

M LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

May 2022

8 Steps to an Effective Sales Letter

*How to Organically
Grow Your
Instagram Account*

*Managing Individuals:
How Small Businesses
Can Get ahead through
Clever Management*

*8 Guidelines for
Effective Small
Business Marketing
in 2022*

*10 Tips to Write
Effective B2B
Customer Case
Studies*

**Infographic:
A Current Cyber
Security Snapshot**

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Greetings!

Running a local business is tough work. We know - we're doing it also. You're wearing many hats, and quite often marketing falls in your lap as well. In today's world, marketing is changing rapidly.

How do you keep up? What is new, and how do you leverage it for your business? To help, we've included in this month's issue several interesting articles and tips that you can apply immediately to help you grow your business.

We hope you enjoy the subjects of this month's articles, including Customer Case Studies, Small Business Marketing Guidelines, Writing Sales Letters, and more.

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

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



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

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

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

May

Mental Health Awareness Month
Military Appreciation Month
Employee Health & Fitness Month
National Pet Month
National Barbecue Month
National Blood Pressure Month

May 1 - May Day
May 5 - Cinco de Mayo (US)
May 8 - Mother's Day
May 30 - Memorial Day (US)

2nd - International Harry Potter Day
2nd - Brothers and Sisters Day
3rd - Teacher Appreciation Day
4th - Star Wars Day
5th - Hoagie Day
6th - Nurses Day
7th - Fitness Day
9th - Women's Checkup Day
10th - Shrimp Day
10th - Clean Your Room Day

11th - Technology Day
11th - Eat What You Want Day
13th - Fair Trade Day
13th - Apple Pie Day
15th - International Family Day
15th - Chocolate Chip Day
15th - Peace Officers Memorial Day
16th - Mimosa Day
16th - Love a Tree Day
16th - Barbecue Day
20th - NASCAR Day
20th - Bike to Work Day
20th - Endangered Species Day
20th - Rescue Dog Day
21st - Whisky Day
21st - Armed Forces Day
24th - Brother's Day
25th - Missing Children's Day
25th - Senior Health & Fitness Day
25th - Wine Day
26th - Ascension Day
28th - Brisket Day

June

Great Outdoors Month
Men's Health Month
Pride Month
Oral Health Month
Safety Month

June 14 - Flag Day (US)
June 19 - Father's Day
June 21 - First Day of Summer (US)

1st - Go Barefoot Day
1st - Global Running Day
1st - Say Something Nice Day
2nd - Leave The Office Early Day
3rd - Donut Day
4th - Cheese Day
4th - Trails Day
5th - World Environment Day
5th - Cancer Survivor's Day
7th - Animal Rights Day

8th - World Oceans Day
8th - Best Friends Day
9th - Donald Duck Day
11th - Corn on the Cob Day
12th - Loving Day
14th - World Blood Donor Day
14th - Bourbon Day
15th - Nature Photography Day
15th - Worldwide Day of Giving
16th - Fudge Day
16th - Career Nursing Assistants' Day
19th - Martini Day
19th - Juneteenth
21st - World Day of Music
24th - Take Your Dog to Work Day
26th - Food Truck Day
27th - PTSD Awareness Day
27th - Sunglasses Day
28th - Insurance Awareness Day
30th - Meteor Watch Day
30th - Social Media Day



8 Steps to an Effective Sales Letter

Writing copy that converts is an essential skill that all marketers should have. For anyone running their own online business, this is a skill that many never develop, which can lead to two different outcomes: they either have to spend extra money outsourcing to a good copywriter, or their business flounders because their landing pages don't convert as they should.

To put it bluntly, your marketing funnel is like a leaky bucket if you don't know how

to write a compelling, effective sales letter.

Whether you're trying to turn visitors into leads or turn those leads into customers, the sales letter is the all-important link between them. No matter how good your products are, or, if you're an affiliate, no matter how much you believe in the products your promoting, if you can't convince your prospects of that, it's all for naught. As such, your copy must be more convincing than all your other marketing.

Mastering this skill will not only help you build your email list and make sales or commissions, but it will also help you write your ads, meaning spending less on pay-per-view or pay-per-click traffic if that's your primary source of leads.

Lucky for you, good copy isn't some mysterious skill that only those born under a certain star sign or with a silver spoon in their mouth can learn. No, it can be learned by anyone! It might take some practice, as few skills are learned overnight, but you won't have to pay freelancers forever if you take the time to learn the process.

The process is simple: your sales letter must highlight the pain points your target customer is suffering from, show them a solution, highlight the benefits of your product or service, and weave a compelling story. No, you don't have to have majored in the arts or creative writing to tell a story. Mankind is an innate storyteller, and when working on a sales letter, you don't have to possess the writing skills of your favorite novelists to grip your audience.

Step 1: Brainstorming

Remember when your high school English teacher insisted that you brainstorm before writing your essays? That wasn't just to pile on more work, it was to make sure your writing was polished and comprehensive. Brainstorming is also a great way to find the inspiration to write a complete sales letter.

So, what you want to do is grab a blank sheet of paper, although there is also software for this if you really don't like doing it by hand. Print the name of your product right in the middle of it, then draw a circle around it. This is the main topic of your sales letter, which should always

be your product. Every bit of the letter should orbit around your product in some way, and this mind map will help you keep it that way.

Now, branch out and write the number one problem your product solves, circle it, then draw a line from your product to it. If your product solves multiple problems, focus on just one or two so that you don't overwhelm your prospects.

Next, branch out and write down the benefits of your product. You can even write down your ideal customer avatar if you want, just to make sure this person is fresh in your mind as you go, but make sure not to link it back to your main product. Why? Because all of those circles you just made are going to be headlines in your sales letter.

Here's what you'll want to focus on in your sales letter brainstorming mind map:

- The problems it solves.
- How it solves the problems, written as benefits.
- Your story, which includes your struggle, triumph, and

willingness to help.

- Social proof.
- The offer and call-to-action.

You can branch out as much as you want from these main categories or keep it as bare bones as you want. The important thing is to create a skeleton outline that you can reference as you write.

Step 2: The Main Headline

The main headline is possibly the most important part of your sales copy, as it's the first impression, and you can't overstate the first impression. To do this, your headline must point to your product's biggest benefit (more detail on that in a bit) without giving away the entire solution. The idea is to generate curiosity by promising a solution to one of their pressing problems.

Example: "Discover the 7 Steps We Use to Turn Ice Cold Leads into Sizzling Hot Buyers"

The headline points to a pain point many marketers face (deadbeat leads) while also pointing out

what our product purports to do, which is to teach people how to turn leads into buyers. There are a few things to keep in mind when you're writing a catchy headline, though.

- Keep it short.
- Call directly and indirectly to your target.
- Emphasize a pain point either directly or indirectly.
- Highlight the main benefits
- Use creative language that engages the imagination.

These are the things that will get your prospects to continue through the sales letter. It should be short and easy to scan over while emphasizing a pain point. You don't have to point out the pain point directly; you can use the solution to indirectly bring attention to your customer's main problem.

Your headline should also let the viewer know whether or not this product is for them. If your headline starts out with "Calling all Doctors" then you know an electrician isn't going to waste time reading your sales copy. In the above example, it's obvious that the product

is aimed at marketers and solves a marketing problem without having to explicitly mention it by name.

Next, you reveal the benefit in a way that doesn't promise anything untrue. One of the best ways to do this is to use evocative language in your headline. If you can conjure up a visual image, an emotion, or another one of the senses, it's extremely powerful. Again, referencing the example headline, words like "ice cold" and "sizzling hot" play with the imagination.

Step 3: Point Out Their Problem and Twist the Knife

Your potential customers have a burning problem. They may have two problems that go hand in hand, but you should never focus on too many at a time even if your product solves many problems. Try to keep it down to one problem to focus on if you can, two at most if they're related to each other.

The most important thing is to twist the knife as you do this. Make them feel the pain and frustration as keenly as possible so as to

put them in the mood to solve that problem right now. Remember, your product is the solution, but you'd never pick up a book hoping to get the ending first. The ending doesn't have an impact if you can't experience the protagonist's burning desires and hardships.

To that end, you bring the problem to their attention and convince them that it can't be left alone. It won't just solve itself, and the longer it plagues their life, the unhappier they'll be.

For example, notice how weight loss programs focus on the lethal statistics surrounding obesity and make it personal by showing overweight people struggling to get thin and putting themselves through a lot of pain at the gym to get there, all to no avail. They emphasize how much they hate looking in the mirror or hate going to the beach.

All of this is done to make them primed for the solution, whether that's a supplement or a personalized weight loss program. Focusing on the product from the start doesn't have the same impact; you need to

keenly feel the struggle.

Step 4: Relate Through Your Story

Empathy is a trust builder, and if your customers know that you've felt the same pain points and solved them for yourself, they'll be more likely to trust you as an authority. When most Internet marketers and business owners, both large and small, go into a specific niche that provides solutions to people, it's because they know what it's like to struggle themselves. They've struggled to turn prospects into customers, lose weight, learn that language, or build an authority site. This not only makes them a true authority but also gives them a story they can use to build rapport with others.

Even if you're an affiliate marketer, promoting products that aren't your own, the story of your own struggles and how you found a product that made all the difference goes a long way in connecting with others.

Tell your own story with passion, letting your potential customers know

that you, too, have been in their shoes and have tried all the things they've likely tried. You're not some slimy hand reaching for their credit card, you're a real person, and a credible one at that.

Don't skim over the struggle, either. Go into the details of how you lost sleep over your troubles, got into financial hardship, felt like you were letting yourself and others down, or even made a total fool of yourself. It makes the success all that more palpable, like getting to the end of a good book and realizing that the protagonist is going to triumph.

People love stories, and humans are the ultimate storytellers. We use them to change minds, help people see things from another point of view, and even sell products and services. It's an innate gift that everyone has, so use it to your advantage.

Step 5: The Benefits

By this point, you've twisted the knife and built rapport with your targets, but now you need to actually tell them how you're going to solve their problem. This is

the solution, where you introduce your product or service, or at least the product or service you're promoting.

However, it's important to overcome one little temptation that derails a lot of marketers and winds up hurting your sales, and that's the temptation to play up every last feature.

People don't necessarily want features, they want solutions. If your customer wants to drive a nail through a board, they don't care if you tell them that you're selling a hammer with spring-loaded action and Wi-Fi capabilities. No, they just want to know that your hammer will do a better job than someone else's.

To that end, if your hammer has Wi-Fi capabilities and a spring-loaded head, you need to turn those things into benefits. Benefits let the customer know that these features will help solve their problem more efficiently. So, maybe the Wi-Fi capability in said hammer can bring up a video of a professional teaching you how to pound a nail through in one or two swings. Perhaps the spring-loaded

head puts more force behind every blow.

By turning a feature into a benefit, you present solutions. As many people view features as extras they may not need, they view benefits as key elements in getting them what they want faster and better than the competition can. That's the power of a solution.

Again, using your creativity, try to paint a picture for them that demonstrates how the unique features of your product will benefit them. If you're afraid of too much text in your sales letter at this point, this is a good place in your copy to utilize bullet points. They're easy to scan and digest without making your landing page look like a textbook.

Bullet points are also easier to remember than paragraphs of text, so if your prospect is just skimming the sales letter or gets to the end and wants to go back and reread some key points as they try to make up their mind about a purchase, bullet points come in very handy. They stay in the memory and are easy to find.

Step 6: Social Proof

Another great way to move people off the fence is by providing social proof. If you're brand new and selling your own products or services, then social proof may be something you don't have off the bat. If you really want it, you should consider offering your product for free to a few people in exchange for reviews. Regardless, social proof can be a real boost, and if you're an affiliate, you can probably pull reviews from the product's website or social media pages.

These testimonials can be screenshots or videos people have made, hopefully singing the praises of your product or service. Sometimes you can even provide case studies showcasing the effectiveness of your solution.

Screenshots and videos are great because prospects can see that they're from real people and not just you or your marketing team making things up. They also provide a sense of community, letting people know that you're engaged with social media and that

people actually engage with you back.

Step 7: The Offer and Call-to-Action

Now you're ready to tell them what you expect to be paid for bringing them this solution, and by this time, they should be primed and ready.

Start by telling them what the offer includes, but don't get bogged down in details. This is a great time to recap your solutions, and bullet points are again a good use here. Make sure they understand that your product is unique and leave it at that.

This is also where you can introduce bundles, such as the ability to buy two or more bottles of a supplement for half price if you're selling that type of thing. Bonuses, even for digital products or services, are great ways to entice people to buy, especially if you frame them as benefits and not just extra stuff you've thrown in.

The point of the offer is to drive home the amount of value a customer is getting when they make a purchase. Anything you bundle, give away extra, or

advertise about your main product or service should provide maximum value.

Finally, end the offer with a call-to-action (CTA). This is merely the last line or two of text prompting the prospect to make a purchase. While it may seem silly and obvious to the marketer that a potential customer should know to do this, a simple test run will always show that these prompts really do make a difference.

Remember to keep the CTA simple, not a multi-step process. It should be clear-cut and easy to understand.

For example, a simple "Take Control of Your Weight Now!" is sufficient. If there's an application process to go through or a sales call, you'd like to get them on, a simple "Fill Out the Form Below to See if You Qualify!" will work so long as the form isn't lengthy or too invasive.

Step 8: Proofread

Finally, you want to make sure your sales letter is polished to perfection. This means making sure the spelling is correct, the grammar is good, and you've got your commas

and periods in the right places. Again, there's software on the Internet to help you out here.

You'll also want to read it aloud, making sure that it flows well and doesn't sound too cringy or clunky. You don't want your sentences to read like a 19th-century treatise, but you also don't want a series of short, choppy sentences. Reading aloud will help you refine your sales voice.

Finally, make sure all your links and videos are working before you publish it and start advertising.

Remember, learning to write effective copy is a skill and if you don't get it right away, don't give up. Keep tweaking your sales copy and testing multiple versions of the same landing page so that you identify what's working and what's not.

In time, you'll be able to ditch the freelancers and build your own funnels with your own sales copy.

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How to Organically Grow Your Instagram Account

For many brands, Instagram has grown to become the foundation of their social media presence. Instagram has surpassed Twitter when it comes to sending traffic to landing pages, building trust, and creating audience engagement. However, as with all social media, it takes time to grow your account, and a handful of followers aren't going to be giving you the business you crave.

Now, there are companies that you can pay for followers, but the Instagram algorithm is constantly trying to weed out followers that have been bought. While there are ways to skirt around the system, you're more likely to get engaged, business-building followers from organic growth, even if it takes longer.

You want people who are liking and sharing your posts, clicking your links, subscribing to your list, and making purchases. Usually, bought followers won't do this; they'll merely be numbers to make your account look more popular. However, with these tips, you'll be able to start growing your followers the organic way.

Optimize Your Account

Before you work on gaining more followers, you should ensure that your Instagram account is fully optimized. This means you need a bio, proper image captions, a username that connects you to your brand, and a profile image. Everything about your Instagram account should point to your brand and business, which means a username

like "DaletheMale" won't connect people to a business selling, for example, paintings of cityscapes. Try using your actual business name instead. If your business name is on the long side, however, you can shorten it for your username, making it easier to remember and link to.

Also, remember that the link in your bio is the one place you have to drive Instagram traffic to your website, so don't overlook it. A good tip is to not link directly to your homepage; try product pages that relate to the specific keywords or hashtags you use most often in your account.

This creates a more cohesive experience for users, especially when you tell people "Link in bio".

Post Relevant Content

One of the first things you'll discover is that some content performs better than others, and there are no universal rules regarding this. Your brand and the kinds of people attracted to your products or services will be different to others, hence why testing engagement is paramount.

However, despite the individual nature of followers and businesses, you should still look at current Instagram trends to see what kinds of content people, in general, are most responsive to. This can be anything from the type of posts you make to the filters, captions, or even post times.

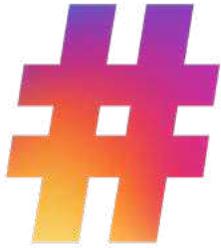
Remember, this isn't so that you can copy your competitors, it's so you can effectively optimize your posting strategy. There are many analytics tools you can use, too, to track how much people are engaging with your posts.

Engage with People

Social media has become one of the primary ways that people come into contact with businesses, and consumers are contacting businesses through these connections more than ever. As such, it's important that your Instagram isn't just a place where you post and wait for clicks to your landing page.

Engage with comments, answer questions, and be personable. You aren't a cold corporation on

Instagram, you're a vibrant, community-driven entity that wants to make a difference in people's lives, even if all you're doing is selling t-shirts.



Perfect Your Hashtags

People search hashtags, so before you start sharing your Instagram link everywhere, one of the simplest ways to grow your following is to use hashtags wisely. A good way to start is to find hashtags that aren't oversaturated.

For example, #love has more than 180 million photos connected with it, so standing out among that crowd is next to impossible. Instead, find hashtags relevant to your posts that clearly have engagement but aren't too populated. If a connection is relevant enough, people will follow.

Of course, you can create your own unique hashtags as well. However, the best way to do this is to use unique hashtags to group posts around relevant content that's already

generating engagement.

Post Consistently

Posting at random is a great way to lose followers. Instead, people prefer predictable content. Knowing they can expect to see new posts every other day, for example, will keep them checking up and engaged. If you post multiple times throughout the day, make sure those times are consistent. Having a schedule will take you far.

On that note, you can always schedule posts in advance. If you have a full marketing team, this can be helpful, so everyone is on the same page, especially if you have a campaign or event going on.

Use Influencers and Help Others

Followers are valuable, and using influencers, or large Instagram accounts in your niche or industry, can have a very positive effect. When an influencer shares your content, it puts your brand before a wide amount of people. You only want to make sure that you're sharing something of value with them, but many influencers are open to

marketing collaborations or sharing your posts for a fee.

You can also share other people's content as well or hold contests to promote your brand to a larger audience. Remember, social media is about sharing and engaging.



Promote Your Instagram Account

Make sure people know they can find you on Instagram. You can add your social media accounts to your website or business cards, or link to your Instagram account from other social media, such as Twitter or Facebook.

Promoting your Instagram is an excellent way to generate engagement and acquire new followers, so don't be afraid to promote it instead of a landing page. You should never run paid ads just to promote your Instagram page. You can, however, add your Instagram account link to an ad to generate more interest in it.

A hand is holding a small yellow cube with a teal person icon. To the right, a pyramid of similar cubes is being built. The background is a blurred image of a person in a blue shirt and tie.

Managing Individuals: How Small Businesses Can Get ahead through Clever Management

Small businesses don't have a lot of financial resources. If you run a small business, you need to make good use of the resources you do have if you want to get ahead. And the most valuable resource you have is your employees. It is they who determine what your customers' experiences are like and what kind of view they form of your business. It is also your employees who will work hard, or not, to improve productivity when you're in a jam. The surest way to gain an advantage over your competitors is to have better, more experienced,

more motivated, more loyal employees. And how do you get such employees? The secret is to manage individuals, not groups.

The Benefits of Managing Individuals

A lot of managers motivate their employees by setting goals for all their employees to meet, promoting the highest performing employees, and firing the lowest performing ones. This style of management wastes human resources. Your employees all have different skills and

styles. Some are better at meeting some goals than others. Some respond to one kind of motivation and some to another. If you manage your employees with a one-size-fits-all approach, all you're doing is making sure you employ a narrow range of skills instead of a broad one. Why limit your resources like that?

Set Individualized Goals

To get the most out of your employees, you need all of them to be top performers. However, you'll never get a team of

top performers by firing all the worst performers until you luck into the team you desire. The only way to get a great team is to help the employees you do have achieve greatness, and the only way to do that is to help each one develop their unique strengths and skills. Set realistic and unique goals for each of your employees, taking into account their particular strengths and weaknesses. Give them constructive feedback and, after they meet the goals you set, set higher ones. With this approach, even low performers can learn to be great.

Use Positive Reinforcement

When you use fear to motivate your employees, you're really just shooting yourself in the foot. An employee worried about getting fired is more concerned about covering themselves than doing their best. They may be

just coasting until they can find another job. Positive reinforcement works much better.

When one of your employees does a good job, approach them directly and tell them what a good job you thought they did. Such recognition makes them feel particularly valued, and eager to work harder to get such recognition and praise in the future. When your employees feel like you have noticed them individually, they feel more like a real part of your company, and the more they do that, the harder they will work for it.

Reach Out

Get to know your employees individually. When you see one of them struggling, don't rebuke them. Instead, reach out to them and find out why they're struggling. Try to help them figure out

what's going wrong and how to fix it. Mentor them a little. Let them know they can always come ask you for help without being afraid for their jobs. If your employees know they can be honest with you when they need help, they will get help when they need it. That's how they gain the knowledge and experience needed to become great employees. That's also how you form the kinds of strong individual bonds with your employees that will make them want to go the extra mile for you.

Your employees are, more than almost anything else, what will make or break your small business. Getting to know them individually, managing them with a personal touch, will take a lot of time and effort. But it is time and effort wisely invested, and it will pay great dividends to you down the road.



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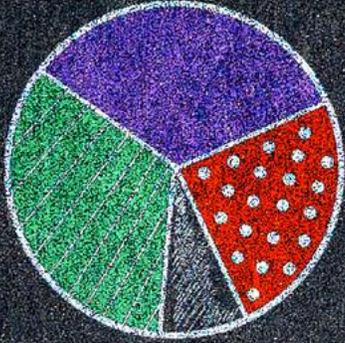


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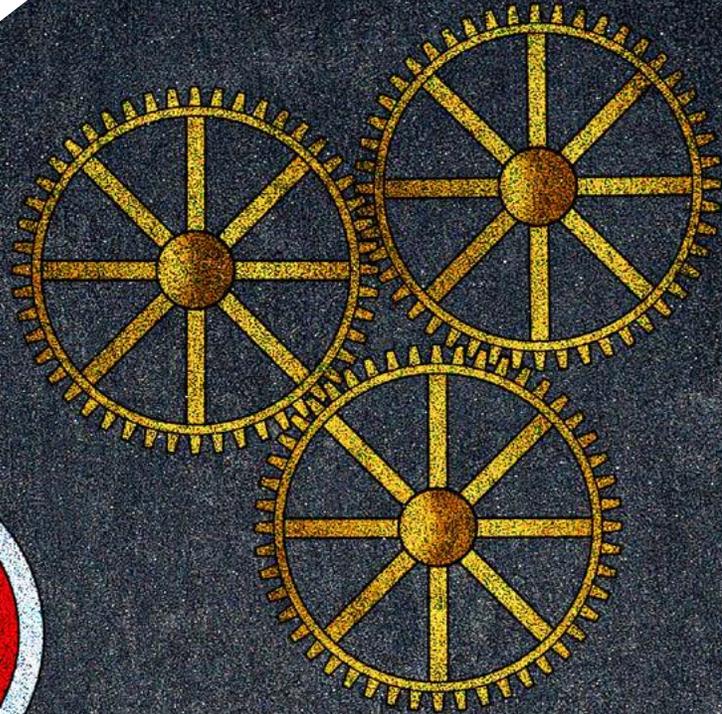
8 Guidelines for Effective Small Business Marketing in 2022



ANALYSIS



TARGETING



ACTION
PLAN

MARKETING
STRATEGY

If you're a small-business owner, you know that there's a lot at stake for your company. You need to make sure that every dollar spent is spent in the right place. That's why it's important to create a marketing plan that will help you get the word out about your business without breaking the bank. In order to do this, you need to first understand what the most effective ways of marketing are and how they can benefit your business.

Here are eight guidelines for effective small business marketing:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is one of the most effective and affordable ways to market your business online. SEO involves using keywords and phrases that are relevant to your products or services in order to rank higher on search engines like Google, Bing, or Yahoo. With SEO, your website will be more visible and accessible to potential customers who are looking for what you offer.

There are different ways to do SEO, but they all have one thing in common:

they help to make your website more visible to search engines. There are two main types of SEO: on-page and off-page. On-page refers to things like keywords, meta descriptions, and title tags -- off-page refers to things like social media shares and backlinks from other websites.

Marketing Research and Analysis

The first step in your marketing research is to analyze your competitors. You can do this by checking their social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and searching for their name online. Social media has proven to be the most effective way to reach local customers. Check how often they post and what types of content they post (pictures, links). Look at how many followers they have and what kind of engagement their posts receive. Do some of their posts receive more interaction than others? If so, will it make sense for you to use a similar strategy?

You should also take the time to learn about your target audience. Whom are you trying to reach

with your products or services? What types of things are important to them? What do they need in a product? How much are they willing to spend on said product or service? What type of language does your target audience use when talking about the service or product you offer? These answers will help determine whom you market yourself to and where you choose to promote your business.

Influencer Outreach

An influencer is an individual who has a large following on social media and/or other online platforms. Influencers have dedicated audiences, many of whom value their opinions and rely on them for advice. What makes influencers so attractive to marketers is that they can drive significant engagement as likes, comments, shares, and purchases.

In order to tap into their influence, you'll need to reach out to them directly and make an offer such as a product review or sponsored post. It may seem daunting at first, but if you follow these steps, it will make the process much easier:

Identify your target audience

-- Before reaching out to any influencers, take some time to understand your target audience and what content they consume online. This will help you find the right people with which to collaborate and create effective content that resonates with your ideal customers.

Set clear goals -- What do you hope this campaign will achieve? Is it brand awareness? New customer acquisition? Increased web traffic? Conversions? Whatever it is, be sure that both parties are on the same page before moving forward on anything else, including budget, deliverables, and timeline.

Find relevant influencers

-- Don't just go after any celebrity or social media star with a big following! Focus your search on individuals who have audiences that align with your brand values and are engaged in conversations around your industry or products/services (e.g., lifestyle bloggers interested in fashion).

Build relationships prior to outreach efforts

-- Don't just jump right into making requests! You should build

meaningful relationships with these people long before asking for anything from them, including their time or attention (i.e., don't be pushy). The best way to go about it is simply interacting regularly by commenting on posts, sharing content, liking photos, etc... It shows genuine interest rather than self-serving motives, which often does more harm than good when attempting partnerships.

Customer Relationship Management

Small businesses are the lifeblood of most, if not all, economies. They do more than just provide goods and services; they also create the vast majority of new jobs, providing breathing room for nations to grow and build a resilient future. But small businesses can't survive without loyal customers, which is why customer relationship management (CRM) is one of the most important elements of effective marketing. A good CRM strategy will ensure that your business:

- Understands customer needs
- Builds trust with customers

- Gathers feedback from customers
- Offers discounts to repeat customers
- Forms relationships with other small businesses

Email Marketing

Email marketing is a highly effective way to stay in touch with customers and prospects and to keep your brand top of mind. If you're not doing it, you should be. Have all employees add their business card info to the bottom of their emails for easy networking with others inside your company and outside. This can help drive new sales and leads. Also, make sure you are collecting information from prospects when they visit your website or respond to an email promotion so that you can add them to your database.

Build out a monthly schedule of email messages that will automatically go out on specific dates (i.e., the first Monday of each month). This allows you to create anticipation by building a schedule that readers look forward to receiving each month. For example, if one of your products is cold weather apparel, send

regular updates on what's new at the beginning of fall, as people are getting ready for winter.

Content Marketing

Content marketing is another key tool in your small business marketing arsenal. It includes creating and sharing media that is valuable to your customers, and it can take the form of blog posts, videos, infographics, and more. The goal of content marketing should be to grow your brand by increasing awareness and building relationships with potential customers.

Effective content marketing will help you show expertise on topics that apply to consumers while adding value to a sales funnel when they are ready to buy. Content marketing also helps you get found in search engines through higher rankings and an increased number of links, which makes it an effective way to build brand awareness for your business.

Social Media Marketing

If you're running a small



business and you don't have a social media presence, you're missing out on a huge opportunity to connect with your customers, grow your brand, and make more sales. Social media is a great tool for small businesses because it lets you connect with your customers on a personal level. By sharing interesting content and replying to questions and comments left by customers on your social profiles, you can engage with your audience in a way that feels natural and even fun.

Best of all, there are so many social media platforms out there, you're bound to find one that fits perfectly with your business -- Instagram if you're geared toward selling products through beautiful photos, Twitter

if you want an easy platform where people can reach out to ask questions or make comments.

Webinars/ Podcasts

Another effective way to create leads is through webinars and podcasts that effectively teach, inform, and entertain their audiences. They're a cost-effective way to market your company and promote new products or services that could benefit your community. Also, a successful webinar or podcast can actually increase sales by improving audience trust in you as an expert and making them more likely to buy from you regularly.

As a small business owner, you've got a lot to do. Your time and resources are limited, but that doesn't mean you can't reap the rewards of effective marketing. If you're interested in growing your business and reaching more customers, consider these eight guidelines for effective small business marketing.



10 Tips to Write Effective B2B Customer Case Studies

A well-written case study can be a valuable sales aid, especially in B2B (business-to-business) sectors. Case studies provide third-party validation and allow prospects to understand the benefits of a product or service in real-life scenarios. However, customer case studies can make a tedious read if not structured and written with care. All too often, what should be a relatable endorsement becomes nothing more than a lengthy description of the features of a product.

Case studies can take a substantial amount of time and effort to create. Furthermore, you will involve a customer in the process. Consequently, you will want the finished article to be something that will provide value to the sales team and a source of pride. Here are ten tips to help you write customer case studies that help you sell your product or service.

1. Collaborate with Stakeholders

The first thing to decide is what you want to achieve with your case studies. And the best way to do that is to ask the various stakeholders in

the business what they want. For example, the sales team will have their ideas on what they need on the ground and the best customers to feature. The marketing team will also want to have input. Senior management may have objectives, such as targeting specific vertical markets.

2. Identify Suitable Customers

Based on the objectives identified by stakeholders, you can then identify suitable customers for your case studies. You will, of course, want to select customers that are happy with your product or service. However, there are other considerations, too. For example, choosing businesses representative of your typical prospects would be advisable. Well-known names in a sector will carry more weight than unknown companies. And ideally, you will want something that will make an attention-grabbing headline, either in terms of the benefits the customer gained or their innovative use of the product or service.

3. Design a Template

You don't want all your

case studies to look the same. Still, a template will help you structure the document and ensure you don't omit any crucial elements. You will need a catchy headline and an opening paragraph that hooks the reader and encourages them to read more. Then, set the scene by introducing the customer's business and describing their challenges. You then can explain how your product or service solved those issues and other benefits the customer gained. An explanation of why the customer selected your solution over competitors will also be helpful.

Like most sales documents, a case study must be easy to read. So, use subheadings to break up the content and use images where relevant. One critical component of a case study is customer quotes, which are best highlighted to attract attention. In B2B case studies, the customer's logo and the contributor's name should also be prominent.

4. Obtain Customer Permission

You could write a case study with no input

from the customer. However, you will need the customer's written permission before starting work on a case study. You will also need permission to use logos and images. Obtaining the customer's consent will cover you legally, and a customer who is fully on board with the process will provide a more convincing and in-depth case study.

5. Do the Groundwork

Customers may be willing to help you out with case studies. Still, even the most cooperative customers will not appreciate you wasting their time. Doing your homework will save time for you and your customer. Start with the basics, such as what products or services your customer has purchased. Check that there are no outstanding issues with the customer. Talking to the sales team will reveal the critical factors in the customer's decision to buy. Researching the customer's business will provide background to the story.

6. Interview the Customer

It is best to have a plan for your interview with the customer and a list of questions you would like to ask. The conversation may go off at a tangent, but at least a plan will outline what you want to achieve. The questions will revolve around the case study template, including giving the background, identifying the problems,



and expanding the solution and the benefits. It can also be helpful to cover how the customer will benefit from the product or service in the future.

You can conduct interviews in person or by telephone or video chat. Alternatively, you could ask questions via email or use a survey. In-person interviews provide the best results. However, it is

crucial to keep discussions to a reasonable length and agree on the timing with the customer beforehand. Recording interviews can be helpful, but you will need to get the customer's permission to do this.

7. Tell Stories

A good case study paints a picture that enables a prospect to visualize the product or service's benefits for their organization. And the best way to do that is through storytelling. Indeed, the case study structure mentioned above has the elements of a three-act play; scene-setting, the challenge, and the resolution. The objective of a case study is not

to entertain the reader. Nevertheless, if the story flows and reads well, a prospective customer will be more likely to read the entire document.

8. Answer Common Objections

Case studies are one of the documents that continue to sell to a prospect when the salesperson is not with them. For example, people might read a case

study back at the office or on the train home from a meeting. The document will likely be shared with other stakeholders, too. So, it will be helpful to highlight answers to frequent questions and objections within a case study. For example, suppose support is a topic frequently raised by prospects. In that case, you might want to highlight satisfaction with the support services in case studies. Or, if the price is sometimes an issue, emphasizing return on investment might be helpful.

9. Highlight Benefits

Case studies are usually written in the third person, describing the benefits gained by the customer. In other words, the story is about the customer, not about you or your company. You want the document to represent your product or service positively. Still, your customer's words will carry more weight than your own. Consequently, it is best to use the customer's narrative to describe the benefits they gained from selecting your company as a supplier.

You can add further

weight to the argument by quantifying the benefits. For example, if the customer says your product saves them time, ask if the time saved can be quantified. Then, prospects will be able to calculate the savings they are likely to achieve.

10. Obtain Internal and Customer Sign-Off

Finally, it is advisable to have a completed case study signed off by relevant people within your organization and the customer. Internally, the document might need checking by the appropriate account manager, salesperson, and the marketing team. And a draft should be sent to the customer for final approval before publication.

Customer case studies provide social proof. However, unlike customer reviews on an eCommerce site, case studies are written by the business. If you are not careful, the document can read like an advertisement, which would defeat the object. You will want a case study to cover the key benefits of your products or service. However, for a case study to ring true, the narrative should be that of the customer.

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FUN FACTS

The month of May was named for the Greek goddess Maia. She was the goddess of fertility.

- May 3, 2002 - Spider-Man was released and became the fastest movie ever to earn more than \$100 million in a single weekend, as well as the most successful film based on a comic book at the time.
- May 15, 1942 - Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs) was formed, granting women official military status
- May 20, 1927 - American aviator Charles A. Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, NY, on the world's first solo, nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.
- May 25, 1977 - Star Wars opened in movie theaters marking the biggest entertainment juggernaut in modern popular culture.
- May 27, 1937 - The Golden Gate Bridge, connecting San Francisco with Marin Count, California opened.
- May 30, 1966 - Launch of Surveyor 1, the first US spacecraft to land on an extraterrestrial body (the Moon).

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A CURRENT CYBER SECURITY SNAPSHOT

CYBER SECURITY STATISTICS

- The average business takes 191 days to even notice a breach
- Small businesses account for 43% of cyber attacks
- On average, the cost of a cyber attack on a small business is more than \$25,000
- Only 14% of small businesses are prepared to defend themselves against cyber attacks
- 65% of organizations in the U.S. fell victim to a phishing attack in 2021
- 95% of organizations provide phishing awareness training, but 30% trained just a portion of their user base.
- For businesses with less than 1,000 employees, 44% of all data breaches were caused by malicious employees.



THE TOP 3 MOST COMMON CYBER SECURITY THREATS



MALWARE

Malicious software is a term that refers to software intentionally designed to cause damage to a computer, server, client, or computer network. Malware can include ransomware and viruses.

PHISHING

This is a kind of cyber attack that uses email or a malicious website to infect your computer with malware or collect your information. Phishing emails appear as legitimate, and often entice you to click on a link or open an attachment containing malicious code.

RANSOMWARE

This is a certain type of malware that infects and restricts access to a computer until ransom is paid. Ransomware is usually delivered through phishing emails and uses vulnerabilities in the software.

VIRUSES

Viruses are harmful programs that are meant to spread from computer to computer and other connected devices that give the cybercriminal access to your system.

THE TOP 3 INDUSTRIES TO FALL VICTIM TO CYBER SECURITY ATTACKS

HEALTHCARE

More than 90% of healthcare organizations reported at least one security breach in the last year, with a 71% increase just this past year.

EDUCATION

The education industry is ranked last in cyber preparedness, yet 62% of 5.8 million cases of malware reportedly came from the education industry this past year.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

The financial industry averages 350,000+ exposed sensitive files, putting them at the most at-risk industry for cyber attacks.



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