

LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

March 2020

Utilizing Facebook and Instagram Stories

**10 Ways to Improve
Your Business
Emails**

***Ten Email
Content Ideas
to Reduce
Unsubscribe
Rates***



7 Ways to Promote Your Small Business

**7 Simple
Ways to Build
Credibility in the
Marketplace**

***7 Ways to
Provide
Excellent
Online
Customer
Service***

**Infographic:
SEO
Pyramid**

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Greetings!

Thank you for taking a few minutes to read through this month's issue. We develop this magazine each month with the hope that the information we feature will help you achieve (and exceed) all of your goals.

Once again, we've packed this month's issue full of interesting articles and tips that you can apply immediately to help you grow your business.

In this month's issue, you'll find another variety of articles covering many topics that are important to business owners. We hope you enjoy the articles on Customer Service, Facebook & Instagram Stories, Emails, and other topics.

If you're not already receiving this magazine regularly, we suggest you add your email to our subscriber list. We have some exciting articles already in the works for the upcoming issues. Don't miss out!

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.

David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions, Inc.

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A Little About Us

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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.

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

March

Irish American Heritage Month
Women's History Month
Employee Spirit Month
National Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month
Save Your Vision Month
Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month
Red Cross Month

March 8 - Daylight Savings Begins
March 17 - St. Patrick's Day
March 19 - 1st Day of Spring

1st - Compliment Day
2nd - Dr. Seuss Day
3rd - Simplify Your Life Day
4th - Hug a G.I. Day
6th - Dentist's Day
6th - Oreo Cookie Day
6th - National Salesperson Day
9th - Crabmeat Day

9th - National Napping Day
10th - Pack Your Lunch Day
12th - Pancake Day – IHOP
12th - Popcorn Lover's Day
12th - Alfred Hitchcock Day
13th - Good Samaritan Day
14th - Potato Chip Day
19th - Awkward Moments Day
19th - Client's Day
20th - Day of Happiness
21st - Common Courtesy Day
21st - Poetry Day
22nd - Goof Off Day
23rd - Puppy Day
26th - Purple Day
26th - Spinach Day
29th - Mom and Pop Business Owners Day
30th - Take a Walk in the Park Day
30th - Doctors Day
31st - Crayon Day
31st - Tater Day

April

Autism Awareness Month
National Humor Month
International Customer Loyalty Month
Lawn and Garden Month
Stress Awareness Month
Physical Wellness Month

April 1st - April Fool's Day
April 10th - Good Friday
April 19th - Easter Sunday
April 22nd - Administrative Professionals Day (US)
April 9th - 16th - Passover
April 22nd - Earth Day

1st - Walking Day
2nd - Peanut Butter & Jelly Day
2nd - Burrito Day
5th - Caramel Day
6th - Hostess Twinkie Day
7th - No Housework Day

7th - Beer Day
9th - Winston Churchill Day
10th - ASPCA Day
10th - Golfer's Day
10th - National Siblings Day
11th - National Pet Day
12th - Grilled Cheese Sandwich Day
13th - National Scrabble Day
15th - Tax Day
15th - Titanic Remembrance Day
16th - Wear Your Pajamas to Work Day
16th - Get to Know Your Customers Day
19th - Pet Owners Day
20th - Look Alike Day
22nd - Jelly Bean Day
23rd - Picnic Day
23rd - Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
26th - Pretzel Day
28th - Superhero Day
30th - Adopt a Shelter Pet Day
30th - Bugs Bunny Day

Utilizing Facebook and Instagram Stories

Social media stories are the new “it” thing when it comes to social media marketing. According to Statista, there are 500 million daily active users that use Instagram stories in 2019. Some might ask themselves, “What are social media stories and why should I bother using them?” Believe it or not, these stories helped businesses increase their numbers and rates.

What are stories?

Originally made famous by social media platform, Snapchat, stories are content that someone can put on their profile for only 24 hours. It's a fun and brief way to interact with your followers without having to commit that content into your profile. This feature has made its way to other social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram.

Each platform provides their own special features that users can utilize to make their stories fun and memorable. For example, Snapchat offers geofilters where users can swipe to put filters on their snapchats at a specific event or location. Businesses can utilize this to promote their event or increase awareness (over a certain radius and period) by customizing their own geofilter. As for Instagram, features such as polls, location stickers, livestreams, boomerang, Q&A stickers, and highlights are available for users to play around with. Facebook, Instagram's parent company, offers similar features as well.

As of 2018, Zuckerberg

announced a change in their Facebook and Instagram newsfeed algorithm where posts will not be shown in chronological order. Instead, this new algorithm will show more content from users' friends and families and less public content. This puts businesses and brands at a disadvantage. However, most have gotten their way around by using stories. By posting stories that last 24 hours, this creates a sense of urgency for your followers to look at your content (thanks, FOMO). Therefore, it helps maintain your content's exposure.

There are about 1.66 billion Facebook users that flood their timeline and stories daily, as stated by the company's Q4 2019 report. With that number, it can present businesses an opportunity to increase their brand awareness and engagement. Companies use the platform's "Swipe-up" feature to lead their audience to the desired webpage by just swiping their finger upwards. This can increase your website's traffic by providing them a clear call-to-action. Just be sure that your Instagram profile is switched to a

business account, or the swipe-up feature won't be available.

Increase your engagement -

There's no doubt that Facebook and Instagram stories are a fun and dynamic way to interact with your audience. Stories can be a way to increase your business's engagement. Features such as polls, livestream, and Q&A stickers all provide an opportunity to increase those numbers. It can provide a more genuine way to connect with your followers as well.

A way that you can use these features at your advantage is by hosting a fun poll with the poll sticker. You can ask your followers any question with two answers for them to choose from. A smart way to utilize this feature is by recording the results for any future reference. Maybe the answer with the most results might be featured on a future post or it might provide you with ideas for your product or packaging.

Another feature that businesses can utilize is livestream. This feature allows users to hold

livestream sessions through their profile. In the future, people can send in questions that the user can answer to and their followers can react in real-time using the preset emojis. Another neat tool is the view count, where both parties can see how many people are watching the livestream. Instagram and Facebook will notify a brand's followers about livestreams, so they know when to tune in. After the session, users have the option to save it to their story for 24 hours, just in case anyone missed out on it.

The livestream feature lets businesses take advantage of real-time marketing. Whether it's to advocate customer service, to provide behind the scenes look of the company, or to simply interact and increase your audience connection, this tool allows businesses to not just focus on the width of your audience reach, but also the depth.

Take note - When it comes to anything your business does, always make sure you're recording data. This includes anything social media. Luckily, Facebook and Instagram already

provide insights in the website and app. From this, businesses can see which posts had the most reach and engagement, as well as which time and day it's best to post. Furthermore, your marketing department can conclude which posts followers engage with more and use that data to improve your Facebook and Instagram.

Connect and share -

Think of Facebook and Instagram stories as an opportunity to form a stronger connection to your audience or following. An instance where a brand or business uses stories to strengthen engagement is featuring people for takeovers. The brand essentially picks an employee or an influencer to take over their Facebook or Instagram for a certain time and post content. It's like a curtain is peeled back from the outside world to peek at the company life or product. This also presents a chance for the followers of the featured person to discover your profile. All you have to do is mention them using the "@" followed by their profile name. The favor is returned when

that featured person mentions your profile on theirs, and when your followers go to their profile. Another feature that helps you connect with your followers is sharing another person's Instagram story to yours. You can only do so when they mention you on their stories. When they do, you will be notified, and Instagram will give you the option to add it to your story. Once it's added to yours, the user with the original content will get a notification that you shared their story. This gets your everyday followers a shoutout by featuring them on your profile.

Have fun! - Utilizing Facebook and Instagram stories doesn't have to be daunting. This gives your business and your marketing department a chance to be innovative and creative, as well as an opportunity to diversify content. You don't only widen your social media reach, but also create depth and deepen your connections within your following. As a result, your followers will truly care about your content. If you have fun with your content, your audience will see the authenticity.



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10 Ways to Improve Your Business Emails



Business emails differ from all other forms of written business correspondence. We all tend to use much less formal language in emails, and emails are instant. Gone are the days of drafting a letter, proofreading it, and then having it typed.

We can now fire off important business correspondence with ease. The spontaneous, instant nature of emails, though, can be a minefield. It's easy to make mistakes, and it's easy to send emails that we live to regret. So, don't send out another email without thinking it through first. Read these ten tips on writing better business emails before you press send.

1. Think About the Purpose of the Email

Before you compose a business email, think about what you want that email to achieve. If you are emailing a prospective customer, for example, don't forget that the email is a sales document. It's another opportunity to convince the person to buy. Emails may seem like a throwaway form of communication, but they can be as important as any other type of document.

2. Use the Subject Line Wisely

The subject line of an email is like the headline of a newspaper article. It should tell the reader what the email is about, and it should encourage them to read the contents. Avoid using vague subject lines, such as "Re our meeting." If you have something important to say, include it or hint at it in the subject line.

3. Keep Emails Short and to the Point

Emails are for short, concise messages. If you want to send a lengthy document, it would be better sent as an

attachment. People get a lot of emails at work, so they tend to skim-read them and then move onto the next one. If your emails are too long-winded, the recipient may miss the important points.

4. Keep Business Emails Professional

The language used in emails can be less formal than it would be in a letter. Even so, emails are still business correspondence, so keep the language professional. Avoid using slang words and be careful about using inappropriate humor. Remember that business emails are often copied to other people.

5. Get the Important Points Across in the First Paragraph

Forget the long preambles and get to the point straight away. If you have lots of points to cover, bullet point them first. Then, you can cover the details of each point further down the page or in an attachment. Many people won't even skim-read the rest of an email if the first paragraph contains nothing of importance.

6. Make Sure That You Get People's Names Right

Always double-check the spelling of people's names. And, don't shorten people's names unless the person has done that themselves. Calling Robert Bob is presumptuous. Misspelling someone's name looks careless and unprofessional.

7. Don't Use all Uppercase or Lowercase

Emails may be informal, but you should still follow the usual writing conventions. If you write an email all in lowercase, it will look lazy. If you use uppercase, it will look like you are shouting. Avoid using SMS shorthand in business emails as well. Not everyone knows what JK means.

8. Only Use Email When it is Appropriate

Before you send an email, ask yourself if an email is an appropriate medium for the message that you want to convey. If you are trying to build a relationship with someone, a telephone call might be more effective. An email can also be too distant and

impersonal for some types of messages. If you are firing an employee, for example, that ought to be dealt with in a face to face meeting.

9. Never Send a Business Email in Anger

Never fire off an email when you are angry. Give yourself time to calm down and think things through. The potential ramifications of an angry business email are major. A business email sent in anger could lose you a major customer or cost you your job.

10. Always Proofread Business Emails

Always proofread your business emails before you send them. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Be brutal with your editing as well. Make your emails concise, punchy, and persuasive. People will judge you and your brand based on the content and style of your emails. So, remember that you are conveying more than a simple message in your business emails.

Conclusion

It is no exaggeration

to say that emails have revolutionized the way that we do business. We can now send everything from contracts to meeting appointments via email. The problem is that many people don't put enough thought into their emails. But emails can have the same impact as any other type of written communication. So, if you want to get ahead in business, think about your emails before you send them. They are more important than you think.

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7 Ways to Provide Excellent Online Customer Service

Amazing online customer service is essential to the success of your brand. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have changed how brands interact with their customers. When a brand has an interactive social media presence, it feels relatable and more like a person rather than a soulless, inanimate entity.



This also means that your brand's reputation is much more vulnerable as social media makes it easy for customers to speak their minds. When customers have a negative experience, they are likely to post about it on social media, especially if they felt that their concerns were inadequately handled or completely unresolved.

Someone with a lot of followers could make a post about a mishap with your brand which could not only result in financial losses but reputational harm as well. All the more reason to ensure that your brand's online customer service is always on-point. Fortunately, there are many ways to develop an efficient customer service team with effective policies. Here are seven ways to provide excellent online customer service every time:

1. Personalize the online customer service experience.

Automatic responses may be convenient, but they come across as uncaring and cold. Generic messages that are sent to everyone who reaches out do not convey the

importance of customer needs. Correspondence must reflect that the interactions with customers are valued and taken seriously.

One of the ways you can do this is by personalizing the customer service experience. To start, make sure that the customer service team addresses customers by their name. This sets a positive tone from the very beginning as it infers that your brand cares and notices personal details. Another way to add personalization is to implement a loyalty program where customers can earn points for the purchases they make that can be used towards discounts or free products and services. If you have a newsletter, ask customers for their birthday so when they sign up, a coupon for a discount or free product or service will be sent to them during their birth month. Customers love these programs and they have been proven to create repeat sales.

2. Use casual language across all platforms and interactions.

One of the reasons why Instagram influencers are so popular is because they feel like real,

everyday people. It is easier for customers to imagine themselves with the product or service if they see someone who looks similar to themselves talking about it. The casualness of the influencer is what makes them feel trustworthy to customers.

This same effect can be had if casual language is used by your brand's customer service team. Casual language makes interactions feel genuine. This translates into trust from the customers as they won't feel hesitant to reach out and engage with your brand. Encourage your customer service team to use casual language while interacting with customers, whether it is through live chat, email, text, phone, or social media. Your team must be approachable because you want customers to feel that they can trust your brand with their problems. Trust is essential to brand loyalty and this should be kept in mind at all times when delivering customer service.

3. Engage across multiple social media platforms.

Social media can be a useful tool for online customer service, which is

why your brand needs a presence across multiple platforms. This way, customers can easily get in touch and interact with your brand in the ways they prefer. You should stay up to date with the latest in social media technology so that you can quickly establish your brand's presence when new social media platforms arise.

Public interactions between your brand and customers on social media can showcase your brand's online customer service. The online customer service team should respond quickly to comments and questions posted, as this shows potential customers the quality of service and interactions they can expect to have with your brand. The way your brand is perceived handling problems is an advertisement in itself.

Reward customers when they follow your social media accounts or write a review. Post discount codes and sales exclusive to social media followers. Contests are another way to engage with customers and reward them for their loyalty, as well as to encourage followers.

4. Incentivize customers to send feedback.

When it comes to obtaining customer feedback, incentivization is key. Generally, customers love the opportunity to speak their minds, but they are more likely to do it if you give them a reason. This also makes the customers feel appreciated and rewarded for their input.

One of the easiest ways to do this is with a follow-up email after every purchase that contains a link to a survey with a reward to be granted upon completion. This reward can be a coupon, free item or service, or sweepstakes entry. Keep the questionnaire short as this should not feel like a laborious task. About four to six multiple-choice questions and an opportunity for open-ended feedback is generally a safe format.

Make sure that every customer who submits feedback receives a response addressing what they said. This makes customers feel heard, respected, and trusted. Even when they have a bad experience, a genuine response of concern might

be the reason why they give your brand another chance.

5. Make sure your brand's website functions smoothly.

A website full of errors and broken links comes across as careless and lazy. Frustrating user experiences will chase off customers as well as your profits. This is also a symptom of poor customer service, as usability is a major part of the online customer experience.

Investing in a professional web developer will make it certain that your website is running properly. If a problem comes up, be sure to address it quickly. An easy-to-use website with quick and uncomplicated processes means that customers are more likely to spend money on your brand's products and services.

Also, consider the accessibility of your website for people with disabilities. Those with hearing impairments need subtitles, so this option must be available on all posted video content. Use image tags on all photos and graphics so

that people who use screen readers for visual impairments can also access your site. Work with a professional web designer to ensure that your brand's website is accessible to everyone.

6. Provide accurate and detailed descriptions of products and services.

Customers do not like it when the product or service they purchased did not live up to their expectations. No one wants to deal with the time required trying to get a refund. One of the ways you can provide good online customer service is to make sure that all product and service descriptions are as detailed as possible.

Reducing the rate of returns means a reduction of the workload on your customer service team. By giving customers adequate and highly detailed information, they can make the best consumer choices to bring themselves the most satisfaction. Keep in mind that the best customer service is a smooth transaction without any problems in the first place.

You can also encourage customers to leave reviews and rate products or services. Allow customers to upload photos, videos, and speak using their own words so that future customers can better imagine themselves using the product or service. Additionally, these reviews can make customers feel more trust in your brand as it shows confidence in the brand's perception and quality.

7. Make it easy for customers to get in touch.

It should not be a hassle to get in contact with the customer service team of your brand. This is why you need to have more than one way for customers to get in touch. Aside from social media, other avenues of contact are phone, email, and live chat. Having many options available across multiple time zones allows customers to reach out in a way that is easiest for them.

Try to offer 24/7 support whenever possible. If this is not feasible, you can accomplish this with a self-service help database that allows customers

to look up answers to their questions. You can even let customers submit questions that can be answered by other customers, as long as your customer service team can oversee these answers.

Multiple means of support make your brand look trustworthy and professional. The live chat options should involve speaking to a person and not a bot. When customers have problems, they want to be assured that they will be solved and taken seriously, not that they are going to get the runaround.

While most may see the product or service as the brand's star-player, the customer service team does very important "behind the scenes" work. Not only will these tips improve the trust customers have with your brand, they will also lead to profit increases and future successes.

7 Ways to Promote Your Small Business



Running a successful small business requires more than being good at creating a product or providing a service. It also means being savvy about promoting yourself. Traditional advertising can be more expensive than some small business owners can afford, but there are many ways of publicizing your business that will cost less and be just as effective.

Here are seven ways of promoting your small business.

Create an e-newsletter.

Creating an e-mail newsletter is a good way of keeping your customers informed about what's going on

at your small business. Start by collecting e-mail addresses from your clients, customers, and people who are interested in what you do. Make sure you are clear that you will use the e-mail addresses to sign people up for a newsletter. Let them know if it will be monthly, weekly, or just occasionally.

When you get a group of e-mail addresses together, you can create your newsletter. There are websites that allow you to do this for free and some that will help you put together a professional-looking newsletter for a small cost. Include news about the business, interesting and relevant links, and

news about coupons or discounts. Offering special promotions or discounts through the newsletter only is a great way to get people to sign up.

Publish a catalog or brochure.

If you have several products to sell, a small catalog can help you stand out from the crowd. Print something with pictures of your products and information about where to buy them. Then you can hand this out to friends, clients, and the public. Online printing companies are usually inexpensive. Consider hiring an experienced designer to make your layout look professional.

Give away samples.

Everyone loves to get something for free, so it makes sense to hand out a free sample of your product. This is an especially good technique if you sell food, soaps, or beauty products. By offering a small sample size of your product, you encourage consumers to want to buy more.

There are many different places to give samples away. You can offer free samples at your business or at an event where you are selling your products. You can also pair up with another business to offer samples to their clients. For example, the dry cleaner down the street might be interested in providing samples of your homemade cookies. This brings more customers in for them and creates new customers for you.

Attend community events.

Make sure the name of your business sticks in the minds of community members. Do this by being part of community activities like local parades or craft shows. You might sponsor some part of the celebration, rent a table at a fair, or even have a

float in a parade. Showing that you are part of local life will help endear you to your neighbors, especially in small towns.

Order promotional merchandise.

Promotional merchandise is a fairly cheap and effective way of promoting a small business. Choose a product that is relevant to what you do and have your name and contact information printed on it. This can be anything from pens to magnets to ballcaps. If you have a dog walking business, print your business information on tennis balls. If you sell food in a bag, print personalized chip clips. Unlike a business card that people might throw away, a useful item will ensure that potential clients see your name again and again.

Take advantage of social media.

While not everyone likes to use social media, it is undeniably important in promoting a business. You need to have a presence online, and you need to use that to reach out to your customers. Have at least a one-page website where people can land if

they search for you online. Then create at least one social media account. What you choose will depend on the age and interests of your potential customers. Try to post something at least a few times a week to stay fresh in customers' minds.

Sponsor a local team.

Local recreational teens need businesses to sponsor them. It's a great way of getting your business recognized for something positive and for lots of people to hear your name. Sponsorship usually requires buying t-shirts for the team with your business name printed across them. It may also involve paying some fees for the team, and you can take everybody out for ice cream at the end of the season.

You don't have to spend a lot of money to promote your small business. Get creative and do some research to find where you can best reach your potential customers. Then make a multi-faceted plan that puts your business front and center. Use these promotion tips to help your small business grow.

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7 Simple Ways to Build Credibility in the Marketplace

credibility



If you're a start-up or established business and feel you lack credibility in the marketplace, there's good news. First, you're not alone. But that's a challenge you can easily overcome.

Other than updating your bio to showcase your skills or chatting yourself up at the water cooler, you probably haven't been spending massive amounts of time promoting yourself. But through the magic of the internet, you've navigated your way here. In less than six minutes, you'll acquire the knowledge you need to begin developing credibility in the marketplace. Utilize these seven credibility-building

strategies that cost you absolutely nothing and are available at the scroll of your mouse.

Why you absolutely, positively must do everything possible to build credibility

So, what's all of this talk about building credibility in the marketplace really about?

It's about success and failure. With credibility, you're ready to strike out on your own and soar with the eagles. Without credibility, you're stuck in a nest of flightless emus waiting for momma to deliver a worm every now and then.

Credibility:

- Builds trust between you and your customers
- Allows you to strategically position yourself in the marketplace
- Offers you a competitive advantage over the zillion of other businesses offering services similar to yours
- Earns you referrals
- Leads to invitations to speak and teach at industry-specific events
- Builds a pathway to expert status and even more success

Why you absolutely, positively must do everything possible to avoid destroying your credibility

Don't accidentally put a hit out on your own credibility. If you think that statement's a bit harsh, keep reading - it's easier to scramble and fry yourself than you think. Take a friend's advice and avoid these all-too-common credibility assassins:

- Grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes, in addition to overall amateurish writing, sabotage credibility. If all that textbook grammar stuff isn't your thing, ask a friend to proof your work or hire a proofreader to point out and correct mistakes before you publish.
- Passing blame to your printer, the mail service, an internet connection and anyone and everything else on the planet for your mistakes leaves a sour note in everyone's mouth. Own up to what you do well and own up to your blunders.
- Avoid belittling other professionals and delivering public put-downs. Focus on yourself, your abilities and your values and let the universe take care of the rest.

- Never take credit for other people's work. It's not only sleazy; it's unethical and quite possibly illegal too. And remember, at the end of the day, the only reputation you're damaging is your own.
- No web design experience spells disaster. Nothing extracts more from a business' credibility than a "House that Jack Tried to Build" website. Do yourself a favor - hire a professional web designer, move on and continue to do the things you do well.

Now that you understand the importance of building credibility and how to avoid sabotaging it, it's time to get down in the trenches and dig into the nitty gritty details (and methods) you can employ today on your quest toward credibility

The benefits of putting a credibility-building strategy in place are endless. As you learned earlier, credibility builds trust between you and your clients, enables you to strategically position yourself in the marketplace, gives you a competitive advantage,

earns you referrals, gets you invites to speak and teach at industry-specific events and builds a pathway toward expert status and more success.

But, all of this won't amount to a hill of beans until you put what you learn into action.

Post these seven credibility-building strategies on your wall, your fridge or your pet panda as a reminder to take some type of action every day as you formulate a plan to strategically position yourself in the marketplace.

#1 - Keep your promises.

Repeat three times - keep your promises, keep your promises, keep your promises but don't overpromise. If you're tempted to overpromise, focus on what you can do and admit what you can't.

Sometimes you don't have an immediate solution. Admit that you don't and formulate a plan to follow up with your client or refer your client to an expert in your network. And, for Pete's sake, don't leave the prospect hanging - follow up regularly so your client knows you're still working

on a solution.

#2 - Be present, show up and position yourself as the go-to person.

Attend in-person events, publish scheduled blog posts, reach out on social media and keep connections in your network buzzing with activity. Diligence pays off when responding to questions, email requests and phone messages, even when tactfully averting requests for free service. And, unless earth has somehow become unhitched from the universe, never, ever cancel a commitment. That's how go-to people do business.

#3 - Prepare yourself before meeting with prospective customers and offer rock solid results.

Clear values and a mission statement prepare you to showcase the skills you bring to the table. One-pagers and other marketing tools give your presentation focus and speak directly to your prospects' needs and challenges. In fact, they're designed to illustrate

how you've already solved problems similar to what your prospect is experiencing in the here and now. You can't get more rock solid than that.

#4 - Show your clients you care. Listen to their needs and challenges and offer solutions.

Challenges are typically the reason clients need services in the first place. Ask questions about the prospect's business, actively listen and keep an ear out for inroads and appropriate lulls in the conversation and step in with solutions. Listen, respond and care.

#5 - Earn certifications and professional credentials, then show them off (just a little).

Offering credentials isn't an in-your-face kind of thing, but credentials do prove you're actively engaged in your field and can back up your claims with proven knowledge and experience. List your certifications and credentials on the "About Me" section of your website, on your business cards and in your marketing materials as

appropriate. See how easy it is to show off a little without nauseating your prospects?

#6 - Build strong relationships through networking and volunteering.

Join professional associations related to your field and, circling back to #5, look into certifications offered through those associations. Network inside and outside of the association, attend conferences, get to know organizers and decision-makers, market yourself as a speaker or course leader in your local area, publish e-books and keep an eye out for industry-related volunteer opportunities.

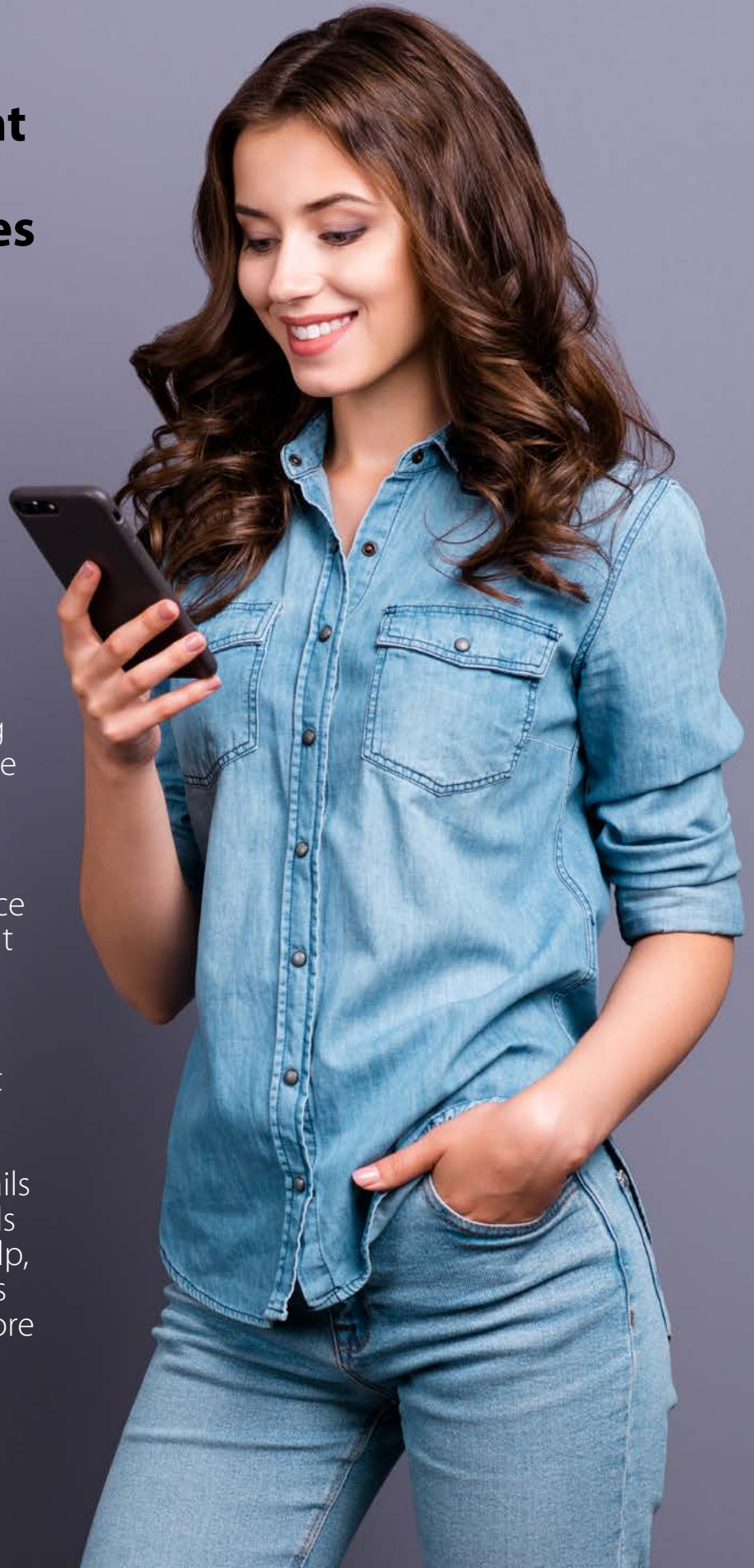
#7 - Name your price, set boundaries and stick with your values.

Don't let your customer drive all of the negotiations especially when it comes to setting your prices. Never agree to a lesser fee unless there's a clear future benefit attached to the compromise. If and when issues arise, tactfully take a stand and never apologize for your pricing scheme.

Ten Email Content Ideas to Reduce Unsubscribe Rates

Creating consistently engaging email content for your audience isn't easy, especially if you're sending frequent emails. Every reader has their own content preferences, so it's good practice to offer a wide range of content to keep engagement levels high. This way, you can reduce unsubscribe rates and at the same time track which content types perform best.

So, beyond your welcome emails and discount emails, what kinds of email can you deliver? To help, here are 10 email content ideas that should ultimately keep more of your subscribers engaged.



Content Highlights

Not all of your audience will be able to catch every new blog post you upload to your website. Give a brief summary of a new blog post and include a call-to-action to direct readers toward the full post. You could also send out a monthly roundup of your most popular blog posts to make sure your audience doesn't miss out on all your great content.

Customer Stories

Testimonials are important at certain stages of the customer journey, but frequently including this type of social proof in emails can come across as too self-promotional. Instead, ask customers for their positive experiences with your products or services, and then use these "customer stories" in emails. These types of real-life anecdotes are great for building brand trust.

Surveys

Sending out a survey is not only a good way to show you care about what your audience thinks, it's also an effective market research tool. What's more, many people enjoy the interactive nature of surveys. There are various

email marketing tools to help you get customer feedback. For example, free tools such as Google Forms or Zoho Survey allow you to embed surveys within your emails.

Industry Studies

Search online for a recent study or survey that is related to your business in some way. Take key facts from the study and share it with your audience in an original email. As well as being educational, it will also boost your credibility by showing you're following industry trends. You could even include an infographic or chart to highlight important points.

Company Spotlights

Adding a more personal touch to your emails is a great way to build brand loyalty. Readers are more likely to trust your business if they can see the more human side to your business. Use your email newsletters to show photos of your team members, showcase new employees, or interview an executive.

Product Focus

If you sell a variety of products, use your emails

to highlight certain products at different times of the year. For example, you could list your best-selling products of the summer. This way, you can draw attention to some of your most popular products without sounding too promotional. Remember that most customers don't know your business like you do - there are probably products and services they are unaware of.

End of Season Announcements

Is there a particular product or service that you want to push at the end of a season? Let your audience know when a certain item is in limited supply. Include special deals and time-sensitive offers to encourage subscribers to take action.

Guides and Advice

Emails are a great way to educate your audience about common issues related to your products or services, and this will also help to reduce the number of people contacting your business for help. Send out an FAQ page answering the most common customer questions, post links to product guides, and

highlight third-party tools that could help your customers.

Company Announcements

As your business changes and grows over time, you'll have plenty of reasons to reach out to your audience to share company news. Tell your audience about recent milestones, awards, and good press to keep your company top-of-mind. You can also inform your readers about upcoming events and new job opportunities.

Product Updates

Your email subscribers will appreciate it when you give them exclusive information about your products or services. Give your audience interesting and informative content, such as product guides and useful tips. Use photos and videos to add more impact to your email marketing.

Over to You

Email marketing is still one of the most cost-effective ways to get messages to your customers and prospects. However, to

boost engagement and encourage action, you need to deliver a range of content types to keep people interested in your business. While you can't prevent anyone from unsubscribing, you can reduce the number of opt-outs by delivering great content.

It can be challenging to deliver engaging content to your audience month after month, but hopefully the ideas listed here will help you retain and grow your subscriber list for years to come, no matter how small or large your business is.

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FUN FACTS

The word 'March' comes from the Roman 'Martius'. This was originally the first month of the Roman calendar and was named after Mars, the god of war. March was the beginning of our calendar year. We changed to the 'New Style' or 'Gregorian calendar' in 1752, and it is only since then when we the year began on 1st January.

Mar 2, 1937 - King Kong (film) opened at New York's Radio City Music Hall.

Mar 6, 1950 - Silly Putty was introduced as a toy by Peter Hodgson. It was invented in 1943 by James Wright in an effort to make synthetic rubber.

Mar 11, 1818 - Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus by 21-year-old Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, was published. It is recognized as world's first science fiction novel

Mar 21, 2006 - Twitter was founded.

Mar 27, 1998 - The FDA approved Viagra.

Mar 30, 1939 - Detective Comics #27 was released, introducing Batman

Mar 31, 1889 - The Eiffel Tower, 986 feet tall, in Paris, France, was inaugurated

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LINKS

Internal links (links to other pages of your website), external links (links to other websites), and hyperlinks (for example, built-in links on blog posts).

KEYWORDS

Brainstorm keywords for website to help specify target. Ask yourself, "Who is my target? What do they type in search engines?"

Pay attention to: headings, titles, body context, images, URLs, and meta descriptions

CONTENT

Providing high-quality content, and is easily accessible through computers and mobile devices. Website is easy to navigate and functional.



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