



Essential marketing tools for any business



How can you present your brand to the world? Through savvy marketing strategies.

A pillar of any business — whether it's a Fortune 500 company, a startup that provides a niche B2B service or a lemonade stand run by a couple of kids — is marketing. The image you present to the world, the voice of your brand and how you reach customers and engage with potential clients are all elements in a broad marketing strategy.

Perhaps in a simple world, people could run a radio ad, and that would cover all your marketing bases. However, as many business owners know, marketing is a big word. It covers a lot of ground and involves employing a dizzying array of tools, techniques and mediums. There is no one way to market your business, and those who think this quickly learn that they need to diversify their efforts in order to connect with a larger audience of potential customers and clients.

To build an effective and robust marketing strategy, you need to know what mediums and tactics are best for achieving certain goals. For instance, a billboard might tell people that your company exists, but if you want to build trust with clients or present yourself as a thought leader in your industry, there are more effective mediums than a billboard.

Over the last few decades, the digital revolution has dramatically expanded the possibilities companies have to present themselves and to reach customers.

Today we'll look at specific marketing goals that are essential to almost every business and discuss the specific marketing tools and mediums that will help you achieve these goals.

Engage with the public

Marketing is about so much more than just convincing someone to buy your product or service. With the rise of social media, companies have realized the huge value of staying in front of the public and engaging with people, whether it's related to your business or not.

Top platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest and TikTok, allow companies to reach a large audience and even target geographic areas. You can pay for targeted advertising, or you can grow organically, through shares, likes and conversations around your stories.

To organically grow your online presence, the key is to engage with people in a way that is informative, entertaining and valuable. Remember, this is not a sales pitch. People are constantly bombarded with ads, and if you present yourself as just another company trying to sell them something, you can lose your audience quickly.

Position yourself as a thought leader

A successful brand is a brand people trust. One way to make your company stand out as a trustworthy voice, whether in fashion, construction, design or virtually any other industry, is to share insights through thought leadership.

One of the most effective ways you can do this is by providing visitors to your website or other social accounts with valuable information, stories or industry analysis. Just like we discussed above, try not to advertise here. For instance, if you run a health food store, the goal is to make your company a go-to source for information about nutrition, dietary trends, supplements, the latest research and so forth. This will lead people to trust you as an authority and the place to go when they need health food. In a way, it's advertising without advertising.

The best tool for this is to have an active blog you regularly update, which is full of engaging and useful information that people will want to read and share, and in the process, puts your business in front of potential customers.

Capture new leads

We've talked about engaging with the public and becoming a thought leader, but at this point you're probably wondering, how do I convert my audience into clients? How do I generate leads from these online visitors?

Begin by making sure you're getting your blog in front of people. Promote your blog on your social media channels and through emails. As more people visit your blog it will show up in organic search results too.

Once you've got visitors to your site there are many free ways you can turn them into leads.

These include:

- Offer free content such as a whitepaper or eBook that people can download after providing their email address, which you can use to follow up.
- Offer something at a discount or for free. This is the equivalent of an online coupon and may be just enough to turn a visitor into a customer.
- Other lead magnets include webinars, video series and interviews with experts or influencers. Basically, it's all about having the right content. You have to give something of value to a customer before you can ask for their email. It's that simple!

Get offline and step out into the community

Running a small business is about more than driving a profit; it's about being part of a community. Indeed, community is one of the biggest reasons people want to patronize small businesses, and one of the things that motivates many entrepreneurs.

You might be able to grow a great online community that generates leads and revenue to make you financially successful, but nothing beats getting out there and physically being part of the wider community.

This is one of the most powerful — and most satisfying — marketing tools. You can do this through volunteer events, hosting events, partnering with other small businesses, participating in community events (such as parades, art shows, block parties) and much more.

In some of these situations you can have sign-up sheets, give away custom logo t-shirts or just be there to build and develop relationships within the community.