



NDSU Extension

Small Business Newsletter

Business Owner Tips and Resources

October, 2012

HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE? SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY – 11/24/2012

Small Business Marketing – Where is It Headed?

“Marketing used to be so easy” some people have told me. I think their comment reflects the fewer choices they had on which to spend their limited resources and time. There has always been networking and the store front and maybe even a billboard. Who remembers the day of maybe a single paper, a local radio station, and only three or four television channels. Yes for some there were other avenues such as flyers, magazines, etc. but nothing like the increased diversity of choices today from local channels on television to the online world.

SmallBiz Trends looks at the channels used by small businesses today. They note that they are using, on average, 5.8 channels – double from only five years ago. Facebook leads the parade. The most amazing sentence in the entire report was that mobile is not even on the list. I suspect if we return to this topic in a couple of years that things will look very different.

Will sum up this rambling with 2 questions - Where are your audience? How will you spend your time and money?

See the entire report at: <http://smallbiztrends.com/2012/10/smb-s-moving-toward-digital-diversified-marketing.html>

See also: <http://bit.ly/QUjHEA>

Till next time,
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Windshield Time

On the day that Hurricane Sandy hit the eastern seaboard, I was serving on an advisory team working on developing videos to supplement, [Recovery After Disaster: The Family Financial Toolkit.](#) Previously I have been a part of the team that put together, [Ready Business: Preparing a Business Disaster Plan.](#)

If you are a typical small business owner, a home-based business owner and/or if you are working with your spouse, a copreneur, both of these programs should be a part of your planning. Actually, we probably need to take the next step and put something together that looks at that intersection of family and business and how you can prepare.

There are several reasons to do this. Small businesses quite often are mixing resources, cash and other assets including family help. Also, in times of disaster, the owner is often faced with the dilemma of what to protect first, my family or business and when the disaster is passed, which one of these systems do I help first?

Such questions are best examined ahead of time and given some thought and planning. And you are just not thinking of major events such as Sandy but of any disruption such as a hard disk crash or the loss of a family vehicle used in the business. I encourage you to pick up these and other materials and do some planning for your business today.

You can find additional business disaster planning information at:

<http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness/business-tips/tips-by-topic/disaster-tips>

Quote of the Month

NOT addressing customer complaints does more than hurt your reputation -- it actually sends customers to competitors - Lisa Barone

This Month's Tips

Marketing Simplified

Good marketing has 2 components – useful and believable. Read Seth's blog - <http://bit.ly/QhJt4d>

Great Tag Lines

Do you have 7 to 10 words that say what you do and the benefits you provide? Can you do it in 2 words? These companies did and we remember them all - <http://bit.ly/PSbQYY>. Being succinct is not easy but the results can be amazing.

Customer Testimonials = Great Marketing

Do you use customer comments and testimonials in your marketing? Do you collect such comments? Hear what others say is proving to have greater and greater effectiveness whether used online or in traditional marketing methods. Get some tips from Intuit to get the most out of them - <http://bit.ly/Q7G2Pk>

How Can I Raise My Price?

Small business owners are always struggling with finding the right price and then deciding when and if they can raise their prices. This SCORE article offers some excellent thoughts. Value means so much. I would also say cutting the psychic and time searching cost can be another important item to consider. More at: <http://blog.score.org/2012/jeanne-rossomme/how-do-i-charge-higher-prices-deliver-more-customer-value/>

Competing with the Big Stores

How often have I heard small business owners talk about their inability to compete with larger companies. Usually it is price that is their concern or maybe marketing. What is forgotten are the many categories where you have the advantage – flexibility, adaptability, understanding of the product or service, where else can you talk with the CEO, you can sell the solution because you can learn what the customer wants in terms of benefits – not a cookie-cutter approach. See what Inc has to say at: <http://www.inc.com/michael-olguin/6-ways-to-steal-business-from-the-big-boys.html?cid=em01013week36>

Going Into Business with Your Spouse

Have you thought about starting a business with your spouse? There are several million couples who have done just that, and that is without including farm and ranch families. When wondering if this would be a good idea, Inc offers 10 questions you and your spouse need to sit down and discuss. These include: “is the marriage more important than the business?” and “can we afford it?”. Get the rest of the story at: <http://www.inc.com/jessica-stillman/going-into-business-with-your-spouse-ask-these-questions-first-.html?cid=em01012week36>

25 Questions Your Website Must Answer

If you have a business website, and you should, it must be one that attracts and then gives me a reason to stay. Here are some good questions to consider as you evaluate your site - <http://smallbiztrends.com/2012/09/25-questions-your-site-must-answer.html> .

Planning, Marketing, Funding: Three Reasons Businesses Shut Their Doors

Starting a business involves risk. The greatest risk is not being in business more than 5 or even 2 years. The three reasons in the title: failure to plan or a poor plan; inadequate funding to weather slow start-up and sales; and ineffective marketing are just three common reasons why businesses have to shut their doors. See five other reasons and what you can do to minimize these risks at: http://blog.intuit.com/money/8-reasons-why-small-businesses-fail/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=8-reasons-why-small-businesses-fail. One reason not mentioned is when business owners shut down one business because they see a better opportunity.

Want to Increase Profits by 50% - Simple, Just Retain Customers

That is right. Retaining only 5% more of your customers can have a substantial impact on your bottom line. Read this article for five easy ways to stay in touch - <http://blog.intuit.com/marketing/5-ways-to-keep-in-touch-with-customers-after-the-sale/>

I am too Old to Start a Business – Wrong!

You might be surprised to know that 48% of businesses are started by people age 45 and older. So age need not be a reason to give up on your dream. And there is actually some better news about older business owners – they have a greater likelihood of surviving (64% stay in business). Why might that be? Because of age, experience, and more financial resources. The

lack of financial resources is an often cited reason for why businesses fail. For more information, check out: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/cherylsnappconner/2012/09/03/do-older-or-younger-entrepreneurs-have-the-greater-advantage/>

Does Your Store Feel Small?

Here are some tips from *Entrepreneur* to help your store feel larger?
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/224308?cam=Dev&ctp=Carousel&cdt=1&cdn=224308>

Do You Have What You Need to be an Entrepreneur?

Many people want to start their own business. But often they question if they have the skills and talents necessary to do so. While researchers have come up with some ideas, there is not absolute set of skills, talents and traits that are essential. There is a set that are certainly helpful. These include persistence, being visionary, creativity and self-confidence. The rest of the list can be found at: <http://bit.ly/NfZmtU>. It is important to realize that everything on this list can be a learned skill. You may not naturally have it in your personality but you can develop it. That means if you want to own a successful business, you can. You just need to learn the skill or find some other means to get it done

Before Your Start – Genuine Feedback On Your Product

You have an idea and would love to turn it into a business. But you don't know what the market will think of your idea. Family and friends love it but does that make it a hit? Probably not. So where do you get honest feedback? It might be your family and friends but you need to dig and ask probing questions. See other ideas at: <http://www.youngentrepreneur.com/blog/5-ways-to-generate-genuine-feedback-about-your-new-product/>

Branding Your Business – Inexpensive Ways

Brand is more than Reputation. Brand also includes the customer's experience with your business! Successful branding creates a positive image of your business in the mind of the public. It is accomplished by creating and delivering unique and positive products, services and **experiences** for your customers. As a small business owner, you may be concerned about the cost of developing your brand. There are ways to do it inexpensively such as great customer service and collaboration. See other tips at: <http://mashable.com/2012/09/10/cheap-branding/>

Making Money After the First Sale

Getting a customer to buy the first time is hard and expensive. Yet our instincts often suggest we need to move on to finding the next customer. We forget about building a relationship with the existing customer. That step is a far cheaper proposition and, if done effectively, that first customer can be our best tool to bring the second customer in the door. The referenced article suggests that repeat customers spend 67% more than first-time customers and are 6-12 times cheaper to sell to. While the article suggests email marketing, and why not, no envelopes, paper, stamps, etc. and it allows for easy feedback, you can, and at times may want to, use some of the traditional tools such as a hand-written thank-you note.

<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33570/7-ways-to-use-email-marketing-to-make-more-money-after-the-initial-sale>

An Audit of Your Website

By now you have probably picked up on the fact that I believe every business needs a website. But a website is only as good if people are visiting and looking through your pages. So it might be time to do an audit. Tools like Google Analytics can help but then what. This article provides a nice audit tool and helps you consider, on a page by page basis, what you need to do to make your website user-friendly and helpful. Good luck. <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/how-to-do-a-content-inventory-and-audit/47664/>

Great New Tool from SBA

Help for small business owners and start-ups to compete and grow. Helps with market research and analysis and comparisons of how you are doing. Tool offers:

- Benchmarking an existing business to see how it sizes up by comparing performance to all other competitors in the same industry;
- A mapping feature to see where customers and suppliers are located; and
- Finding the best places to advertise by choosing from pre-set reports to find areas with the highest industry revenue and the most underserved markets. Custom demographic reports can also be created.

<http://www.sba.gov/sizeup>

Want to be a Market Leader? Focus on Your Industry

Market leaders are found to focus on their company AND their industry. They network, share knowledge, teach, host, and cooperate. <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2012/09/10/5-habits-practiced-by-market-leaders/>

Customer Service – 2 Stories for the Price of One

Would someone write a story about you and your store?

<http://www.smallbizsurvival.com/2012/09/a-customer-service-story.html>

And a related story asking who is minding the shop when you are not there.

<http://www.futuresimple.com/blog/are-inexpensive-employees-costing-you-money/>

7 Crucial Elements When Branding Your Business and/or Product

Does your business have a brand? Does your business need a brand? (the answer here is “yes.”) Do you want to strengthen your brand? There are seven key elements you need to focus on: logo; value proposition; target market; and emotion are four. See the rest at:

<http://www.networksolutions.com/smallbusiness/2012/09/branding-checklist-7-elements-that-make-a-strong-brand/>

Newsletters and E-newsletters Work

The newsletter, today usually the email newsletter, can be an effective marketing tool for your business. One reason for this is that your mailing list is usually focused assuming you have been collecting names and addresses of interested people and customers. So you have a targeted audience, the first key in an effective campaign. Remember to include something in each newsletter that allows you to track the ROI. Mix up the items tracked so you can see, over time, what is the most effective. And don't forget to put it out on a regular basis. Get more information at: <http://blog.intuit.com/marketing/how-to-create-an-effective-email-newsletter/>

Cash-flow Statements – Are They Done in Your Small Business? Do You Understand Them?

This article does a nice job of providing the basic outline of what you are looking for and at when you look at your cash-flow statement. See where your money is coming from or going to. Is it from operations or financing? Makes a difference!
<http://www.business2community.com/finance/small-business-cash-flow-statement-in-plain-english-0282924>

Want to Start a Business: A List of Skills That Help

Right now there are lots of individuals who would like to start a business. One question for many of them is “do I have the right skills?” The good news is that the needed skills can be something you can learn or there are means to get the tasks accomplished rather than you doing it yourself. The bad news is that the list is long. Check out 28 items that the American City Business Journal suggests - <http://upstart.bizjournals.com/resources/advice/2012/10/05/28-startup-skills-you-cant-live-without.html?page=all>

Success Means Knowing What Tasks Offer the Most Benefit

This article from INC talks about the 80/20 rule. The argument here is that 20% of your tasks lead to 80% of your benefits. Yes most of the other 80% have to be done but maybe not as soon as planned or done with as much detail. Successful small business owners can make the calls on what is most important. <http://www.inc.com/langley-steinert/why-you-cant-do-it-all.html>

More Information

Website: www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz
Twitter: www.twitter.com/gmuske
[#extsmallbiz](https://twitter.com/hashtag/extsmallbiz)
LinkedIn: [glenn muske](http://glennmuske.com)

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