31 MARKETING BARRIERS
AND HOW TO BREAK THROUGH THEM

Steakhouse Mogul’s Branding Tips

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Spotlight:
Startmarke Customizes Marketing Options for Startups
31 MARKETING BARRIERS AND HOW TO BREAK THROUGH THEM

Marketing for small business can be exciting and profitable. It can also be a sink hole for your hard earned dollar if you start down the wrong path. If you’re stuck and not getting the results you’re looking for, try looking at these 31 marketing barriers and how to break through them.

Brand Building Tips from the Founder of Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse

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Defining Your Marketing Plan

This Marketing edition of Small Business Trends magazine is designed to help you make sense of the huge number of marketing tools and techniques out there today.

Our cover story identifies 31 common marketing barriers that a small business faces. We consulted with several top marketing experts and share the best ways to bust through problem situations.

Social media marketing is wildly popular but it can be overwhelming -- and a time suck. Get clarity with our list of 45 ways to use social media for marketing.

Don’t miss the branding advice from the founder of the popular Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse in New York City. He’s also the host of the Restaurant Stakeout reality TV show. In our interview, he describes how he branded his business -- techniques you, too, can use in your business.

Do you market your business to local customers, e.g., those within a 75-mile radius? We’ve got tips on bringing more local customers through your doors.

We also tackle the 5 biggest marketing mistakes small businesses make so you can avoid them.

There’s all that plus tips on making great videos to promote your business, using direct mail, and lots more marketing goodness!

Wishing you much success,

Anita Campbell
CEO and Publisher
@Smallbiztrends

P.S. Please subscribe (free) so you never miss future editions of the magazine. Go to http://smallbiztrends.com/magazine.
Starbucks’ Unicorn Frappuccino Was a Marketing Master Stroke

The colorful beverage made the perfect Instagram share and its limited availability guaranteed customers would race into their nearest Starbucks to get one. And once they did, they couldn’t resist snapping a new photo and sharing it on Instagram or Snapchat. What a way to start the whole crazy marketing cycle over again. Genius, no?

Or Maybe It Wasn’t!

But all that magical unicorn dust dissipated a bit once a trendy little cafe called The End in Brooklyn cried foul. It seems the Starbucks beverage bore a striking resemblance to the little cafe’s own creation: the Unicorn Latte. The smaller business had the foresight to file for Trademark protection and a lawsuit ensued. So maybe NOT the greatest idea after all?

Of Course, Unicorn Glitter Isn’t the Only Way to Set Your Product Apart

Lost Spirits Distillery has found another way. The Los Angeles maker of oak aged rum and peated whiskey markets its products on several levels. The distillery itself boasts a fantasy landscape of carved wooden tikis, jungle landscapes and a raft festooned as if from ancient Egypt. The rum and whiskey created there is artificially aged and instilled with exotic flavors.

How About Bringing Manufacturing Jobs Back to the U.S.?

There’s no need to engage in such flights of fancy to make your brand stand out. Already iconic brand Kangol, whose hats have been worn by stars from Samuel L. Jackson to the Beatles, is a case in point. The brand’s effort to bring its manufacturing from China back to the U.S. has grabbed some attention.

Or Adding New Products Both Needed and -- er -- Exotic

While companies like Bowery create new indoor farming options to serve urban customers, Oregon wineries are moving in a more … interesting direction. These wineries are adding marijuana crops to the grapes they now grow. As always, when adding such a dramatically different product, these businesses are moving slowly. But the impact is undeniable.
31 Marketing Barriers and How to Break Through Them
Marketing for small business can be exciting and profitable. It can also be a sink hole for your hard earned dollar if you start down the wrong path. If you’re stuck and not getting the results you’re looking for, try looking at these 31 marketing barriers and how to break through them.

**Negative Online Reviews**

Bad online feedback can be amplified through tweets and posts. While some might be constructive, you need to mitigate the damage when the attacks are vicious. Finding a reputation management company can run the necessary interference.

**PPC Ads are Prohibitively Expensive**

Some people limit the scope here to search based ads where you’re picking keywords and choosing where you want your ads to appear. Therein lies the issue according to Robert Brady, founder of Righteous Marketing.

“Pay per click encompasses a lot of the paid options in social networks as well,” he says.

**Poor Customer Renewal Rate**

The Harvard Business Review suggests that increasing customer retention by 5% increases profits by up to 95 percent.

If your retention rates are sagging, the problem might be in the tone of your messaging.

Ivana Taylor is a small business marketing expert. She says using words and phrases to establish a relationship based collaboration is more effective than the old hard sell.

**Messaging that’s Off**

Copying and pasting the messages your competition is using doesn’t resonate with your market. Besides, it can even get your website penalized with Google.

“It’s important your message is clear about who you are and what you’re committed to,” she says. “Unique content is what drives customers in.”

**Website Doesn’t Convert**

You might be getting the traffic to your website but not the numbers in visitors who convert into sales. Remember, first impressions are just as important online as they are face-to-face.

You might need to tweak your landing page to get better numbers. Try simplifying your navigation. Something as simple as bigger buttons might be all you need.

**Long Sales Cycle**

Let’s say you need 10 clicks to get one ebook download. Narrow that down to eight and there’s a 20% cost savings.
Shopping for less expensive clicks from places like Facebook is a great way to shorten that sales cycle.

**Not Enough Leads Generated**

The issue when you’re not getting a steady flow of leads could very well be with the image and tone your emails, social media posts and website portray. Ivana Taylor suggests you soften that approach.

“Because of the Internet, our culture dictates you need to have strengths in areas that are predominately feminine,” she says.

**Poor Lead Tracking and Follow up**

Small business owners can easily get overwhelmed with all the analytics choices they have. However, not picking a way to automate your follow up procedures could cause everything to stall.

Checking out the variety of social media dashboards available today is a good jumping off point if you haven’t taken the plunge. These supply great metrics that even include open rates for email.

**Customers Confused by Your Offering**

Too many choices on the landing page can actually be confusing and bad. That goes for products and services that aren’t clearly different than the competition as well. Taking the time to front load any and all of your marketing efforts to decide what makes your offering unique is worth the time.

**Social Media is a Time Sink**

Carrying on with the too many choices theme, you don’t need to have a social media presence on every available site just because you can. Some work better than others and you need to match your target market up with the one that works.

Robert Brady stresses that good tracking helps you to decide what works and what can be cast aside.

**Keywords Fall Flat**

Search engine optimization (SEO) doesn’t get your website’s ranking to where it needs to be if you aren’t using the right keywords. There’s a process to getting the right ones and SEO gurus like Allan Pollett know what they are.

“The first thing to do is make a list of the keywords that you think people will use to search for your product or service and always think locally,” he says. You can actually fine tune your choices by searching them in Google.

**Inconsistent Brand Messaging**

A message that doesn’t have the same repetitive approach doesn’t resonate with your target audience. That means it won’t stick with the very people you want it to.

Take the time to blend the old with the new here. That means developing tag lines and product attributes you can use across any integrated marketing campaigns.
Marketing Voice Doesn’t Resonate

Just like Little Red Riding Hood’s porridge, some marketing voices are too hot (advertorial) or too cold (they speak down to your clients). The trick is to be conversational and catchy, while still valued added and informational. Hiring a writer helps.

Not Attracting Email Subscribers

Maybe your problem isn’t that you aren’t using tracking software. Maybe you’re having difficulty over what the software is telling you about the people opening up the emails you sent them.

Ivana Taylor suggests redefining who gets these emails.

“One of the reasons they’re not selling is because they don’t know who their ideal customer is,” she says.

Try creating some buyer personas to filter the message.

Your Product Doesn’t Get Any Reviews

You might not be selling enough to generate reviews or you’re not allowing for customer reviews in your online space.

Worst case scenario: you need to pull your product off the market and mine social media to find out how to fix what’s wrong in a new prototype. Best case scenario? Add a page or widget to your website to allow for reviews to be added.

Lack of Knowledge and Skills

Small business owners get overwhelmed with all the social media choices, analytical capabilities and other marketing toys they can adopt.

This one’s easy. Hire a professional marketer. Ivana Taylor’s LinkedIn page even highlights how she helps small businesses that get overwhelmed.

Misusing Links

Use these correctly, Google will reward you by ranking your page higher in the searches. Cut a few corners and pay a hefty price.

Allan Pollett explains:

“Google is penalizing sites for bad links. Citation links drive traffic to your website and build up authority with Google.” Yelp is a good example of where you can get quality links.

Not Testing Your Copy First

Many small businesses make the mistake of throwing their copy into their marketing mix without taking advantage of the analytics that can help to define it.

“Test the copy in an email or PPC environment first,” Robert Brady suggests.

Not Taking Advantage of a Big Email List

Not using a large email list to full advantage is another barrier. Even when you’re not sure
about something as simple as a headline, you can test it and break it down by sending it to different segments of your email list to decide what works. Then you can build a page with the copy that got the best results.

Organisational Barriers

Quite often, there are some generational divides in organizations. Some people may want to go for a more traditional print approach while others are interested in digital marketing.

The solution here is to adopt an integrated marketing plan that may use tools like Twitter to get the word out on live events.

Not Knowing What a Website Can Do

Some small businesses think they can circumvent having a website with a Facebook page. While that works they don’t get the full analytical capabilities.

Having a website on a platform like WordPress opens up the ability to get all of the analytical capabilities so you can make smart marketing decisions, according to Robert Brady.

Taking the Cheap Routes

There’s many marketing versions of snake oil salesmen on the Internet. Cutting corners by listening to big promises and cut rate prices means your business might pay the price.

“Sometimes people think they’re doing something good for their business,” Allan Pollett says, “but they can destroy their website so it will never rank on Google.”

Make sure the people who are doing your Internet marketing are transparent about the relevant factors like page and domain authority.

Failure to Prioritise Objectives

You can’t travel down any marketing road until you know what your preferred destination looks like. Benchmarks are a great way to determine how things are working.

Analytics are fine but you need to have concrete signposts like a consistent bump in sales to gauge success here. The two should work together.

Remember, first impressions are just as important online as they are face-to-face.

Not Understanding Who Is Pulling Your Marketing Strings

Some small businesses don’t pay attention to the Google updates like Panda. No small business can hope to ignore the rules set out in these and hope to succeed.

Allan Pollett makes this clear another way. “Google supplies 60 to 70% of most website’s traffic. If you get banned from Google, you’re basically saying you don’t want to be in business.”

Your Spending Has Increased but You Don’t Know What’s Working

You’re trying new marketing platforms because of the interesting emails you’re getting from internet marketing companies promising you page one rankings. Casting the net too wide might not work, but getting back to trusted fundamentals like AdWords is a sure bet.

Robert Brady suggests you can use three different ads and use a trusted platform like AdWords to rotate between them.
“Try them with a keyword you’ve got good volume on and look at the click through rate,” he says.

**Expecting Twitter Ads Will Work by Themselves**

Nothing you do online works just by being in cyberspace. If you just put together a Twitter Ad and let it all alone on the vast Internet ocean, you won’t get results.

Ivana Taylor knows that Twitter has a lot of great features that work with their ads like adding target market behaviors and interests. She knows that tailoring your approach here gets you results.

**Confusing Tactics and Strategy**

If you don’t have the language clear and use it properly, your marketing will be a jumbled mess.

Start clarifying with the difference between strategy and tactics. Mobile marketing, social media tools and the like are all tactics you use to further a business strategy. The business strategy being the objectives you use the tactics to achieve.

**Lack of Coordination**

Sometimes, your marketing team can be too big and/or disjointed. Social media teams might not have any connection to the print and radio advertisers. That can lead to a breakdown in the entire system.

If you integrate everything and load it into the right dashboard, you can see how Twitter and Facebook ads work together with live events and the ROI.

**Duplicate Content**

There’s a tendency for the DIY marketer to copy and paste competitor’s content. Cutting that corner can lead to penalties from Google that can cost you ranking and money.

The solution is simple. Make a few videos about your business and place them on your website.

**Hostile Corporate Cultures**

Franchisees might run up against this issue when they want to run a campaign for their individual stores. Not every big company will let their underlings hold the marketing reigns for themselves. You might be able to get around a restricting corporate culture by setting up your own social media accounts and posting personal items from the job. Adding pictures of employees and managers gives this a cozy personal vibe.

**Lack of Vision**

There are still those small businesses that think they don’t need integrated and/or digital marketing and can do well without even a website.

Keep in mind even the folks in a small town have smart phones these days. You’re missing out on getting the word out on your goods and services if you don’t take advantage of all the tools modern marketing has to offer.
Exciting Travel Offers

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Save Up To 70%

On Your Travel

Sign Up
Brand Building Tips from the Founder of Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse

Willie Degel is the former host of the Food Network’s Restaurant Stakeout and the owner of New York City’s iconic Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse. He’s expanding his proven recipe for success with franchising and expansion plans including a new location in Astoria, New York. We asked him to share some tips and advice on the methods he’s used to “steak” his iconic place in the business world.

Of course, the legendary entrepreneur who has recently opened a new restaurant in suburban Atlanta too, started with branding.

Pound the Pavement

“America has to take your brand, embrace it and welcome it into their households. It takes years. You need to pound the pavement and have a game plan,” he says.

His philosophy for initial research includes three questions:

“You need to ask yourself, ‘What are we selling? What is our product or service, and why should anyone come to us?’”
Lead by Example

Degel is a big believer in keeping small business branding simple. He also says leading by example and being a great problem solver are critical characteristics for small business owners looking to build a brand. Multi-tasking is important, too.

“You have to wear as many hats as possible,” he says. “You need to be an accountant and a lawyer and a motivator. In my business, you need to be a cook and a waiter and a bartender. Running any business takes a lot of work.”

Set Trends, Don’t Follow Them

Along with a dedication that includes taking your work home with you, small business owners need to know how to pick the right team. A big part of that is being able to highlight individual characteristics that work to the business’s advantage.

As well as having an open door policy and being able to communicate well, a good entrepreneur needs to know how to adapt to the changing times by staying flexible.

Degel says small business mavens even need to go a step further and be able to see the next big thing before it arrives.

“Not only should they be adapting to the times and trends, but they actually need to be a visionary and create trends themselves. You need to be there before anybody else and then wait for everybody to catch up to where you are.”

Willie’s track record is a template for his success as a restaurateur and motivator for small business owners in any field. His franchising plans include airports and shopping malls. To that end, Degel has established several different models to better build his brand across different price points and various locations.

Currently, he operates three different restaurant types:

Uncle Jack’s Steakhouse. There are three of these upscale dining establishments located in New York City.

Jack’s Shack Organic Eatery. Located on Long Island, this “fast-casual restaurant” features burgers, salads, smoothies and other menu choices.

Uncle Jack’s Meat House. The new Atlanta location is underway with the Astoria restaurant scheduled to open this month.

This American success story also has some excellent advice for what people looking to
build their small business brand need to avoid. However, not rushing to get rich isn’t the kind of tip you’d expect from this man, but Willie knows what works.

Get educated. Know the fight. Understand the responsibilities to running your own business. This is not a job. It’s a lifestyle.

“Start off slow and build with one employee doing one thing at a time. Avoid trying to start perfectly, don’t be afraid of failing, but be willing to make changes as quick as possible,” he says.

No Surprise

It’s no surprise to anyone familiar with him that Willie Degel feels having the right character and drive are essential ingredients to good branding. He explains how his own “hands on” personality works.

“My brain is addicted to challenge and going into the unknown,” he says. “I didn’t go to work for a company. I built my own company. Every position I hire for, I work the position and then I fill it so I can keep moving up.”

His final piece of advice for folks looking to get involved in building a small business brand sizzles like a 24 oz ribeye steak from one of his restaurants.

“Get educated. Know the fight that you’re getting involved in and understand what the responsibilities are to running your own business. This is not a job. It’s a lifestyle,” he says excusing himself because it’s time to prepare for another item on his never ending menu for success, an online podcast.

Rob Starr
Staff Writer
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Social media’s potential impact for small businesses cannot be understated. But if you’ve been using social media for awhile, then you probably already know a lot of the standard tips. However, there are plenty of other things you can do on social media aside from just posting product photos and responding to customer inquiries. Here are some social media marketing tips that you don’t hear every day.

**Post Product Creation Videos**

You already know that you can, and should, post information about your products on social media. But not many businesses actually give customers a behind the scenes look at what goes into making their products. You can do this easily through quick videos on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or even Snapchat.

**Start a Hashtag for Testimonials**

Testimonials can also be great content for businesses to share on social media. But finding testimonials that can be boiled down enough to fit into a tweet or social media post can be a challenge. So consider creating a hashtag specifically for that purpose and
then encourage your customers to share their testimonials in that format. You can then repost their thoughts directly to your followers.

Honor an Employee of the Week

Social media is a great outlet for sharing behind-the-scenes looks at your business. And your employees can be a big part of that. So you can start an employee of the week or month program and share a bit about your best team members on social media channels.

Share a Photo an Hour

You can also share behind-the-scenes looks at your company through regular photos. A few times a year, designate a day where you share a photo each hour, or at least a few times a day, to give people a realistic view of what goes on over the course of a day.

Share Tutorials of Your Products

Aside from just sharing information or photos of your products, you can use social media to give people cool ideas for how to actually use them. So you can create and share quick tutorials that highlight some of those unique uses or ideas.

Make Stop-Motion Videos on Instagram

Stop motion videos can be a great way to showcase some of those tutorials or unique ideas. Or you can even use them to tell stories quickly and in a unique and fun format.

Share Boomerang Images

Boomerang is an Instagram app that lets you create really quick gif-like videos. They’re not long enough to tell a story or share a bunch of steps, but they are sufficient to show some movement. So you can use them to demonstrate simple features of products in some cases.

Start a Group Pinterest Board

You already know that Pinterest can be a great outlet for sharing content. But it can also be a great way to interact with your audience through group boards. Start a board where customers can share images of your products in use or just posts related to your industry. And add your own content as well.

Partner with Other Companies to Amplify Your Reach

You can actually amplify the reach of some of your posts by working with other companies to create social media campaigns. Consider showing off your product in use with another company’s product and both of you can share it on your channels. This can be especially useful for posts like recipes or DIY projects.

Have Employees Take Over Your Accounts

Having the same people run your social media accounts every day can mean that it starts to get repetitive after awhile. But you can change it up a bit by having different employees take over your accounts on occasion to share a different view of your company.
Have Customers Take Over Your Accounts

You might also host a contest or promotion where you choose a customer or follower to take over your accounts for a day to share some of their favorite content, including how they use your products or services.

Recommend Other Accounts for People to Follow

Most of your social media followers also follow other brands that are somewhat related to your industry. So you can add some value for them by suggesting some other accounts that you think they might find useful.

Add Personality with GIFs

On Twitter and other social platforms, you have the opportunity to add GIF images to your posts, which can inject some personality and movement into your posts.

Create a Recurring Character

If your company has a mascot, logo or even a pet or office decoration that really represents your company, you can use that as a sort of recurring character in your social media posts that your followers can easily recognize and interact with.

Ask for Photo Submissions

The content you share on your social media channels doesn’t always have to come directly from you. You can ask your customers regularly to share their photos of your products or anything related to your industry and then share those photos.

Have a “Caption This” Contest

You might also share some photos that your followers can have some fun with. Share a funny photo of your team or even one related to pop culture and ask followers for caption ideas, then share the best ones.

Create Your Own Meme

It might sound silly, but memes also give you the opportunity to share some fun content with your social media audience. If there’s a popular meme that could somehow fit with your business or industry, create your own caption and share it with your followers.

Host a Q&A on Snapchat

Social media can be a great way to answer customer questions. But you can go even deeper than that and host a question and answer session where followers can ask you anything on Snapchat, then answer those questions in quick clips on the app.
Ask Trivia Questions

Another way to spur some engagement with your audience is to ask some trivia questions about your company or your industry. You might even offer some kind of prize to a follower who answers correctly.

Relive Your Company’s Past on #tbt

Throwback Thursday, or #tbt, is a weekly hashtag on Twitter and Instagram where people post throwback photos. You can get your business involved and share some history by posting old photos on Thursdays each week or even just on occasion.

Start a Weekly Series

You can also create your own weekly theme for social media posts like #tbt. Come up with something that fits with your industry and keep it up every week. You can even encourage your followers to participate as well.

Interview Customers

Interviews make for great online content. You can create a short video or text interview with some of your customers and share it on social to get even more people involved.

Celebrate Odd Holidays

Holiday promotions are commonplace on social media. But you don’t have to wait for the major ones. Even weird holidays like “talk like a pirate day” can make for interesting content.

Compile a List of Industry Updates

Each week or month, put together a list of updates that are relevant to your followers or your industry and tag related accounts.

Host a Regular Hangout

Google+, Periscope, Facebook and other social platforms allow you broadcast live. So you can announce a weekly or monthly hangout with your audience. Keep a set schedule so people know when you’ll be broadcasting.
Post Sneak Peeks

You can also post some sneak peeks of new products or offerings where you only give a partial view to followers. Then you can even ask customers to guess what they think will be released in order to get them more involved.

Support a Charity or Cause

Customers love a socially conscious business. So you can use social media to spread the word about important causes or share information about different charity organizations.

Live Tweet Events

When you attend events for your business, or even if there’s a televised event that has something to do with your industry, you can tweet or post throughout the whole thing to get followers involved.

Repost Instagram Photos from a Dedicated Hashtag

On Instagram, you can start a dedicated hashtag for your customers or followers to use for images related to your company or industry. Then you can browse through those tags and find images to repost to your own account — with permission, of course!

Have Influencers Take Over Your Account

Influencers are often other social media users that have significant followings and influence in a particular niche or industry. So if you can find influencers that fit with your business, you can have them take over your account for a day to get some fresh content and increase your reach.

Co-host a Twitter Chat

You might also connect with those influencers to host chats on Twitter. Twitter chats have long been considered one of the best ways to increase engagement on the platform. But by working with other influencers in your industry, you can increase your reach even more.

Share Comic Strips

Images are popular on social media. And images that tell stories can be particularly effective. So you can share or even create your own comic strips to share on social media.

Ask Customers for Predictions

There are plenty of ways for businesses to get customers engaged in conversations on social media. But asking for predictions about the future of your industry or other relevant topics can be a particularly good way to get those conversations started.

Play “This or That”

You can also ask questions of your audience. If you give them just a couple of choices, it makes it easy for people to respond and might even spur some friendly debate.

Share Book or Movie Trivia

It can also be beneficial to post things on social media that don’t relate directly to your business from time to time. Things like books and movies are topics that interest the majority of consumers on some level. So you might consider sharing thoughts or recommendations on things that you think might interest your social media followers.
Have Birthday Sales

Everyone loves birthdays. So you might use social media as a way to really make a big deal about your company’s birthday or even the birthdays of your team members.

Post Staff Recommendations

To go even further, you can have your team members pick some of their favorite products or pieces of content to share on social media. You can offer discounts on those items on each team member’s birthday or just round up some employee favorites in a few social media posts.

Share Playlists

Music streaming services like Spotify allow you to create online playlists that you can easily share with others on social media. So it could be fun to create playlists for specific occasions or situations and share them with your followers.

Post Time Lapse Videos

Videos are great for telling stories online. But if you want to really show some change over time, you might consider doing a timelapse video rather than a traditional one. You can post quick time lapses on platforms like Instagram or even more advanced ones on YouTube.

Host Weekly Challenges for Followers

Challenges and contests can be really beneficial for building engagement online. You can start a simple challenge like a photography contest or scavenger hunt and repeat it each week to really get customers involved.

Create Joke Products

To inject some humor into your social media content, you might consider creating some joke products, or at least visual depictions of those joke products, that are similar to your offerings, but with a ridiculous twist.
Have a Sale Directly on Social Media

Want to increase sales on social media really quickly? You can have a quick sale of clearance products directly on platforms like Instagram, rather than trying to get people to visit your website or physical location.

Use Instagram Direct Messaging to Send Exclusive Promotions

Also on Instagram, you have the opportunity to reach out to customers directly through the direct messaging feature. So you can send exclusive offers to your best customers or followers. Just don’t abuse the feature and send out mass messages all the time with this feature.

Put the Spotlight on Partners

The focus doesn’t always have to be on your business when it comes to social media. You can also highlight some other businesses you’ve partnered with to nurture that relationship and potentially increase your social reach through those connections.

Ask for Content Requests

And finally, you should always keep your followers’ input in mind when creating content for social media. You might even occasionally ask people if they have any requests, just to be sure you’re keeping your content fresh and interesting.

Annie Pilon
Staff Writer
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Direct Mail – Is Your Business Missing Out?

If you would like to increase your business through affordable direct mail advertising, Every Door Direct Mail target advertising can direct your mail easily and effectively?

What is USPS EDDM?

Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) is a relatively new mailing program offered by United States Postal Service (USPS) with a discounted postage rate of as little as $0.154 per piece for Flats weighing no more than 3.3 Ounces (oz). It was designed to help businesses reach existing and new customers — without a mailing list or mailing permit.

USPS EDDM features an online mapping tool that lets you map your own direct mail delivery area, as well as map your marketing mail audience by age, income or household size. For example, a local restaurant can target anyone within a 5 mile radius who makes more than $40k per year.

As you might expect, USPS EDDM is extremely popular among small business owners and franchisees that use it as a marketing tool to reach new customers and increase sales.
With this program you can stop buying address lists for targeted mailings. Simply map your own direct mail delivery area with the EDDM mapping tool and let USPS direct custom mail to your specific audiences easily and affordably.

Grow Your Business with USPS EDDM

USPS EDDM delivers to every residential mailbox (business and P.O. boxes optional) within defined geographic parameters. Small businesses frequently use it to reach entire ZIP Codes, or specific postal routes. Here’s what the service can do for your next direct mail campaign:

• Help you reach a location without an address list.
• Seek new customers or markets in a targeted area
• Build community awareness
• Drive store or website traffic
• Promote events or special offers
• Introduce new products and services
• Reduce mail preparation costs involved with a direct mailing campaign.

According to the USPS DDM user guide (PDF), retail users can ship a minimum of 200 and up to 5,000 mail pieces in a given Zip Code in a day. That means you can reach anywhere from 200 to 5,000 potential customers each day that you don’t have contact information for. That is a huge number considering that you don’t have any of the information that you would normally need to send direct mail.

Map your own direct mail delivery area with the EDDM tool and let USPS direct custom mail to your audience.

Businesses that Benefit from USPS EDDM

Apart from restaurant chains that benefit from using direct mail campaigns, USPS EDDM also works particularly well for field service businesses and other businesses in industries such as:

• Moving/storage companies
• General retail stores
• Auto repair Shops
• Car washes
• Gyms

USPS EDDM is generally also useful to small businesses that deal with an audience or customers who are a bit older than the technological age. It can be a great tool to
reach those people who pay all of their bills via check and love to hold physical paper, while also rarely checking email.

**Get Started with USPS EDDM**

Any direct mail advertiser can easily launch an USPS EDDM campaign using the online campaign builder to target prospects, choose design and print options, and schedule mail delivery. You can also get help with design, printing, and mail preparation and drop-off using USPS affiliate vendors.

Once your EDDM mail pieces are received by USPS at the Post Office where you drop them off, they are typically delivered within a few business days. USPS does not guarantee delivery dates, so it is important that you are mindful of any deadlines or time-sensitive items that you want to mail using the service.

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Email marketing serves a number of purposes, integrating multiple separate marketing channels and funneling your audience into one place. However, most email marketers end up narrowing their focus to only one email marketing goal: click-throughs. It’s certainly important to optimize your emails for click-throughs, as more traffic to your site usually translates directly to more revenue.

However, there’s another dimension of email marketing strategy that could lead to an even longer-term return on your investment: brand loyalty. This is how you can generate repeat business on a consistent basis. If you can facilitate greater brand loyalty through your content marketing campaign, you’ll generate customers who are willing to buy from you over and over again—and not from your competitors.

Here are seven strategies to help you do it.

**Important Updates and Reminders**

Your first job is to use your email strategy as a way to keep your customers informed, with important updates and reminders. For example, if your company is planning to have
a major sale in the coming months, you can announce it to your email subscribers first, giving them a sense of exclusivity, and then send them periodic reminders as the date gets closer so they can adequately prepare. This helps your brand stay top-of-mind with your subscribers, and demonstrates value to them. Just make sure what you’re announcing has some real value to your subscribers or you’ll end up annoying them.

Free Gifts

Offering a free gift is a common tactic used to attract people to subscribe to your email newsletter in the first place. It’s an exchange of value that prompts them to hand over their personal information. This is good for attracting initial subscribers, but it won’t prevent them from unsubscribing if their only interest was getting the free gift. If you want to show them recurring value, and keep them subscribing for the long term, consider offering them free gifts periodically, reminding them why they’re subscribed to you in the first place. These don’t have to be expensive. In fact, you could even stage a free gift as a giveaway for similar results.

There’s a dimension of email marketing that could lead to a long term return on your investment – **brand loyalty**

Discounts and Special Offers

It’s also a good idea to offer discounts and special, email-exclusive offers to your subscribers. For example, you might give your email subscribers early access to one of your upcoming sales, or you might distribute a coupon code to only your email subscribers; this gives them a feeling of value and of exclusivity, bonding them more deeply to your brand. You could even encourage them to share these special offers; the feeling of exclusivity will remain, they’ll get to show off their rewards, and you’ll probably get some new subscribers out of the deal, too.

Circulated Content

One of your greatest tools for encouraging brand loyalty is your ongoing content marketing campaign. By providing value and answers to real questions, anyone familiar with your brand will be more likely to stick around in the future. Email is a perfect tool to enhance the effectiveness of this campaign; for example, you can evaluate the effectiveness of your most recent content, pick out some top performers, and promote them via email blast to get even more recognition for them. Your subscribers will enjoy having the top-tier content delivered straight to their inboxes.

Exclusive Content

You can go another route in the content marketing frame by offering email-exclusive content. This content is only distributed to your email subscribers—at least at first. For example, you might give them early access to download an eBook you’ve written, several weeks before it’s available to the general public. You could also distribute smaller pieces of content, such as fact sheets or digestible “quick guides” that have some kind of practical value for your readers. The key is to give them something valuable that nobody else is getting.

Participation Bonuses

You can also give your users opportunities to engage with your brand—and rewards
for doing so. For example, you could host a competition that encourage your users to write testimonials for your products or your brand in general, and enter participants in a giveaway for a hot item. Alternatively, you could ask for feedback in the form of a survey or user comments, and personally thank or reward anyone who participates. When users engage with your brand, in any way, they’ll feel closer to it, and they’ll be less likely to go to a competitor in the future.

Social Integrations

Though somewhat simple, you can also encourage more brand loyalty by integrating your social media platforms with your email marketing strategy. This mode of cross-pollination encourage some of your already-loyal social media followers to subscribe to your email list, and encourages some of your interested email subscribers to get more involved on the social media front. Either way, you’ll be encouraging more user participation with and exposure to your brand, which will foster a stronger sense of cumulative loyalty over time.

Note that the effectiveness of these seven strategies will depend on the nature of your business and the type of users you’re trying to target; they won’t work equally well for every business. Take some time to develop your other marketing strategies in unison with your email campaign, and sort out the tactics you think are most effective. If you’re in doubt, simply try them and see what happens; your results will indicate whether your chosen tactic was a success.

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How Do You Get Consumers to Come to Local Businesses?

Good news for small retailers (and, indeed, for all small businesses): Consumers prefer local businesses to national chains, according to a new study by GoDigital. How can you capitalize on this preference, and more effectively market your retail store to local customers in a way that appeals to their natural preference for shopping local? Here’s what the report had to say.

First, consumers don’t need a lot of extrinsic motivation to patronize local businesses: 55 percent say they do so because they like to support their local communities, and 30 percent say they do so in order to support small businesses (even if those businesses aren’t right in their local area). The factors you might think would make a big difference in choosing where to shop — such as convenience, product selection, staff knowledge and prices — are far down the list of consumers’ reasons for shopping local.

The Takeaway: As long as you sell what they’re looking for, consumers are predisposed to shop at your store simply because it’s a small, independent business. The key to building on
that natural desire, the study says, is to make connections with prospects and build lasting rapport with customers. Here’s how.

The factors you might think would make a big difference in choosing where to shop are far down the list of reasons for shopping local.

**Customers Support Local Business  
– So Make that Work for You**

Facebook is by far the most popular social network among surveyed consumers, with Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram tied for second place. Start your social media outreach by building a strong presence on Facebook. To get more interaction on your Facebook page, the report suggests emphasizing your independent, small business status. You can do this by sharing photos, quotes or information about yourself, your employees and your store.

The goal is to make customers feel like they know you personally so they’re comfortable walking in. Don’t forget about Facebook advertising, either: nearly half of respondents in the survey say they are somewhat or very likely to click on relevant Facebook ads. Although your Facebook presence should be your primary social media outlet, the report also recommends having a presence on Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter as well.

**Fight Showrooming**

“Showrooming” is a legitimate concern for local retailers. Some 31 percent of survey respondents say they use their smartphones to look for better prices on products sold in-store. However, you can counteract this tendency by using pay per click (PPC) mobile ads that target a very specific radius around your store. When a prospective customer searches for a better deal for product you’re selling, the ad will serve up a discount at your store. It doesn’t have to be a big discount to get results: Most respondents say just 10 percent off is enough to sway them to shop at a local retailer.

**Get Good Reviews**

A whopping 92 percent of respondents say online reviews factor into their decision to patronize local retailers at least some of the time. Just 8 percent never look at reviews when deciding where to shop. Be sure to claim your store’s listing on ratings and review sites, and monitor your reviews daily to make sure you quickly respond to any negative reviews or complaints. Use window stickers, decals or text on your receipts to encourage happy customers to “Review us on Yelp” (or whatever review sites you use. Watch what people are saying about you on social media, too: Two-thirds of survey respondents say they would review businesses on Facebook or Google+ in addition to the typical review sites.
Plan Your Promotions

Although 27 percent of consumers don’t need the motivation of discounts to shop at local stores, 73 percent say they are interested in promotions (even though that’s not their primary motivator). Discounts and loyalty programs are the most effective promotions your retail store can offer — and it doesn’t take a huge discount, either (remember that 10 percent rule). You don’t need to try to beat big retailers at their game of 40 percent, 50 percent or even 60 percent off. Instead, the report suggests, save big discounts for slower months when you need to bring in customers, or for highly competitive times of year such as the holiday shopping season.

The goal is to make customers feel like they know you personally so they’re comfortable walking in.

Discounts and loyalty programs are the most effective promotions your retail store can offer.

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5 Big Marketing Mistakes Your Business is Making

Marketing is no easy task. Whole businesses exist devoted to marketing other businesses. Some companies have their own marketing departments. Small businesses often rely on the DIY approach to marketing. When developing your own marketing strategy, take care to avoid wasting your time and money.

Mistake 1: Too Many Social Channels

Judging by some of the marketing advice you’ll come across on the web, you may think you need to be everywhere, all the time.

What a colossal waste.

When it comes to marketing via social networks, the most important thing is for you to be where your target audience is already spending their time. Do your customers spend lots of time on Instagram? Then don’t waste your time Tweeting.

Focus your marketing and engagement efforts on Instagram. This frees up your time to engage directly with your customers even more on their favorite channels. You can find out which social networks your customers
When it comes to marketing via social networks, the most important thing is for you to be where your target audience is already spending their time.

**Mistake 2: Creating New Content**

You’ve heard you need fresh content all the time. New blog post every day, right? Nope.

Your customers want a relationship with your business. They want to know you value them. They don’t want to get buried in your posts. Trying to create new content about your business or related to your business gets old fast — for you and your customers.

Try a better approach. Use some of your marketing budget to hire a content developer to create high quality content optimized for your business. Remember quality over quantity.

An interesting, professionally crafted infographic will get you much more customer engagement than a rambling post on your biz blog about industry minutiae.

Sharing content is important for engagement and variety. Choose carefully. Share only things that your audience will find value in. Save those 50 cat memes for your personal accounts.

**Mistake 3: Casting a Wide Net**

Your marketing efforts will work better if you target your audience effectively. Casting a wide net may seem like a simpler method, especially for DIYers, but you’ll end up wasting time and money marketing to the wrong people in the wrong places.

Ask current customers where they spend time online, what encourages them to make a purchase, and how they found you.

Create a Buyer Persona, this is a sort of bio of your ideal customer. Use the persona and any data you collect from customers to identify where best to apply your marketing efforts.

**Mistake 4: Influencer Marketing**

Everywhere you look, someone is advising you to find influencers to promote your business. This trend in marketing is taking off.

First, decide whether it’s right for your business. If you’re in an obscure industry or create products for a small niche market, influencers are probably not going to be much help to you.

If you decide this is the right path for you, be sure you have compelling things for an influencer to share about you in the first place. An interesting narrative can make all the difference. It’s imperative you identify key influencers in your industry with whom to build relationships.

Avoid wasting your time and money on a low impact influencer or one in the wrong industry.

An interesting, professionally crafted infographic will get you much more customer engagement than a rambling post on your biz blog about industry minutiae.
Mistake 5: Video Marketing

Before you shell out beaucoup bucks hiring a video production company to create the perfect marketing video, consider a few important things. Chances are very good that your customers are watching video online, but where?

It’s important to know what platform your videos would be viewed on before you create one. Marketing videos on Instagram will be consumed a bit differently than on Facebook, for example. What kind of value will video give your customers?

A boring product demo is probably not going to inspire much engagement. A sneak peek of a new product that leaves some features to the imagination can be exciting. Video that makes an emotional impact inspires engagement well.

Before hitching your wagon to a new marketing technique, be sure it’s right for your business. It must be a way to provide your customers something of value. It must be shared where they are most likely to engage. Develop a detailed strategy with clear goals. Always measure your results, so you can make adjustments as necessary.

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4 Steps to Making Professional Video Ads

Marketing is currently undergoing a significant facelift. As traditional mediums like radio and magazine ads begin to die alongside digital strategies like banner ads, tactics such as advocacy and influencer marketing are filling the void left behind by these withering relics.

In addition to the soaring popularity of these newer marketing modalities comes the meteoric rise of video content and advertising.

Video is the new black. People can’t get enough of it. It’s everywhere. From business websites to social platforms, in-app adverts, and every other digital location you can possibly conceive of, video has tangled its engrossing tentacles all throughout the web and beyond.

For marketers, this means that content needs to make the necessary transition from text to video if there is any hope of continuing to attract, engage and convert consumers. If you haven’t ever created a video, then it can be a bit daunting, but it’s likely easier and cheaper than you think.

Video is the new black. People can’t get enough of it. It’s everywhere.
Here are some steps to take that can help you with this transition.

- Create Professional Video Ads
- Establish Goals

As is the case with any marketing tactic, the first step is to establish the goals you aim to achieve. These should fall in line with your company’s overall marketing strategies.

Video is extremely efficient at driving a variety of objectives such as:

- **Increased brand awareness**: Video helps to shape entertaining, memorable, and immersive experiences for brands.

- **Framing a person or business as a thought leader**: Since people remember 55 percent more information from video formats, this content is a premier forum for educating consumers through tutorials, process guides, case studies and more.

People remember 55% more information from video.

Driving conversions and sales: Video is an acquisition and purchase-inspiring machine. Placing a video on a landing page can increase conversions by 80 percent. Additionally, 64 percent of users who watch a video are more likely to buy a product online.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Video is a compelling vehicle for just about any marketing goal you can fathom.

**Find Super Simple Video Tools**

If you don’t have any video production or editing skills, you’re likely operating under the assumption that creating your own video content involves a steep learning curve.

These fears, however, are only illusions now that premium, customizable digital video services like Promo by Slidely have entered the online marketplace.

With Promo, marketers can construct professional-grade video clips from a selection of millions of high-quality video clips and fully licensed music snippets to add to the video’s tone and messaging.
Moreover, Promo lets users upload their own footage and image materials to help create custom ads. And with its text editor, robust toolsets, and affordable pricing, marketers of every degree can create epic ads that will resonate with consumers.

Additional self-service video apps include Biteable and Magisto.

In order to create a video that people will actually want to watch, simplicity is key.

Create Stellar Scripts

No matter if your video content is 15 seconds or 15 minutes long, you will need to craft a compelling message that keeps consumers hooked from start to finish.

The most important thing to remember when forging your video’s voiceover and story flow is to keep your points succinct. Like all content, many brand videos fall into the pitfall of trying to explore overly convoluted concepts, relying on industry jargon, or attempting to cover too many topics at once.

In order to create a video that people will actually want to watch, simplicity is key. This means using a conversational tone in voice or text and staying away from lingo that only your coworkers understand.

Be sure to also keep sentences short and sweet. This is especially important for text overlays and makes your messaging easy for the audience to absorb and retain.

If you aren’t sure if your script meets these guidelines, reading it aloud will quickly clear up any confusion.

Of course, all of this needs to be accompanied by relevant and high-quality images or video clips; or as an alternative, you can opt to use a “talking head” video host.

Tell the Audience What’s Next

CTAs are an absolute must for video content. Even if the goal is to merely drive awareness, you should be directing your viewers to more of your content so as to continue developing a rapport.

At the end of your video ad (or below it, as is the case with CTA buttons on Facebook ads) you should be letting viewers know what to do next.

This could be letting prospects know to grab their coupon code before it expires, informing them to visit your website for more details, or driving folks to download a digital offering. Whatever purpose your video serves, be sure that it fulfills its potential by prompting users when the time is right; this normally happens at the end of the video.

Start Making those Clips

Video content is the future of online marketing. Fortunately, creating video is becoming an increasingly easy and cost effective marketing modality.

Don’t let your business become as antiquated as newspaper ads. Blaze a path into the future of marketing by learning to craft arresting video content and adverts that will cater to a new generation of consumers.

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Win with the Cloud

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Take the Joy Out of Your Advertising

There are many inspiring stories in the media about using affirming words, remaining joyful and optimistic in business, and also sending out positive messages to people. But, apparently, when it comes to the travel sector, using joyful words in advertising copy does not bring the best results.

Wait, What?

Yep, joyous words aren’t exactly the most successful marketing terms for travel businesses and businesses in a few other sectors. At least that’s what a new study produced by landing page and conversion marketing platform Unbounce found.

Words that Sell (and those that Don’t)

According to the Unbounce study, titled The Conversion Benchmark Report (PDF), which analyzed the behavior of 74 million visitors to 62,000 landing pages to establish what specific content triggers people to respond to businesses online, using too many joyful words
in marketing copy can be bad for business because it’s likely to raise concerns about the legitimacy of the offers.

Travel businesses that use words that contain less than 1 percent of copy that communicates feelings of joy were found to have up to 35 percent higher conversion rates than pages with more than 1 percent of similar copy. Other sectors where words that convey joy were found to negatively impact a campaign’s conversion rate for businesses are the home improvement and vocational studies.

“This study really set out to take our unmatched wealth of data and use it to give marketers the type of deep insights into copy and words that they have had access to before now,” said Rick Perreault, CEO and Co-Founder of Unbounce. “Some of what we found was as we’d have expected it, but other findings were seemingly counterintuitive – joy can decrease conversions.”

Among the joyous words the study identified that can negatively impact conversion rates, and which businesses in the home improvement, vocational studies and travel sectors should seemingly limit include: “safe,” “friendly,” “clean,” “comfort,” “excellent,” “happy,” “success” and “confidence.”

Words that subconsciously evoke feelings of trust used on landing pages can lead to higher conversion rates

So, what words should businesses use in their online marketing campaigns to boost conversion?

Words that subconsciously evoke feelings of trust (e.g. “system,” “team,” “manage,” “powerful,” “real,” “compliance” and “policy”) used on landing pages can lead to higher conversion rates in the travel and business
services industries, as per the study. However, these same words that evoke feelings of trust can lead to lower conversion rates in the credit & lending industry.

Similarly, words that induce a deep-seated sense of fear and unease (e.g. “bankruptcy,” “court,” “problem,” “bad,” “change,” “risk”) can increase conversion rates in the business consulting sector when included between 1 to 2 percent of the copy. However, these fear-inducing words decrease conversions in most other industries, including the travel, legal, health and credit & lending industries. In the credit & lending industry, for instance, fear-driven words decrease conversions by an average of up to 15 percent.

Fewer Words on Landing Pages Bring Best Results

In most popular industries (travel, real estate, business services, business consulting, credit & lending, health and home improvement), shorter copy on the landing page was found to correlate with higher conversion rates. The study also found that marketing copy in most industries is most effective when written at 9th-grade reading level or lower.

“Credible, scientifically-grounded insights into how the words we choose drive user behavior, is something we’ve never had access to, until now,” said Oli Gardner, Marketing & Optimization Expert at Unbounce. “This report paves the way for the future of data-driven marketing, and the future is conversion automation,” added Gardner who is also Co-Founder of the landing page platform that leveraged proprietary machine learning tech to analyze the enormous pool of industry-specific data.

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IS YOUR BUSINESS DIGITALLY READY TO REACH NEW CUSTOMERS?

Being digital is an equalizer that allows businesses to compete effectively. According to Boston Consulting Research, businesses who are digital ready grow 461% faster than digital laggards.

START YOUR FREE ASSESSMENT
5 Great Tips on Successful Small Business Branding

We all understand how important brands can be. There are brands that signify all over the world. Nike. Harley Davidson. Starbucks. These are companies that are more than just the products they sell.

They’re lifestyles. They’re statements, both about the company and the consumers who choose them.

If you think bold, memorable branding is only available to big companies with massive marketing budgets, think again! No matter your industry, you can cultivate a unique brand that resonates with your clients. Want to know how to do it?

Clarify Your Company’s Purpose

For a brand to be meaningful, it must connect to your company’s reason for being (which, incidentally, assumes you have a reason for being above and beyond simply earning an income.) Why did you start your company? How do you think you’re making the world a better place? Without a firm grasp of your purpose, you’ll never be able to communicate what’s unique and important about your company.
Enlist Your Employees

Along with clarifying your purpose, you must also ensure that every single member of your staff understands that purpose and knows how and why to communicate that purpose with every customer. In a perfect world, your purpose isn’t something that’s pounded into your staff. It’s something you hire for. When you hire an employee who shares your values, then you’re on the right track. Effective branding isn’t an afterthought. It infuses everything you do!

Without a firm grasp of your purpose, you’ll never be able to communicate what’s unique and important about your company.

Create a Rallying Cry

So for my company, Profit First, our purpose, our rallying cry is “We want to eradicate entrepreneurial poverty!” We say it, and we mean it. Every morning huddle (our quickie standing meeting) reiterates our purpose and the steps we’re going to take that day to accomplish it. Our rallying cry lets us communicate our purpose and values quickly – to anyone and everyone. That’s our brand.

Enlist Your Customers

You know your purpose. Your staff knows your purpose. But do your customers know your purpose? Letting your clients know that they’re buying more than just your goods or services is key to enlisting them in your brand building efforts. Consider the Life is Good brand. When people don a t-shirt, they’re making a statement about a lifestyle, rather than just getting dressed. Folding in what makes you unique and worthwhile is a big part of successful branding.

Hire a Pro

Sometimes we think we should be able to do it all, but no matter how talented you are, you need help in the areas that aren’t your strength. If marketing isn’t your thing, consider hiring a consultant or agency to help you crystallize and evangelize your brand. Professionals can help you avoid spinning your wheels and wasting money on ineffective tactics.

Your brand is more than just your company name and a slogan. It’s the expression of your values, your quality, and your unique vision. Branding done right cements you in the minds of your customers. It makes it easy for people to understand who you are and what you do. Branding differentiates you from your competitors, and it speaks to your ideal customer, resonating with the people who will most appreciate your work.

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Marketing a startup isn’t a straightforward process. There are countless different routes that businesses can take to get the word out. So it can be invaluable for those businesses to have some help when they’re starting out.

And that’s exactly the type of thing that Startmarke provides. The company specializes in helping startup companies with various areas of marketing, offering unique customizable services like content planning, website SEO services and more. Read about the company, and its marketing packages for small businesses, below in this week’s Small Business Spotlight.

**What the Business Does**

Sells custom marketing packages for small businesses and startups.

Founder Demetrius Brown told Small Business Trends, “Startmarke offers small businesses and startup companies low priced marketing packages with a number of custom add on options.”
Business Niche

Offering solutions that are affordable for small businesses.

Brown says, “We make all of our pricing transparent and upfront with our flat fee pricing structure.”

How the Business Got Started

After working with larger businesses.

Brown explains, “I myself the founder, worked previously as an engineer for a software company. I then went on to work in marketing and advertising consulting Fortune 500 companies and brands on marketing to Millennials. I started Startmarke which stands for (Marketing for Startups) to help small business and startups with their marketing efforts when they need it most while remaining budget friendly.”

Biggest Risk

Starting the company without any capital.

Brown says, “I completely bootstrapped and worked from the ground up to gain clients and help get our name out there. If I did not have knowledge in understanding how to market there could have been a different turnout. The result of my risk is that I learned more about how to build an effective strategy on a tight budget.”

Lesson Learned

Start with a detailed plan.

Brown says, “I would start by raising capital for my company as well as drawing out a more detailed roadmap for the future.”

How They’d Spend an Extra $100,000

Promoting the business.

Brown says, “I would use a portion of the funds marketing and promoting the business. The rest of the money I would use for working capital.”

Favorite Quote

“Yesterday has already happened, and tomorrow doesn’t exist yet, seize the day”

– Demetrius Brown

Annie Pilon
Staff Writer
@AnnieHP
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**Get Started**
Animals in offices are a familiar go-to for me. I just think it’s super funny to see them sitting at their desks doing mundane work while bringing that whole animal thing along.

So one day I was thinking about a bunch of cats having a meeting and wondered what they might talk about. I generated a whole list, but two of them seemed to pop out to me: catnip and yarn. And I thought, wow, cats love yarn, and they love catnip, how is this not a thing?!

I looked online, sure that someone must’ve come up with this already, but no! So I wrote and drew this cartoon, which is fine, but I have to say, the idea that this might be an actual viable product still nags at me every so often.

Would you like your message to appear in Small Business TRENDS MAGAZINE?

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