

MARKET YOUR **BUSINESS**

Best-Kept Marketing Secrets

100 Experts Dish With Their Marketing Tips

By Readers of Small Business Trends, 2008

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A Letter from the Publisher of Small Business Trends

Welcome to our first—but not last—eBook featuring tips and advice learned from 100 savvy readers.

It was humbling to see the breadth and quality of these reader-contributed pointers. The knowledge of many is far greater than the knowledge of one. No matter how much one person might know, it pales when compared to the wisdom of those who live and breathe the need to go out and get and retain customers every day in order to put food on the table.

I'm reminded of the narrow margin for error under which most small businesses operate. As one reader said, "Market or die! When you're a small business owner, if you don't succeed at marketing, your business literally could die."

And small businesses have to make *everything* count. As George Langan, CEO of eXpresso (www.expressocorp.com) told me, "When you're on a tight startup budget, you can't afford a \$2,000-a-month marketing mistake."

Throughout the submitted tips, I noticed three themes over and over:

- 1 **Simple and inexpensive tools are more popular than complex or pricey approaches.** "Duh!" you might be thinking. "Isn't it obvious that entrepreneurs and small businesses, being on tight budgets, would favor low-cost approaches?" Well, yes and no. What was surprising is just how many of the tips cost *literally nothing but your time*. A large proportion of others, such as those that focused on using business cards or blogging, can be done for hundreds, not thousands, of dollars. So don't be tempted to throw up your hands and say "I can't afford marketing." You can.
- 2 **Authenticity, friendliness and relationships matter.** When you count your customers in the single or double digits, as opposed to the thousands or hundreds of thousands, relationships tend to matter much more deeply. The importance of smiling and being friendly was brought up again and again. Doing something nice for others and being yourself were common themes. Most small businesses are NOT about mass marketing campaigns. Instead, we rely on attracting and retaining a relatively small number of customers to be successful. A solo consultant or small Web design firm may have as few as five or six regular customers. For small businesses, investing in relationship building goes a long way.
- 3 **Creative online marketing plays a key role.** We drew tips from those who are active online, so on the one hand you might think that the results would naturally be skewed toward online marketing. And to a degree I suppose that's true. But I was surprised by the *sophistication* of the online marketing—especially on limited budgets. Some of the online approaches are very detailed and go far beyond the plain-vanilla "create a nice Web site" type of advice. A number of the small-business marketing techniques represented in this document get into advanced online marketing, including social media marketing.

The tips suggest you don't need to be an expert in every whizbang social media site out there. A targeted approach is much better. You're better off working a few social media sites such as Flickr.com or

LinkedIn.com Answers. How to know which ones? Start with some of the social media sites referenced in the reader tips in this document. They may trigger other ideas for using other social media tools.

I want to take a moment to thank Ivana Taylor (www.strategystew.com). Ivana was my “partner in crime” in this roundup. She used her contacts in the marketing field to reach out to many of those who contributed, and her help was invaluable—thank you, Ivana!

One more thing—as you review these marketing tips, start thinking about your own marketing. Do you have a secret or a tip to share? A unique approach that’s worked well for you? We’re always looking for entrepreneurs and small business people to interview to provide inspiring and instructive stories and advice to others.

Thanks to all who contributed to this compilation. Your advice and pointers are an inspiration to thousands of your peers.



Anita Campbell

Anita Campbell

Publisher, Small Business Trends

Part 1 – Relationship Marketing

Seth Godin, SethGodin.com

Make promises and keep them. So obvious, it's become a secret.

www.sethgodin.com

Jackie Huba, Church of the Customer

Attracting is the new selling. It is the least-visible, and least-examined principle behind most companies today that are growing quickly through word of mouth.

www.churchofthecustomer.com

Andy Birol, Author of “The 5 Catalysts to 7 Figure Growth”

In striving to please their customers, too many marketers believe they must exceed expectations. Better yet, marketers should just ask and listen, for what they will learn and hear is often a different, more modest need, which when fulfilled, will profitably delight the customer.

www.andybirol.com

John Battelle, Searchblog

The best-kept secret in marketing is to invest your time in eliciting and responding to your customers' feedback, even if it's negative. It's the secret to building a network of evangelists who keep on giving back to your business ...

www.battellemedia.com

Dina Giolitto, Wordfeeder.com

Host an educational network—on YOUR turf. Teach people something they can use. Brand yourself the whole way. Lead your group with vibrant, positive energy. Tend to each person in the group as though they were a guest in your home.

www.wordfeeder.com

Paul Durban

Allow your customers to catch you in the act of providing something spectacular. After all, the strongest conclusion is the one you draw yourself. When they ask how you do it, reach out to them and say, “Let me teach you.”

Rachelle Matherne, Five by Five PR

Don't be afraid to give stuff away, whether it be helpful articles, lists of resources, credit to your peers or a little something extra to your clients. Be generous.

www.fivebyfivepr.com

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Jan Marie Dore, The Professional Women's Online Marketing Coach

Give away lots of free content and ideas to develop relationships and build trust. Give away your best tips freely.

My view is that content marketing is one of the best ways to gain expert status in your niche. I work with professional women who want to write the content that could build their business, but are blocked by their perfectionism or fear of being visible with their outspoken views. I suggest that when they start writing, they just write like no one else is reading except them. Then, just stay focused on how they can help their target audience achieve their most desired result. This takes the pressure off it being all about them and makes it all about the clients they are meant to serve and how they can help them. From that place, the writing and the content development just start to flow.

www.femalepreneurs.com/blog

JEB

Always providing the customer with ways of contacting your business, and having the great customer service is a very big plus.

Ramon Ray, Small Business Technology

Be nice. Smile. Love others and love yourself.

www.smallbiztechnology.com

Marcel Sim, Get Entrepreneurial

Today's customers are much more sophisticated than before. They have a problem, and they expect you to be able to provide a service or solution that will solve the problem. On top of that, the solution has to meet their needs.

So we've got to really understand what the customer needs and sell him the right solution for those needs. We have to learn to work as a partner with our customers. Sit down with your valued customers, clarify the problems at hand and design your products and services to address the issue. By doing this, you'll gain the trust of your customers. Go beyond the seller-to-buyer relationship. Today's customers expect that.

www.getentrepreneurial.com

Michael Werner, Dream Jobs Dialog

Step 1 Ask your customers what they want.

Step 2 Listen.

Step 3 Listen again, and harder this time, to what they say.

Step 4 Give 'em what they ask for.

www.dreamjobsdialog.com

Lex

Show concern about what really matters to your customers ... customer loyalty.

Kelly Hayes, Office Tracker

Don't be afraid to ask for a testimonial or success story from your customers. Let them know you feel that others would benefit from their experience, and that you would really appreciate it, then make it super easy by providing a questionnaire.

A questionnaire helps structure a success story by allowing them to quickly answer basic questions such as "What does your company do differently?" "How did you first learn you had a need for our products/services?" or "Who in your office uses our products on a daily basis and how?"

Finally, don't forget to personally thank them and let them know how others were inspired from reading their story!

www.officetracker.com

Steve Rucinski, Small Business CEO

Surprise your customers. When was the last time you did something to surprise your customers? You know, something that would really make them remember you and appreciate your thoughtfulness and attention.

We all spend most of our energy trying to create attention and generate enthusiasm in our prospects and potential customers, but ignore the current ones. Just ask the wireless phone companies—all of the good deals go to new customers. When is the last time your provider called you and offered a free phone, or a month's free service? Probably never, like me.

The surprise doesn't have to cost a lot of money, sometimes a phone call from the owner just to followup is enough. The issue is, whatever you do has to be sincere, not just an administrative task done without true intent.

Maybe we could call it "Random Acts of Kindness" or "Pay It Forward" or something. Try it, I bet your customers will enjoy the experience.

www.smbceo.com

Daniel Sitter, Idea Seller

While important, the price we ask for a product or service is far less important than you might think. Our customers want value. They are paying for solutions. They expect results and they are not put out by paying a fair price to get what they need. We entrepreneurs are often guilty of prematurely lowering our prices, perhaps out of a sense of fear or perceived competition. We need to be in the practice of adding so much value that our customer does not even blink at our price. We must learn to present our expected price with confidence, without flinching.

www.idea-sellers.com

Jed Freeman, Watchour.com

My top tips that keep customers:

- 1 Set expectations ahead of time
- 2 Meet those expectations
- 3 Communicate **constantly**

Never offer problems. Offer solutions! Many times we recognize problems and ask our customers to solve them. This approach only helps to solidify in your customer's mind that you don't know what you are doing. When there is an issue, and nothing is perfect, make sure to offer at least one solution to the problem. This will indicate that you have considered the options before simply admitting failure.

Like all relationships, the ones that are most valuable are the ones that offer a high level of honesty and transparency. If you make a mistake, admit it. If you succeed at something, explain to your customers why and then tell them how you will work to make it even better, and then do it.

On a simple marketing level, make sure your Web site is actually there for your customers.

www.watchour.com

Scott Pomeroy

Secret? Maybe it's just getting back to treating a customer like anyone else that you would talk to, and not *at*. My personal "secret" is to educate people on the product or service; if they are truly interested, they will take the time to listen.

Eric Kuhen, Marsh

One way to build a relationship with a client is to refer business to them. Lead them to someone who will buy their product/service. No better way to show you understand their business than by referring them to someone who can help them grow ... you become more important to them and they appreciate your efforts. Also, "no" means "not yet".

www.marsh.com

Yvonne DiVita, WME Books

The best, very best marketing secret I have is: Show enthusiasm. I blog, I attend networking events offline, I speak, I personally answer 95% of the e-mail I get ... and in all of that I present a focused, happy, enthusiastic face to whomever I'm speaking to. I do not have to feign enthusiasm, because I am truly excited about people. What they're doing, how they're doing it and why they're doing it. And I take more business cards than I give—the better to connect with a personal note later on. I'm fascinated and eager to hear about new businesses or products.

This doesn't bring me business, and it isn't intended to. It's intended to validate the listener's idea—and sometimes offer a tidbit of advice. Because of this, people remember me. And they send me referrals. Most of my business is achieved via referrals. I do not have to spend a lot of cash on marketing, because my best marketing tool is my own enthusiasm for the people I meet. It's memorable—and it creates word of mouth better than anything else I do.

www.wmebooks.com

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EJ Malyn

The warmth of a smile goes a very long way.

Judy Dunn, Marketing Your Small Biz

Give without expecting something back in return. Help people solve problems. Build value and trust. Find out what your customers really want and give it to them. I've found relationship and trust building to be one of the best marketing tools out there.

www.marketingyoursmallbiz.com

Don

Have really great customer service and offer exclusive specials to repeat customers. If selling products, make sure to put business info on EVERYTHING you sell.

Leeps

Best tips in marketing: know your customers, tailor your product and service around their needs and tell them about it regularly (i.e., talk to them. Don't blog about how great you are ... no one cares).

Pamela Slim, Escape from Cubicle Nation

Be yourself. Lying takes too much energy.

www.escapefromcubiclenation.com

Michael Dorausch

Run analytics on your small business like you do your Web site:

“Welcome, is this the first time you're visiting our business?

Great, who can we thank for the referral? Are we the first office you visited or have you been anywhere else?”

Build a series of easy-to-ask conversational questions and pretty soon you'll have a gold mine of information.

www.planetc1.com

Rodrigo Leme, Mobilit

As time goes by, this remains a big mantra of mine: for any \$1 you spend communicating with your audience, spend \$2 listening. Goes for time and resources as well.

www.mobilit.com.br

Part 2 – Marketing Strategy

Toby Bloomberg, Diva Marketing

Forget what your mama or your preacher taught you. The Golden Rule does NOT work for developing a marketing strategy. Your customers do not want to be treated “as you would like to be treated.” In understanding your customers, you might discover that their values, needs and expectations differ from yours. New Golden Rule For Marketers: Do Unto Your Customers As THEY Would Like To Be Treated.

www.divamarketingblog.com

Scott Shane, Author of “Illusions of Entrepreneurship”

The data show that most entrepreneurs compete on price, but doing this leads companies to perform worse. New companies are better off competing on service, quality or some other dimension.

<http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/entrepreneurshipquiz.asp>

Tim Berry, Planning Startups Stories

One of the most expensive myths in marketing is that lower price produces higher volume. That might be true for coal or gasoline, but not for most businesses. Lower price means, well, ask yourself: do you always eat at the lowest-priced restaurant? Buy the lowest-priced clothes? Do you drive the lowest-priced car? Pricing is your best statement of value.

<http://blog.timberly.com>

Drew McClellan, Drew’s Marketing Minute

Do less. One of the most tempting aspects of marketing is the veritable smorgasbord of different marketing tactics that you can toss into a marketing plan. It’s almost overwhelming.

Many marketing professionals make the very understandable mistake of believing that more is better. But they’re wrong.

You will be vastly more successful if you do less, but do them better. Pick 3-4 marketing tactics that you think are really going to be valued by your audience, and drive the behavior/action you’re looking for. Then, figure out how you can do them in an extraordinary way.

100% consistency. 100% relevancy. Do less. But do them better.

www.drewsmarketingminute.com

Barry Welford, Strategic Marketing Montreal

As a priority, always think customer-centric. Of course you should have identified your market niche and how your product or service provides better value to your prospects than the competitors. Make sure you look at what you’re offering from the customer point of view.

That isn't just the leading-edge customers who may see things the way you do. Try to consider those prospects you would like to sell to who are not like you. Be sensitive to what you're hearing from the marketplace. Sometimes those who decide not to buy or are dissatisfied with some aspect of what you're offering will give you the most helpful insights.

Make sure your marketing strategy ensures you communicate well with all your prospects. Try to envision how the most difficult of your prospects is seeing you. Develop a simple and direct way of communicating with that difficult prospect (KISS).

Look for any barriers that may block or weaken your communication and remove them.

Do it all with such excitement and flair that the easier prospects want to tell their friends about it.

www.strategicmarketingmontreal.ca

Walt Goshert, Goshert Marketing

The "secret" is the obvious that 95% of small businesses miss: Understand that first and foremost ... you are in the marketing business. Adopt a mindset of marketing innovation in every single facet of your business. ACT before it's perfect.

www.goshertmarketing.com/blog

Debra Murphy, Masterful Marketing

Learn not only how to best market your business, but also learn what you are good at in marketing and what you should leave up to the experts to do for you. Many small business owners try to cut costs in marketing by doing it all. Trying to do things you are not good at is more deadly to your business than not doing them at all. Figure out what you can do yourself and bring in the experts to do the rest. It will pay off in the long run.

www.masterful-marketing.com

Jim Symcox

A great secret that everyone "knows" is to have a mastermind group that can help you by acting as a sounding board, coach and electric cattle prod. And the group can consist of truly great people who are now dead! Think of what Winston Churchill might say when you're faced with competition: "we will fight them in the markets, we will never surrender!"

www.business-powerpack.com

Lutz

Ask three customer-centric questions:

- 1** Step into the role of your customers and ask yourself: Would you buy your product, honestly? The answers will help you better understand why people buy and why they don't buy.
- 2** Do you use your own product? It always amazes me how many companies find lots of excuses of not using their own products—probably the same reasons why their customers don't.
- 3** People don't buy products; they buy the VALUE of the product. Don't market and sell features, sell the value of the features.

www.startupramp.com

Learn more about HP products at Staples, www.staples.com/hp

Eric Reisner, Lunterra Green Solutions

Be bold, have passion, resist complacency, redefine the rules, deliver value.

www.lunterra.com

Ross Dunn, StepForth

Create an environment of intention by creating a mission and vision statement for both your business and your life. I have known nothing more powerful than the clarity and balance that comes with an established purpose. If I feel like my goals are not in order and I am just working, day-to-day business and my personal life will often stagnate—nothing feeds imbalance as well as unconsciousness. Yet as soon as I regain my clarity and direct my life toward a goal, positive change just seems to come out of the woodwork; I look forward to work, sales calls increase, awesome ideas spring forth and seemingly long-lost contacts appear out of nowhere with great news. I know this might sound a bit far-fetched, but it works ... in fact, it has never failed me. I hope the same goes for you.

www.stepforth.com

Chris Brown, Branding and Marketing

Make sure you have a written marketing plan that addresses the “4 M’s” of marketing:

- Target Market—who are you trying to attract?
- Message—what are you trying to teach them, get them to do, think, feel or be?
- Media—How will you reach your target market with your message?
- Measurement—How will you track your marketing results?

By having these four components in place, you will be able to create a mini-marketing plan for your business that will provide positive sales results!

www.brandandmarket.com

Shama Hyder, After the Launch

Best marketing tip: don’t give up!!!! Marketing takes time to show results. Patience and perseverance are key!

www.afterthelaunch.com

Ron Finkelstein, AKRIS, Inc.

Marketing is one of the hardest activities to get right. One marketing secret from my book called 49 Marketing Secrets (THAT WORK) to Grow Sales (shameless plug) is as follows:

You do not know what will work until you test it. It is suggested that you test your ideas and concepts inexpensively. What has worked for me is to call a meeting of friends, associates, advisors, customers, etc. and test the concepts with them before you do a full launch. Be prepared for feedback (which is

what you want). They will tell you if your approach is right, does the message resonate, is the process you create the right process, etc. Be sure to park your ego at the door!

I have helped my customer solve and get clear on many marketing issues using this approach. It doesn't cost much, you get great feedback, you build wonderful relationships, and you find out what works.

www.ronfinklestein.com

Kimberly Dawson, Blue Banana Marketing

Understand your target market: who they are, what they want, what they value, how they think, etc., And always keep this in mind when making marketing decisions. Don't focus on all the bells and whistles of your product or service, but instead clearly articulate the value you bring to a customer's life. It's not selling—it's making the right connection.

Never forget to make the most of a first impression: Potential customers will develop an impression about you and your business in the first few seconds. Make the most of that by developing a top-notch look for all your promotional material. Best money for a new business owner to spend is in the development of a professional logo. It makes all your sequential advertising easier and more effective. Ensure you and all your staff best represent your company ... right down to the clean shoes, fingernails and car.

You only get one chance to make a first impression, so don't entrust that to a brother-in-law who does Web sites for a hobby, a friend that likes photography or a spouse who thinks they can save you money by creating your business logo.

Remember, all these marketing efforts represent you and play a part in the customer's decision whether to buy or not.

www.bluebananamarketing.ca

Susan Oakes, M4B Marketing Software

As they say, keep your friends close and your enemies closer. In a marketing context, it is essential to know all about your key competitors as the information you get will allow you to take advantage of their weaknesses and defend against their strengths.

By analyzing your competitors, it helps you to work out your key points of difference and what you do better. Sources to find out more about your competitors include their Web site, trade associations, Internet search engines, your customers and don't forget to buy their product to experience their customer service.

Remember, they would probably love to have some of your customers, for their business, and they are probably keeping a close watch on you.

www.m4b.com.au

Janis Pettit, The Small Business Profits Coach

Since most businesses in the US are micro-businesses, often solo or home-based, use joint ventures and strategic alliances to reach larger numbers in your target market. There's power in numbers. That's why so many larger businesses form strategic alliances and partnerships.

Find other business owners who have already invested time and money to build trust with your target market and who don't offer products or services that directly compete with yours. Determine what you offer that would be of real value to them.

Offer your partner a percentage of sales if they will promote your business to their clients and subscribers, and make sure you make it easy for them to say yes by preparing all marketing materials and making order fulfillment easy.

You can also create new products with partners, and you can co-market and sell bundled packages where you combine one of your products with theirs if there is natural synergy. The possibilities are endless, and your ability to reach much larger numbers or prospective clients on a small marketing budget can make a big difference to your bottom line.

www.smallbusiness-bigresults.com

Robert Levin, The New York Enterprise Report

Marketing takes time. Despite the fact that marketing is one of the most crucial factors in a company's success, a company's marketing plan or marketing initiatives are always the last things to do and the most rushed. Marketing requires a lot of creativity, and that takes time—even for the most experienced of marketers. It takes time to understand what your customers and prospects really want. While that is a challenge, it is even more challenging to develop the right words and images to engage them.

www.nyreport.com

Dale King, Guru Knowledge

Success is all about productivity. Therefore, when you're working, you should always spend the majority of your time doing only those things that are the most productive.

www.guruknowledge.org

Lucio Dias Ribeiro, Marketing Easy

- Remember, you become more vulnerable when everyone else is talking about how good you are
- A competitor is not just that who sells similar products/services, but all those with whom your clients interact
- Pay attention to details
- Every time your client is contacted, an opportunity to create value is given
- Make it easy for clients to express themselves
- Quality is more than limited possibility. Quality is about unlimited possibilities.
- Always carry two business cards. One with your details and another one that's blank, so if you meet someone with no cards, you can offer it to him/her to fill up and give back to you

- Call everyone by their name
- The best ads come from attempts to solve problems
- A good advertisement is one which sells the product without drawing attention to itself (from Ogilvy!)
<http://marketingeasy.net>

Tara M. Bloom

Keep out there, keep at it and don't stop marketing. It takes time for efforts to come back to you. Be persistent.

www.bloomcopywriter.com

Ivana Taylor, Strategy Stew

Target those markets and customers that you love that love and you back. In other words, don't work with jerks or people you don't like. There are enough customers out there for everyone, and the ones that love you value what you do see that working with you is literally priceless. The first step in doing this is knowing your strengths and special gifts that make you irresistible to your target audience. The next step is to love them enough to know what they want and then just give it to them lovingly and from the heart.

www.strategystew.com

Part 3 – Selling

Michael Port, Author of “Book Yourself Solid”

All sales start with a simple conversation. It may be a conversation between you and a potential client or customer, between one of your clients and a potential referral, or between one of your colleagues and a potential referral. An effective sales cycle is based on turning these simple conversations into relationships of trust with your potential clients over time. We know that people buy from those they like and trust. But as Sir Winston Churchill once said, “It is a mistake to look too far ahead. Only one link in the chain of destiny can be handled at a time.”

www.michaelport.com

Jonathan Fields, “Awake at the Wheel”

Decide whether you want to feed your ego or your family. Sexy, expensive, image-building campaigns might win your ad firm a Clio, but, with rare exceptions, they don't put money in your bank or food on your table... at least at the level small businesses can afford. So, drive your branding efforts with free PR in the early days and spend your money on measurable direct-response marketing that delivers X dollars of revenue for every dollar spent on marketing.

www.jonathanfields.com

Siamak Taghaddos, GotVMail Communications

People don't like to be sold. If they did, they would spend all their free time in car dealerships. Instead, people want to be informed, they want to be educated. You'll find your best customers are those you educate about your product or service and who then decide to purchase it because it is a good fit for them.

Prospects who buy your product/service but are not educated about your offering will be disappointed. They will not be return customers. Worse, they will tell others how they got “sold” by you. In the Internet age, this can quickly be very destructive to your business.

www.gotvmail.com

Christopher Knight, ChrisKnight.com

Marketing is about demand creation.

www.chrisknight.com

Tom Marquardt, The Profit Repairman

The meaning of the adjective “radical” is “not bound by traditional ways or beliefs.” Here are the “must-dos” of a seasoned business unit's radical salesperson and marketer.

No stone goes unturned in your search for new leads and clients; no sales idea is too silly or stupid to try; you sell to everyone, every day, no matter what their size; you sell more than you market;

you utilize yield management techniques; you just do not leave collateral, you collect a database for follow-up; you go down swinging and then get back up for another round; you are always in “selling mode;” you network, you don’t just talk to people; you are “it,” no one but you can make it happen; when you fail, you succeed by learning from it; you start your day with a goal and focus on its achievement; you look for ways to sell to prospects that others do not; you carry your business cards with you everywhere; wherever you go you see a future client; no matter how many no’s they have given you, you write down phone numbers from passing businesses on the street; you see customer obstacles as an opportunity to get testimonial referrals from them by meeting their expectations; you work on the probability theory; you radiate confidence and bring direction to clients; you take ownership of your sales 100%; you go out finding new revenue generation that your competition never knew existed and selling to them before they do; you see doors of opportunities, not slammed ones in your face; you ask for the sale every time, in all possible ways, with each client you communicate with; you are a relentless “door knocker” and grassroots marketer; you look at your sales reports for new business that purchased from you; you drive the desire and passion for each sale with every presentation; you fight tooth and nail to retain a client and make new ones every day when you come into work; you smile until it hurts just to go to bed and wake up to attack your business leads all over again tomorrow.

Are you ready for the challenge? Are you ready to become a radical salesperson and marketer for your business unit? Why not?

Keep it (sales and marketing campaigns) simple (KISS theory) for the biggest bang with the fewest bucks! Oh, by the way, do you know why the above sentence is so long? Because it is aggressive and unconventional and “not bound by traditional ways or beliefs,” just like what a radical sales and marketer for your business unit needs to be.

Go be radical today!

www.theprofitrepairman.com

Amanda, Kiski Valley Candles

A smile and a pleasant attitude can go a long way.

www.kiskivalleycandles.com

Part 4 – Communicating and Messaging

Scott Ginsberg, That Guy with the Name Tag

Don't have a business card. Have a philosophy card. In order to do so, ask yourself the question, "If everybody did exactly what I said, what would the world look like?" Come up with 5-10 answers, then print them on a nice, thick, laminated card. Include your contact info, picture, branding, etc. Give it to EVERYBODY. It will be the only card they will not throw away. This marketing tool has made me well over \$50,000 in new business.

www.hellomynameisscott.com

Brian Moran, Publisher, Small Business Edge

Less is more: In today's cluttered world, your customers are being bombarded with thousands of messages every day. In order to rise above the noise level, you need to capture their attention immediately and then hold it while giving them your pitch. You must be able to deliver your message, if necessary, in 25 words or less. Include your main feature and the main benefit in the message. If you hook the potential customer, they will gladly ask you for more information.

www.smallbusinessedge.com

Brian Clark, CopyBlogger

Take an educational approach to marketing, and people will actually pay attention. Plus, the more you can teach people about the subject area surrounding your product or service, the more of a market you open up in those prospective and existing customers.

www.copyblogger.com

Les Bain, Wizard Creek Consulting

Create and use an e-mail signature with name, Web site or blog, and tagline.

www.wizard-creek.com

Susan Payton, The Marketing Eggspert

Never say no to a customer. If you don't know how to do something, you can find out how or hire someone who can do it. Customers like hearing yes, and they love it when you can meet all their needs.

www.eggmarketingblog.com

Local Hound, Convert Offline

Take "25 words or less" and instead turn it into a question. In SEO it would sound like, "If someone did a search on the Internet for your product, would you like your name to come up?"

Most often the answer is yes and then you have permission to use more than 25 words with a very receptive listener.

www.convertoffline.com

Learn more about HP products at Staples, www.staples.com/hp

Vikram Rajan, 365 Marketing Thumb Rules

Find an overlooked target market, and market to them using their kind of jargon and/or colloquialisms. Yep, it's in my new book.

www.marketingthumbrules.com

Barbara Payne, Really Good Freelance Writer

Be true to yourself—in all you do, in everything you communicate to your audiences.

There are a hundred ways to market today—some of them will fit your personality and your philosophy—for example, someone who makes friends easily may find connecting with bloggers their most valuable practice. Some approaches won't feel right at all—if you consistently refuse to open direct mail that comes in your mailbox, you may be better off focusing on other channels. Think about how you like to get your information, how you make your decisions. Put your passion into the pathways that feel right, and then touch your audiences on a regular basis.

Don't worry about the competition (but, pay enough attention that you can borrow a good idea when you notice one). Discover the deepest truths you feel in your heart—about your business, your customers and your employees—and then express these well and often in your chosen marketing vehicles.

www.reallygoodfreelancewriter.com

Joel Libava, The Franchise King Blog

Tell some real life stories of how you were able to help your clients/customers. I always include stories like that in my speaking engagements, and in my blogs. Thousands of marketing messages are seen and heard by people on a daily basis. Stand out from the crowd by being real, and by sharing real stories. If prospective prospect can relate to those stories, they will want to learn more.

www.thefranchiseeking.com

Rohit, Influential Marketing Blog

Admit you are marketing. Don't run into the trap of believing that people won't pay attention if you confess that you are trying to sell something. Being up front about what you are trying to do will set you apart, and ironically make your message far more believable in the process.

<http://rohitbhargava.typepad.com>

Deborah Chaddock Brown, Web sites People Read

Write with the reader in mind. Toby Bloomberg addresses this with the revised Golden Rule of “treat your customers as THEY would like to be treated.”

Put yourself in their shoes to understand their issues, challenges and what solutions they seek. Use their language; big words don't create a connection. Customers want to know you “get them.”

Rather than using typical marketing words like “quality”, “affordable” and “variety”, think in terms of solutions you provide, ways you make their lives easier, tools you provide to grow their business or make them more profitable.

www.Web sitespeopleread.com

YCHANGE

How about using the back of your business card to state five or six things that your company does for the customer? This is prime real estate and normally is left blank. What a waste!

www.ychange.com

Laura Newman, Publicity Wit

Focus on telling, not selling to the media when embarking on your PR campaign. Think beyond yourself and your company to what's happening on a larger scale, and how you fit into that. Remember, the media is your customer too. Service them with excellence to become a reliable, valuable resource, and give them a reason to add you to their rolodex!

www.publicitywit.com

Mitch Solway, Think Mitch Think

Choose your customers. Let's face it, there are way more customers out there than there are you. Why not work with the ones that you're happiest working with. What could be better!

Focus your messages on describing who your typical clients are and less about what you do. They've got to know that "Yes! That's me!" Then they are yours (Woo-hoo!). It also filters out the ones that don't fit (Yeah!)."

www.thinkmitchthink.com

Martin Lindeskog, Blue Chip Café

Join a social network, e.g., Toastmasters, and practice to do your pitch when the time is right. Engage in different types of storytelling and give your customers a keepsake / memento stuff in order to spread the good word around to other potential customers.

<http://cms.bluechipcafe.se>

Chris Brunner, Great FX Business Cards

When marketing with business cards, use the back side to your advantage. Add value to your card, make it worth holding on to. Here are some ideas on how you can add value to your business cards using the back side:

- 1 Offer a coupon or discount.
- 2 Create a frequent user punch card.
- 3 Offer a free gift if they return the card to you.
- 4 Include a conversion table.
- 5 Make your card a handy ruler.
- 6 Display a URL to a special landing page for those who receive your cards. At the page offer discounts, gifts or other special information.

Face it. If you don't add value to your business cards, they are worth nothing more than the

paper they are printed on. Give your clients what they want, and your business cards will pay for themselves many times over.

www.greatfxbusinesscards.com

Rhonda Holland

Inject your personality into everything you write. Be yourself and give your honest opinion.

www.rhondaholland.com

Chris Shallow, Business Lecturer

Whenever you're writing about your business, product, service, yourself, don't WE-WE! Remember that your actual and potential customers are all tuned in to their favourite radio station: WIIFM. What's In It For Me! Whenever I review a small business's Web site it always begins, We ...

www.linkedin.com/in/chrisshallow

Francois Gossieaux, Emergence Marketing

Put the buyer at the center of your offering—not your product or your company. Buyers do not care about you or your product; they care about themselves in the context of your product.

Also, buyers do not want to hear from you anymore, they want to hear from their peers—so is your story one that has the buyer at the core of it, and is your story easily retold?

www.emergencemarketing.com

Will Limkemann, Limkemann Business Advisors

My tip will increase effectiveness from referral sources. Print an attractive double-sided 3 X 5 card. On one side put your picture and contact information along with a one-sentence caption of what you do. On the reverse side list what kind of business or person would make a good referral. This needs to be succinct and clear, with 3 to 5 bullet points. Even better, have it laminated. It will not get lost, get mixed in with business cards, and will remind your referral source what to say about you.

www.neobizadvisor.com

Tucker

Always send business cards or brochures when shipping orders.

Tyler Garns

It's no secret that good marketing is all about staying in front of your prospects and customers and offering valuable content, but few seem to understand how to automate the process.

Multi-step follow-up marketing sequences are almost impossible to keep track of once you have hundreds of prospects/customers, unless you have an automated system doing it for you. The secret: Leverage the power of technology to automate your marketing follow-up. Experience shows that sales will soar.

www.infusionblog.com

Gaurav Mishra, Gauravonomics Blog

Learn how to give the perfect elevator pitch. An elevator pitch is an overview of an idea for a product, service or project that can be delivered in the time span of an elevator ride (say, 30 seconds or 100-150 words). Knowing how to make the perfect elevator pitch is important because sometimes 30 seconds is all you get with your boss, client or investor.

I use a simple three-step template to make my own elevator pitches:

Step 1 Describe your idea in one or two sentences. Give both facts as they are, and your own opinions

Step 2 Specify what exactly you want to be done, by when and by whom

Step 3 Give three reasons why, including examples to illustrate the benefits

Now that you know how to make the perfect elevator pitch, why don't you make one today?

www.gauravonomics.com/blog

Gonzalo Puebla, Bs As, Argentina

My secret is simple: stimulate the emotions without creating illusions.

Part 5 – Online Marketing

John Jantsch, Duct Tape Marketing

Become a journalist—no, I'm not really suggesting that you join the staff of some publication, but the acceptance of new media tools like blogs and podcasts has turned the marketing tables. So take advantage of the allure of a reporter and start a blog and podcast and request interviews with industry leaders, community leaders, authors and maybe even your biggest prospects. Instead of asking for a meeting to demonstrate your product, ask to feature your prospect in your next blog or podcast episode. You will automatically change your status in their eyes, increase your role as an expert and create great content for your marketing materials.

www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog

Yaro Starak, Entrepreneurs Journey

There's something I do that very few other bloggers do—build an e-mail list. My secret tip isn't to build a list, though — that's pretty obvious to anyone who markets online. It's how you use your list and your blog together that is my secret.

Here's one simple example. I write product reviews to my blog now and then. I write a solid review, with my honest opinion and what I think is good and bad about the product after using it. I post the article to my blog and usually make a few affiliate sales as a result.

I then write a short e-mail to my list designed to bring people to the review and add the e-mail to my autoresponder sequence. From that point forward, at some point everyone who joins my list eventually receives the e-mail and visits the review. This ensures I have a steady stream of traffic to that review, even long after it is hidden in my blog archives AND I continue to make affiliate sales.

This is a formula for passive income from just writing one blog article and one e-mail, though of course you want to do it again and again with new products to multiply your earnings. Good luck!

www.entrepreneurs-journey.com

Matt McGee, Small Business SEM

SEO is just like traditional marketing. In the “real world,” you want to create a great product and get people talking about it. Online, you want to create great content and get people linking to it. Same theory, and often the same techniques. Develop relationships with journalists offline; do the same with bloggers online. Engage with customers offline; engage in social communities online.

Give people something to talk about (and link to), join the conversation, and you're on the road to SEO success.

www.smallbusinesssem.com

Andy Beard

If you are creating a short list that your users might enjoy and maybe want to share with their own readers, create it for them using an HTML text area, with a credit link where you specify the anchor text or call-to-action. The same can be applied with great effect with pictures or photos, just look how effective it is for sites creating MySpace graphics or icanhascheezburger.com.

<http://andybeard.eu>

Liz Strauss, Successful Blog

The best promotion is to promote other people. Promote your customers, their friends and yours. Always be looking for what other folks do well and be the first to talk about it. Be the first to point people in their direction. There's no better way to show that you're a generous team player, a great judge of skill and character, and completely confident about the work that you do.

www.successful-blog.com

Wordsmith Bob, WordsmithBob.com

Don't think of your business Web site as an online brochure. Without a salesperson to build a case around that brochure, people will treat it just like they would if you walked into their office, dropped a brochure on their desk and walked out the door. Into the round file it goes!

Rather, when you're creating your business Web site, think of it as your 24/7 salesperson. In fact, one of the best ways to create copy for a business Web site is to put a recorder in the pocket of your best sales performers every time they make a sales call. After a weeks worth of great sales pitches have been accumulated, use them as a resource to create marketing copy for every page of your Web site!

www.wordsmithbob.com

Maki, Editor, Dosh Dosh

Timeliness is my marketing secret. A lot of marketers talk about networking with influencers and successfully building trust with their audience in order to evoke widespread brand adoption. While the developing of trust indicators is important, I think some of the most successful online marketing is done as a response towards current affairs, events and news. The best marketing advice I have is to be timely, to react to sociocultural feedback and then capitalize on it by co-opting the incident/subculture's language or frame.

Newspapers are publicity manufacturers. Monitor them closely, because what your customer or audience reads influences their opinions. Observe their feedback. Market your business by riffing off and building upon the natural flow of news. Timeliness is an opportunistic and powerful way to not only build relevance but demonstrate that your business is in tune with the concerns of the community.

www.doshdosh.com

Stephen Hopson, Adversity University

I actually wasn't really thinking of this as a marketing tool when I first created my "Stephen Hopson Interview" series at Adversity University, but I'm finding this is quickly becoming a great way to brand my name as a speaker and coach who specializes in helping people deal with and overcome adversity.

Interviewing other people is a great way to promote others and their blogs. They, in turn, love the attention being lavished on them and want to promote you too. It's pretty amazing. The interview series is still in its infancy, but my goal is to create something like a "distinguished lecture series at a major university" type of thing where rising stars in the blogging world come in for an interview.

www.adversityuniversityblog.com

Yura, Improve The Web

Being yourself and acting naturally human online works well. Basically, it means being honest, generous, helpful and so on. Don't expect to get something unless you give away a lot without considering getting anything at all.

www.improvetheweb.com

Josie

This isn't my idea, but I saw somewhere that if you provide a product or service, offer the service free or provide free products to influential bloggers and ask that they blog about the experience afterward. Just make sure they have a positive experience!

Kelly and Curt Wissink

We try to make an emotional connection with our readers. Marketing is about reaching a person's heart. Remember your audience. Find your niche. Be authentic. Our marketing mantra is: inspire, innovate, impact.

<http://work-at-home.blogs.com>

Part 6 – Social Media

Dharmesh Shah, Hubspot

The power of second-order Internet marketing: Small businesses should consider the positive marketing impact of “second order” effects in Internet marketing. A second-order effect is when you do not promote yourself directly, but help promote others who have mentioned you, linked to you or referenced an idea or concept that you agree with.

The simplest example is when a blogger mentions your business in an article they write (even if you are mentioned only incidentally). If you like the article, you should help promote the article in the social media sites (Digg, StumbleUpon, etc.). This is better than trying to promote yourself and can often create significant traffic, PR and marketing good-will.

www.hubspot.com

Brent Leary, Host, Technology for Business \$ake Radio

Promote your book, blog, podcast series or business by using LinkedIn Answers. No, I’m not talking about spamming LinkedIn. Here’s what you do: Ask for opinions on a particular topic and link back to your blog, etc. in LinkedIn Answers. Some people will also be intrigued enough to visit your blog, investigate your book, subscribe to your podcast — they will check out whatever your question is in connection with.

Beyond that, if you quote some of the answers you receive (on your blog or use them in a radio interview or in an article you write for publication) then you could get an additional viral effect. Because those who are quoted may pass around the link that refers to them, to their friends, colleagues and family.

I did this when I interviewed Don Tapscott about his book Wikinomics. On LinkedIn Answers, in advance of the show, I asked if anyone had a question they wanted me to ask Don. I got a number of comments and used one of the reader-suggested questions in my radio show, linking to it from the show page. That reader later sent me an e-mail saying he had passed the show link to others and also wrote his own blog entry linking to the show. And show listeners got the benefit of hearing a question that they themselves might have wanted to ask a famous author.

www.businesstechnologyradio.com

Jennifer Laycock, Editor, Search Engine Guide

One of the least utilized social media sites for subtle marketing is Flickr.com. I think people picture Flickr as just another place to store their images. In reality, Flickr is filled with vibrant communities of highly engaged users. There’s a discussion and photo sharing group for nearly any topic you can think of. Now it’s easy to write that off and say “there are discussion groups everywhere” but that would be a mistake. You see the discussion groups at Flickr are made up of people who not only talk about these topics, but

care enough about them to take pictures and upload those pictures as well. That means the members of a Flickr group tend to be more fanatical about their topic than your average discussion board member.

There are several great ways to leverage Flickr.

- 1 You can join a group and post in the discussion threads to establish yourself as an expert. This will lead people back to your profile where you can easily promote your Web site, blog, etc.
- 2 You can geotag your images. Flickr is owned by Yahoo!, so in my opinion, it's only a matter of time until Flickr's geotagged images get meshed with Yahoo Travel. Anyone who owns a tourist destination would be crazy not to be uploading geotagged photos of their hotels, grounds, nearby hiking trails or any other scenic spot.
- 3 You can add descriptions, tags and even in-picture captions to your photos. You can also add links. This creates new links from a valued site and drives direct traffic to your site. The key here is to make sure you aren't adding links to more than 10 or 15% of your photos. As with any social community, you HAVE to add more value than you pull.
- 4 You can build relationships with other passionate bloggers in your niche. I've found Flickr can really fast track your attempts to network. When you're talking to people via Flickr with an avatar and a photo it's much easier to stand out.

The key here is that Flickr is only going to work for companies who have a visual component. Landscapers, gardeners, custom car detailers, chefs, salons, tourist spots

www.searchengineguide.com

Dan Perry

If you don't blog, start, and if you do blog, blog as if nobody else is reading it.

www.danperry.com

Michelle

Blog, Even though you may step on some toes without that politically correct filter in mind all the time—you just might start something. Don't let fear or ridicule hold you back. And you don't have to blog about your industry. Blog about gardening or pets and share links to your products and services in mentions with visitors.

Anita Campbell, Editor, Small Business Trends

This is a tip for those of you who run blogs and online publications: Treat PR people with respect.

- 1 PR people bring news your community will value and save you the time of finding it on your own. I'm not suggesting you regurgitate press releases word for word. Instead, use the release only as a starting point. Gather additional facts. Then write it YOUR way.
- 2 PR reps will bring you scoops and exclusives. PR reps who come to trust you will send you news early, under "embargo." They'll also make company executives available for interviews.

- 3 PR reps will circulate your article about their client on e-mail distribution lists and on company intranets. Sometimes you'll get linked back from the Press section of the client's site. This can drive considerable traffic. (Never pander to get links. Write objectively and only about subjects of value to your audience — you'll still get links AND preserve your self-respect.)
- 4 Don't lose your temper in public on your blog at some inexperienced PR rep who sent an awkward e-mail pitch. Just hit "delete." There's no upside to making public enemies of PR firms.

www.smallbiztrends.com

Mack Collier, The Viral Garden

Success in blogging is dependent upon having a built-in direct benefit to others. For example, many companies want to approach blogging as a way to sell products to customers. But blogs don't work well as a direct-selling channel. The key is to first provide a benefit to readers by creating content and community that offers them value. By giving readers a direct benefit, the company then benefits indirectly by seeing sales increase as a result of their blogging efforts. But if the company instead tries to directly promote themselves, readers will see no value in this, and the blog will die.

<http://moblogsmoproblems.blogspot.com>

Sally J, Practical Archivist

The internet is the greatest thing EVER for introverted entrepreneurs like me. No more shaking hands, small talk and rubber chicken. In the online world, teaching other people what you know is a way to network (blog). Heck, just raising your hand and creating a little "Wow look at this cool site!" arrow is networking (Stumbleupon).

www.practicalarchivist.com

Netvalar, Netvalar Speaks on Music

- 1 Start a social network for your blog/site/company. Easy to do at Ning.com or a forum would work too this is for your visitors/customers/clients. Now the rarely part, take time once a year or more often to work with and plan a party or event for these people to get together. You don't need to attend though it would be beneficial if you did. What this does is adds to the community building aspect of your brand.
- 2 Create a superblog or metablog of various blogs and feeds in your niche. Let everyone who is a part of the metablog know about it. The site I am currently looking at for this is www.superblog.org though I may look at other sites and or tools too. This idea started out as me wanting to put together an online news paper style site including several other music related blogs.

<http://blog.timelineonline.org>

Guy Kawasaki, Truemors

Do the opposite of what bloggers think you should do.

www.truemors.com

The Small Business Trends Story

[Small Business Trends](#) is a multi-author Web publication serving up robust, relevant and timely articles covering marketing, technology and business. The site reaches more than 100,000 small business owners and entrepreneurs each month, all of whom share a passion for small business and trends affecting their businesses.

How did Small Business Trends get started?

Anita Campbell, the publisher and CEO of Small Business Trends, had been a corporate executive, with a career that culminated as the CEO of a technology subsidiary of Bell & Howell Company. She left the corporate world and started a management consulting business.

She started the Small Business Trends site as an early business blog back in 2003, at a time when business blogs were new and unusual.

The idea, like so many startup business ideas, grew from the seed of a modest need. Anita wanted to find an easier and faster way to publish a monthly newsletter.

Soon, the blog was more popular than the newsletter it was intended to feed. Eventually, the blog became a business.

Over time, the site also evolved from a one-person publication to a platform for a range of voices on issues affecting small businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises. Over 50 authors have contributed articles to date, on topics such as franchising, global business, entrepreneurship, technology, business books, software and industry trends.

What does Small Business Trends do?

Our mission is to help you run your business better and more profitably. Small Business Trends provides quality content on the Web, in email newsletters and in RSS feeds. The content highlights (1) other small businesses, and (2) resources, products and services of interest to small businesses.

Small Business Trends is also a community where you can feel part of what's going on in the broader small business landscape across the world.

A companion Internet radio show / podcast provides opportunities each week for a small business owner, entrepreneur or other person with useful information to be interviewed. The show is broadcast each Tuesday at 1:30 pm EST over the BlogTalkRadio.com network. Guests have included both of the last two administrators of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the great-great granddaughter of Emily Post on business etiquette, as well as industry leaders, professors and people in the trenches like you. The radio show is on the Web at: www.smbtrendwire.com.

What's the Small Business Trends revenue model?

Small Business Trends is an advertising-supported publication. That way, you can get valuable content at no cost.

Learn more about HP products at Staples, www.staples.com/hp

Where is Small Business Trends located?

The business is headquartered outside Cleveland, Ohio, on the North Coast of the United States (on the Great Lakes just across the border from Canada). Business—especially small business— happens everywhere. With the internet, could just as easily be located almost anywhere in the world.

Northeast Ohio was once the Silicon Valley of its day and retains the benefits of having been home to an earlier generation's leading business leaders. Their generosity resulted in acclaimed universities and renowned medical facilities like the Cleveland Clinic. The Rock 'n Roll and Pro Football Halls of Fame are here, too.

Besides, the cost of living and running a business in Ohio is affordable. This allows us to plow more money back into the business instead of blowing it on rent and expenses.

Like many small businesses today, our business depends on an ecosystem of service providers. We put our money where our mouth is, and contract with other small businesses for products and services at every opportunity.

More questions?

We love hearing from you! Your input inspires us, and your feedback influences what we write about.

You can call us toll-free at 1-888-842-1186. Or you can email CEO Anita Campbell directly at: anita@anitacampbell.com

Your support is what keeps us going! **You** rock, and we love it!

Thanks to all who contributed to this compilation. Your advice and pointers are an inspiration to thousands of your peers.

About Small Business Trends

More than 100,000 entrepreneurs and business people read the Small Business Trends Web site, e-mails and RSS feeds each month. How about you?

Visit: www.smallbiztrends.com

Subscribe: <http://www.smallbiztrends.com/smallbusinesstrends-newsletter>

Special Marketing Tips Supplement: www.smallbiztrends.com/hp

Free Trade Magazines

One of the ways Small Business Trends is able to earn revenue is through subscriptions to a wide range of free trade magazines.

“But wait!” you say, “How can you give away free stuff AND make money?” Simple. These B2B print magazines are controlled subscription. They are provided for free by the publishers to qualified professionals. We’re just an intermediary – a Web affiliate. We get paid a small fee for each completed subscription.

You get it for free – we get paid! What could be better?



Web site Magazine

Until now, there has not been a magazine that caters exclusively to the business of running a Web site. *Web site Magazine* has tapped premier talent in the Internet industry. Each and every issue contains practical advice and insights for Web site owners ...

<http://smallbiztrends.tradepub.com/free/webs>



Business Management Magazine

Business Management delivers sharp, practical management comment alongside educational materials. It is a targeted blend of leadership and learning for key decision makers ...

<http://smallbiztrends.tradepub.com/free/bmt>



eWeek Magazine

eWeek is the essential technology information source for builders of e-business. Through a combination of news, analysis and evaluation, it guides readers in making the best technology decisions for their enterprise ...

<http://smallbiztrends.tradepub.com/free/ew>

Offer free B2B publications to your Web audience – become a TradePub.com affiliate and earn revenue:

<http://revresponse.com/join.php/?refbrand=smallbiztrends>