

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR

BUSINESS

ONLINE

(& GET MORE CUSTOMERS!)



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14 WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS

ON A SMALL BUDGET

In order to survive and grow into a profitable company, every business needs new customers.....

In order to get new customers, every business needs to promote the business. Before the advent of the internet, promotion was easy because there weren't too many options. It was a matter of deciding between a flyer, a post card, billboards or an ad in the local newspaper. Today, however, the methods for promoting your business can be overwhelming and new approaches seem to be increasing by the day. There's social media marketing, search engine marketing, text marketing and more. If you are a small business owner struggling to figure out which one to use, or would be the best fit and most effective, you are not alone. To help you navigate the maze of ideas and methods out there, here is a list of ways that you can promote your business whether you have a budget or not.

Free Ways to Promote Your Business

- **Online Directories** -- Online directories are today's version of the yellow pages. Google, Bing, Yahoo, Yelp, and others all have online directories for businesses. By listing your company in these directories, your business will show up in certain search results – particularly if someone is looking for a local business. To promote your business, get started with free listings in the biggest directories (you can download a list [HERE](#)) and make sure you keep your business details exactly the same in each directory in order to maximize visibility. For more tips on how to rank well in Google+and other directories, take a look at this article.
- **Online Reviews**-- Claim Your Listing on Yelp & Google! Word of mouth is still the most powerful promotion for any business, people value peer reviews/recommendations. Today, digital reviews are “Word of Mouth” on



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steroids and are the best way to build authority with your audience and the search engines. Testimonials on your own website are great, but if you really want to maximize the effectiveness of positive reviews, you need to get them on third-party websites like Google/Google My Business and Yelp. These websites/Directories will increase your exposure, and because they make it harder for businesses to generate fake reviews, people trust the reviews here more than anywhere else. Make sure you let your customers know that you have listings on these sites so that they can review you. Rather than asking them to review you, something simple like “View us on Yelp” serves as an effective but casual reminder. Creating a "short link" that sends your happy clients/customers directly to the review page can be very effective. We encourage our clients to e-mail or text the short link directly to make it easy for folks to leave their positive reviews.

- **Facebook** -- If you don't have a business page set up on Facebook to promote your business, it may be time to set one up! Facebook is the largest online social network and it can be a great way to keep in touch with existing customers and to reach new customers. We highly recommend putting together a strategy for using the page before you create/launch it. It doesn't have to be an overwhelming process, but some thought as to the layout and content to be posted is a great start.
- **Twitter** -- Twitter is another free channel that can be used to promote your business online. It requires a bit more activity to build an audience, but if you're consistently active it can be easier to build a following of your target audience there than on Facebook. Twitter can be intimidating at first, and is certainly not a platform you will master right away. However, putting a little time into it each day exploring and experimenting with things, can go a long way. Check out how other companies in your industry are using it, maybe even a direct competitor in your local market. The best way to learn Twitter is to use it while using the vast online information & resources.



Not just one hour here and there, but a consistent daily effort over the course of a month. The investment of time will be worth it.

- **LinkedIn** -- LinkedIn has become the “professional’s” go to Social Media Network. A place to join in on group discussions, connect with potential customers, form new partnerships, or just to do general online “Business” networking. Potential customers can check out you or your company before doing business with you to find out how many employees you have and to get more information on the background of the company personnel. You can also promote your business indirectly on LinkedIn by providing a perspective in group discussions and/or providing links to relevant content on your website. If you’re interested in exploring the best techniques for promoting your business in LinkedIn, start here:
<https://business.linkedin.com>
- **Pinterest** -- Pinterest is fundamentally focused on sharing photos, the fact that those photos can link back to a web page where the photo is located, has created an opportunity to promote your business. Pinterest is especially powerful for e-commerce businesses looking to reach a female audience (Pinterest users are heavily skewed towards the female demographic). However, the popularity has bled over to the male demographic and growing at a rapid pace. If this fits your profile, you may want to think about getting active on the Pinterest network.
- **YouTube** -- Video marketing is a great way to promote your business, and YouTube lets you do it for free! Although YouTube is not considered a "Search Engine", it consistently shows up in search results and the public more and more use it to search for "How To....." . Promoting your business via YouTube has become an effective way to help potential customers or clients connect with your business. Putting together a quick overview video of your business and then uploading it to YouTube gives you a nice sales



tool that you can embed into your homepage or send out in emails or post to Blogs. The video is also likely to get some pretty good visibility in the search engines. Beyond a general introductory video, educational, tutorials, or how-to videos can increase visitors to your website and build authority with search engines.

- **Public Relations** -- Getting publicity for your business can be costly, but it can also be free. Promoting events on Social Media Channels like Facebook & Twitter can be very effective channels. If you have a newsworthy event that a local news outlet might be interested in covering, try contacting a local news organization or group of bloggers. Local news and bloggers are always on the lookout for interesting content, they might be willing to do a story on you or at least give you a mention. If they have accounts on Twitter and Facebook, take some time follow and engage with their content. The more you can familiarize yourself with their style of writing or range of topics, the more specific you can be with your request. If you've taken the time to read and share their work, they may be more willing to help you. Show interest in them and they may show interest in you. This takes time to develop relationships but is a great way to get visibility and promote your business.
- **Partnerships** -- Partnering or aligning with businesses that serve the same clientele can be a great way to promote your business, while growing a quality network. Great examples would be an electrician and plumbing businesses serving the same community. You can cross-promote each other's services through your email lists, coupons, or by engaging them on social media. Don't be afraid to get creative to maximize the promotional value of partnerships.
- **Events** -- Promoting your business at physical events is still a great way to grow your business. National trade shows that attract tens of thousands of



people, to small local community events, are great opportunities to promote your business.

When targeting a national audience you or want to wholesale your products to retailers, going to a big trade show might make sense. If you have some time to, consider just attending a trade show as a visitor before investing the money in your own booth to get ideas of how you want to present yourself and what materials you think you'll need to be successful. If you have developed any partnerships as in the aforementioned idea, setting up a "co-branded" may be an option. This can cut down on the cost as well as double your potential contacts.

As a local business, getting involved in community events can be a great promotional tool and meet new customers. You can also search for local events on Google and sites like Meetup.com.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** -- Google is still the primary way people search for products and services they are interested in purchasing. Most of those searches now occur on mobile devices, phones, tablets, etc. The good news is that you can have a significant impact on how easy it is for people to find you by implementing some search engine optimization.

When referring to search engine optimization, you would have some form of a website in place. The initial investment may cost some money to have a professional presence, but once the site is in place, SEO is very cost effective, especially for local businesses.

Make sure you follow all the best practices if you want your website to come up on the first page for as many keyword search phrases as possible. Search Engine Land is a great resource to get familiar or stay current on all things SEO: <https://searchengineland.com/library/how-to/how-to-seo>



Paid Ways to Promote Your Business

- **Website** -- Although there are completely free website solutions for your business, inevitably you will need to move to some form of a professionally built website if you are serious about promoting your business online. A website has become an essential ingredient for almost any business that values an effective online presence. Content has become key to building authority with the search engines, specifically Google. “Valuable” content is what your potential customers as well as the search engines are looking for, and will be a big part in determining where a business ranks on a local search result.
- **Online advertising** -- There are a number of different ways to promote/advertise your business online. You can pay for banner/display ads on websites like Yahoo, or allow Google to place ads on their partner sites. Alternatively, you can do search engine marketing (SEM) where you pay to have your ad show up in Google (or other search engines) when someone searches for a particular keyword or phrase. Advertising online can be tricky, but you can get traffic to your website quickly. If you optimize your campaigns correctly and your website is setup to funnel the traffic being generated, this is a sustainable way to promote your businesses and generate a steady stream of customers.
- **Direct Mail** -- Despite the dominance of digital media and the web, for a lot of local businesses direct mail is still a very effective way to promote your business. One of the biggest challenges to promoting their businesses through the mail is that it requires a significant budget to do enough testing to get it right (or to determine if it’s the right channel). Because average response rates are around 1%, you may need to send thousands or even tens of thousands of mail pieces to find the right format, the right message or offer, and the right target list. **The benefit:** If you get it right, direct mail get you new customers using a very repeatable process.

