, or non-profit organization, our programs can help you find greater success.

LMS Solutions has been recognized by the Philadelphia Business Journal as one of the area's Top Marketing Agencies for the last seven years straight!

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- Social Media Marketing
- Direct Mail
- Email Marketing
- Graphic Design
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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

December

Impaired Driving Prevention Month
Write A Business Plan Month
Tie Month
Universal Human Rights Month
Worldwide Food Service Safety Month

November 28th - December 6th - Hanukkah
December 25th - Christmas
December 26th - January 1st - Kwanzaa

1st - World AIDS Day
2nd - Mutt Day
3rd - International Day of Persons With Disabilities
4th - Cookie Day
5th - International Volunteer Day
6th - Walt Disney Day
9th - Pastry Day
10th - Salesperson Day
10th - Human Rights Day

11th - App Day
12th - Universal Health Coverage Day
12th - Gingerbread House Day
14th - Free Shipping Day
15th - Cupcake Day
16th - Chocolate Covered Anything Day
17th - Maple Syrup Day
17th - Ugly Christmas Sweater Day
18th - Answer The Phone Like Buddy The Elf Day
19th - Free Shipping Day
21st - Crossword Puzzle Day
21st - Humbug Day
21st - Winter Solstice
22nd - National Re-gifting Day
26th - Whiner's Day
26th - Day of Goodwill
27th - Fruitcake Day
28th - Chocolate Candy Day
31st - New Year's Eve

January

Cervical Health Awareness Month
Family Fit Lifestyle Month
Financial Wellness Month
Get Organized Month
Glaucoma Awareness Month
Thyroid Disease Awareness Month
Volunteer Blood Donor Month
Walk Your Pet Month

January 1st - New Year's Day
January 17th - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

1st - Polar Bear Plunge Day
2nd - Science Fiction Day
4th - Spaghetti Day
9th - Law Enforcement Appreciation Day
10th - Clean off Your Desk Day
11th - Human Trafficking Awareness Day

13th - Gluten-Free Day
14th - Dress Up Your Pet Day
15th - Hat Day
15th - Bagel Day
16th - Hot & Spicy Food Day
18th - Winnie the Pooh Day
19th - Popcorn Day
20th - Cheese Lover's Day
20th - Take a Walk Outdoors Day
21st - National Hugging Day
23rd - Pie Day
24th - Compliment Day
24th - Peanut Butter Day
26th - Spouse's Day
27th - Chocolate Cake Day
28th - Blueberry Pancake Day
29th - National Puzzle Day
30th - Croissant Day
31st - Backward Day
31st - Hot Chocolate Day



Which Social Media Platform Is Best for Your Marketing Your Business?

There are more social media platforms than you realize. And even some of those that you will never have heard of have millions of monthly active users (MAUs). But the best advice for marketing a business is to limit the number of platforms on which you have a presence.

So, you want to choose social media platforms on which you can reach your target audience. And you don't want to spread yourself too thin. So, how do you choose the best social media platform for your business?

Consider Demographics

Millions of active users are of no use whatsoever if those users are not interested in what you sell. TikTok, for example, has a predominantly young user base. LinkedIn, on the other hand, is mainly used by business professionals. So, the first thing to consider is the user demographics of a social media platform.

Think About Content Format

The type of marketing content you want to produce will also influence your choice of social media platform. YouTube, for example, is, of course, a video-sharing site. Instagram is for sharing short visual content, including photos and short videos. And Twitter is used for messages of 280 characters or less. All these formats may be used for marketing your business. However, some

types of content will be better suited to your brand personality than others.

Check Out Your Competition

Another way to decide which platforms will be best for your business is to check out your competitors' social media accounts. And, while you are there, look at what type of content your competitors are posting on social media, too.

You could argue that you want a presence on a platform that your competitors don't use. However, competing companies will likely have done their research, so there will be good reasons why they selected a particular platform.

Choose Only Two or Three Platforms

Posting new content regularly and engaging with the community are essential for effective social media marketing. And maintaining an active presence on social media can be time-consuming.

So, consider what resources you have available before selecting

too many platforms. And, if resources are limited, you would be better off choosing only two or three platforms on which to market your business.

Six of the Best-Known Social Media Platforms Explained

As mentioned above, there are plenty of social media platforms from which to choose. And, you will probably know the names of the most popular social media sites. However, if you are not a regular social media, you may not be familiar with the ins and outs of each one. So, here are some facts and stats about some of the best social media platforms to help you choose the best one for your business.



1. Facebook

The mighty Facebook is the largest social media site in the world. And Facebook is probably the most versatile of social media sites in terms of the type of content you can post.

Facebook has 2.8 billion monthly active users. Most Facebook users are aged 18-34, and the gender split is 56% male

and 44% female. It is also worth noting that 96% of Facebook users use the site on their mobile devices.

Facebook is versatile because you can share almost any type of content. You could publish product details on the site, or promote special offers, for example. Or you can post videos, share blog posts from your website, and post company news and updates.

Facebook is probably the number one choice for most businesses. It has a wide reach, is easy to use, and many people use Facebook to find and check out brands.



2. Twitter

Twitter is a site for posting short marketing messages and generating brand awareness. The maximum length of a post on Twitter, known as a tweet, is only 280 characters. However, you can also share links to blog posts on Twitter, add images, and embed videos.

The demographics of Twitter users lean more towards the older generations. Indeed, 59%

of Twitter users are aged 25-49. Twitter users are also predominately male. The gender breakdown is 68% male, 32% female.

Twitter is a site for breaking news and topical discussion. Tweets have a limited life, but they can reach many people. The use of trending hashtags can also significantly increase the reach of a tweet.



3. Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing site. The site is very much focused on visuals. So, Instagram suits lifestyle-orientated and visual brands. However, almost any business can benefit from sharing images of their products or work.

Instagram has one billion monthly active users, and the largest age group is 25-34. Instagram users are 57% female and 43% male.

Instagram is an excellent platform for generating brand awareness. And it's not only makeup brands and celebrities that use the platform. It has been estimated that 71% of US businesses have an

Instagram account. What's more, Instagram users are not averse to following brands. Indeed, 90% of Instagram users follow at least one business.



4. YouTube

YouTube is the world's largest video-sharing site. The site attracts 1.9 billion monthly active users. It has been estimated that 74% of US adults use YouTube, so there is no doubting the potential reach of this platform.

You can post virtually any type of video on YouTube. And there is no restriction on the length of a video. So, you could post product review videos, company overviews, and behind-the-scenes content, too.

The demographics of YouTube users are broad. However, the largest age group of YouTube users is 15-25. Still, don't let that put off YouTube marketing. The platform's user base is so massive that even a tiny percentage of users represent many people.



5. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is primarily a

professional networking site. Businesses that actively market their products and services on LinkedIn are generally professional services and B2B (business to business) companies. However, the site is excellent for networking and attracting talent as well. So, most businesses will benefit from LinkedIn presence, even if they don't post much content on the site. The largest age group of users of LinkedIn is 56-55. The gender split is approximately 50-50. The site would best suit professional services and B2B (business to business) companies for marketing purposes. LinkedIn is also excellent for international marketing as 70% of LinkedIn users live outside the US.



6. TikTok

TikTok is a video-sharing site on which users share short video clips. The maximum length of a video on TikTok is three minutes. However, most of the videos you will see on the platform are significantly shorter. TikTok videos tend to be amusing and entertaining rather than promotional. So, the

platform is excellent for creating brand awareness but less so for pure advertising.

TikTok is still a relatively new platform. Even so, it has a user base of 100 million active monthly users. The largest age group using TikTok is 18-24. So, this is the ideal social media platform for reaching younger people. However, the number of older people using the site is growing.

Only six of the most prevalent social media platforms are listed above. You might also like to consider others, including Snapchat, WhatsApp, Tumblr, and Pinterest. Each of the platforms focuses on different media formats and has a user base with varying demographics.

So, the crucial takeaway from the above is to do your research before choosing a platform for your social media marketing campaign. And don't spread yourself too thin. It is far better to have a solid presence on two or three social media sites than having a poor presence on them all.

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10 YouTube Content Marketing Ideas for Small Businesses

Did you know that YouTube has almost 2 billion monthly users? If that fact startled you, then here's another one to boggle your mind. The total number of internet users is estimated to be around 4.66 billion. So, that means that almost 50% of internet users regularly visit YouTube.

As a small business owner, you might wonder what

global statistics like those above mean to you. After all, no one from Adelaide, Australia, is going to bring their car to your auto shop in Kansas for repair. However, you might also like to consider that YouTube is popular across all demographic groups. So, it is a safe bet that someone using YouTube right now is a potential future customer of your

business.

So, YouTube has the reach, and the cost of creating videos is not prohibitive. Still, that leaves the burning question of what types of videos you can use to promote a small business on YouTube. Well, here are ten video content marketing ideas that almost any small business could create and post on a YouTube channel.

1. Company Overview

You could start your YouTube channel with something simple, like a short promotional video introducing your business. This video could contain similar content to the about us page on your website. Tell the story of how your company was formed, for example. Explain why you are passionate about your business and what sets you apart from the competition. It will help, of course, to also outline the products or services that your company sells.

2. Introduce the Team

It always helps to put faces to names. So, your next marketing video could be introducing your team. Have your employees present themselves on camera and explain the roles they perform in your business. And encourage team members to highlight any experience or qualifications they have that are pertinent to the business. Meet that team videos are excellent for personalizing the brand and provide an opportunity to showcase the expertise that exists within a company.

3. How-To Tutorials

Another way to demonstrate your expertise is to create some how-to videos. If you are an electrician, for example, you could explain how to isolate an electrical fault. Or a bakery could explain how to bake bread at home. Don't worry about showing people how to do what you want them to pay for you to do. Even when people know how to do something, most will still come to a professional to get the work done to the highest standard.

4. Product Tutorials

Product tutorial videos are an excellent way to offer higher levels of customer service. People might need some tips on assembling or using your products, for example. Or perhaps there is a variety of ways your products can be used that need explaining? Product tutorials can reduce the number of customer support calls. And tutorials give prospective customers a better idea of your products and customer service.

5. How It's Made

People are always interested to learn how

things are done. And that wish to learn more applies to service providers, product manufacturers, and professional organizations. So, how it's made videos are another video marketing opportunity for most businesses. For example, how is a house designed and built? How is an order picked and dispatched from an online store? Or what does a real estate agent do behind the scenes to sell a home? How it is made videos provide an opportunity to demonstrate the skills you possess and the quality of your products. This type of explainer video is also likely to be viewed by people interested in learning more about the product or service you offer.

6. Testimonials / Case Studies

Nothing sells a product or service better than satisfied customers. So, use your YouTube channel to provide the third-party validation of your business that so many people will need to see before they buy. In some industries, case studies highlighting the benefits gained by a customer will be the best format. In others, short

interviews with satisfied customers will be the best format. Either way, YouTube is an excellent platform for leveraging the power of social proof.

7. Product Promotion

It is generally best to consider the entertainment value of marketing videos on YouTube. After all, people are more likely to share a video that entertained or educated them. However, you can also post short promotional videos as well.

Promotional videos will back up the other types of content. For example, someone who views a case study might then want to learn more about the product. Promotional videos might also be shared with purchasing influencers. For example, a consumer might ask their partner to check out a product before purchasing. Or a business buyer might share a promotional video with their colleagues. However, it might be best not to fill your channel with only sales-orientated content.

8. A Day in The Life

People love to peek behind the doors and

learn more about other people's lives. After all, that's why reality TV shows are so popular. So, a day in the life video presents another marketing opportunity for most businesses. But remember, it's not only the business owner's day at work the will be of interest to your target audience. Indeed, a day in the life of an apprentice or skilled worker might be more engaging than your own! So, consider what would be more entertaining and informative when selecting a team member to feature. And, of course, consider who will present the business in the best light, too.

9. Behind the Scenes Tour

A behind-the-scenes tour gives people access to the areas of your business they wouldn't usually see. This type of video might include the production line of a manufacturing company. The warehouse of a distribution business. Or the back office of a professional business. Of course, you must ensure that you don't film anything that might harm your business on any behind-the-scenes video. And that includes trade

secrets, personal details of customers, and any potentially unsafe working practices. So, videos of this nature can take a lot of planning and staging.

10. Webinars, Presentations, and Corporate Events

Finally, you can use YouTube as a catch-up service for the people who could not attend marketing events. The precise format of this type of video will depend on the industry. Videos of this type include webinars, presentations, and footage of corporate events, such as trade shows. This type of content may only be of interest to a relatively small segment of your target audience. Nevertheless, videos of this nature do offer another opportunity to provide insights into your business.

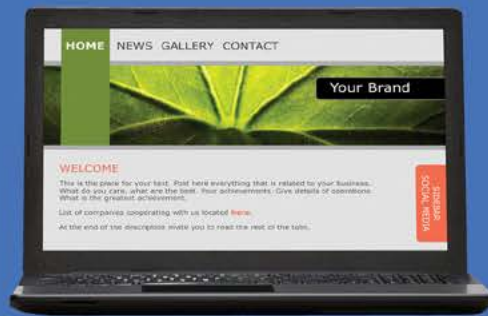
The above is only a handful of the possible topics for marketing video content on YouTube. And there will be variations on the above themes that might better suit your business. However, the crucial takeaway is that every company has material for YouTube video content if you look hard enough.

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A Small Business Guide to Local Email Marketing

Email marketing is one of the most cost-effective ways for any small business to connect with local customers. As larger companies scramble to personalize their emails, small businesses naturally benefit from their local knowledge and experience. What's more, an increasing number of consumers prefer to shop locally. According to a 2020 study, 82 percent of shoppers said they would rather support a local business than a large corporation.

If you want to use local email marketing to promote your small business, this guide looks at:

- The benefits of local email marketing.

- How to choose an email marketing tool.
- How to build an email list, online and offline.
- Various types of local email content.

What is Local Email Marketing?

While regular email marketing involves sending emails to a wider pool of customers and prospects to promote a business, local email marketing involves targeting customers and prospects from a specific geographic area.

Small businesses can use various online marketing strategies to support the growth of their business locally, but email marketing offers many unique benefits.

What Are the Benefits of Local Email Marketing?

Build Your Local Reputation

By sending out helpful email content and attractive offers to local consumers, you can quickly build your reputation in the community. Ultimately, it enables you to grow your

brand organically through word of mouth and referral activity, increasing trust in your business.

Save Time and Money

Direct mail advertising, TV and radio ads, search engine ads, and social media ads are expensive if you're on a tight budget. In contrast, email marketing costs very little and offers a high return on your investment. With email automation and bulk email broadcasting, you can reach a large number of potential customers using very little time and resources.

Increase Traffic to Your Online Channels

By including relevant links within your emails, you can expose more people to your website content and social media conversations.

Reach Mobile Consumers

An increasing number of consumers read emails on their mobile phones, so you can reach your target audience wherever they are at all times of the day.

Generate More Sales

Email marketing is one of

the best ways to increase sales throughout the year, especially if traffic to your brick-and-mortar store is down. According to a Direct Marketing Association study, 66 percent of consumers made a purchase online because of an email marketing message.

Increase Customer Loyalty

Sending useful emails to local customers not only strengthens your reputation, but it also fosters customer loyalty. When customers know they can rely on you for helpful content and exclusive deals, they're more likely to stick around.

Track Results

Most email marketing tools allow you to track what happens after you've delivered your emails. You can track open rates, click through rates, unsubscribe rates, and more to learn how your emails are performing. You can then use this data to better understand the needs and interests of your audience.

How to Choose an Email Marketing Tool

Choosing the right

email marketing tool will help you create more effective email marketing campaigns. Here are a few key features you should look out for:

- Multiple subscription tiers. Look for a provider that offers cheap or free plans for smaller businesses. You can then upgrade as you grow.
- Analytics tools. You should be able to get a detailed overview of how your emails are performing, with access to open rates, unsubscribe rates, click-through rates, and more.
- An A/B testing tool. This tool allows you to test different versions of an email on a small group of subscribers. For example, you could send two groups the same email, but change the subject line for each group. You can then compare the results and send the best version of the email to the rest of your list.
- Email survey tools. Your email marketing platform should make it easy to create surveys and send them to your list. Gathering feedback will help you optimize future marketing

campaigns.

- A visual editor. Most tools offer a drag-and-drop editor to help you quickly create attractive-looking emails. You should also get access to pre-designed templates.
- Autoresponders. These are emails that are sent automatically to your subscribers when certain events are triggered, based on rules that you define. For example, you could set up an autoresponder to send a welcome message to anyone that signs up to your mailing list.
- Segmentation tools. Dividing your subscribers into sub-groups is an important part of being able to send more personalized, effective messages. For example, you can segment subscribers based on their location, age, gender, interests, and so on.
- Mobile optimized templates. More and more users are opening emails on mobile devices, so your emails need to be easy to read on smaller screens.

These features are a good

starting point to find the best tool for your business. Some of the most popular email marketing platforms for small businesses are Mailchimp, Constant Contact, Sendinblue, GetResponse, Drip, ConvertKit, and AWeber. Some of these platforms even offer free plans for businesses with smaller email lists.

Local Email Marketing List-Building Strategies

Before you start to build your email list, it's important to categorize your existing email addresses into groups based on their location. By segmenting your list, you can be sure you're sending out the right messages to the right people.

There are various ways to grow your list, but these are the best online and offline methods:

Online Methods

- Place signup forms across your website - on your homepage, about page, contact page, and alongside blog posts.
- Use popup forms that get triggered after users have spent a certain amount of time

on your website, after they've scrolled down a certain percentage of a page, or when they start to exit a page.

- Create a full-page call-to-action when users land on your website. Known as a welcome mat, this technique is a great way to grab the attention of visitors and encourage them to join your email list.
- Include a link to your email signup form on your social media profiles, and within posts.

Offline Methods

- Encourage in-store customers to sign up during checkout.
- Clearly display a URL to your sign-up page on business cards, flyers, and shopping bags.
- Collect email addresses at trade shows and other business events that you attend or host.
- Partner with other local businesses to promote each other's deals. For example, you could create a community-based email list with exclusive deals from various

businesses.

With all of these methods, it's crucial to provide an incentive to sign up, such as a discount code, access to exclusive content, or a customer loyalty rewards program.

Local Email Marketing Content Ideas

Once you have a growing list of email subscribers, you should aim to consistently deliver engaging emails. Here are nine different types of email content you can bring into play:

Event-Related Promotions

Create an editorial calendar based around regular holidays and events in your local area. Apart from national holidays, include local events such as community festivals, local historical anniversaries, exhibitions, and sporting fixtures. Then include events tied to your business, such as company anniversaries, workshops, trade shows, fundraisers, and product launches. Base each email campaign around these specific



events, using special offers to encourage engagement with your business.

New Product Promotions

While product launches can be an in-store event, you can also keep it virtual. Whenever you're releasing a new product or service, never waste this opportunity to involve your email subscribers. Encourage users to try your new products with limited-time offers or discounts.

Business Updates

Any new developments in your company can be used to create email content. For example, keep subscribers informed about your changing business hours, new staff, new locations, or reformed work processes.

Helpful Content

To lower unsubscribe rates, you need to regularly deliver helpful content to your audience. What problems do your readers face? What tips and advice can you offer to improve their lives? For example, a dog grooming business might send tips about the best places to take dogs in the local area.

Surveys

If you're not sure what your audience wants to hear about, send out a survey. Surveys are not only a good way to get to know your audience, but they also give you valuable feedback about your business, products, and services. What do customers like and dislike about your business? What do they think about local issues? Report the results in a follow-up email and share the results with local newspapers for free publicity.

Loyalty Programs

Consider setting up a loyalty program that rewards customers for sticking with your business. For example, offer a VIP loyalty program that offers discounts, free deliveries, and early access

to new products. Promote the loyalty program during the email signup process.

Staff Spotlights

Showing customers your real employees helps to humanize your company and builds trust with your audience. Show real photos of your team at work and consider interviewing team members to give readers an insight into your company.

Personalized Offers

If you've collected enough information from subscribers during the signup process, you can deliver more personalized offers to make your emails stand out. For example, send customers exclusive discounts on their birthday and subscription anniversary. You can also offer special deals on related products or services to people that have recently made a purchase.

Blog Roundups

You should definitely promote new blog posts on social media. However, you can also promote content to your email subscribers; just do it

less frequently. Consider highlighting your most popular blog posts of the last three months or share a roundup of your most popular posts of the year.

Boost Small Business Results with Local Email Marketing

There are many benefits of local email marketing for small businesses, but the bottom line is that it's the most cost-effective way to attract, engage, and retain local customers. It takes time and dedication to grow a small business, but you have the advantage of local knowledge - unlike larger companies.

Draw on your local insights to deliver relevant and helpful email content to your audience and reward your subscribers with special offers. At the same time, grow your email list by using the online and offline strategies outlined here. When you do this consistently, you'll steadily build your reputation in the local community, attract more potential customers to your business, and ultimately increase sales in the process.

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10 Planning Tips to Prepare Your Small Business for Expansion



When you first start a business, your thoughts will be focused on survival. But, in time, your business will become established, and then your mind will turn to expansion.

Your market research might have shown you that there is scope to expand your operations. There might be more than enough demand for your existing products or services. Or perhaps there are other complementary products that you could bring to market.

However, promising the prospects appear to be, your business must first be prepared to cope with rapid growth. Because if you cannot scale up when the new orders come flooding in, expansion could spell the demise of your business.

As with almost everything in business, successful business growth depends on thorough preparation and planning. So, read these ten business expansion planning tips before you light the fuse on a significant business growth program.

1. Plan for Growth in Phases

You might have a broad growth target in mind. Your growth target might be to double sales in twelve months, for example. But that kind of target will probably be too vague and the timescale too far into

the future.

Instead, it would be better to develop a step-by-step plan detailing the monthly actions required to achieve the desired annual growth. Then, you can monitor progress throughout the year and modify your growth strategies when needed.

The growth plan will need to be as detailed as a start-up business plan. It should include product development proposals, if appropriate, market research, and marketing plans. And there should be a financial section that will consist of budgets, cash flow forecasts, and financing requirements.

2. Set Measurable Targets

As mentioned above, you will need to track progress throughout the expansion period. So, you will need to define growth targets. However, sales volume targets alone may not be sufficient to manage growth.

The primary objective may be to increase sales. But it would be best to also set targets for and monitor gross margins, return on investment (ROI) on marketing campaigns, and cash flow.

Expansion can put a strain on the general running of a business, too. So, there will also be non-financial key performance indicators (KPIs) that will require monitoring. For example, it will be crucial to ensure that an order fulfillment backlog does not occur. And the processing of essential financial documents, such as sales invoices, will also need monitoring.

3. Implement Scalable

Processes and Systems

Once you have your detailed plan in place, you will need to prepare the business for expansion. And the best place to begin that process is to consider if your current business processes can handle a significant increase in volume.

Almost every function in a business will be affected by the expansion. So, pre-expansion investment in scalable technology will ensure that those processes will not hinder growth.

For example, how well will your sales team handle the number of leads you are expecting? Do you need to invest in a customer

relationship management (CRM) solution? Will your accounting software cope with the increased number of transactions? Do you have the systems in place to manage large volumes of sales orders?

4. Consider Logistics and Physical Aspects

Upgrading business processes and computer systems will help scale up operations in preparation for expansion. But you may need to scale up physical assets, like equipment and business premises, too.

For example, new employees will need desks, computers, software, and possibly other equipment. And, if your business sells physical products, you might need new production equipment and more extensive warehouse facilities.

It would be advisable to consider your supply chain as well. Can your current suppliers meet your increased demand for material and services, for example? Does your existing freight shipping company have the capacity to cope with the increased volume?

5. Hire Top Talent and

Train Employees

New hires will need to learn your systems and processes before they can be 100% productive. So, it is best to hire suitable employees before putting a business expansion program into action.

Preparing for expansion doesn't necessarily mean significantly increasing staff levels immediately. But it will help to consider the business's future needs when recruiting. You might want to recruit people with experience in larger organizations, for example. And current employees might benefit from further training.

6. Define Management Policies and Structure

The hope is, of course, that your business growth plans will turn your business into a hive of activity. And it is likely that, even with thorough planning, some aspects of the operation will become stretched at some point. So, it will help to have your company policies and business processes documented and a proper management structure in place.

The crucial point to recognize is that you

cannot run a large enterprise like a small business. The business owner, for example, cannot make every decision and deal with every crisis. Instead, the business owner must get used to delegating and allowing managers to become decision-makers.

7. Consider Impact on Existing Revenue Streams

It is essential not to neglect existing customers during a period of expansion. After all, they are the people who got your business to where it is today. So, it would be best to ensure that growth does not affect the service or products that existing customers receive. And, if you plan to offer new customers special price breaks, you might want to offer existing customers the same deal.

You might also want to consider how expansion might change the personality of your business. Will you be able to maintain the personal service that your customers currently value, for example? What steps can you take to ensure that quality does not fall in favor of volume? Indeed, if you begin to lose long-

standing customers, it could be a sign that you are expanding too fast.

8. Assess Financing Needs

The expansion of a business will need financing. If you need new equipment, for example, that must be purchased. There will be a delay between spending money on a marketing campaign and the sales materializing.

So, you will need to prepare detailed budgets and cash flow forecasts to assess what financing will be required. And you will need to decide on what type of financing would be best and allow for the lead time to apply for and receive the funding.

When preparing your forecasts, you will also need to consider the impact of sales growth on working capital. For example, you will need to fund a larger accounts receivable (AR) balance. And you might need to increase your stocks of raw materials or goods for resale.

9. Strengthen Financial Position

It is not uncommon for businesses to fail following a period of expansion. A

lack of working capital often causes these failures. So, it would be advisable to strengthen the business's financial position before expanding. A solid financial situation will also help you obtain the funding you need for business growth.

So, look at ways that you might be able to strengthen your balance sheet. Pay off debt where you can, for example. And avoid taking on any new long-term debt before applying for business growth finance. It would also be worth looking at your business credit score and taking steps to improve the rating if necessary. And review your cash flow with a view to building a cash reserve if you can.

10. Have Contingency Plans

There will be risks in expanding your business. You will, for example, probably need to invest in people and equipment that will not be immediately 100% utilized. And you may need to move to larger premises before you need every inch of that space. So, it would be wise to plan for contingencies as well as for success.

As mentioned in point one, expanding in phases will reduce the risk of overcommitting the business. Nevertheless, it would still be wise to consider the possible need to downscale your ambitions should things not go to plan.

You might want to avoid inflexible rental agreements, for example. Instead, opt for flexible contracts from which you could extricate yourself if the need arises. You could initially hire equipment rather than purchase it outright. And it would be advisable to avoid taking on significant long-term debt based on optimistic sales forecasts. Instead, look for flexible financing options that can be scaled in line with business turnover.

Significant expansion is a big step for most small businesses. So, it is advisable to plan for business growth one step at a time. And, if possible, fund the expansion from reserves or flexible financing options so that you are not left burdened with excessive long-term debt. Slow and steady may not be exciting, but it's a lot better than boom and bust!



A Guide to TikTok Marketing for Small Businesses

TikTok has been a phenomenal success since its international launch in 2017. Indeed, it is estimated that there are now 80 million monthly active TikTok users in the United States. That rapid growth in users has led to many businesses wanting a presence on the video-sharing site.

TikTok is relatively new and generally appeals to a younger audience than the more established social media sites. So, some business owners are unsure how to promote their brand on the platform, and some are not convinced that TikTok is the right place to be marketing their business.

So, what is TikTok all about, and how can you use the platform for marketing a small business brand?

What Is TikTok?

For those who have yet to visit the platform, TikTok is a video-sharing site. However, the site is not a YouTube clone. TikTok videos are short. Indeed, the maximum length of a TikTok video is three minutes, but most videos are significantly shorter.

Most TikTok videos are

light-hearted and user-generated. The most prevalent topics relate to comedy, dance, and pranks. Other popular topics include beauty tips, fashion, and fitness. Often, TikTok content is dominated by what is trending on the platform.

Who Uses TikTok?

Most users of TikTok are in the younger age groups. However, it would be a mistake to think that TikTok is exclusively for kids. It is estimated that 60% of US TikTok users are aged 16-24, and 24% are aged 25-44. Approximately 60% of TikTok's US user base is female.

So, the average TikTok user is likely to be a member of Generation Z or a younger millennial, and that group includes people born in the mid to late 90s to the early 2010s. Generation Z, also known as zoomers, have grown up with the internet and are generally considered trendsetters.

TikTok Content Marketing Tips

The demographics of TikTok users mean that the platform will not be suitable for every business. You are not, for

example, going to sell many retirement homes or mobility scooters on TikTok!

However, that still leaves many other types of businesses that could leverage the TikTok marketing opportunity. And, as TikTok has yet to be flooded by marketing content, now is an excellent time to get in on the ground floor.

But how do you market a product or service in three minutes or less? Well, traditional marketing extolling the benefits of a product is unlikely to work. Instead, you must create entertaining content that people will share. Here are some tips to help you market a small business on TikTok.

Check it Out First

As mentioned above, TikTok is unlike any other social media platform that you will have used before. So, it would be a good idea to spend some time on TikTok before you begin planning a marketing campaign.

Create a personal TikTok account and review some of the content. Perhaps search for some of your

competitors and see what content they have posted. Get a feel for the site and look at what types of content generate the most interest and engagement.

Keep It Brief

TikTok users love the platform, and typical regular users of the site will spend around fifty minutes per day viewing TikTok content. However, a user will flick through hundreds of videos in that time, skipping over any that take too long to get to the point.

So, brevity is the key to successful TikTok marketing. Don't take too long to get to the punchline. Instead, get your marketing message across fast so that users don't get bored and move on to the following video.

Create Original, Authentic Content

Try to convey the personality of your brand in TikTok videos. Perhaps share some amusing behind-the-scenes footage, or even some of the things that didn't go to plan in your business. Of course, you don't want to show anything that might damage your brand. Even

so, you do want to show the human side of your business.

Follow the Trends

TikTok is very much driven by trends. So, it will help to follow what is trending on the platform and see if you can incorporate any of those trends into your marketing videos. Some of the trends are merely seasonal, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Other trends are specific types of videos or challenges.

Following the trends will help keep your channel up to date and relevant. And you will probably attract more views by using trending hashtags, too.

Be Yourself

If you try to force it and post "trendy" videos that don't reflect your personality, the content will look disingenuous. People will think you are merely trying to be "cool" to gain more sales, and TikTok users do not like advertisers invading their space in that way.

You need to be comfortable about what you are posting on TikTok, and you need to be

yourself. If you don't feel confident in front of a camera, it would probably be best to ask someone else to appear in your TikTok videos.

Entertainment First, Advertising Second

People are tired of being bombarded with advertising online, and that dislike of ads is even more prevalent in younger age groups. So, if you don't want your TikTok videos to be skipped over, it would be best to prioritize entertainment over advertising.

TikTok marketing videos work best as brand awareness content. So, create content that will gain people's attention and pique their interest in your brand. Then, once you have grabbed someone's attention, you can direct them to your website, where the selling begins.

Collaborate with Influencers

It can be challenging for small businesses to gain a foothold on TikTok. But one way to get more exposure is to partner with established influencers on the platform. You

might struggle to gain the attention of a creator with a massive following, though. So, micro or nano-influencers with only a reasonable following might be a better target.

To find influencers in your niche, look for creators using hashtags relevant to your business. Then, follow these micro-influencers, engage with their content, and then reach out to them with a collaboration proposal. Remember, though, that entertainment is the name of the game on TikTok, not straight advertising. So, any content proposals you make to an influencer

must offer some value to that person's followers.

Don't Overproduce Videos

TikTok is dominated by user-generated content. The site features snippets of people's lives and is generally light-hearted and fun. So, no one is looking for perfect production quality on a TikTok video. TikTok marketing content must be original and authentic.

Users of TikTok tend to be younger than the users of other social media sites. So, TikTok is not going to be a suitable marketing platform for every small

business. However, TikTok does offer an excellent marketing opportunity for companies that sell products that would appeal to younger generations.

Like all social media platforms, you need to post regularly on TikTok. It will also help your marketing efforts if you interact with the community. Most crucially, TikTok videos need to be entertaining, even quirky, and, of course, relatively short. So, TikTok marketing content is somewhat different from other types of marketing but can be highly effective.

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FUN FACTS

“Jingle bells” was composed in 1857, and not for Christmas – it was meant to be a Thanksgiving song!

Japanese people traditionally eat at KFC for Christmas dinner, thanks to a successful marketing campaign 40+ years ago. KFC is so popular that customers must place their Christmas orders 2 months in advance.

December Milestones:

- Dec. 1, 1885 - Invented by Charles Alderton, Dr Pepper was first served at the W.B. Morrison & Co. Old Corner Drug Store in Waco, Texas
- Dec. 3rd, 1994 - The Sony PlayStation was released in Japan
- Dec. 10, 2009 - Avatar, the biggest grossing film of all time, was released in theaters
- Dec. 17th, 1843 - A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens was published
- Dec. 19th 1917 - The first NHL Game took place with the Montreal Canadians playing against the Ottawa Senators
- Dec. 24th, 1814 - The first performance of Silent Night took place in the church of St. Nikolaus in Oberndorf, Austria.
- Dec. 31st, 1907 - The first New Year’s Eve celebration was held in Times Square (then known as Longacre Square) in Manhattan.

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5 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE *Instagram*

1 VISUAL COMPOSITION AND CONSISTENCY



Instagram is all about visuals, so you need your posts to look great and capture attention. You want your photos and videos to be sharp, well-lit, well-composed, and in focus. Your visual content also needs to be compelling. You want them to tell a story or get viewers excited. Examples of compelling posts include behind-the-scenes posts, quotes/text-based images, instructional posts, videos, or reels. Your Instagram look should be consistent across all posts to help followers easily recognize your content in their feeds.

2 INSTAGRAM STORIES



Half of businesses on Instagram are using Stories and are seeing positive results. Stories provide an opportunity to connect with followers and build relationships. Your Stories need to be more real and raw than your Instagram feed. The best ways to use Instagram Stories for a business is to tell a story, use a call to action, give viewers valuable information/useful resources, or use multiple short scenes and convey your message in the first 3 seconds. But make sure your brand identity is consistent just like your feed is.

3 ENGAGEMENT



If you want engagement on Instagram, you have to engage, too. Respond to comments and follow other popular accounts in your niche and like and comment on their posts. If someone tags you in a post, look for a way to engage like resharing the post. Pinning comments from top fans or comments that're likely to spark conversations is a way to encourage more engagement. Instagram Live is another great way to connect with fans. Host a Q&A, host a workshop/tutorial, talk to a client or team member, offer a behind-the-scenes look at something, or do a collab.

4 INSTAGRAM ADS



The surest way to get your content in front of a new audience is to run Instagram Ads. You can advertise in the Instagram feed, Stories, or Explore. You want to target your Ads based on your target audience, looking at the location, demographics, interests, and behaviors to target your ads.

5 HASHTAGS



Hashtags are a keyway to increase your visibility and discoverability. You can use up to 30 hashtags in an Instagram post. However, we recommend using only 5 to 9 hashtags per post. More than that could turn potential followers away because it looks like spam content. You also want to make sure your hashtags are relevant, are specific to your niche, and do not encourage follow or like-swapping, for example #like4like or #followme.



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