

A Manta eBook

# 29 Awesome Ways to Market Your Small Business



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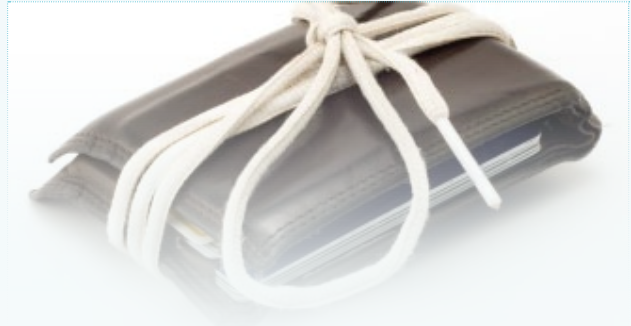
At Manta we're committed to giving you the tools, tips and best practices for growing your small or midsize business. Our team of experts compiled the following 29 marketing recommendations, along with some of the best Q&A from our forum, Manta Connect. We hope you find some useful nuggets of information. Enjoy!

## 21 Shoestring Marketing Secrets That All Small Business Owners Need to Know

By Jessica M. Swanson

Unfortunately, many small business owners believe in the motto, "it takes money to make money" in the world of small business. The good news is that nothing could be further from the truth.

There are twenty-one shoestring marketing secrets that will provide you with the right frame of mind so that you can begin the process of building a thriving small business without spending much on marketing.



### What every small business needs to know about Shoestring Marketing:

- 1. Low-cost.** In today's internet and social media age, there are now more low-cost marketing options than ever before. Not only is it possible, it is absolutely doable to substantially grow your small business on a shoestring budget.
- 2. Commitment.** If your marketing is going to eventually take hold, then you need to make a strong commitment to see it through until it sticks. Don't give up in the early stages.
- 3. Patience.** The fruits of your marketing labors don't happen overnight. You need to plant your marketing seeds and tend to them regularly before your marketing garden blooms.
- 4. Branding.** Your clients and customers need to have a clear picture in their minds as to who you are and how your product or service can solve their most pressing problems.
- 5. Consistency.** Marketing is much like breathing. It's the life of your small business and should be a regular part of your daily business activities.
- 6. Domination.** If you want to explode your small business profits, then you must dominate a small part of your market. You need to become the "go-to" person in your particular niche.
- 7. Customer-focused.** Your primary job is to clearly identify the problems that your prospects face and offer them the obvious solutions.
- 8. Identify your target market.** It's crucial that you know exactly who needs your product or service. Mass marketing doesn't work in today's business environment. Not only does it force you to water down your marketing message to please the masses, but it's much too expensive for the shoestring marketer.

**9. Elicits confidence and trust.** Create experiences and situations that boost the level of confidence from your prospects. At the end of the day, people buy from those whom they like and trust.

**10. Massive visibility.** Since your prospects are exposed to over 4,000 ads every single day, you need to ensure that your small business is utilizing as many marketing platforms as possible.

**11. Repetition.** Research suggests that prospects need to encounter your small business between seven and twelve times before they are ready to purchase. So, put yourself in front of your target market over and over again.

**12. Ease of use.** If your sales process, marketing materials or any other part of your business is too complicated, your customers will become confused. Confused customers simply don't buy.

**13. The WOW Factor.** What are you doing to get noticed? How are you different than your competition? The fastest way to small business failure is to blend in with the crowd.

**14. Quality.** If your product and/or services aren't top quality, then you won't get repeat business. Your long-term success depends on satisfied customers who spread the word about your business and purchase from you repeatedly.

**15. Education.** Position yourself as an expert and educate your prospects as to why your small business can offer them the remedy to their most pressing pain points.

**16. Relationships.** Create real relationships with your prospects and customers. Answer their questions, solve their problems and help them if they're stuck. Your prospects want to know that there's a real person in front of your small business.

**#17 Increasing the lifetime value of customers.** Over 20% of your existing customers will purchase from you again (since they already know and trust you), so create additional ways for them to make purchases.

**18. Automation.** We're living in a fast-tracked society that doesn't work using old-fashioned marketing methods. So, embrace automation tools such as landing pages, email autoresponders, shopping carts, customer management software, etc.

**19. Tracking your results.** It's essential to your overall survival that you have a clear understanding of what works and what doesn't work when it comes to your marketing. Use link tracking software to track your ROI (even if your only investment is your time).

**20. Flexibility.** Things change quickly and you must be willing to adapt. When the next "great" marketing platform emerges, be willing to jump on board and embrace it with excitement. If you are a flexible marketer, you're always miles ahead of your competition.

**21. Everything that you do.** Marketing isn't just about your advertising campaigns. Every single interaction that you have with your prospects promotes your small business. So, be careful how you answer the phone, respond to your emails and treat your customers because all of it makes an instant and lasting impression on them.

So, there you have it, twenty-one Shoestring Marketing strategies that will literally transform your small business from “just getting by” to “flourishing.” And, the best part of all is that you can do it all on a shoestring marketing budget.

RELATED CONVERSATIONS IN:



*Chris Post from Buffalo, NY asks:*



**Q:** What’s the most proven and effective way for a small business to market themselves using the internet?

**A:** “Internet marketing requires an integrated approach that focuses attention on your core products and services. While components have high levels of independent effect, it is the cumulative impact that really delivers the ROI. Marketing on the internet should not be considered a “fire and forget” vehicle.”

<http://connect.manta.com/t/whats-the-most-proven-and-effective-way?f=32&t=41>

*Jim Doan from Kamloops, BC asks:*



**Q:** What do you consider to be the best return on your advertising dollars? TV, radio, newspapers, flyers, directory ads, facebook ads, posters, etc.

**A:** “Good question and I’ll put my two cents in. I have found that in the marketing world it’s not one thing that does it, it’s a lot of different things all working together that do it. It’s a matter of finding what works for your particular business, what you can afford to do and then expanding on it from there.”

<http://connect.manta.com/t/what-do-you-consider-to-be-the-best-retu?f=32&t=406>

FEATURED Q&A FROM MANTA EXPERTS

**Q: What are low cost marketing methods?**

**A:** You’ve already heard them, just by other names like “Guerrilla Marketing” and “Social Media.”

And while they are low cost, understand that there are no cost-free marketing methods. Some of the most wasteful marketing spending we’ve ever seen has been in the pursuit of “low-cost marketing.” Measuring your marketing efforts should never be based solely on cost, but instead on return.

I know, I know, you have a marketing budget, so costs are important. But focusing too much on costs leads to costly mistakes, especially in figuring out what it really takes to make that low-cost marketing method really work. Here’s an example: I’ve already mentioned social media; so-called “gurus” are describing it as “free marketing.” It’s not. It takes time, and time (especially yours) is money. So, while it can work effectively, it’s not free. Successful social marketers work long and hard for their success. And if it’s not generating the kinds of sales you need, it’s not worth it.

Instead of cost, start looking at the concept we call “lift.” In simple terms, it is how much you get back on your marketing investment. The easiest way to compute that is to divide gross profits (the money you make off of sales generated by the marketing effort) by the marketing costs. If for example, you generate \$10,000 in sales (with a 40% gross margin) on a marketing investment of \$1,000, your “lift” is four times.

Providing you can track all this--and that’s a big “if” for some companies--your cost becomes much less important. In addition to changing how you look at marketing, following this approach will discipline you to better know your company income and expenses. Who knows; you could get to the point where the real issue is how much new business you can handle effectively?

## 3 Easy Steps to Getting Referrals Every Time

By Larry Prevost

Asking for referrals is a natural part of the sales process and it doesn't have to be limited to sales people.

But, as with all other activities in the sales process, sales people need to establish rapport, meet their clients and prospects at their level, and then lead them on a guided tour to a place that is mutually beneficial.



Typically, I've heard sales reps use language such as, "Do you know someone else I should be talking with?" or "Who else do you know that might be interested in ABC's extraordinary service?"

That's the equivalent of saying, "Do you want to buy my product" or "Are you interested in my services?"

These types of questions are blunt instruments meant to bludgeon your prospects into submission. You don't have trust, you don't have rapport, and your efforts to gather referrals are seen as self-serving with no regard for your prospect or client.

This is the process that you've probably seen untrained sales people use.

**Instead, conduct the referral process the same way that you would conduct other pieces of the sales process. Follow these steps:**

- 1. Establish rapport.** Use language to meet your client or prospect at their current state of mind. You've done this to open the sales call by simply verifying several pieces of information with your client or prospect. Do the same thing here as well. If you are speaking to a past or returning client, use questions to get them to verify their experience. If you are speaking to a new prospect, use a cushion to acknowledge their current state, appeal to their nobler side and then reiterate some of the points about their industry that brought you to the prospect in the first place.
- 2. Describe the kind of referral that you are looking for.** Describe your ideal client in as much detail as possible. When possible, use elements that are shared by the prospect or client that is sitting in front of you. And use descriptive language to create a person that your client will understand and relate to. Describing your ideal client as a young person with high energy, working in a creative hi-tech environment creating unique applications for the web will result in your prospect thinking about specific people with names that have done some of the work that you have outlined.

However, saying that you are looking for web designers will result in your prospect or client having an unfocused mind and they will most likely say, "I can't think of anybody right now, but I'll let you know

when I do.” Remember, detailed descriptions will act as an anchor in your clients’ mind and produce concrete results. Vague descriptions of the type of referral you are asking for will produce vague results at best.

**3. Lower the barrier to getting cooperation.** Lower the barrier by reducing the risk associated with your client or prospect giving up their contacts’ information. Remember that if they are giving you their contacts, they are putting their reputation on the line. Make them look good by insuring that their contacts will get the best service or products possible. If you are getting referrals from a client that you’ve done business with before, this should be fairly easy to do. Tell your client that you will work to insure that these referrals will receive the same types of benefits that they received. You also can get creative here and offer incentives to your clients for supplying referrals that buy your stuff.

This process works if you are asking clients that you have a favorable relationship with or if you are asking new prospects that you’ve never met before. The only difference will be in how you establish rapport at the beginning of the process.

It is our responsibility to help lead our clients to a place that will help them get what they need. If you leave that process unmanaged, then your client or prospect will find their own solution and it may not include you or your product or your ideas.

**Take the uncertainty out of getting referrals. Guide your prospects and clients in the discovery process and you will get referrals every time.**

## FEATURED Q&A FROM MANTA EXPERTS

**Q: Is there a way to ask current clients for referrals without sounding too needy?**

**A: It’s a relatively small step to create an active referral development program. Here’s how to get started:**

**First...your state of mind:** Don’t be shy or embarrassed about soliciting referrals from current clients, especially loyal ones. Most will be pleased to recommend you.

**Next...who to ask:** Start with those clients who have historically provided the most and best referrals. You know they love you, and you know they aren’t shy about doing referrals. Make a list of your clients and arrange by referral value. Then start at the top and work your way down. Don’t ask too many clients all at once. You may get too many opportunities to follow up effectively.

**Then reach out and ask them for referrals:** Do it face-to-face or by phone. Explain that you have some available “bandwidth” for new clients and you’re starting to reach out. Tell them you’d like to find clients just like them: good businesspeople who understand the value of outside support. And ask directly if they know of anyone that could use help. That’s simple and honest, and it does not appear needy.

### **Keep these tips in mind:**

- Some companies offer incentives or rewards to customers who provide referrals. But be careful. Undertake a rewards program only if it fits with your type of business or customer. For most small businesses, your client wants to help you because of his or her relationship with you, not because they can benefit financially. An offer of money might actually offend.
- On the other hand, express appreciation readily. And keep them posted on your efforts, either way.
- Once your client list fills back up, don’t quit soliciting referrals
- Finally, ask them to be your “coach” with your referral prospects. As a coach, they can provide a testimonial for you via phone call, letter or email.

Shana Kirkpatrick from Durant, OK asks:

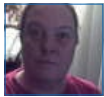


**Q:** I have several leads and when I call to book them for a webcast they set a time and then don't show up!

**A:** "I wouldn't take it too personally. Selling anything is a matter of persistence. I've run across this in the past scheduling appointments for an old position I once had. I would sometimes have to schedule and reschedule them in upwards of 10 times before they showed up."

<http://connect.manta.com/t/i-have-several-leads-and-when-i-call-to?f=33&t=1016>

Sue Joines from Fayetteville, NC asks:



**Q:** Hi, I'm Sue and I'm wondering how I can get some customers without waiting a long time?

**A:** "You must tell everyone you know, everyone you meet and everyone in your online social network what you do and how you do it. Develop a 30 second "personal ad" or elevator pitch, that concisely says NOT what you do or sell, but how what you do or sell helps THEM."

<http://connect.manta.com/t/hi-im-sue-and-im-wondering-how-i-can-get?uid=974&f=33&t=1216&start=0>

## 5 Social Media Marketing Tips for Your Business

By Jessica M. Swanson

Even though social media sites are a tremendous way for small business owners to promote themselves on a shoestring budget, most small business owners don't utilize these powerful platforms effectively. They vacillate between feeling completely overwhelmed and feeling that the sites are a huge waste of time.



Social Media is one of my favorite ways of generating interest around my own small business. But, there are some basic principles to keep in mind in order to make your marketing more effective and efficient.

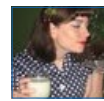
## Here are five important tips that will enhance your overall social media marketing experiences:

- 1. Create a landing page.** A landing page is a one-page website that offers your visitors a quick peek at you and your small business before they are “overwhelmed” by your business website. In addition, successful landing pages offer visitors a valuable free offer in exchange for their name and email address. Landing pages are crucial to business success because they allow prospects to connect with you on a more personal level, quickly highlight the benefits of doing business with you and give your prospects a small taste of what your small business is all about.
- 2. Set up complete profiles on your social networks.** If you want your marketing efforts to work, make sure that your social media profiles are complete. If prospects land on your profile page and it doesn’t have a picture and contains sparse information, they aren’t likely to feel any connection with you. You should provide as much information about yourself as possible. Remember, people want to get to know you, so give them what they’re looking for.
- 3. Participate; don’t push.** When marketing on social media platforms, always keep in mind the 80/20 rule. You should spend 80% of your time sharing, answering questions and interacting with others and only 20% of your time promoting your small business. If you stick to this rule, you’ll be viewed as a true participant as opposed to a pushy salesperson.
- 4. Be consistent.** Social media marketing is all about consistency. It’s extremely important that prospective clients see you on a regular basis. Exposure is the key to gaining your client’s trust and eventual business. So, get on those sites and interact on a daily basis.
- 5. Create a daily schedule.** If you don’t have a schedule, it won’t take long before you’re sucked into the “social media black hole.” Determine how much time you have to devote to your social media marketing and stick to it. If you only have 30-minutes each day, then only utilize three social networking sites and generate a strong presence on them. I like to use a timer (honestly!) to keep myself on track; when it beeps, I’m off to the next site.

### RELATED CONVERSATIONS IN:



*Cassandra Fear from Cleveland, OH asks:*

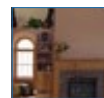


**Q:** How does a small business gain footing in the huge world of social media?

**A:** “Success in the Social Media, be it Twitter, Facebook or any other requires a strong base of fans that are established customers and prospects. I would recommend you focus your time and energy on other areas that will give you the momentum required to make a splash on social sites.”

<http://connect.manta.com/t/how-does-a-small-business-gain-footing-i?f=9&t=741>

*Jim Doan from Kamloops, BC asks:*



**Q:** How do you use social media to grow your business?

**A:** “With social media, it’s important to update your page consistently otherwise people lose interest. To get your fanbase to grow, email your friends and family the link to your page and ask them to “like” the page. Include the link to your Facebook page on your website and in your marketing materials.”

<http://connect.manta.com/t/how-do-you-use-social-media-to-grow-your?f=9&t=353>



**Q: How do I get more traffic to my website?**

**A:** In simple terms: SEO, SEM and social media.

**Search Engine Optimization (SEO)** is the art and science (mostly science) of getting better search results for your website.

That's a simple description; it's far more complex in execution and requires constant attention. (SEO is not a set-and-forget activity.) Basic tactics are simple:

1. Find the best keywords to attract your potential customers.
2. Use them in what's called on-page and off-page SEO.
3. Repeat periodically.

There are hundreds of SEO resources online, starting with Google (which offers one of the best keyword finders available). So start the SEO learning curve yourself, or hire expert help. You can do 70% of the work yourself without too much time invested, but from there, it gets harder to both learn and execute.

**Search Engine Marketing (SEM)** is also called Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising. Search engines allow you to insert ads on search results pages with your best keywords, or where your prospects are most likely to visit on the web. And it's free...right up to the point that someone clicks through to your website. Then you pay the going rate for that click. SEM is a huge, freewheeling, fast-moving auction where--depending on the keywords--you may be up against large, sophisticated competition. If a few of your SEO keywords prove to be winners, consider investing a little in SEM. But be prepared to manage the click-throughs effectively when they hit your site; otherwise, a lot of money can go to waste in a big hurry.

**Social media**--in particular, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and blogging--offer ways for you to drive traffic to your website. But--unlike what some scammers will tell you--it's a slow building process to generate traffic. And it works because what you put out there slowly builds value in your "brand" until prospects choose to visit your site or register for your feeds.

The common threads among all of these is patience and work. Don't start a Twitter account and expect web traffic to take an immediate bounce after your first three tweets. Instead, learn the ropes, then reach out to others. Start a conversation, and keep up with your end of the dialogue.

Looking for more ways to grow your business?

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