

M LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

January 2021

9 Ways to Leverage Social Media in 2021 to Boost Small Business Results

10 Twitter Tips for Small Businesses

10 Ways to Boost Sales Without Spending a Lot of Money

Tips on Improving the Readability of Your Email Marketing Content

10 Elements That Will Improve Your Sites SEO

10 New Years Goals for Your Small Business

**Infographic:
Instagram Stats
& Tips**

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Welcome to this month's edition!

2020 is now behind us! I don't know any business owner that is not thankful for the new year to be here. The opportunity for have a great 2021 is in front of us, especially with the vaccines being distributed nationwide. Our hope is that the information you find in our magazine will help you achieve (and exceed) all of your goals for the year, and that 2021 will be a healthy and prosperous year for you.

We've packed this month's issue full of interesting articles and tips that you can apply immediately to help you grow your business. We hope you enjoy the articles on Goals, E-Mail Marketing, Social Media, SEO, and other topics.

If you find the magazine helpful, 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.

As always, we welcome any comments or questions you might have, as well as the opportunity to explain how we've been able to help businesses just like yours.

To A Fantastic 2021!

David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions, Inc.

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A Little About Us

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

January

Cervical Health Awareness Month
Eye Care Month
Family Fit Lifestyle Month
Financial Wellness Month
Get Organized Month
Glaucoma Awareness Month
March of Dimes Birth Defects Prevention Month
Staying Healthy Month
Thyroid Disease Awareness Month
Volunteer Blood Donor Month
Walk Your Pet Month

January 1 - New Year's Day
January 18 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

1st - Polar Bear Plunge Day
2nd - Science Fiction Day
4th - Spaghetti Day
9th - Law Enforcement Appreciation Day
9th - National Take the Stairs Day
11th - Clean off Your Desk Day

12th - Work Harder Day
14th - Dress Up Your Pet Day
15th - Hat 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 - Pediatrician Day
28th - Blueberry Pancake Day
29th - Have Fun at Work Day
29th - National Puzzle Day
30th - Croissant Day
31st - Backward Day
31st - Hot Chocolate Day

February

African American History Month
Heart Healthy Month
Responsible Pet Owner Month
Cancer Prevention Month
Children's Dental Health Month
Spay/Neuter Awareness Month

February 14th - Valentine's Day
February 15th - President's Day

1st - National Freedom Day
1st - Change Your Password Day
1st - Car Insurance Day
2nd - Groundhog Day
3rd - International Golden Retriever Day
4th - Facebook's Birthday
4th - World Cancer Day
5th - Wear Red Day
7th - Super Bowl Sunday

8th - Boy Scout Day
10th - Flannel Day
11th - Inventor's Day
12th - Lincoln's Birthday
14th - Autism Sunday
16th - Fat Tuesday
17th - Random Acts of Kindness Day
17th - Ash Wednesday
18th - Drink Wine Day
20th - Love Your Pet Day
20th - World Day for Social Justice
22nd - Wildlife Day
22nd - Washington's Birthday
22nd - World Thinking Day
25th - Pancake Day
25th - Chili Day
26th - Bacon Day
27th - Polar Bear Day
29th - Superman's Birthday



10 Ways to Boost Sales Without Spending a Lot of Money

When times are tough, and you need more sales, you can find yourself caught in a catch-22 situation. You need to generate more sales to boost your cash flow. But you don't have the cash to spend on the marketing that will bring in more leads. However, it is unlikely that you have exhausted all the low or no-cost strategies to increase sales. Here are ten ways that can boost sales without spending a mountain of cash.

1. Look for Repeat Sell Opportunities

The first thing to consider is whether you can resell to customers who have already purchased a product from your business. Can you offer customers a related item, an upgrade, or an add-on product? Past and existing customers will be less resistant to buying from you again. So, don't ignore the potential gold mine that you have in your old customer records. An inexpensive mailshot or email campaign to old customers could provide a significant boost in sales.

2. Encourage Customer Referrals

Reach out to your satisfied, loyal customers, and ask them to refer your business to a friend. In some cases, you will not even need to offer a financial reward to encourage customer referrals. If you have a great relationship with your customers, they may merely need a little prompt from you to put more business your way. Even if you need to offer a financial incentive, it can be relatively small

compared to the profit you make on new sales.

3. Warm Up Your Old Mailing List

Even if you have let your mailing list go cold, you may still be able to generate some sales out of old contacts. Prospects interested enough to subscribe to your mailing list before might yet be tempted into buying your products today. However, it is not advisable to make your first contact with a cold mailing list a sales offer. Reintroduce yourself to your subscribers with some valuable warm-up content, like a free eBook, before you try selling to them again.

4. Improve Your Upselling at Point of Sale

Are you getting all the sales volume you could from customers when they place an order with your business? Could you tempt them into buying a complimentary product, upgrade, or additional services? When a prospect is about to become a customer, they could be drawn into adding "one more" item to their shopping basket or order. So, consider if you could add some upsells

in your sales processes to generate extra revenue from every customer.

5. Focus Sales Efforts on Hot Leads

If you need to boost sales fast, it is best to focus all your efforts on your hottest leads first. And it would be advisable to concentrate on those leads that will bring in the most revenue. When you want to increase sales without spending any money, you need to maximize the benefits you gain from existing resources. So, make sure that your sales team focuses only on the leads that are likely to generate cash in the short-term. The longer-term prospects can be put on the back burner and kept warm in the meantime.

6. Make Some Cold Calls

If you don't have enough leads to work on right now, you could go back to the old-fashioned cold calling methods of generating sales. It can be disheartening cold calling people who are potentially not interested in what you have to offer. However, setting your sales team a cold calling task is better

than having salespeople doing nothing when you desperately need more sales. If your sales team is underutilized right now, the only cost of cold calling will be the telephone calls. So, the cost of an in-house telemarketing campaign would probably easily be covered by the increase in sales.

7. Network

Your network of business contacts could provide you a source of new leads. So, try working your contacts harder to see what sales opportunities you can unearth. Remember that your employees will have their networks as well. It is not only your sales team that will have contacts who might be interested in buying your products. So, encourage employees to play their part in generating sales, too. You might want to consider offering all employees a financial incentive to bring in new customers.

8. Partner Related Businesses

Another way to generate leads with no marketing costs is to form mutually beneficial

partnerships with other, noncompeting businesses in your niche. A bookkeeper, for example, may often get asked to recommend a business lawyer. An accounting software supplier may have opportunities to promote a point of sale (POS) software application. Such partnerships might operate on a commission basis, or they may be merely a reciprocal lead-passing arrangement. Such agreements can also benefit smaller businesses pitching for large projects that require additional products or services outside the scope of what that business offers.

9. Improve Social Media Presence

Paying for social media ads is not the only way to promote a business on social media. By posting relevant and useful content on platforms like Twitter and Facebook, you can reach prospective customers free of charge. Try posting more often on your social media accounts and interact with your followers. If you can create a buzz around your brand, you will find that people will share your posts more

often, including your sales content.

10. Update Your Website Content

If you post more content on your business website, you will increase your chances of getting traffic from Google. And as organic traffic costs you nothing, it's a great way to generate sales without spending more money. As well as posting new content, revisit your existing content, and consider if it can be made more appealing. Make sure that your calls to action are punchy and enticing, for example. And check that all your product descriptions are up to date and accurate.

As you will see from the above, there are plenty of ways of generating sales without spending a fortune on marketing. Sometimes, all that is required is a little bit of lateral thinking. Of course, businesses that want to grow need to invest in marketing. Even so, the above tips will help you generate the money for the next marketing campaign when you are short of cash.



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Setting goals is how you get things done in business. It doesn't matter what stage of development your enterprise is at; it is the targets you set for your company that drive you forward.

Of course, it would be best if you were working on and revising your business goals throughout the year. However, the goal-setting exercise must start somewhere. So, most business owners set their high-level goals at the beginning of a new financial or calendar year.

A target to make more money is not a specific enough goal. The goals that you set for your business need to be what is known as SMART. A SMART goal is a target that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. But before you get down to the specifics, you need to know what your high-level objectives are. Here are ten outline ideas to get you started on developing your new year business SMART goals.

1. Complete a SWOT Analysis

The best place to start setting new goals for your business is by identifying the company's strengths and weaknesses. A SWOT analysis, an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, will help you determine what aspects of your business require attention. The strengths of your business are the areas that you capitalize on further. The weaknesses will need to be addressed. The opportunities are aspects of your business and your market that you have yet to exploit, and the threats are the external factors for which you need a contingency plan.

2. Reduce Costs

All business owners aim to control business costs. However, it can be challenging to monitor expenses constantly when you have so many other things on your plate. So, commit this year to set aside some time for a complete cost review. Go through your accounts to see where

you are spending money and where there might be potential savings to be made. Review all your regular vendors, too. You might be able to renegotiate terms with some vendors, or there might be cheaper alternatives.

3. Increase Gross Margins

There may be new products that you could release and new markets you could target. But, before you start considering expanding your reach, you might want to look for ways of squeezing some extra profit out of what you currently sell. Review your entire product range and consider if prices could be increased this year, and see if any savings can be made on raw materials or production costs. Merely adding \$1 of extra gross margin on every unit sold could represent a significant increase in annual profits.

4. Improve Cash Flow

Another excellent new year goal to set yourself would be to improve your

cash flow. More cash in the bank would mean less time wasted fending off creditors and more time available for managing the business. If your cash flow runs smoothly, you would have more money to spend on expanding the business. So, consider the ways that you might be able to get your customers to pay you sooner. You could offer early settlement discounts, for example. Or. Perhaps you could improve your collections process. For some businesses, invoice factoring can also be an excellent way to smooth out the peaks and troughs in cash flow.

5. Carry Out a Marketing Audit

Your marketing might be bringing in sales. But do you know which marketing campaigns are yielding the results? It's easy to take a "throw enough of it at the wall, and some will stick" marketing approach. However, if you fail to measure each campaign's success, you could be wasting a lot of money.

Make this year the year that you sit down and take stock of your marketing campaigns. Weed out the marketing campaigns that are not bringing results. Spend the cash that you save on campaigns proven to be successful or on new marketing ideas.

6. Start Taking Social Media Marketing Seriously

If you have yet to use social media marketing to promote your business, this could be the year to start. If social media ads can influence an election's outcome, think about what they could do for your sales. Set an initial goal of learning more about social media marketing, and then plan your first social media campaign. Don't give up if you don't see immediate results. It takes time to build a credible social media presence, and you will probably need to try several approaches to social media advertising before you find the most effective format for your business.

7. Expand Your Product Range

If you believe you have achieved all you can with your current products, it may be time to expand your range. So, put some thought into new products or services you could offer to complement your existing product range. Look at what your competitors are selling, and survey a sample of existing customers for their ideas on how you might expand your offering. If you can sell more complimentary products, it could increase both new and repeat sales.

8. Target New Markets

You could make it a goal of the next twelve months to explore new markets for your products. Consider, for example, if there are untapped vertical markets that you could target. Or perhaps you could repurpose your products for a new use. Another way to expand your business is to broaden your reach to new regions or even look overseas for opportunities.

9. Improve Customer Service

Set yourself a goal to take your customer service levels from adequate to exceptional. Review all your customer service processes, including your complaints process, and consider how you might improve the customer experience from the first point of contact to sales follow-ups. If you operate in a highly competitive market, customer service is what will set you apart from the rest. So, look at the journey a customer takes with your business

and consider how you can improve the experience.

10. Update Your Business Plan

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to review your business plan. So, dig out the business plan document you wrote when you set up your business and see if you achieved your goals. Then, revise your plan to incorporate your new SMART goals for the coming year. Remember, merely thinking about new objectives for the next twelve months is not

enough. Your goals need to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound, and you will need to plan how you will achieve them.

Hopefully, the above ideas will get you thinking about your business goals for the next twelve months. The crucial point you should take away from this article is that your business may lose direction without a plan. So, put aside some time this year to set your SMART goals and rewrite your business plan ready for the new year.

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Tips on Improving the Readability of Your Email Marketing Content

You want your email marketing content to stand out and grab the attention of recipients. However, this task can seem difficult due to the volume of emails that are sent out daily. You can follow some simple tips on improving the readability of your email marketing content so that recipients

open your emails, read the entire content, and complete the call to action (CTA).

Create a Succinct Message

You must write content that is concise and meets the needs of today's busy consumer. With emails,

less is more. Your readers won't have the patience to read long emails that only waste their time. In this digital age, you need to understand that your readers are used to reading shorter articles online and posting and reading short social media posts, and are constantly inundated with

information all day long.

Create more readable emails by getting rid of the fluff and quickly arriving at the point so your readers know that you value their time. You don't want to waste it by overwhelming them with needless information. Write the email content at an eighth-grade reading level and stick to shorter sentences, so the readers see more white space in the email. If you write extra long paragraphs, that can quickly overwhelm the readers and they'll likely stop reading-- which would hinder you from reaching your goal of getting the reader to complete the call to action (CTA).

Stay Focused on the Main Idea

Don't start rambling when writing your email marketing content. If you drone on in your writing, you'll quickly lose the attention of the reader. You want the reader to stay on track with what you've written so they can easily understand your point and follow through with clicking your link or sharing the information on social media.

Consider using a lightbox, block quote text, or highlighted content so you can help the readers stay focused on your main point. You should reference your main idea throughout the email content. However, highlighting it in a featured manner can keep your reader on point with you.

While you're writing content that remains consistent on a central focus, make sure you help your readers understand how they will benefit from following through on the call to action (CTA). For example, offer referral points if they share the email content on their social media accounts. Offer the reader a 15% discount if they subscribe to your newsletter. Just remember that the more you stay on focus in your email content, the easier it will be for your recipients to understand your message.

Use Online Tools to Check Readability

After you've written email content that has a succinct message and stays focused on your main idea, use online tools

to check for readability. Do an online search to find free readability checkers like the ones found at Readability Formulas, Text Compare, and Word Calculator.

With these readability checkers, you input your content and receive a score on how readable it is and identify the current reading level. This will be helpful so you can ascertain whether or not your email content will positively impact the recipients on your email list or if the content is too convoluted to be easily understood.

Think About Your Readers

The bottom line is that you must always focus on how your readers will receive your email content. Don't get caught up in delivering your message that you forget to think about how you are delivering it. By following the three basic tips outlined in this article, you can improve the way that you write email marketing content and how it is received by your recipients.

2020



2021

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Planning process
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 Target
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 Start
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 Concept
 Goals
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10 Twitter Tips for Small Businesses



Twitter may appear to offer only limited opportunities for marketing. Tweets have a minimal life span, and you are restricted to only 280 characters per tweet.

Even so, Twitter has a lot to offer a small business. Twitter provides a platform for marketing messages. Tweets can be used for customer support,

launching new products, and developing a business brand. Yet, many small businesses fail to take advantage of this free marketing opportunity.

So, if you haven't yet taken full advantage of Twitter as a means of marketing your small business, read on. Here are ten Twitter marketing tips for small businesses.

1. Set Your Objectives

Even though Twitter has its limitations, you still need to treat it the same as any other marketing opportunity. And the best way to start any marketing campaign is to set your goals. So, decide what you want to achieve with your tweets and set yourself some targets. Do you want to generate new business, for example? Or is your goal to connect with existing customers? Setting your Twitter marketing goals will help you decide on the type of tweets that you will send, and setting targets will allow you to monitor the success of your Twitter campaign.

2. Watch and Learn

You may have never used Twitter for marketing before. If so, it would be best if you look at what your competitors are

doing before you begin your marketing campaign, and it would be advisable to investigate what your target audience is talking about too. Twitter is like a conversation, so you need to know what is being discussed before joining in. The objective is to add to the conversation, not merely fire off random, irrelevant tweets

3. Complete Your Twitter Profile

You only have limited space in your Twitter profile, so you need to make the most of the 160 characters you have available in your Twitter bio. Create a Twitter bio that describes your business in an impactful way, and use all the fields on the Twitter profile to your advantage. You can use hashtags in your bio. However, it would be best to avoid filling the 160-character space with nothing but hashtags. Don't forget to add your business logo, complete the address fields, and add your website address.

4. Post Short, Informative Tweets

Short and to the point is the best approach for marketing tweets, and tweets should be informative and provide value. Entertaining or amusing tweets can be useful for engaging an audience and building a brand image. However, it would be unwise to go overboard with frivolous tweets. People will read your tweets because they are interested in your product or company, not the office cat. Furthermore, irrelevant tweets will not help you achieve your Twitter marketing objectives.

5. Post Unique Content

You will create more engagement with your Twitter account if you post unique content. So, try to avoid posting the same content across all social media platforms. Posting links to blog posts on your website is okay. But it would be best if you create original content for your tweets as well. People may visit your Twitter account to find out more

about your business, so people will be expecting to see content on Twitter that can't see on other platforms. Posting different content to different media will also encourage people to visit more of your social media accounts.

6. Use Hashtags Sparingly

Using the appropriate hashtags in your tweets will increase the number of visitors. However, overusing hashtags will make your tweets unreadable. Avoid the temptation to use off-topic hashtags as well. Inserting trending hashtags into your tweets will attract the wrong people to your content, and it will annoy Twitter users. If you are unsure what hashtags to use, try using a hashtag research tool, like Hashtagify or Socialert.

7. Use Images and Videos

Adding images and videos to your tweets will significantly increase engagement. People prefer to look at pictures or watch a video than reading text. Indeed, most Twitter users watch

videos on Twitter. Adding an image to a tweet can increase engagement by more than 30%. Tweets with videos or pictures are also much more likely to be retweeted.

8. Engage as Well as Advertise

As mentioned before, Twitter is all about the conversation. So, avoid the temptation to fill your Twitter feed with nothing but advertisements. Instead, post a mixture of ads, informative content, and entertaining posts. Aim to initiate a conversation and a buzz around your brand rather than using Twitter purely as an advertising medium.

9. Get the Timing Right

The best times for most businesses to post tweets is between 12 pm and 3 pm on weekdays. However, some types of audiences may be active on Twitter at different times of the day. To discover the optimum time of the day for your tweets, you will need to monitor engagement levels with a social media

management tool like Hootsuite.

10. Tweet Regularly and Engage

Twitter is a real-time medium, so you will need to post regularly to generate an audience. Aim to post at least one new tweet every day to keep your Twitter feed fresh. If you always have a fresh and original tweet on your Twitter account, people will revisit your profile more often. And don't forget to respond to messages and tweets about your brand. Engagement on Twitter is a two-way thing.

Twitter can be an excellent medium for connecting with your target audience. But it would help if you kept your Twitter feed fresh, unique, and interesting. And you need to engage with your Twitter audience. Like all social media marketing, the best place to start with Twitter is setting your goals. And then, you will need to monitor your Twitter marketing campaign's success by tracking the analytics.



10 Elements That Will Improve Your Site's SEO

Search engine optimization deals with the methods and techniques used by webmasters and internet marketers to boost the

visibility of their website and its content in organic search engine results. In other words, SEO is focused on maximizing a site's Google rankings.

Here are the most important elements that you must take care of to optimize your blog or website for better SEO.

1. Relevant Content

Search engines like Bing and Google are in the business of sending their users to the most relevant sites based on user search queries. Therefore, you must publish content on your blog or website that's relevant to what your target audience is searching for online. That means you need to know your audience, as well as the intent of their search queries.

2. Quality Content

In addition to relevancy, your content must be high-quality as well. That means you should write for your target audience - not for search engines. Furthermore, you should include useful images and videos too. Avoid overusing keywords in your content, because Google can penalize your site for keyword stuffing. Instead, use relevant keywords naturally throughout your text.

3. Good User Experience

Providing your visitors with a good user experience offers many SEO benefits. For example, by offering your visitors with a clear,

easy way to navigate your site, they will likely stay on it longer, as well as being able to locate all the relevant content that they are interested in reading. Google measures the average time users spend on a website when determining the site's organic search rankings.

4. Good Site Speed

Search engines are putting greater emphasis on how quickly (or slowly) web pages load when determining search rankings. Websites that take longer to download won't rank as high. One reason is because most users will leave a site that takes longer than five seconds to load. Many won't even wait that long! Therefore, if you want to improve your SEO, you need to ensure that all your web pages load quickly. Google offers a free speed test that will measure your site's speed, as well as offer recommendations on how to improve it.

5. Authority

When a website has high authority, it means that users trust the site and consider it a credible

source of information on a given topic. One way to gain website authority is to publish lots of relevant, high-quality content that your audience finds valuable and interesting to read. Sound familiar? Furthermore, when other webmasters find your content valuable, they will link to it from their respective sites - which will boost your site's authority in the eyes of Google. Building website authority takes time, so it's more of a long-term SEO investment.

6. Title Tags

Title tags are an important SEO element that tells visitors and search engines what the content on your web pages is about. By using relevant keywords in your title tags, you can drive targeted traffic to your site when users conduct search queries using those keywords. However, you should try to only use a few relevant keywords for each title tag so you don't dilute their SEO value. You should aim to make your title tags around 60 characters in length. If you make them too long, the end will get cut off in Google search results.

7. Select a Good Domain Name

Are domain names important to SEO? Yes! However, not necessarily in the way that you think they are. For example, using a keyword-rich domain name might actually hurt your search rankings. That's because Google now puts greater scrutiny on the quality of content for sites that use lots of keywords in their domain name. In years past, webmasters would try to trick Google by using domain names that consisted of their main target keywords. Google didn't like that bloggers and website owners were trying to manipulate their search algorithm. Therefore, you should pick a domain that includes your brand's name - something unique that your visitors will associate with your business.

8. Allow Comments

Most bloggers hate having to police comments - especially from rude and hateful users. However, allowing user comments on your posts can improve your site's SEO, but you still need to take some

steps to filter out spam comments so they don't hurt the value of your brand and site. You can also add the 'nofollow' value to your comments section - which tells search engines to ignore any links posted by users.

9. Local SEO

Google is increasingly putting more emphasis on providing their users with local search results based on their searches. Therefore, if your business has a brick-and-mortar location, you should optimize your site for local search results. For instance, you should register your site with Google My Business and Bing Places for Businesses to boost your rankings in local search results. You can find other local business directories online to add your site to as well. It might also be a good idea to join your local chamber of commerce and get listed in their online business directory.

10. Get Social

Lastly, a non-technical SEO element that can increase your site's visibility is to use social media

marketing. You need to find and join all relevant social media platforms that your audience uses. However, you shouldn't just use social media as a way to "blast" more content at your audience. Instead, you should use it as a way to 'get social' and genuinely engage them. For example, you could offer customer service assistance and helpful hints about your products or services. Done right, social media marketing can be an effective way to drive targeted traffic to your site.

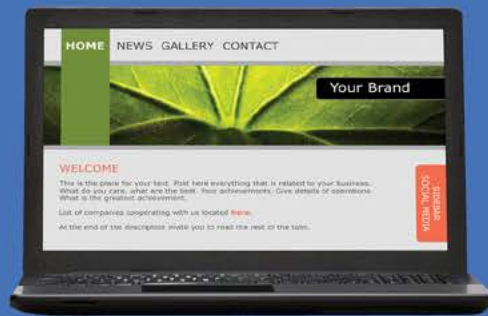
In short, good SEO isn't just about pleasing Google. More importantly, it's about pleasing your audience by creating relevant, quality content that they find valuable. Furthermore, you should provide them with a good user experience. Your audience should also view you as a trusted source for information related to your niche. Make sure you take advantage of every opportunity to interact with them online - like allowing them to post comments on your post, as well as reaching out to you on social media.

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Nine Ways to Leverage Social Media in 2021 to Boost Small Business Results

Social media continues to be one of the most valuable marketing channels for all sizes of business. Nonetheless, many small business owners are still unsure how to make the best use of social networks in their day-to-day operations.

If you need some direction or just want to take your social media marketing to the next level, here are nine ways social media can help your small business get ahead in the coming year.

1. Get to Know Your Target Market

Social listening, which simply means monitoring conversations around

your brand or industry, helps you understand what your target audience are thinking and talking about. You can then use these insights to find out where conversations are happening and deliver more appropriate content to your audience.

Tip: Regularly ask your audience for feedback and join in with social conversations. Find out what's important to your audience and what problems they face to help you create content that addresses their pain points.

2. Improve Brand Awareness

Establishing your business

and gaining recognition used to be expensive, but now it's easier than ever before to compete with larger companies. Unlike traditional marketing methods, social media can get your business in front of people quickly and cheaply. In fact, the number of social media users continues to grow. Over the past year, the number of global social media users has increased by more than 10 percent.

Tip: In the coming year, try to post useful and entertaining content more frequently, and always use one or two industry-related hashtags to reach a wider audience.

3. Build Audience Trust

With an increasing number of consumers distrusting advertising and marketing, authenticity has become vital for businesses using social media. To build trust with your audience, show the real people behind your business. Post behind-the-scenes videos of your business operations, share your company's mission and beliefs, and highlight the unique personalities of employees.

Tip: Showcase your actual customers. Encourage customers to share photos of themselves using your products or services. As well as building trust, this type of user-generated content can boost social media engagement and shares.

4. Provide Better Customer Support

Social media can be a great customer service platform for small businesses, especially Twitter and Facebook. According to a Facebook survey, 53 percent of people said they're more likely to shop with a business they can message directly. With the right social media monitoring tool, businesses can respond to customer queries quickly and deal with complaints transparently to build trust.

Tip: Answer common customer questions across your social media channels before they are asked, or link to your FAQ page. Also, consider creating a separate Twitter account exclusively for customer service.

5. Nurture Leads

While email marketing is one of the best lead nurturing channels, social media can also be very effective for reaching leads at different stages of the buyer's journey. For example, for awareness-stage customers, post content such as expert roundup posts or helpful infographics. For consideration-stage leads, you might upload product demos or post a link to a product guide.

Tip: Don't forget to connect social media content to your other online channels. For example, awareness-stage content should link to your "About" page or a recent blog post.

6. Cultivate Backlinks

Links to your website from other channels are still an important factor in search engine rankings. While social media shares don't have a direct impact on search engine rankings, posting useful content on social media can encourage

others to link to your original content, which can boost your search rankings.

Tip: Include links to your website in your social media profiles, business descriptions, and pinned posts.

7. Keep Your Audience Informed

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic forced businesses all over the world to focus on how effectively they were communicating with consumers. Fortunately, most businesses took advantage of the immediacy of social media to update their customers. Going forward, businesses should continue to use social media to update, inform, and educate their audience.

Tip: Use social media to constantly educate your audience about your business, products, and services. This can include product guides, product updates, service changes, news about upcoming events, and anything that might affect customers.

8. Generate Sales

As well as being an effective platform for providing useful information, social media can also be an

excellent sales channel. While you shouldn't only post promotional content, regularly offering deals and promotions can help to build your following and drive sales.

Tip: Frequently offer exclusive deals and promotional codes to your social media followers. Consider running a regular "Saturday Sale" or something similar.

9. Increase Customer Loyalty

There are various ways to strengthen customer loyalty and keep your audience engaged. Apart

from offering regular deals, encourage conversations around topics important to your target audience. Also, ask questions to increase social media engagement and learn more about your audience.

Tip: Aim to post more videos to your social media channels. In a HubSpot survey, 54 percent of consumers wanted to see more video content from businesses they support.

For small businesses, social media is one of the most cost-effective forms of marketing. Whether you're looking to improve customer support or learn

more about your customers, there are many ways you can leverage social media to support your small business. There's no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to social media marketing, but hopefully these tips will inspire you to use social media more effectively.

When considering your next steps, think about what your business goals are for the coming year. You can then prioritize your tactics, plan your social media strategy more effectively, and maximize the growth of your small business in 2021 and beyond.

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FUN FACTS

January is traditionally the coldest month of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the warmest month of the year in the Southern Hemisphere

Leap years exempted, January always begins on the same day as October. In leap years, January always begins on the same day as April and July.

January Milestones:

- Jan. 1st, 1908 - The 1st New Year's ball drop in Times Square, NYC
- Jan. 3rd, 1847 - Yerba Buena renamed San Francisco
- Jan. 9th, 2007 - Apple's iPhone was unveiled
- Jan. 13th, 1986 - Johnny Cash performed his famous Folsom County Jail show
- Jan. 14th, 1990 - 'The Simpsons' premiered on Fox
- Jan. 15th, 2001 - Wikipedia debuted online.
- Jan. 18th, 1977 - Snow fell in Miami and The Bahamas. It was the only time in recorded history that it happened
- Jan. 21st, 1972 - The first convention of Star Trek fans was held in New York City's Statler-Hilton Hotel

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INSTAGRAM

2021 STATS & TIPS

71%

of users are under the age of 35

90%

of Users follow at least one business

1 Billion

Monthly Active Users

10.7

Hashtags on average are used in a post

83%

of users say they discover new products and services on Instagram

53 Minutes

spent on Instagram per day on average by users

500 Million

accounts use Instagram Stories every day

71%

of US Businesses use Instagram

- The use of the hashtag "ad" has increased over 133% in the past year
- The best time to post on Instagram is Wednesday between 11 am - 1 pm, or 7 pm - 9 pm in your time zone
- Brands can generate over 4x more interactions on Instagram compared to Facebook
- 36% of B2B decision-makers use Instagram when researching new products or services
- 1 in 5 Instagram posts are published as carousel posts

Hold A Fun Contest

Create a custom hashtag and encourage others to post entries.

Embed In Your Website

Add an Instagram Feed into your website - show off your customer engagement.

Business, Not Personal

Ensure you set up and are using a business page, not a personal one.

Incentivize Followers

Provide exclusive savings and promotions to your Instagram followers.

Behind The Scenes

Show off your team members and give a peek into your your culture.

Show Your Products

Provide photos showing off your products or services.



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