



The Update: Small Business News, Tips & Ideas

Helping You Reach Your Goals!

December, 2015



And What Shall 2016 Bring?

Don't you love this time of the year. Everywhere you find predictions of what will be in 2016. Here are just some of the ones I caught:

- <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2015/28997/the-year-in-video-marketing-and-what-to-expect-in-2016?adref=nl120815>
- http://www.ted.com/talks/danit_peleg_forget_shopping_soon_you_ll_download_your_new_clothes
- <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/4-local-seo-tips-for-2016/>
- <http://www.smallfoodbiz.com/2015/12/07/what-does-2016-hold-for-the-food-industry/>
- http://www.inc.com/lolly-daskal/12-things-you-need-to-really-get-rid-of-in-the-next-12-months.html?cid=sf01001&sr_share=twitter

It's important to keep up with what may be predicted for your industry, customer base, marketing efforts, and in general. And you probably need to begin making "what if" plans for some of the potential scenarios. Pick out the most probable predictions or have those with the most significant impact on your business.

But save some wiggle room as there is no perfect crystal ball for the future. Plus things change as noted by Seth Godin, "the next best thing only lasts a short time" – (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2015/11/the-end-of-the-future.html).

So get ready for 2016. And remember, **we are here to help.**

Till next time,
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In Cooperation With



Quotes of the Month

Our best marketing is the referrals that we get from really happy customers – Gigi Schumm, Bluebird Dinners

Excellence is not a singular act, but a habit - Shaquille O'Neal

This Month's Tips

Making the First Sale as a New Business

As you get started it is difficult to get those first customers. Inc. suggests that you need to use your customer interviews, giving those customers more power, and offering incentives to the early adopters. <http://www.inc.com/aj-agrawal/how-to-sell-with-a-lack-of-traction.html?cid=sf01001>

Building a List

Are you trying to build a list of contacts for sending out materials, flyers, etc? Here are 13 ideas such as hosting a webinar or an event or offer a discount for signing up. As they point out, and I have repeatedly encouraged, don't forget about the traditional marketing means of printed material and snail mail. See more at: <http://blog.flightmedia.co/13-list-building-tactics-you-havent-thought-of/>

Can't Sell – Don't Give Up

You want a business but know you just can't sell. Tough but not something that can't be overcome. Be social, let your customer be your voice, use a call-to-action, focus on customer retention, and, above all, solve people's problems. These are just some of the ways people just like you have made it work. <http://www.inc.com/neil-patel/7-online-marketing-tips-for-entrepreneurs-who-can-t-market-or-sale.html>

Is Your Smallbiz Ready to Grow?

As problems become more complex and you find yourself doing less of what you would like and more of what you don't care for, it may be time to think about growth. And as you do, ask yourself if you and others have the right skills to successfully grow. Think long term. And understand that managers are not, by definition, leaders. Just some thoughts to get you started. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239349>

Local can be a Big Advantage

Just one example of how local can work to your advantage. <http://impactnews.com/austin-metro/round-rock-pflugerville-hutto/kaleidoscope-toys/>

Is the Startup the Easy Phase?

You are excited, you have energy, you see the future. All of these are part of being a startup. But as your business grows and matures, you begin to see another side. Issues grow, other challenges, such as finding good help, enter in. And your energy might not be what it used to be. If you are good, the competition grows and they are aiming to take your spot. Just things to think about. <http://www.inc.com/jeremy-quittner/midsized-companies-face-important-growth-challenges.html>

Good Ideas

Good ideas solve problems. So keep your eyes and ears open to what people are saying or what you are thinking. Also be realistic and make sure your idea can make money. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239397>

Protecting Your Invention

See what the US Dept of Commerce has available to you. Some new services make it cheaper and also may offer some legal advise. <http://www.commerce.gov/blog/2014/11/03/five-steps-protecting-your-invention>

Effective Email Marketing

Email can be an effective marketing tool. Such things as the header, where you put your newsletter sign-in form, and "about us" pages are just three elements you can use to build this marketing effort. <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2014/26409/10-tactics-to-increase-newsletter-subscriptions?adref=nl111014>

More Email Marketing Tips

Make it personal, use the subject line, be brief and targeted are just some ideas on how to get the most out of your email efforts. <http://www.inc.com/aaron-aders/does-email-marketing-still-work-10-ways-to-make-it-work-for-you.html>

One More Tip

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/aj-agrawal/how-to-build-a-killer-ema_1_b_8335006.html

New Marketing Angles

Have you thought about setting up a booth at a farmers market? May reach an entirely new audience. <http://www.news-press.com/story/money/2014/11/16/storefronts-find-new-sale-marketing-avenues-farmers-markets/19139703/>

Innovation and Diversification

These are two key elements to a successful business. Innovation takes many forms. It may be new products or services but also may be new packaging, how you bundle items together, new partnerships formed, etc. And diversification means you can't be just a one-item store. While that may get you off to a great start, someone else will be looking to knock you off your perch. So always think about broadening your opportunities. <http://exportwise.ca/number-one-success-factor-small-business-today/>

Tell Your Story

Whether online or traditional, good marketing is about telling your story. A good story connects with potential customers. A good story keeps already existing customers engaged. What's makes a good story? Try these 5 items. <http://www.copyblogger.com/marketing-stories/>

Ideas for Stories

Story telling can be a powerful marketing tool. However many business owners don't think they have any story to tell. Here are some ideas to get you started. Think about the people making the product, people using the product, where the product is made or how the product is made. You can also go through the steps it took to get where you are at. The list is long. <http://heidicohen.com/content-marketing-product-stories/>

Good Stories

Good stories have a beginning, a problem, and a conclusion. They include a likeable character and trigger emotion. And they are pertinent.

http://www.moneycontrol.com/sme-stepup/news/4_tips_to_successful_small_business_storytelling-1588241.html

Learn More about Telling Your Story

<http://smallbizsurvival.com/2015/06/are-you-telling-and-selling-with-your-business-story.html>

Planning is Nice, Execution is a Must

Planning is a useful tool although you hear lots of people offer contrary opinions. What is true, however, is the fact that you must execute. Whether it is a formal business plan or just an idea wandering around in your brain, nothing happens if you don't put things into motion.

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/239657>

Online Tools and Tech Tips

Internal Content Creation

Are you out of ideas for content? Have you thought about how you might use previous content again? Focus it towards a new audience. Update it. These are just a couple of methods. Get more from this article - <http://heidicohen.com/internal-content-curation/>

Growing an Ecommerce Business

Having a successful ecommerce business means taking certain steps such as developing a good email database and getting the most out of your contact with current and potential customers. Social media is a tool that can help as well. Need other tips? Keep reading. <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2015/27659/the-seven-most-efficient-marketing-techniques-for-growing-an-e-commerce-business?adref=nl051215>

Branding by Embracing Social – Check out U-Haul

U-Haul is a well-known brand name but they have been continuing to up their social media presence. This story takes a look at some of the issues they have had to deal with such as screening all of the mentions of U-Haul from customers who are posting a complaint. And check out the photo campaign. You can even follow your truck. Engagement comes in many ways. <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/special-columns/2015-05-11/big-brand-theory-u-haul-uses-social-enhance-customer-service>

Location-based Emails can Work

Are you surprised sometimes when an email or other message finds you as you enter a certain geographic region? The sender may be using some type of location-based service. Typically it is for some type of deal offered at the right place perhaps at the right time. Have you considered it for your business? <http://mashable.com/2015/05/14/location-based-emails/>

Get People Sharing Your Visual Content

Visual is exploding. But not all works. It must stand out. It must reflect who you are. It must be quality and follow the trends. Is your business competitive? It can be (and it doesn't take long or cost a lot). <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/visual-content-social-media-mistakes>

Website Design Terms

If you are working on your website, it is important to know the language that your web developer might use. Here is a list of terms that can help you and your developer stay on the same page. Knowing these will save time and reduce frustration. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/website-redesign-terms>

Social Media for an Uncool Business

You can understand how some businesses want to have their business online. And you can further understand why some businesses can grow their number of followers. But what if your business is just one of the many we need to get through life. Well, you have things to say and can have lots of people who listen. How do you do it? Check this out.

<http://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-business/dianamackie/2015-05-21/social-media-strategy-uncool-brands>

Social Media Management

Having a social media presence is easy. Having and EFFECTIVE social media site takes work. Here are some tips that can help make that job easier. Things like automation, visuals, and planning are part of the job. Get more at: <http://twittercounter.com/blog/2015/05/10-secrets-that-will-make-your-life-as-social-media-manager-easier/>

Set Content Goals

Like any marketing effort, setting goals for your content marketing should be a priority. And just like any goals you set, they should all tie into what you have for your overall business objectives. <http://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-content-marketing-strategy/>

Should Service Businesses Go Online?

How can a service business benefit from online marketing? You serve a limited area and it's easy to get your business in front of your audience. Read this story and how one firm did it and why. <http://smallbiztrends.com/2015/06/old-school-business-discovered-the-internet.html>

Develop Trust via Your Product Page

Developing a relationship with your customer happens in many ways. Even your product pages help build that relationship. Do you include customer reviews? Are they just the positive ones? How about statements on how customer information is kept private? Or even the content you put on your product pages? All of these and more can generate trust.

<http://www.blogtrepreneur.com/2015/06/04/5-product-page-mistakes-make-site-look-untrustworthy/>

How Social Media Benefits Your Smallbiz

It can make people aware you exist. Remember, build it and they will come doesn't work. It is another marketing tool. Today it legitimizes your company and your brand. And the list goes on.

<http://www.business2community.com/infographics/top-8-benefits-social-media-marketing-small-business-infographic-01240453>

Help with Podcasts

If you are thinking about using podcasts as one of your marketing tools, then you may appreciate this tips for beginners from Becky McCray at Small Biz Survival - <http://smallbizsurvival.com/2015/06/podcasting-basics.html>

Managing Social Media

How much time do I need to spend to manage a social media marketing effort? That is a question many small business owners ask. This article doesn't answer that question as it looks at marketing folks and what they do. It does however provide some great insight on where to spend your time. The suggestion is that you should spend 35% of your time, however much you spend, engaging. A great take-away - <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/michael-patterson-sprout-social-how-to-allocate-your-time-managing-social-media/621895>

Upcoming Events

Jan 12th, 2016 – *What Works in Rural Marketing Today* – 2 pm CT – 60 minute webinar providing tips to help craft a message that catches your audience's attention. [Click here to register](#). Sponsored by ND Tourism, Small Biz Survival, and NDSU Extension. We suggest you join about 15 minutes early to download the computer file required.

April 27 – 28, 2016 – *Igniting Legendary Leaders* – Learn how to build the community you want to live in with Morris Morrison, Greg Tehven, and others. Save the dates. Will be held at Bismarck State College National Energy Center of Excellence. More information will soon be available.

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