

The 12 most important things to do for success in Small Business Marketing

Here's our list of the twelve most important things to do in marketing your small business for the best return on your *time* and money.

 **Know this:** The media reports about what is new and cool in marketing. Don't get caught up in all the marketing hype and fads.

Our advice: focus on the 20% of marketing tactics that will give you an 80% return for your time and money.

Be brilliant at the basics and then expand from there.



Know this about small business marketing

1. All companies, large and small, have the same marketing goals

Every company wants to get customers, keep customers, get existing customers to buy more, fire unprofitable customers and create customer advocates.

 Since everyone has the same goals, it's not *what* you aim to do but *what you choose to do and how well* you implement or execute against those goals that will make your marketing successful.

2. It's better to do a few things well, than a hundred things poorly

Focus on mastering the marketing basics that are needed to retain and attract profitable new customers or clients. This article covers what those are. Then focus on developing a winning marketing strategy, one thing that you can be known for.

Think of it like entertaining. To host a lovely party, you don't need to know how to cook hundreds of fancy recipes. Instead you need to master a *few* recipes to create a meal that will impress your guests. To make the meal memorable, you just need one signature dish.

3. Marketing Job #1 should be customer/client satisfaction

Top reasons customers never return to give you repeat business:

- ✓ They have a bad experience
- ✓ They don't feel special, important, or valued
- ✓ They are not encouraged (reminded) to return or buy again
- ✓ They bought on a price off deal and don't see the value of the full price product/service

4. Marketing Job #2: nurturing and creating brand fans and customer advocates who share positive word-of-mouth with others

You want your customers to be so satisfied that they proactively share positive word-of-mouth about your company, products, services and/or employees. Why is this so important? It's now easier than ever for people to share positive (and negative) stories about their experiences. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs, forums) has given everyone a microphone to reach a much wider audience.



The 12 most important things to do for success in Small Business Marketing *(in priority order)*

1. Collect the names and contact information from your customers and prospective customers. Then keep it up-to-date.



From our experience: We are amazed at how many small businesses *don't* do this. Remember that song, "*Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold*"? Your existing customers are gold. How can you treat them so well they will come again? Buy more? Tell their friends?

- ✓ [How to collect customer information](#)
- ✓ [How to create a customer database](#)

2. Describe your business or products or services in a meaningful and compelling way

In marketing that's called positioning. Learn about how to position your company, product, service or yourself as a person. Define your business and what it stands for, then build your marketing program around that.

- ✓ [Positioning](#)
- ✓ [Personal Branding](#)



TIP: [Marketing Strategies for Small Business](#) - learn how to develop a *winning* marketing strategy for your small business that will give you a competitive edge. This is a must read how-to guide!

3. Make a good first impression

- ✓ [How to create a brand](#)
- ✓ [How to create a logo](#)
- ✓ [How to create and print business cards](#)



TIP: Do you know about marketing cards? These cards are like mini ads for your business. They're larger than traditional business cards. One side has a description of your business along with your website address, business address and phone number. The other side of the card can have whatever makes the most sense for your business: a map, a special offer, a list of benefits, hours of operation. Hand these out at trade shows, events and give them to people to refer business to you.

- ✓ [How to create a brochure](#)
- ✓ [How to create an effective Yellow Page ad](#)

With websites and Google, Yellow Page ads are less important than they used to be for many businesses. Is a Yellow Page ad still an important way new customers and existing customers find you?

- ✓ [How to create an effective sales presentation](#)

4. Create a website, and set it up to attract as many people as possible



From our experience: Most small businesses could get a lot more website visitors for free if they learned how to set up their website and individual web pages within their site to be found by the search engines. Learn how to do this so you'll be attracting as many people as possible to your website.

- ✓ [How to create a website](#)
- ✓ [How to get more website visitors](#)
- ✓ [Search engine marketing](#)

5. Segment (cluster) your customers so your marketing will be more focused and relevant



TIP: cluster your customers into segments like these:

- ✓ MVCs - most valuable customers (profitable + refer others)
- ✓ Most profitable customers/clients
- ✓ New customers (move them to another cluster after six months)
- ✓ Loyal across all products/services
- ✓ Buy only one service/product
- ✓ Brand fans and company advocates (refer others)
- ✓ Switchers (not loyal; buy whatever is on sale generally)
- ✓ Coupon/discount buyers
- ✓ Unprofitable (don't pay, pay late, high customer service costs)
- ✓ Difficult to deal with
- ✓ Lost/moved
- ✓ Prospects (Hot prospects; Warm prospects; Cold prospects)

Doing this type of customer analysis and segmentation will help you in your marketing, customer service and sales. You don't want to treat all customers the same. They're not. Some are valuable, some are vulnerable, some need to be nurtured to be more valuable and some customers you should try to fire.

- ✓ [How to identify your most profitable customers](#)
- ✓ [How to segment your customers](#)
- ✓ [How to fire customers who are unprofitable \(and unpleasant\) to serve](#)

6. Keep your most profitable customers very happy

For most businesses, 80% of profits come from 20% of the customers. These people should be treated like VIPs. Everyone who interacts with customers should know who they are.

- ✓ [How to conduct a customer satisfaction survey](#)
- ✓ [How to treat your best customers like VIPs](#)

7. Create an excellent customer experience so people will positively recommend your business or products/services to others



TIP: Before you invest in attracting new customers, focus on solidifying and improving customer satisfaction among the customers you have. This has two benefits: It reduces the risk of losing customers who have to be replaced (at an expense) and it increases the likelihood that these people will refer others and spread positive word-of-mouth (which is free and far more effective than any advertising).

- ✓ [How to get more referrals](#)
- ✓ [How to improve customer satisfaction](#)
- ✓ [Customer satisfaction surveys](#)
- ✓ [How to manage your reputation on Yelp](#)
- ✓ [Social media monitoring](#)

Monitoring online buzz is like reverse market research. Instead of asking people what they think in a survey or focus group, you read what they're saying online in blogs, comments to articles, posts made to forums and places like Twitter and Facebook. It's eavesdropping on public conversations. There are amazing tools that gather and capture the relevant information you want on your company, your brands, your competitors and even individual people.

8. Set up a customer contact plan

This is a proactive plan about how often, through which means (email, text message, call, direct mailing, etc.), and with what messages you will communicate with your customers and prospects. It's being very intentional so you don't over- or under-communicate with people.



From our experience: Most small businesses either under-communicate (never send anything) or send everyone the same generic (irrelevant) information. This is like sending the same cover letter and resume to everyone versus tailoring it to be more relevant and persuasive. You don't need to tailor your messages to individual customers necessarily but by clustering (segmenting) them into groups as suggested above, you can tailor your messages to be most relevant. This will *dramatically* improve your response rates and sales as well as your customer satisfaction.

It's important to send customers and prospects relevant information frequently enough to keep your business or product (or yourself) top-of-mind. That's generally at least six "touch points" (communications) a year. Those could be three email newsletters, an invitation to an event, a direct mail postcard, and a personal call or email.

- ✓ [How to create a customer contact plan](#)
- ✓ [How to create and send an email newsletter](#)
- ✓ [How to create and send direct mail postcards](#)
- ✓ [How to get more business from existing customers](#)
- ✓ [How to increase your direct mail response rates](#)

9. Focus on attracting new customers/clients who are most like your most *profitable* customers



TIP: You want to attract new customers/clients who are like your most *profitable* customers. It's very easy to attract new customers through coupons, sales and special deals but will these people be switchers (buy only when something is on sale) or will they become your most profitable and pleasant-to-serve customers/clients? Referrals are the best way to generate profitable new business leads, especially if those referrals come from your best customers and "respected recommenders" (other professionals, bloggers, the press).

- ✓ [How to get more referrals](#)
- ✓ [How to attract new customers](#)

- ✓ [How to set up a lead management system](#)
- ✓ [How to nurture long leads](#)
- ✓ [How to create a great elevator pitch](#)
- ✓ [Direct mail marketing](#)
- ✓ [How to create flyers and leaflets](#)



[How to Increase Sales for Your Small Business!](#) How-to guides on: how to get customers, keep customers, sell more to existing customers, increase referrals, and generate positive word-of-mouth.

10. Get coverage from influential press and bloggers

- ✓ [How to get the press to cover your business](#)

- ✓ [PR / Public Relations](#)
- ✓ [Blogs and blogging](#)

11. Be great at networking online and in person

✓ [How-to guide on Business Networking](#)

Meeting and networking with other business professionals is a great way to get referrals and meet prospective new clients and customers. Improving your networking skills can help you be more effective in social gatherings with groups that you are a part of. Use these practical suggestions on how to initiate meaningful conversations.

✓ [Trade shows and events](#)

People go to trade shows and seminars to learn about new products/services and to reconnect with companies and people they know. Learn how to be effective when choosing and attending trade shows and events with these how-to guides.

✓ [Social Media Marketing How-to Guide for Small Business](#)

Social media marketing using Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other online forums and sites is free but it can be time-consuming. Learn how to get the best return on your *time* when using social media marketing to generate word-of-mouth and referrals for your small business.



12. Be cautious about advertising

Evaluate whether advertising will provide the best ROI (return on investment) or if other marketing approaches will be more effective.



From our experience: Most companies spend far too much money on advertising. Why? It's often the easiest and fastest way (people think) to generate sales. But notice that it's last on our list of marketing basics. Before you spend a dime on advertising, have you exhausted all the ways you could generate new business through your existing customers by asking them for referrals? Word-of-mouth is far more effective than an ad or special deal to attract profitable new customers.

- ✓ [Best free and low-cost marketing ideas](#)
- ✓ [Advertising Overview - the pros, cons, alternatives and costs](#)

- ✓ [Direct mail marketing](#)
- ✓ [Email marketing](#)



From our experience: for the best return on your time and money, focus on being brilliant at the basics and developing a winning marketing strategy that you will be recognized and remembered for.

www.MarketingZone.com, *the source for small business marketing*

MarketingZone is a how-to site and community on small business marketing. The how-to guides are written by marketing experts and continually updated. Join the conversation online!



Be brilliant at the basics for small business marketing success!

Audit your business. How are you doing?

- Collecting the names and contact information from your customers and prospective customers? Then keeping that up-to-date?
- Describing your business or products or services in a meaningful and compelling way?
- Making a good first impression (branding)?
- Creating a website? Setting it up to attract as many people as possible?
- Segmenting (clustering) your customers so your marketing will be more focused and relevant?
- Keeping your most profitable customers *very* happy?
- Creating an excellent customer experience so people will positively recommend your business or products/services to others?
- Setting up a customer contact plan?
- Focusing on attracting new customers/clients who are most like your most *profitable* customers?
- Getting coverage from influential press and bloggers?
- Being great at networking online and in person?
- Being cautious about advertising? Evaluating whether advertising will provide the best ROI (return on investment) or if other marketing approaches will be more effective?



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