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Building your Network

Every year more and more small businesses are created and every year more and more of those small businesses fail. Sadly this is a true fact. When starting a small business many entrepreneurs believe they need a website, and they are most definitely right. Whether your small business brings in thousands of dollars every month, or hundreds of dollars every month, there is no excuse for not having a website.

So you jumped all in, and have a website up and running. Just because you have a website does not mean people visit it, or for that matter, can find it! Just like with your business in general your website requires marketing. Marketing your website will help produce traffic like you have never seen. It will help your listing on search engine rankings, and it will bring new and repeat customers to your site. So, how do you market your website? You build a network, and the steps below will help you do just that!

- Google Places- Is your business listed on Google Places? It should be! It is free and only requires a Google or Gmail account.
- Facebook- Does your small business have a Facebook Fan Page or Business Page? Another free way to link back your site and drive traffic.
- Twitter- Yet another free way to highlight your business and link back to your website.
- Video- YouTube is the 2nd highest used search engine. Create a video showcasing your store or a how to related to your business and link it back to your site.
- Trade Organizations- Some directories focused on particular industries, such as education or finance. You probably belong to various trade associations that feature member directories. Ask for a link. Even if you have to pay something for a link from the organization, it may help boost your PageRank.

- Write Articles- You can dramatically increase your visibility when you write articles in your area of expertise and distribute them to editors as free content for their e-mail newsletters or their websites. Just ask that a link to your website and a one-line description of what you offer be included with the article. This is an effective "viral" approach that can produce hundreds of links to your site over time. You'll find lots of information on how to do this from the most popular article marketing site, EzineArticles.com. When you create a free membership account, they begin sending you instructions and ideas each week.
- Blog- Want links to your site? Begin a business blog on your website, hosted on your own domain. If you offer excellent content and regular industry comment, people are likely to link to it, increasing your site's PageRank. Consistency and having something to say are key. If you have a blog on a third-party blog site, occasionally find reasons to talk about and link to your own domain.
- Include your URL- Make sure that all business cards, stationery, brochures, and literature contain your company's URL. And see that your printer gets the URL syntax correct. In print, I recommend leaving off the http:// part and including only the www.domain.com portion.
- Use Traditional Media- Don't discontinue print advertising that you've found effective. But be sure to include your URL in any display or classified ads you purchase in trade journals, newspapers, yellow pages, etc. View your website as an information adjunct to the ad. Use a two-step approach: (1) capture readers' attention with the ad, (2) then refer them to a URL where they can obtain more information and perhaps place an order. Look carefully at small display or classified ads in the back of narrowly-targeted magazines or trade periodicals. Sometimes these ads are more targeted, more effective, and less expensive than online advertising. Consider other traditional media to drive people to your site, such as direct mail, classifieds, post cards, etc. TV can be used to promote websites, especially in a local market.
- Use your signature- Install a "Signature" in your E-Mail Program to help potential customers get in touch with you. Most e-mail programs allow you to designate a "signature" to appear at the end of each message you send. Limit it to 6 to 8 lines: Company name, address, phone number, URL, e-mail address, and a one-phrase description of your unique business offering. Look for examples on e-mail messages sent to you.
- Ask for E-Mail- Your own list of customers and site visitors who have given you permission to contact them will be your most productive list. Send special offers, coupon specials, product updates, etc. They often initiate another visit to your site. If you have a regular newsletter, you can include many of these in your regular e-mailing.
- Promotions- People like getting something free. If you publicize a contest or drawing available on your site, you'll generate more traffic than normal. Make sure your sweepstakes rules are legal in all states and countries you are targeting. Prizes should be

designed to attract individuals who fit a demographic profile describing your best customers.

Wow, we have definitely covered many ways to market your website, and your business for that matter. I hope this helps highlight some ways you can successfully drive traffic to your small business website.

If you decide you would like to implement these strategies into your website, but don't know how, or simply don't want to, give me a call and we can setup an appointment to go over your site and start building your network.



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