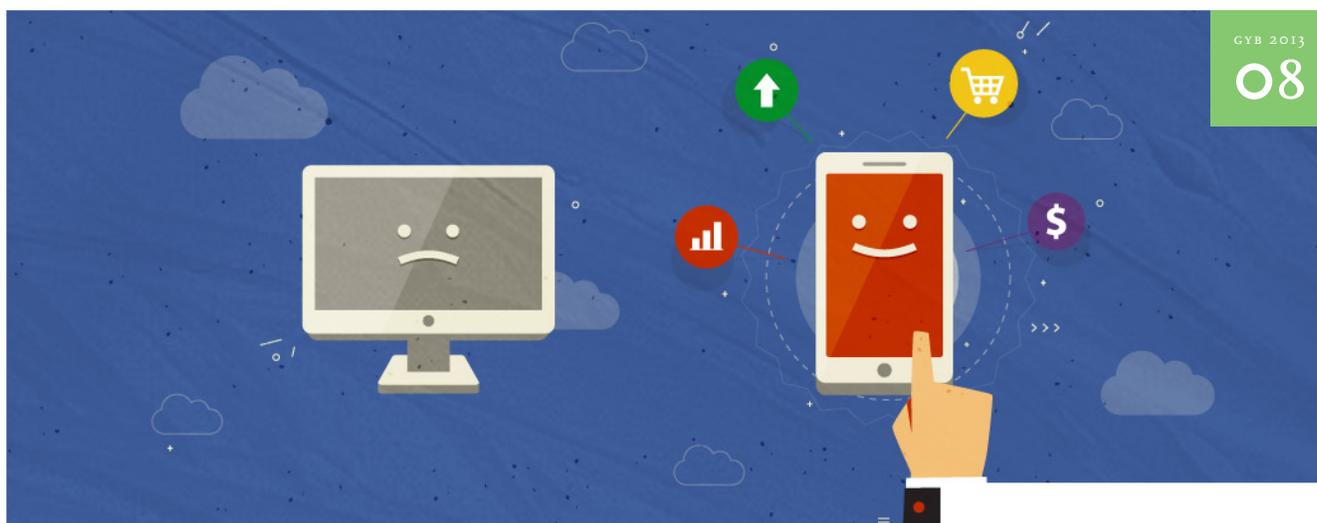




GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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Why Small Businesses Go Mobile (Mobile VS Desktop)

“The Rise of the Mobile Only User”, “Mobile Internet Traffic Gaining Fast” and “Mobile’s browser usage share jumps...”- these are the kind of headlines that pop up when you search the web for ‘mobile vs. desktop’.

Expect that to continue. Studies continuously show that consumers are relying more heavily on mobile web browsing than that of the traditional desktop variety.

“Mobile web browsing will overtake desktop web browser within few years.”

What does this mean for small business owners? It means that most visitors to your website are browsing, shopping and interacting via mobile and tablet devices. It means, get on board!

It means a shift in priorities, focusing expenditures on mobile browsing and making the necessary adaptations. During

the transition phase it is important to remember that technology is a fluctuating industry, constantly changing. Be wise when picking and choosing which trends to invest in. Choose those that are intuitively long lasting and wide reaching.

Some tips to consider when considering the mobile market:

- How will your mobile browsing differ from the desktop version? Be specific, not just with visuals but consider interactivity as well.
- Remember to consider content management- two stand-alone sites means two separate sets of content and double the workload.
- Test usability on varying mobile devices like Smartphone’s and tablets.
- Utilize analytics and make on the go information more accessible on mobile platforms.
- Always provide the option to browse the complete site via the mobile device. Do not isolate your users to one platform or the other.

Mobile prioritization will not require extra resources or an inflated budget. View it as more of a redirection of existing priorities.

Feeling overwhelmed? Start with baby steps, like optimizing your site for mobile visitors, mobile-optimizing emails and doing mobile Search Engine Optimization.

Use mobile for social media marketing, email marketing and advertising- like Facebook updates and newsletters, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest.

Statistically, 74% of consumers will wait 5 seconds for a website to load on their mobile device before abandoning the site.

Many experts say that the only way mobile marketing works for small businesses is if they jump in whole-heartedly and commit to the mobile and digital functions. So if now is not the time, when is?



Protecting Your Employees from Poaching

Poaching or employee raiding is when another business or firm targets your valued team members and attempts to lure them away.

Small businesses, especially successful ones, become viable targets because bigger businesses know they can offer more in terms of cash benefits. So how do you ensure that your small business retains those valuable team members who you have invested in?

Start at the beginning and include non-compete clauses in each and every employee's contract. Essentially, these agreements state that the employee agrees not to go work for the competition, solicit business from current customers or compete with your company for a designated period of time after leaving their position at your business.

Potential employees may shy away from these agreements as they can feel trapped in their career trajectory.

You can also prevent the temptation by nurturing your employees and providing adequate incentives. Create long-term

incentive plans and keep your employees involved in planning for the company's future.

Managers can often underestimate the value of small acts of kindness and inspiration when it comes to their employee's satisfaction. Make this a top priority and incorporate it into daily work life. Be the boss that employees want to work for.

“Money is not always the biggest factor.”

Recruiting is becoming cutthroat. Poachers are boldly calling employees at their place of work or accessing them through sites such as LinkedIn and making enticing offers.

Large corporates have juicy budgets to offer bonuses and more, making poaching a high-risk and expensive problem for small business owners.

Employees want to feel “engaged and interested in their work, feel appreciated and that their effort and opinion counts

as well as being confident your organization is invested in their future,” says one expert in the field.

Consider these simple ideas carefully- are you actively doing them?

- Actually saying ‘Thank You!’- Besides these simple words, make other rewards achievable and regular.
- Keep communication open and make it known that their opinions count.
- Build company culture and unite the ranks, everyone wants to be part of something bigger!
- Promote a work/life balance. Making their lives better outside the work place shows that you actually care.
- Invest in staff development- if you don't encourage their growth and help them achieve their goals they will go somewhere that will!

Reach out to your employees with an anonymous survey or questionnaire to find out about their levels of satisfaction, give them a chance to tell you what needs to happen in order to keep them happy!



Content Promotions and the “new SEO”

Essentially, small business owners want to figure out how they can improve their ‘natural search performance’, without relying on the typical SEO trends of link-building and other specialized tactics.

This is where content promotion comes into play. Content marketing is a marketing tactic that relies on producing ‘high value content that produces a number of different results’. It is a powerful tool for building brand recognition, as an example.

“The strategy is to produce high value content.”

When done well, it also drives website traffic through content found on popular social sites.

Ideally, small businesses should aim to intersect the search engine optimization with their content marketing. Do this by creating blog posts utilizing keywords- blog posts are the foundation of strong content marketing.

Good blog posts consist of 1,000 words or more, are authoritative, regular, and engaging. Include “outreach” content, which

can be spread via social sites and person-to-person.

Examples of this type of content are:

- Infographic and instructional images
- Humorous and educational video clips
- Downloadable guides or reports

This type of interactive content will produce natural link building, a cornerstone of content marketing.

So you have now created great content- what’s next? How does it get consumed? Promotional channels include email campaigns, events and social media.

Paid promotions like content syndication, Google AdWords and other tools such as newsletters, email sponsorships and search marketing are also valuable.

Promotion is key- if the great content is not distributed properly, your business will not feel the effects. Invest here when necessary, hire a freelancer to step in and revamp your content and provide unique insight to your campaign.

Engage the influential- reach out to niche bloggers or press analysts and offer to feature

a quote or an interview in your content, to gain access to their deep wells of followers.

Create banner ads or visual titles and place them strategically on the home page of your site, encouraging potential readers to continue to dig deeper into your content.

Embrace being a publisher, a creator and an editor. Create a schedule for production and stick to it. Find your story and share it! As they say, if you are not creating content online, you do not exist.

PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS FROM FRAUD

Always compare checks to invoices, and never pay a bill without confirming it first. If you pay over the internet set up a separate checking account to handle these transactions. Most importantly, watch your back online - the wizardry of words can be mesmerizing to a struggling small business owner but only ever accept funding from a legitimate, proven source.



No Friends? Facebook Tips to Build Loyal Followers

Facebook provides two-way communication between consumer and company. It builds brand recognition, is incredibly versatile and has a massive audience.

Moreover, Facebook shares content seamlessly. Ever heard of going viral? Well we can thank Facebook for that! It is time to embrace the Face and more importantly, make it work for you. First, you need friends!

Here are some things you can do to build a better following:

- Personalize your profile- add a variety of pictures that reflect who you are as a business owner.
- Commit to the page and post regular, unique and interesting commentary that keeps fans engaged
- Analyze your progress; utilize Facebook's insight tools to track the performance of your page.

Do not be fooled by services touting their ability to provide you with '1000 friends for a low, low price of...'. These are just numbers- and can be counterproductive in that Google is wise to these "tricks" and

can actually penalize your site. What you need are engaged, interactive fans.

The goal is not to close a sale, but rather to provide interesting content. It may create a jump to your ecommerce site.

"Provide a reason for consumers to visit your Facebook page."

Create a voice and personality that goes beyond the corporate blah-blah that bores users. Above everything, Facebook is personal and fans only like pages that reach out and speak to them specifically.

Experts suggest a 70/30 model – 70% interaction, 30% sales- when it comes to Facebook. Users are likely to 'unlike' a page that they feel is flooding their feed with junky promos.

It's all about content- videos, images, contests, guidebooks, newsletters- it must be relatable and intriguing.

Friends and likes are not stats to be quantified. They are a source

of intelligence when it comes to investigation among your market niche.

Make them part of the process by running surveys or polls on new products and services. Run market tests on the most simple platform- testing names, colors, designs, etc.

Run contests and promotions and offer deals and discounts with each 'like'. Just like everyone else, Facebook users like to be rewarded for their loyalty.

Often consumers feel that companies are faceless and impersonal. This is the ultimate reaching-out tool, a chance to put a face to a name. Being responsive makes consumers feel appreciated.

Aim to become a more exclusive group over time. Accept all members in the beginning and slowly weed out those who do not contribute or promote your ideals.

Join local groups, like-minded industry pages and the groups your clients might be interested in. Like and be liked!



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