

Boost Your Local & Tourist Business

A simple Guide to Get You started!



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30TH ANNIVERSARY



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Simple Steps to Boosting Business

Introduction

Marketing is one of the most important functions or systems that operates in your business. But, while it is one of the most important, it is also one of the most misunderstood concepts.

What is marketing? Is it the ads you place in the paper to advertise your business? Is it your website? Is it the way that you handle your customers when they are in your shop?

All of these actions fall under the heading of marketing. Marketing can be simply defined as:

*** The actions you take to attract customers and to keep them coming back for more.**

Small business owners must wear many hats in their business. You are the “go to” person for your vendors, accountant, employees and often many of your customers expect hands-on service from you, as well. It’s an exhausting proposition that doesn’t leave much quiet time to work on your business strategy.

But, if you become so busy working *in* your business and don’t take time to work *on* your business, you run many risks. You may miss opportunities that you didn’t have the time to explore. You may miss ways to increase profits through creating special offers. You may not have the time to get competitive bids from other vendors and miss the opportunity to reduce costs.

With all of the responsibilities that you have, it’s no surprise that brainstorming new marketing ideas doesn’t very often rise to the top of your to-do list. But, most small business owners would agree that your customers are the lifeblood of your business. So, don’t you think it’s important to give your marketing efforts some attention?

Here is some good news, though! Your marketing efforts can reward you quickly with increased revenue - and, often, it doesn't take much time at all. Plus there are other great benefits that you and your business will receive if you create and track good marketing in your business.

Benefits of Marketing

Here are three big benefits for you to consider:

Predictable Revenue

Good marketing allows you to predict revenue. Imagine that you have a magical document in your computer. Whenever you print that document out and mail it to your list of customers, you know that it produces \$10,000 in quick revenue.

What would it feel like to have that document in your computer? It would feel like you could legally *print money* in your business!

Owning a good marketing piece gives your business that power. Imagine knowing that the first week of every month you run a promotion and you know how much revenue to expect coming into your business from that promotion.

How would that predictability change your business? Would you be able to manage your cash flow better? Would you sleep better at night? Take a minute to really think about this.

Competitive Advantage

A second benefit to implementing good marketing in your business is creating an edge over your competition (and making it harder for new businesses to start up and compete against you).

The truth is most businesses do a sub-par job with their marketing. Their efforts are random and without any reason behind them. Most businesses feel pressured to do 'something' to market their business, but don't have a plan. They are then at risk of listening to any sales rep that walks in their door (not a good position to be in).

Most businesses end up doing sporadic marketing and not tracking any of it. They may buy a Yellow Pages ad because the rep came in and told them they “have to be there”. They may put an ad in the paper every now and then but then get frustrated with lackluster results.

Most businesses don’t take the time to figure out what marketing actually works in their business and to find ways to track the success (or failure) of their efforts. On top of that, most businesses don’t figure out a marketing budget. So any time dollars are spent on marketing, it has the feel of “stealing” from other parts of the business.

Random acts of marketing are expensive and frustrating. This is how something that can be so good for your business can get pushed to the side. You feel like you are always getting “hit up” for ads and sponsorships. It’s too expensive. It doesn’t work. You don’t want to give discounts. If you have found yourself saying those things, you’re not alone - but you are at a big risk.

If you only do a few things in your marketing correctly, you can reap big rewards over your competition. It’s worth the effort! You are putting your blood, sweat and tears into your business - do yourself the favor and support your business with a few *affordable* marketing efforts!

Your competition is probably doing a terrible job with their marketing. With a little effort, you can *really* get ahead. Wouldn’t it feel good to have your competition trying to keep up with you?

Valuable Business Asset

The final big benefit that your business will receive from implementing good marketing is that it becomes an asset in your business.

Here are two scenarios. Let’s say that you want to sell your business and retire. You’ve worked hard, your business is profitable and you have a good reputation in town.

But will a potential buyer pay more than the cost of your equipment and physical assets? What else is of value in your business? Well, your customers are an asset - but how do you value them?

Couldn't the potential buyer just wait for you to close up shop, buy your equipment, hire your former employees and re-open? No need to pay you a premium if that is all you can offer them.

But, what if you added this one "asset"...

"We have a proven and time-tested marketing plan in place. The first week of the month we send out a postcard and it produces approximately \$15,000 in revenue. The second week of the month we place an ad in the local paper that produces around \$10,000 in revenue. We mail birthday cards to our customers with a coupon and that produces about \$75,000 over the year. We also have a referral system that adds 10 new clients to the business per month, on average."

How does a postcard, ad, birthday card and referral program change the whole scene when you are trying to sell your business? It changes it completely! Your customers are now the most prized asset in your business. An asset that a potential buyer can't just price out and easily replace.

With those benefits in mind, don't you think your marketing is worth figuring out?

Complete the following worksheet. Challenge yourself to really take the time to think and write out your answers. You are responsible for the vision and direction of your business. Giving these ideas their full attention will only benefit you, your business, your employees and your customers!

Worksheet

Right now, what am I doing to get new customers?

How am I encouraging my current customers to do more business with me?

How am I communicating with my customers?

Am I collecting contact information from my customers (names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, etc.)?

Which of these limiting beliefs have I thought, or am thinking right now?

- Marketing is too expensive
- It doesn't work in my business
- I don't need any new business
- It's too complicated
- I don't have the time
- I don't want to give discounts - people only come to me when they "need it"

Ask yourself the following questions for each limiting belief that you checked:

- Do I absolutely know it's true that (i.e. marketing is too expensive for my business)?
- Could I be missing out on some great benefits by not being open to new ideas?

Which of the following benefits am I missing out on by hanging onto those beliefs?

- Ability to predict revenue?
- Getting ahead of my competition?
- Creating an asset I can sell?

If I had to guess, what is the dollar value to my business, that is sitting on the table by creating some good marketing? Consider dollars today and in the future.

Who will suffer if I don't take steps to create some good marketing for my business?

Target Marketing

Definition

Target marketing is the process of identifying your ideal customer and customizing your marketing efforts to best reach that customer. Often businesses will say, “everyone is a potential customer.” But a wise saying to keep in mind is this: if you are marketing to *everyone*, you are marketing to *no one*.

Take some time to think this step over before you jump into a new marketing plan. The more time you spend getting into your best customer’s shoes, the easier it will be to find ways to reach them (the best, most efficient way to market).

Also, keep in mind that your local customers can have a different “profile” than tourists that come into your business. It is very wise to look at both sides of your business in order to be more efficient in attracting more of your best local customers and tourist business.

Complete the following worksheet for both your local customers and tourist customers. Really take some time to think these answers over as they will help you make decisions on how to best reach them (and attract more of them). You may want to complete this over the course of a few days as well as asking some of your employees and best customers to help you brainstorm the answers.

Worksheet

Come up with a profile of your **Best Customer** - the customer that makes up the most profitable portion of your business, the customer that fits your business well and that you can serve exceptionally well - what does this Best Customer look like?

What age group do they fall into?

Where do they live, how far do they drive to come to my business?

What do they seem to have in common (hobbies, affiliations, interests, careers, etc.)

What do they like about my business?

What frustrates them about my business?

Who else is selling a similar product/service to them and how have they failed and succeeded?

Branding

Definition

Branding is a popular buzzword that gets mentioned in many books and articles, but what is it exactly? It's probably easier to understand branding by explaining its goals than by its scientific definition.

The goal of branding is for the consumer to relate warm fuzzy feelings with a particular brand, therefore making them think warm fuzzy thoughts when they make their purchasing decision.

Goodyear spends millions of dollars every year to have their blimps flown over baseball games. Why? Because people are happy at baseball games! People aren't happy when they have to buy expensive new tires for their vehicles. Goodyear's goal is for people to relate their brand with happy feelings - and for those happy feelings to transfer over when people have to make a tire purchase.

It may seem like a long shot, but brands like Goodyear, Tide, and Nike are looking long-term. They also have very, very deep pockets to pay for their brand marketing.

What does this mean for a local small business? Is there a place for branding in your business strategy? Yes! But the good news is that it's much, much cheaper!

Local Branding

Local branding is a great way to show support for your community and to remind people of your business in a warm, fuzzy way. Here are a few ways your business can do some local branding:

- Sponsor a program for the local 4H
- Support a local baseball or softball team
- Advertise in your local theater's program (often called a sponsorship)
- Have a booth at the local fair (or sponsor an event that is fun)
- Donate to the local parks ("buy" a bench or tree & get named on a plaque)
- Organize a fundraiser for the EMS, fire department or police station

There are multiple options for businesses to support their local communities and help develop their brands. Show your support and then make the best use of it! If you raise money for a local group or charity, have a picture taken of you presenting the check and submit it to the local newspaper with a press release. Leverage your efforts for the best results.

You can have fun participating, get your employees involved in the efforts and enjoy the additional exposure that your business gets in your community (and with your customers and prospective customers).

Now that you understand branding in action - really more the “verb” side of branding, let’s talk about the other side of branding.

Components of Branding

Branding also includes visual aspects of your business and marketing. The look of your logo, your website, any print materials like brochures and even your lobby or office. It can be summed up in three words:

- Clutter
- Cleanliness
- Colors

When customers walk into your business what are they presented with? Is your lobby clean? Does it look organized? What image do you offer as a first impression? This image is a portion of your brand.

These are important factors to consider in how your business operates. People are wired to make decisions and to do so, people need data. Everything from keeping your sidewalks clear and safe to having a friendly receptionist to keeping clutter to a minimum is important. All of these factors send messages to your customers.

- What messages are you sending?

Small efforts in this area can make big impact in your business. Take care of your customers like they are a guest in your home. They will reward you with more business and more referrals.

While clutter and cleanliness can be obvious factors in your brand, colors also play an important (and more subtle) role in your business. Colors work on the level of psychology, but can add up to make a big difference.

As a good general rule to follow, select colors that represent your business and use that color in all of your branding efforts. Colors are most often thought about in logos, in brochures, on business cards and websites but don't forget about your business' signage. The sign that hangs in your lobby, on the outside of your building or even on a billboard should all have the same color scheme. Also make sure any lettering on your signage is big enough to be legible. It's often hard to guess when looking at it on a computer screen, so before you invest in a physical sign get one printed on paper in life size. Then stand back or even drive by as a test to make sure people will be able to read it.

Following is a general guide to how colors tell a story about your business. These examples are specific to your website, but apply to printed products and signage as well.

Please note that the following color guide is provided by the Kajabi research team. Kajabi is web-based business owned and operated by Andy Jenkins. Jenkins was a long-time video editor and producer for NFL films before launching his own company. He has worked extensively with traditional and online video. What this means to you is that he has studied the use of color and form for a long time and boiled it down in this easy to use guide.

Color Guidelines

RED

Energy, Bloodrush, Scarcity, Sale, Urgency, Passion

Use Red when seeking attention and selling a product with a pricetag. Do not use red for promoting free software (people think virus and danger).

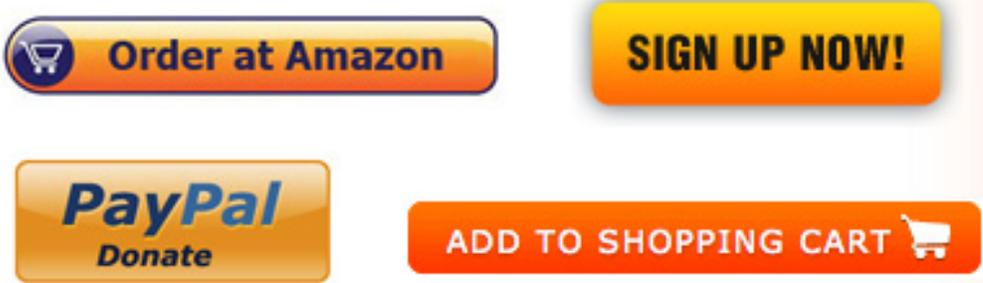


www.kajabi.com

ORANGE

Balanced Aggression, Action, Firm, Bold, Driven

Use Orange for your call to actions. It's a great color for subscriptions, sign ups and "buy now" buttons.



www.kajabi.com

YELLOW

Fresh, Happy, Warm Stimulating, Optimistic

Yellow is the greatest attention grabber. It sticks out in an unalarming way and should be used for opt-ins, form submissions and free email signups.

YES! Let Me In! **Register Now**

Get Instant Access! **Get Access Now!**

www.kajabi.com

GREEN

Stability, Relaxation, Ripe, Calm, Organic, Money, Altruistic

Green is an excellent color to use to calm people down. It's used in hospitals for patients. It's also great for communicating safety and a call to action simultaneously. Use green for downloads, donations and to evoke relaxation.



Download 

\$25  **LEND NOW**

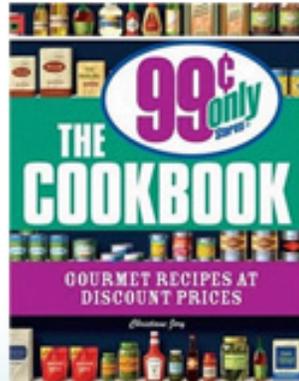
WHOLE FOODS MARKET

www.kajabi.com

TEAL

Sophisticated, Budget, Savvy, Comforting, Luxury

Teal is a great color to implement if you're going after early adopter markets, budget-minded females and sophisticated audiences. It's a great color for attracting bargain hunters and those looking for timeliness treasures.



www.kajabi.com

BLUE

Traditional, Reliable, Secure, Trustworthy, Standard

Blue represents dependability. Many banks use blue and it's often used in uniforms. It may also be used for call to actions that involve monetary transactions because it calms the user.



www.kajabi.com

PURPLE

Royalty, Sooth, Calm, Abundance, Creativity

Purple represents abundance, royalty and creativity. Purple is a good color to use when selling a high-end product, but if used too much it can appear "stuffy."



Scottrade®

www.kajabi.com

PINK

Young, Feminine, Sweet, Female, Girlish

Pink is a great color to use when targeting the female audience. It's typically used to target the younger age demographic, but a softer pink can be used for all ages.



www.kajabi.com

BLACK

Luxury, Esteemed, Power, Sleek, Bold

Black stands as a great choice when marketing a high-end product like a luxury car or technology. Black is a great color to use if intending to make a bold statement or impression.



www.kajabi.com

BROWN

Grounded, Earthy, Reliable, Fundamentals

Brown is a great color for promoting a sense of reliability. It expresses a grounded nature that gives the viewer a sense of humbleness.



The Internet

There is no doubt that the Internet has changed businesses in a drastic and permanent manner. Oftentimes, though, local businesses skip keeping up with technology trends because they think their customers are locals. The attitude is, “Everyone knows where we are, what we sell and when we are open. Why go through all the hassle of putting up an expensive website?”

If you have made this generalization about your business, it can be an expensive false belief. People move into the area yearly and the drop in people’s usage of the Yellow Pages is staggering (regardless of what they tell you when trying to sell you an ad!).

Also, smart phones are on the rise at an astonishing rate. During the 2010 Holiday shopping season, over 100,000 Android-powered phones were activated daily. People have the power of a computer right in their pockets - and this includes access to the Internet.

*** If you want your business to be found by Internet users, you need to be listed online!**

Getting your business online used to be an expensive (and frustrating) endeavor. You don’t have to talk to many business owners to find a horror story of an endless website project that went way over budget and never helped their business. In fact, even now only about 50% of businesses have a website.

But the newest, cutting edge website technology actually makes it *easier and cheaper* for you to get a website up and running. Plus, if you happen to have a teenager or college-aged kid at home or working for you, you probably have all the knowledge you need right there!

Website Creation Resources

Two resources that can save you money and allow you to get a website up cheaply and quickly are Bluehost.com and WordPress.

At the Bluehost.com website you can buy your URL (your www.website address) and the hosting together. Hosting is the storage space you need to save your website on so that people can see it when they type in your URL. At the time of this writing, you can purchase a website and a year of hosting for less than \$100 (search for a coupon online and you'll save even more money).

But how do you actually get a designed website up? Isn't that where all the expense comes in? Don't you have to hire designers and web programmers that speak in technical jargon and charge you lots of money?

This is where WordPress comes in and saves the day. WordPress is a content management system that features a web template system. After WordPress is installed (you click a button within Bluehost.com to do this), you simply scroll through and choose a theme that matches how you'd like your website to look. If you change your mind, you can switch between themes.

Users can also re-arrange items on their websites (called widgets) without editing any code. WordPress has simplified the entire process of getting a website up. You now can add new information to your website (such as articles, hours of operation, specials, etc.) without needing to know any HTML, which is the programming code most websites use.

If you want someone to do all the work for you, you can easily hire a freelancer on websites such as elance.com or odesk.com. Another option is to look on craigslist for help or contact a local web company.

The key is that you now have some knowledge of the entire process. Don't get taken advantage of because you don't have an understanding of websites! Most businesses could really benefit by having a website so it's worth spending some time to research the topic. The resources listed above will give you a great head start but don't be afraid to do a little looking online for the best value.

Now, if you still don't want to put up a website for your business, there is good news for you. You can still have an online presence - even without a website.

In November 2010, Google made some massive changes that help local small businesses in a big way. In order for you to appreciate the opportunity that Google is offering your business, let's take a look at some Google history.

Google: The Old Way

Last year if you wanted to send your Grandmother flowers for her birthday (assuming that your Grandmother lives in another town), you likely would have gone to Google and typed in “florist Anytown, State”. The primary search results would have been big, national companies like FTD and 1-800-Flowers.

Many people prefer dealing directly with a local business instead of the big national companies like FTD. But to find a local florist you would have had to dig deep into the search results. And even then, you would only find florists in your Grandmother’s town that have a website.

Google ignored locally based businesses like florists because they weren’t advertisers. Google is the massively successful company they are, by selling online ads.

Google: The New Way

Google is always analyzing data and tracking trends. What they realized is that people *wanted* to find local businesses (not just national advertisers). And if people stopped using Google because it wasn’t helping them find what they wanted, Google would lose business.

So, Google did a major overhaul and introduced Google Places.

Google Places

The following is an example of the search results now on Google for the term “Restaurant Richland Center”. The search results with the lettered “pins,” as well as the map, are Google Places results.

Web [Images](#) [Videos](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) [Shopping](#) [Gmail](#) [more](#) [Web History](#) | [Search settings](#) | [Sign in](#)

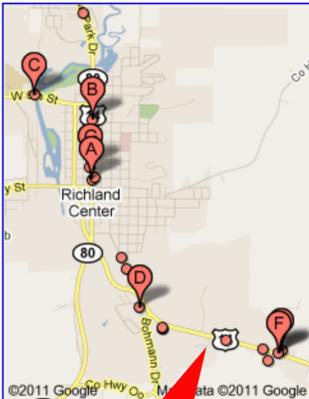
 restaurant richland center Instant is on ▼

About 243,000 results (0.16 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

▶ [Places for restaurant near Richland Center, WI](#)

- A** [Fiesta Fe](#) - 15 reviews - [Place page](#)
maps.google.com - 130 South Main Street, Richland Center - (608) 647-4732
- B** [Pizza Hut](#) - 2 reviews - [Place page](#)
www.pizzahut.com - 719 E Hwy 14, Richland Center - (608) 647-3300
- C** [Mc Donald's](#) - 1 review - [Place page](#)
www.mcdonalds.com - 875 U.S. 14, Richland Center - (608) 647-2740
- D** [Country Kitchen](#) - 1 review - [Place page](#)
www.countrykitchenrestaurants.com - 1450 Veterans Drive, Richland Center - (608) 647-6339
- E** [Taco Bell](#) - 3 reviews - [Place page](#)
www.tacobell.com - 1950 Us Highway 14 East, Richland Center - (608) 647-2178
- F** [Culver's](#) - 2 reviews - [Place page](#)
www.culvers.com - 2405 Us Hwy 14 E, Richland Center - (608) 647-7790
- G** [Gables Restaurant](#) - 2 reviews - [Place page](#)
maps.google.com - 212 North Main Street, Richland Center - (608) 649-0628

[More results near Richland Center, WI](#) »



[Richland Center Restaurants in Richland Center, WI](#) [Pages by ...](#)
Directory of **Richland Center Restaurants** in WI yellow pages. Find **Restaurants** in **Richland Center** maps with reviews, websites, phone numbers, addresses, ...
www.superpages.com/.../C-Restaurants/S.../T-Richland+Center/ - Cached - Similar

[Richland Center Restaurants | MyTravelGuide.com](#)
Richland Center Restaurants - MYTravelGuide - Reviews and research on all **Richland Center Restaurants**, Hotels, Attractions and more.
www.mytravelguide.ch/restaurants/ctrestaurants-9219101-United_States_Wisconsin_Richland_Center_restaurants.html - Cached

[Richland Center Restaurants - Best Food and Dining in Richland Center, WI](#)
Choose from 28 of the best **restaurants** in **Richland Center** - View a **restaurant** for all types of food and cuisine, from **Richland Center** cafes and fine ...
restaurants.uptake.com/wisconsin/richland_center/614130620.html - Cached

[Richland Center Restaurants and Dining - Menus and Reviews](#)
Richland Center Restaurant Guide - Find menus, reviews, maps, and delivery information for **restaurants** in **Richland Center**.
www.menupix.com/wisconsin/richland-center-wi-restaurants - Cached - Similar

[AllPages.com - Casual Dining Restaurants, Richland Center, WI](#)
AllPages.com Yellow Pages provides business listings (addresses) for Casual Dining **Restaurants, Richland Center, Wisconsin** (WI).
wi.allpages.com/richland-center/restaurants.../casual-dining-restaurants/ - Cached - Similar

[Richland Center, Wisconsin WI - Real Estate, Restaurants, Shopping](#)
Find the best Real Estate, **Restaurants**, Shopping, Clubs, Schools, Government, Sports, News and everything for **Richland Center, Wisconsin**. All at Richland ...
www.americantowns.com/wi/richlandcenter - Cached - Similar

[China Inn Restaurant, Richland Center WI 53581 -- MerchantCircle.com](#)
MerchantCircle.com -- China Inn **Restaurant** of 121 Richland Sq, **Richland Center, WI**. Phone: 608-647-5277. . Find coupons, blogs, and newsletters in Richland ...
www.merchantcircle.com > ... > WI > Richland Center > 53581 - Cached - Similar

[McDonald's Restaurant #10583 - Mcdonald's Richland Center](#)
McDonald's **Richland Center**. 875 Highway 14 East **Richland Ctr** WI 53581. Phone: 608-647-2740. Manager: Alicia Crawford. This **restaurant** is owned and operated ...
www.mcwisconsin.com/10583/ - Cached

These are where the Google Places results appear.

This is PRIME online positioning for businesses!

If search results were real estate, the area toward the top would be the most sought-after prime real estate in town. The same cliché in real estate about location, location, location applies to search engine results. Statistically, most people click on the first few results while few websites listed on the second or third page ever get any attention. What this means is that these free Google Places pins are really valuable!

In the past, Google sold these spots to national advertisers. This is where you would have seen the sponsored listings for FTD and 1-800-Flowers. Now, they are giving these spots away to local businesses (if these businesses know how to claim them).

*** It cannot be emphasized enough how important this is, or how big of an opportunity Google Places is for your business!**

Google Places Pages - Example

Let's take a look at the actual information that a Place Page contains. The following graphic is the Google Places Page for a restaurant in Richland Center called Fiesta Fe.

Get Directions My Maps Edit this place - Business owner? << Print Email Link

Fiesta Fe

130 South Main Street, Richland Center, WI 53581-2349 (608) 647-4732 Directions Search nearby more ▾

Category: Mexican Restaurant

15 reviews **Your rating:** ★★★★★

"Great atmosphere" - dine.com ... "Posole soup came with Nichole's meal, and it was OK but not very memorable" - madisonatoz.com ... "Delicious food" - dine.com ... "Got the sampler and the food was good" - urbanspoon.com ... "Pleased overall, we'll be back" - urbanspoon.com ... "If the chicken had some seasoning it would have been better" - urbanspoon.com



restaurant.com



Details

Cuisine: Mexican/Southwestern, American
Parking: Street, Parking on Site
Specialties: Non Smoking Area, Wheelchair Access
Email: bob@fiestafe.com
Dress Code: Casual, No Dressing Room
Atmosphere: Romantic, Family Friendly, Children
Reservations: Suggested
Meal Services: Brunch, Lunch, Dinner
Bar Info: Beer, Wines
Service Type: Sit Down, Carry Out
restaurant.com
More details »

Photos & Videos Upload a photo



restaurant.com



restaurant.com

Report inappropriate photo

What people are saying

- food "Delicious food." - dine.com
- mexican "Though the desserts (Mexican wedding cake, tres leches cake, flan etc.)" - madisonatoz.com

Reviews from around the web

madisonatoz.com - 10 reviews

"I think Beth is totally right- why be so harsh on a family owend buissens. I think the food is very tasty! To me- it is filling! And there desserts are amazing! Especially the Mexican Wedding Cake!! If you just go there for your self ..." - Jan 5, 2010

Ads

Local Coupons
1 ridiculously huge coupon a day. Get 50-90% off your city's best!
www.Groupon.com

Local Restaurants
Get 50% Off Coupons On The Best Local Restaurants. Sign Up!
www.LivingSocial.com

Taj Indian Restaurant
Best of Madison By Madison Magazine
Clean. Friendly. Simply the Best.
www.TajMadison.com

Local Florist Delivery
Same Day Delivery by Local Florist
Save \$10 Online using Coupon SUNNY
JustFlowers.com/Local_Florist

Related Maps

- Richland Center High School**
By annemieke711
130 S Main St Richland Center, WI 53581
(608) 647-4732 more info »
maps.google.com
- The Powershot Pool, with geodata**
By nobody@flickr.com (Eric Alan Marx)
Eric Alan Marx posted a photo: Cafe **Fiesta Fe** 001. Lunch at Cafe **Fiesta Fe** in Richland Center, Wisconsin on July 13, 2010.
api.flickr.com/.../geo/?g...
- The Wisconsin Downtowns Pool, with geodata**
By nobody@flickr.com (Eric Alan Marx)
This is a place to show the character and vitality of Wisconsin Downtowns - whether

"Business Owner?" indicates this Google Places page is unclaimed. Meaning Google pulled this information on its own. Note that there are reviews posted (it's unlikely the owner even knows about this). It's risky to leave these up to chance!

You can see that the Places Page gives a complete description of the business. In your Google Places Page profile you can:

- Write a summary of your business
- Indicate your location and hours of operation
- Business contact information (phone number, email, website, fax)
- Indicate how you accept payment
- Display whether or not you have parking
- Display multiple photos
- Display YouTube videos
- Offer a coupon

Google pulls any reviews on your business that it finds elsewhere on the internet and displays these on your Google Places Page, as well. In fact, if you don't set up your Places Page it is quite possible that Google created one for you - without you even knowing about it. The risk in this is that Google compiles information from various places on the Internet and creates these Places Pages for you. It is the business owner's responsibility to change any information that may be wrong, to complete the profile and to monitor it.

Google has created Places Pages for millions of businesses - automatically. But often businesses don't know about this new opportunity, so their Pages remain "unclaimed." If a business hasn't claimed their Places Page, it is likely they aren't aware of the content or nature of the reviews that may be displayed on their Pages.

It is easy to see the great opportunity Google has given local businesses, but it is also easy to see the risk that businesses take by ignoring this and just letting the "Internet" describe their business!

What These Changes Mean

Every business can claim their own Google Places page - and it's free - you just need to know how to do the work correctly. For local searches, a map pops up with "pins" in it - those pins relate to a business' Places page. There are seven pins available on a map.

What does this mean to your business?

*** It means that you can now have an online presence - complete with your phone number, hours of operation, a link to your website (if you have one, though it isn't mandatory), even photos, videos and reviews. This is free and a must-do for your business!**

Mobile Devices

A valuable bonus to setting up your Google Places Page is that every Page is mobile-enabled. Being mobile-enabled means all those people looking on their smart phones for your information, can now find it. This also includes GPS devices that are internet-connected. More and more automakers are installing internet connectivity into vehicles. GPS mapping devices are no longer static programs, they are often continuously updated with road closures and traffic problems. These devices also can link directly to a business' Google Places Page so that the car can give turn by turn directions to the driver.

With gas prices at record high levels more and more people are doing "trip planning" before they travel. Travelers often want to program their GPS devices with all their planned stops before they even hit the road. If you aren't visible online, you'll miss out on these visitors. Fewer and fewer people will want to drive extra miles just wandering and looking for businesses to visit when it's so expensive to fill up their cars with gasoline. Make it easy for these visitors to find you and set up your Google Places Page correctly!

Even if people don't have internet connected GPS units, a very high percentage of people travel with a mobile phone. And as more and more phones offer online access, local businesses need to be able to be found by them. Skipping this step and remaining locally-focused means your business will be overlooked by internet-reliant people (a huge group that is only growing).

Since there are only 7 pins available per category, it would be a shame for the pins to be taken up by the national chains in your town. Claim your Google Places page today - don't put this important task for your business off!



Please note: A training video will be available showing you step-by-step how to set up your Google Places page. Contact the SWBDC at 608-342-1038 or email them at swsbdc@uwplatt.edu for more information on how to get your copy of this training video.

Online Reputation

Not too long ago, almost all a business had to worry about with regards to their reputation was word of mouth. The Internet, with all the great things that it offers, does have a dark side.

Now, if customers or former employees (or even mean-spirited competitors) are upset about something, they can post their opinions online for countless numbers of people to read. Couple this with the fact that people, in general, are quicker to complain than to compliment - and your business can be affected by negative reviews before you even realize it.

Permanence of Online Information

Unfortunately, once something is posted online, it can't just be "removed". The Internet is like a river of endlessly flowing information. A review is like pouring one cup of water into that river. Once it's poured in, it can't be taken back out.

So, what is a business owner to do? Just sit back and hope that people take time to say nice things online? While many businesses do just that - it is a risky proposition.

The Internet age requires businesses to be proactive in managing their online reputation. The truth of the matter is, whether you have a website or not, people can STILL post reviews online about your business! Ignoring the Internet does not protect you from it.

Online Reviews

The simplest way to encourage positive reviews is to ask happy customers to say something nice online about your business. Most people would be happy to help you out and they probably haven't thought about posting a review (unless they are upset).

A budget-friendly solution would be to print simple cards that said something like the following:

“Could you do us a favor? We’d love for you to post a review online about us! Some popular review sites are Yelp, FourSquare, and our business listing on the search engines. Also, if you have any suggestions on how we can improve our business - we’d love to hear your ideas! Just email us at suggestions@yourbusiness.com. As a thank you, bring this card in on your next visit and get \$5 off!”

Now, obviously you want to customize the thank you offer to fit your business. But there is a second important step here. You don’t want to just leave these cards sitting out on your counter. You don’t need a flood of online reviews - even just a few reviews per month is great. Reserve these cards for customers that you are sure are *happy* as they have checked out.

Only selecting happy customers may seem like a sneaky trick. And, I’m sure the review sites wouldn’t necessarily want reviews “directed”. But, as a business owner YOU are responsible for your online reputation. And, since unhappy customers are much more likely to be posting negative information online, you need to pull those odds back in your favor.

Be aware, you can’t just sit down at your computer and fabricate a bunch of glowing reviews for your business. Google and the other search engines are very sophisticated. They actually track what is called an IP address of the computer that posted the review. Every computer has its own unique IP address. If Google sees multiple reviews coming from one computer - they will flag your listing and you risk being banned from their website. Not a good thing. So, be proactive but don’t try to “trick” the system!

Attracting Tourism

The Driftless area of Wisconsin has much to offer visitors and attracts scores of people every year. To ignore visitors would be costly to your business. But when people are just “passing through” how can you gain their business?

Some businesses lend themselves to the tourism industry more readily. Coffee shops, cafes, bars, restaurants, antique shops, and hotels are obvious recipients of tourism dollars. But other businesses such as hardware stores, grocery stores, tire and automotive repair, auto parts stores, yoga studios and clothing stores are often visited by tourists, but this may go unnoticed.

The first step to taking advantage of the tourist industry is to be visible online. This can not be overlooked! If your business isn't ready to invest the time and money into a website then it becomes more important that you claim your Google Places Page.

Travel Trends

Most people leave their house with three things: their keys, their wallet and their cell phone. Smart phones are cell phones with robust features such as cameras, internet access and an ever growing number of applications. The trend for using phones as credit cards is even growing. In Europe and Asia many people swipe their smart phones in front of a reader (similar to the scanner at the grocery store) and pay for everything from groceries to movie tickets.

The United States is typically behind in these technology trends, but Starbucks is already using this “pay with your smart phone” technology in their stores and their advertising. Since cell phone carriers will get a portion of the credit card processing fee for every transaction used with a smart phone on their network, you can rest assured they will be making smart phones more and more affordable for people.

Aside from just driving by a business, in the past, if a visitor wanted to find a restaurant, antique shop or any other location, they would find a phone booth and look up the category in the Yellow Pages. Can you even think of a location of a phone booth right now? Not likely. More and more people every day are doing these “local searches” on their internet-enabled cell phones.

If your business is not online, you will be invisible to these people. No visibility means no revenue from these visitors! Take the steps to making your business visible online!

Beyond Your Online Presence

Getting proactive and planning for visitors is a great way to attract more of them into your business. Take stock of who is visiting your area, why they are there and when they typically visit. Lay out a seasonal map. For example, winter attracts snowmobilers, spring attracts mushroom hunters, summer attracts - well, everyone, and fall attracts hunters. Ask yourself these questions:

- What do these people need while they are visiting?
- What businesses are they most likely to visit?
- What other businesses *could* they need if, for example, they have engine trouble or forget something (bike tubes, motorcycle parts, rain gear, fishing line, etc.)?

The businesses and services that you listed as answers would make great partners for you as you come up with a plan to attract more tourism.

Cooperative Planning

There are many benefits to organizing a group of like-minded business owners with the sole purpose of teaming up to attract more tourist dollars. Here are a few to think about:

Accountability

When you commit to another person or a group with a goal, you are much more likely to follow through on it. It's easy to let ourselves off the hook. We say we've gotten too busy or that it's not worth it or that we'll get to it next month. But if you have promised someone else that you will do something, it's harder to just skip it.

Brainstorming

When you get a group of people together for the purpose of coming up with ideas or solutions to a shared problem, many more ideas are created than if each person was left alone to do the same thing. There is a momentum that gets people's brains going. Someone else's idea may bring you a new idea and you then inspire an idea in someone else. Plus, it's more fun to brainstorm with a

group! Get a group of your peers together and ask, “How can we get more tourist dollars?” Write all the ideas down - its important not to judge them now.

Shared Responsibility

Some of the ideas that your group comes up with will be easy to implement but some will require more work. Sharing the responsibilities among your group allows you to share your individual talents. Is someone more technical and can make sure that everyone is “visible” online? Can someone design some coupon sheets that you’ll each present in your businesses? Does someone have a color copier? You’ll get your tasks done more quickly by sharing the work.

Pooling Funds

Most small businesses watch their budgets very carefully. Pooling funds with your group can help everyone stretch those dollars and get more exposure. Just make sure that the split is fair to all businesses. You may not be able to simply divide the costs, if a few businesses get far more exposure. Just lay out the rules, talk it out and make a decision with your group that is fair.

Ground Rules

Here are some ground rules to make your group work better (and to avoid as many headaches as possible):

Clear Purpose

Be clear on your group’s purpose. This will help keep meetings short and effective. It will also help you avoid getting ‘muddy’ results. It’s hard to figure out what to do to reach your goal, if your group isn’t sure what it’s goal and purpose is. If you are specifically wanting to find affordable, creative ideas to attract tourism dollars - state what that means to your group. Also take some time to think about what it doesn’t include.

Clear responsibilities

Discuss responsibilities and what to do with members that aren't pulling their weight. Are they not getting any benefit? Maybe they should bow out. Are they not getting their tasks done? Maybe they should offer to pay more and allow someone else to pick up their tasks. Having this conversation up front will make things easier down the road for your group. Remember, schedules change and priorities shift and that is okay. You don't want people feeling guilty and you don't want to risk damaging relationships, so get specific about responsibilities as early as possible.

Recognize that some members of the group will naturally get more benefit, and should either participate more or contribute more money. More visitors will eat at a restaurant in town than go to a yoga class. Be fair in the distribution of work and cost.

Set as a Project

Treat this like a project. If you want results, keep the timeframe for accomplishing activities short. If the group starts turning the few meetings you may need to have into a social hour, your results will suffer. Tackle only a couple ideas at a time and measure their results. One easy idea would be to create a sheet of coupons. This way, each business will be able to count the coupons that are remitted and get a sense for the value they are receiving.

Agree on End Date

Agree to disband in a certain amount of time. Now, this may seem like a strange ground rule, but you will be happy if you implement it. Teams have a natural cycle to them. Management theory has actually assigned names to each stage.

- Forming - where you just start to put the team together.
- Storming - where there may be arguments as people voice opinions on goals.
- Norming - where you lay down rules and get organized.
- Performing - where the team starts to get the work done they set out to do.

But there is another stage that is often not discussed - the dissolution of the team. Maybe it's not stated because it doesn't rhyme. But, it is still an important stage to recognize.

Agreeing at the outset to disband at a certain time has many benefits. It compresses the time to get things done, which actually *helps* to get things done. This is why we have deadlines, right? Probably the biggest benefit, though, is that it allows people an "out" without feeling like they have to quit or resign - and let people down.

Everyone has many different things going on in their lives, and while increasing business may be important it competes with many other tasks. Setting the end date three or six months out, allows people the ability to schedule and to know when their responsibilities are over. You can always start the group back up in the future.

Your Local Chamber of Commerce

Get your local Chamber of Commerce or Tourism Committee involved in your group. Let them know your goals and ask what they can do to support you. They are likely trying to come up with creative and budget-friendly ways to attract more tourism, too.

A great way for your local Chamber to support your efforts is to look at the types of tourism that your area attracts and to reach out directly to clubs and organizations. A little bit of internet research will turn up dozens of motorcycle, bicycle, and vintage car clubs. Your Chamber could reach out to them directly and offer to put together travel packages to attract them to your area. Your group can offer coupons or special offers to help attract these clubs.

Share photos, tips and articles with your local Chamber to help them put up great information on their website. You are the expert in your business and you know why tourists may visit you. Help your Chamber out (and your business) by sharing that knowledge with them.

Here is a list of ideas that will help you get started in thinking about the many ways you can attract more tourists to your area, as well as encourage them to spend their money at your business and others:

- Print coupon books and display them in participating businesses
- Print out an events calendar highlighting the many reasons to come back to visit
- Create a “10 Things to Do While Visiting” sheet highlighting interesting places & activities
- Create a historic walking/driving tour of your area
- Organize a car show and invite car clubs from around the state
- Organize a motorcycle tour and invite clubs from around the state
- Create punch cards for visiting local businesses and give away prizes
- Collect contact info of visitors and invite them back with a special offer
- Create a wine & cheese tasting tour - print maps to leave at the Chamber of Commerce offices in the area
- Organize a charity sports event (triathlon, canoe race, bike tour, poker run, etc)
- Put up a tourism-related Facebook page for your area with events, coupons and updates from the area

What other ideas came to mind as you read this list? Write these ideas down now and use them as a great starting point when you start a discussion with your group.

Your Action Plan

Congratulations on completing this book! Many business owners *want* to be more successful but they aren't willing to stretch out of their routine in order to learn and grow. Following is a checklist you can go through to make sure you didn't skip any steps. Also, now is the time to plan how you take this knowledge and make it work for you in your business. Knowledge is important but it's the action you take with that knowledge that gives you results!

<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed Benefits of Marketing in My Business Worksheet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed Best Customer Worksheet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brainstormed ideas for local branding opportunities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reviewed the 3C's of Branding for my business:
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Clutter
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Cleanliness
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Colors
<input type="checkbox"/>	Claimed my business' Google Places Page
<input type="checkbox"/>	Here are 3 ideas that I want to research and pursue further:
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Here are 3 Action Steps I will take, and the dates I will have these done by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Date to Complete by: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Date to Complete by: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Date to Complete by: _____

The Most Important Question

The most important question you can answer on behalf of your business is:

- *Are you committed to making your business a success?*

Make a decision to succeed and don't be wishy-washy on that decision! So many people want success but only if they don't have to work at it or change in order to get better results. Many are more comfortable watching their numbers fall and blaming the economy than they are with trying a new idea. Don't settle for less than your best effort, when it comes to your business - it's worth it!

Be proactive. Be open to new ideas. Ask questions about how you can make your business better. Keep wondering, researching and learning. You are an expert with dozens of ideas waiting to be discovered by taking the time to look at your business strategically.

If you find yourself wishing for different results, while stubbornly not doing anything to change, ask yourself these questions:

- What is at stake?
- What are the risks of me not taking action?
- Who would this affect besides me?
- Is it worth getting over my fear about this?
- What is *one step* I can take action on today?

There is business out there to be done, dollars to be made, and tourists to attract. Don't just sit back and "hope" that more business walks in your door. Leave the sitting and the hoping to your competition. Take action for your business today!