



5 Proven Social Media Strategies for Small Business

In the Fast Five Marketing Series, I share strategies that have worked for our business and that I have seen effectively implemented for our customers who are brick & mortar small businesses throughout the world. This week I am talking about 5 Proven Social Media strategies for small businesses. Social media can be almost as daunting as Internet Marketing when it comes to small business.

However, it doesn't have to be daunting and it doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. Here are 5 Proven Strategies for social media that every small business can implement immediately and see a return on the investment.

1. Facebook – Facebook is a social network that, when used correctly, can have tremendous business benefits as well. In fact according to the Social Skinny web site, 58% of Fortune 500 companies have an active corporate Facebook account. If it works for big business, it can certainly work for small business. And in fact, 47% of customers are somewhat likely to purchase from a brand that they follow or like on Facebook and 80% of US social network users prefer to connect with brands on Facebook. If you want to increase your customer base, you have to start interacting and engaging where they are and Facebook is it. However, just creating a fan page and posting once in a while won't work. I recommend creating a tiered Facebook approach where you have a corporate fan page that customers like and then you encourage them to join a free rewards club that is powered using Facebook. The beauty of this strategy is that you can reward and incentivize customers for referring others to your business. Now, once you they have liked your page and joined your club, you have to provide relevant and valuable content on the site. That can be easily achieved by using an affordable outsourced solution.





2. Twitter – You may not have placed much value on Twitter for your small business, but you need to know that next to Facebook, it is the second most popular social networking tool for marketing (at 82%). With Twitter, you are limited to 144 characters in your posts. One tool that I recommend is HootSuite which will allow you to post to Facebook and Twitter at the same time. Then, I recommend using Twitter as the vehicle to share behind the scenes photos in your business or to give a glimpse of new things that are about to be launches. Be sure to listen and monitor the comments on Twitter as your followers will tell you what they like and don't like. Twitter can also be a great place to ask quick questions and obtain feedback, which is a replacement to the traditional focus group approach. Twitter can also be a great place to provide special incentives and offers to those that respond quickly. Remember that you have to say a lot in a short number of words so being succinct is key.

3. Youtube – You may think that Youtube is reserved for those wanting to be discovered as a singer or those showing off pranks. However, it can be a great marketing tool for small businesses. In fact, basic business knowledge tells us that educating a prospect in the sales process is key to converting them into a sale. The next key in sales is creating a relationship. Youtube is a tool that allows you to accomplish both. You can create a series of short videos that are educationally based. These would feature you, as the business owner, on camera providing answers to the top questions typically asked by your prospective clients. Short and sweet is the key with Youtube videos. How do you produce these and what's required? It's easy with the technology today. Purchase a small Kodak handheld recorder (the size of a cell phone) and a small wireless mic that you can use with the camera. This will ensure great sound quality. Then, create a backdrop in your office or a nice setting where you can be comfortable and it looks professional. Extremely polished videos are not necessary as ones that are not professionally produced show higher response rates from audiences. When posting on Youtube you can categorize the content and organize videos so it is easy for your prospective client to research. And, along the way you develop a relationship with the viewer just by talking to them regularly.

4. Linked In – This is one of the top social media sites for businesses. In fact, the Social Skinny reports that Linked In is four times better for business to business lead generation than any other social media site. The first step is to create a profile and start linking out to friends, professional colleagues and those in your sphere of influence. Stay on top of requests as people





like to refer people that are responsive. Obtain testimonials from those who are raving fans for your business. Once you have this handled, you can expand to providing content through Linked In groups which helps to establish you as an expert. It also strengthens the relationship that you have with those on Linked In which is important because you after three or four months, you can go out to that group and ask them to join you on a webinar or at a live event. Only ask after you have given and shared information. This will tell people that you are a giving person first and that you are not just asking for the "sale" up front.

5. Integration – No, that's not a new social networking site. It means that effective use of social media requires integration. There are a host of programs out there that can do this for you. Here's what you need to look for in a solution. One that allows you to easily maintain one database. The last thing you want to do is rely on a team member to export and import information into various databases, this is asking for disaster. Accurate reporting is also key. You want to be able to track the return on your investment with social media. This can be handled through tracking of special offers given to specific audiences. It can also involve reports that track referrals and new customers that are coming from social media. It's not complicated and there are programs that are more effective and affordable than others. If you are having difficulty finding one that is right for you, just email me and I can get back to you.

Social media can be an effective marketing tool for small businesses when it is used properly, established correctly and when there is a clear strategy of how it will be integrated into the entire business. Determining the return on investment for any marketing program is critical, but especially social media. Keep in mind that only 22% of businesses have a dedicated social media manager so adding payroll expense is not a must. Focus on the strategy and then leverage outsourced affordable solutions for implementation.

