



The Update: Small Business News, Tips & Ideas

Helping You Reach Your Goals!

November, 2015



Lots of ideas on what we could talk about this month. We just passed Thanksgiving which ushers in the holiday shopping season. So we could talk about how you handled the holiday season in your business or what's expected to sell well this year.

Of course during that weekend, Small Business Saturday was celebrated. If you're a small business owner, I hope you made sure to let your customers and community know. If you are a consumer, like me, I hope you took the opportunity to drop by your favorite small businesses, said thanks, and did some shopping.

Or we could look forward into 2016. Digital and visual will be two words that continue to be important for small business owners. People will be more mobile and looking for you online and checking out your online reviews and brand.

However, my topic this month is combining this note with the "What's Going on in the Office" segment I sometimes write. I hope you take the time to read those when they are included. Each story takes a look at someone we have worked with or someone who is promoting or helping ND small businesses.

During November, we finished a three- year project focused on building local foods in North Dakota. We had a SARE, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant. The first year was educations. Then for the last two years, individuals and teams have been working in their local area doing projects that would expand local foods. Some areas needed more growers, others wanted to expand their markets, and others just wanted to determine the overall interest in local foods.

The overall project has been a lot of fun, and work. A couple of things it demonstrated was how creative people are as well as the need to let people build an effort around local needs. Conversations were started, new networks formed, and the local food effort has moved forward, in part with assistance from this SARE project

In Cooperation With



To see more about what happened during the project, I encourage you to check out:
<http://www.slideshare.net/glennmuske/nd-local-foods-sare-project>

And I encourage you to check out the "What's Going on in the Office" segment in future months.

Hope you enjoy.

Till next time,
Glenn Muske
glenn.muske@ndsu.edu

Quotes of the Month

Honesty is the best image – Tom Wilson

Continuing with "business as usual" is no longer a viable option – Lester Brown

Upcoming Events

PLEASE Join Us on **Friday, December 4th at 11:15 a.m. CST** for our Friday 15 Live Chat with Dr. James Barnes – "Facebook Ads Made Simple." He will share several lessons learned from the @MSUExtService Program called @MississippiBricksToClicks (www.msbrickstoclicks.com).

To see the session, go to:

https://plus.google.com/events/c47dat1q387r0d3201tqdkibnf4?authkey=Cl3j-6Gyz_i_2AE or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evrrqRK0ZWI>

This Month's Tips

Getting Ready for 2016

This is the time of year for predictions. For business owners, this one predictions that personalization, customer experience, loyalty programs and analytics will be some of the big issues. <http://www.computerworld.com/article/3000335/it-management/forrester-s-top-10-predictions-for-business-in-2016-and-what-they-mean-for-tech.html>

Startup Tips

Starting a business. Then be ready to put your own money on the line and know if it is the right time. Also as you go through the process don't be surprised that the business you start is not the one you once started out to begin. You don't need to spend money on marketing and be ready to be a customer service whiz. Just some of the tips offered.

<https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/grow-your-business-from-the-ground-up-10-expert-tips-from-learnvests-alex-von-tobel/>

What Don't You See?

Interesting article discussing the blindspots we have in life and in our business. Those blindspots can be devastating if we (1) don't realize they are present; and (2) don't do something to help see them before they damage or destroy the business. What are your blindspots? <http://www.management-issues.com/opinion/6541/business-blind-spots/>

Why Startups Often Fail?

It should come as no surprise but no market, no money, wrong staff, beat by the competition, and wrong pricing lead the list. Get more insight in the article - <http://www.inc.com/kimberly-weisul/what-went-wrong-failed-startups-tell-all.html>

Having a Success

How do you feel when something goes your way? Pretty good I would guess. And we may want to take a victory lap or not keep our eyes focused on the longer term goals. This HBR article reminds us to stay in the present and keep on working. While it's okay to have a small celebration, remember there are still many challenges ahead. <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/09/the-unexpected-consequences-of-success/>

Start-Up Costs

People are bad about estimating start-up costs. So here are some broad guidelines to use. But remember they are only a guide. I would guess that these are also under-estimated. The one thing known about start-ups is it take a lot more time and a lot more money than estimated. So get your financial house in order and be prepared to cover at least 50% of such costs. <http://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/business-planning/start-costs-industry>

Costs of Starting a Small Food Stand

This is a first-person perspective of what it costs. Offers some different items than those normally seen. Also perhaps missing some but overall it is a helpful article. <http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20141001/park-slope/heres-how-much-it-costs-start-tiny-food-cart-business>

Avoiding Heavy Start-up Costs

The author suggests three things to help avoid going into debt when in the initial phase of starting your business. Don't quit your day job. Start at home. And only hire people as your company ramps up. All of these mean that you will be working lots of hours but without income coming in, but he suggests that's a good thing. <http://www.themuse.com/advice/3-ways-to-start-your-business-without-going-into-debt>

Agritourism Farms are Diverse

USDA provides some demographics on agritourism operations. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2014-october/agritourism-farms-are-more-diverse-than-other-us-farms.aspx#.VDWAW7Uo5aQ>

Full report - http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/601606/err134_1_.pdf

Building a Business Around Handmade Items

Thinking of taking your skills in making things and building a business around it. Then you may want to look at this article. Making the product is one thing. Getting it to marketing and getting buyers in another. <http://www.indiebusinessnetwork.com/successful-handmade-business/>

Keep Going When Few Support You

You have a great business idea, or so you think. Most of the people around you are telling you to give up the idea. So what do you do? Certainly you must listen to these others but also you need to listen to yourself. If you have done your homework, you know more about the product, the market, and the opportunities than others. So keep your motivators in mind, find some allies, make the idea better, and believe in yourself. It's a balancing act though. <http://www.fastcompany.com/3037583/hit-the-ground-running/how-to-keep-going-when-everyone-thinks-your-idea-is-terrible>

Right Time versus Real Time Marketing

We have all heard of one of the newer trends of real time marketing. This article makes a point that an even better marketing strategy is right time marketing. They point out that the right time doesn't have to necessarily be real time. Comments are offered by several people regarding this idea. <http://www.emarketer.com/Article/Real-Time-Marketing-Now-Right-Time-Marketing/1011421/1>

Understanding Consumer Behavior

There are lots of reasons why consumers respond to various things. And understanding how you can touch on those things that can make a positive difference in how your business is viewed and the sales you make is crucial. Here are some ideas such as overcoming action paralysis and adding labels to people. <http://www.inc.com/jeff-haden/4-scientificallly-proven-ways-to-get-more-customers.html>

Handling Difficult Clients

It begins with setting expectations up front. If you do get a complaint listen to what the real problem is. And then work to correct it. You don't necessarily need to discount your prices. Keep track of all back-and-forth communication and have only a single point of contact. Just some thoughts. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/melinda-emerson/10-tips-to-handle-difficu_b_6082616.html

Online Tools and Tech Tips

The Death of Google+

Okay, Google+ isn't gone yet but all indications are that it is soon over. There are two lessons here. One is to not put all of your social media efforts into one effort. You may do that as you start but a couple of efforts would probably best serve most businesses. The other important lesson is that you need an online effort that you control – a website or maybe a blog/website such as Wordpress. These you control and they won't go away on you.

<http://marketingland.com/unofficial-death-google-means-marketing-122696>

Types of Social Media

This article breaks out 8 types of social media, yes 8. It then discusses how each can help your business. Now reality says that small business owners can't do all 8 well so pick the one or two that best suit your situation. Maybe it's bookmarking sites or personal networks.

<http://blog.hootsuite.com/types-of-social-media/>

Quality Websites

A lot has been said about social media as part of your online presence. Yet your website still remains a key part of your marketing plan. To help your website maximize its potential, here are seven design tips - <http://tweakyourbiz.com/technology/2015/04/23/sure-website-quality-website-7-things-prove-wrong/>

Why Blog?

Blogging as a marketing tool receives a lot of attention. Yet business owners often tend to not do it for a variety of reasons. This article looks at some of the reasons you should blog. First and foremost, it is the type of content that search engines like. It also build brand. And people can find it engaging. <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/2015-04-24/blogging-so-misunderstood-8-things-everyone-should-know>

Image Sizes

Here is a good primer on the image size you need for various social media platforms. A good resource tool to keep on hand. <http://mashable.com/2015/04/21/social-media-image-sizes/>

Online Sales Growth

Online sales are running ahead of projections with ecommerce sales expected to hit \$300 billion in 2015. The Forrester report that provided that number has some interesting comments. While it sees mobile as continuing, it notes that it is also changing with fewer flash sales but more

integrated activity. Brick and mortar sales are holding strong in comparison. Stay tuned to see how things develop. <http://digiday.com/brands/3-ways-e-commerce-advancing-2015/>

Updating Your Website

Just like you update the displays in your physical store, you also need to keep updating the pages on your website. As you go through that process, there are some things that seem to be going out of style such as stock photos and text-heavy sites.

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2015/27566/bye-bye-to-these-10-web-design-trends>

Use Boring Content

So you have a boring business. Why would you ever put up online content? This article provides the reason. Because there are people out there who need your knowledge. It may not be a million. So what? If you get to the people who need your help and they find your stuff, you are a successful marketer. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/create-boring-content>

Use Your Data

There is a lot of talk about collecting consumer data. But often that data sits on the shelf. If you are going to spend the money and time to collect it, you need to plan to use it as well. Here are ways to use it to grow your ecommerce business. <http://tweakyourbiz.com/sales/2015/05/05/7-ways-grow-ecommerce-sales-using-customer-data/>

Make the Most from Your Ecommerce Business

Ecommerce activity continues to grow. Getting the most out of an ecommerce business though isn't magic. Like any business it requires strategic action. Think about how you can bring people to your landing pages, your focus, and social media. And remember to don't stop learning and testing. <http://smallbiztrends.com/2015/05/successful-ecommerce-business.html>

Go Online for More Tips:

Websites: www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness

<http://powerofbusiness.net>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz

www.facebook.com/eXtensionentrepreneurs

<https://www.facebook.com/powermybusiness>

Blogs: <http://powerofbusiness.net/blog/>

<http://smallbizsurvival.com/>

Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/gamuske/>

Twitter: www.twitter.com/gmuske

North Dakota State University does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a U.S. veteran. Direct inquiries to the Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Global Outreach, 205 Old Main, (701)231-7708.

