

ONLINE MARKETING TIPS FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

Getting started with online marketing can be a scary prospect, but equipping yourself with some basic knowledge can make a big difference to your small business. Today, you've got more ways than ever before to market yourself – and you can dedicate as much or as little time and money as you want.

It doesn't matter if you run an on - or offline – business, in a world where we surf the web to seek out products and services, you need a strong digital presence. So here are some handy tips to get you noticed in the digital arena:



SET UP A WEBSITE

This should be at the top of your list when it comes to online marketing priorities – in today's market, it's make or break for the future of your small business. A website connects you to potential customers, so they have a much better chance of finding out about you. Without one, you're at risk of alienating clients.

The first thing to do is to think carefully about your domain name – that's the name of your website. It doesn't always have to be exactly the same as your company name (and it's possible that the name you want may not even be available), but it should at least be relevant and easy to

remember. You can search for and register a domain name through a web hosting company, such as [GoDaddy](#) and [Register.com](#).

When it comes to the website itself, free templates can be a great idea if you're just starting out, but it's well worth hiring a professional web developer or designer to build a site for you if you do have the budget – they know all about search engine optimisation (SEO), which enables your audience to discover you online much more easily. It also means that your website will be totally customised for your individual business.



Things to ask your Web Designer

If you're roping in a pro to create your website, don't forget to ask about the following – and don't be afraid to ask them to talk you through if you're unsure what they mean:

- Site navigation, functionality, timeline and pricing**
- Site design** – you want the look and feel to be just right
- Installation of a content management system (CMS)**
- Site development** – layout and content (text, photos, video)
- Site testing** – checking the site works across browsers
- Site maintenance** – including training on how to update it

BE SOCIABLE

Using social media is a way of ensuring people remember you, plus it's a handy customer service tool. It can also help turn one-off customers into loyal ones, as you provide gentle reminders of why they might need you and answer any questions they have. Yet with so many social media platforms out there, it can be tricky to know where to start.

The first thing to remember is that there's no need to set up multiple accounts right away. Instead, you should focus on one or two – such as Twitter and Facebook – manage them well and make updates little and often to build your audience. For example, you can set up a [Twitter](#) profile

or a [Facebook](#) business page featuring interesting content and discounts, and use these accounts to talk directly to your customers and show off your products and services.

Tools like [Hootsuite](#) can automate posts across one or more platforms to save you some time – but you'll need to spend some time on your social media accounts in person to increase your following, especially in the early days to get you off the ground.

Why Social Media?

Social media allows you to have a two-way conversation with customers and prospects, and embracing this technology can have great results for your small business. Here's why:

46%

of online users count of social media when making a purchase decision

50%

of shoppers have made a purchase based on a recommendation through social media

71%

of social media users are more likely to purchase from a business they're connected with

PROMOTE YOURSELF

Online advertising can be much cheaper than traditional ads in newspapers and on television – so why not make the most of the opportunity? Thanks to the internet, it's never been easier to reach a local, national or even global customer base.

Your message is targeted to the relevant audience, meaning a bigger and better chance of return on investment (ROI) as people head straight to your small business' website via the digital ad. What's more, web analytics tools allow you to track who's seen and clicked on your ad so you can actually see if it's working or not.

[Google](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) all offer paid advertising, and prices vary depending on the platform. If it's appropriate for your small business, you can head also to [Gumtree](#) or [Vivastreet](#) to post a classified ad for free. Wherever you choose to advertise, you must always ensure your message is well written, otherwise you risk appearing amateur and losing credibility.



EMBRACE EMAIL

Printing and distributing traditional paper newsletters can be expensive, but that doesn't have to be the case when you go digital. In fact, email marketing is one of the most cost-effective and powerful techniques available to small businesses today.

If you do it right, email campaigns can bring in big business – as long as you make sure you include valuable content that people want to read. Easy-to-use tools like [MailChimp](#) and [Constant Contact](#) make it simple to create eye-catching content, even if you only have limited design skills (or

even none at all) – for example, you can send special offers straight to peoples' inboxes. You can also see statistics about the success of your campaigns, so you can learn what's working and what isn't.

Remember to think carefully about what you're writing – it's always a good idea to include a catchy subject line and a compelling call to action (for example, 'get 50% off now'), and ensure all your spelling is spot on. It's also really important to make sure you have permission from the person you're emailing before you add them to your distribution list. For example,

you should include an email sign-up form on your website so people know they're opting in to receive emails from you.



Stay in touch

60% prefer email as a communication method for receiving regular updates and promotions (*Smallbiztrends.com*)

Emails with personalised subject lines are **26%** more likely to be opened

Loyalty programs are the most effective email campaigns, followed by exclusive deals

Nearly half **(49%)** of marketers say email is directly linked to their business' primary revenue source (*SalesForce*)



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