Small Business TRENDS

YOUR SITE TRAFFIC

DO YOU HAVE A SALES MACHINE?
Unlock the Power of Customer Testimonials

TRACK YOUR COMPETITION
We've got the tools and the techniques to help

LOCAL BUSINESS DOES FOOT TRAFFIC MATTER?

20 STRATEGIES TO DRAW ATTENTION TO YOUR SITE

Expert Tips on How to Boost it Today
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More Traffic = More Customers

Can you think of a website that doesn’t have something to buy on it? Yours probably does, too. But if no one is visiting your site, you’re probably not making a lot of sales online.

We’ve got tips for drawing more people to your online store to turn them from merely site visitors into actual paying customers.

7 Great Content
There’s one sure way to drive people to your site. Creating it isn’t easy.

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Do you still need to get traffic coming in through the front door?

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Turn your customers’ kindness into a unique marketing tool.
DRIVE TRAFFIC TO
YOUR ONLINE STORE

Owning an ecommerce store has a lot of perks: It’s a self-run business available to anyone, helps leverage your online presence, requires minimal overhead, and a good store has limitless revenue potential.

E-commerce stores epitomize the American Dream. There is, however, some significant drawbacks to running an ecommerce hub; mainly having to compete with gargantuan marketplaces like Amazon, Alibaba, and eBay. In fact, many pieces have been published which discuss the fact that Amazon is crushing small businesses.

Despite this, entrepreneurs and business owners set up their digital shops in hopes of making it big; but most just end up wondering where all their traffic is.

No matter if you are trying to acquire your first customer or reach $1 million in revenue for the year, all businesses need to increase their traffic in order to see continued growth.

If you are looking for ways to drive more users to your web and product pages, these are tried and tested strategies that will make an impact on your traffic and bottom line.

Diversify Your PPC Efforts

PPC is still one of the most effective ways to immediately generate website traffic. Whenever and wherever your budget permits, employing technological tools and services that lighten your managerial load is always a great call.

For driving traffic to your webstore, tools like StoreYa’s Traffic Booster may help you.

“Driving traffic to your website doesn’t have to be a maddening endeavor.”
If you do decide to do things “the old-fashioned way” of running your own ads, the key to epically successful PPC campaigns always lies in the creative elements. Visual components are just as essential as the language you choose.

Tools like Canva can help you appear polished and professional, even if you’re a design amateur.

**Making the Most of Your Campaigns**

Generally speaking, businesses generate $3 for every $1.60 spent on Google AdWords. So if you’re seeking immediate traffic, this is still a very effective channel.

From an ecommerce perspective, when advertising with Google, one of the best options is Product Listing Ads. While these have been around for quite some time, they are still immensely powerful.

In Q1 of 2016, Product Listing Ads accounted for 43% of all retailer’s ad clicks on Google and 70% of non-brand clicks.

If you would rather go the route of social media, Facebook and Instagram both provide a myriad of targeting options and dynamic experiences that can help you reach the right crowd.

With these platforms, promoters can target ads based on age, location, interests, behaviors, and other defining characteristics. Additionally, Facebook Dynamic Ads help businesses by serving up automatically-generated ads to users who have already visited your site.

Outside of these two social juggernauts, Pinterest is a prime location for ecommerce adverts as 93% of users have leveraged the platform for planning out purchases and 52% of pinners have bought something they saw on the website.

That said, mastering each of these ad platforms is challenging (that’s putting it mildly). Many small business owners find that the ever-increasing prices for clicks is beginning to squeeze them out of the market. For example, the phrase “free online auto insurance quote” can cost advertisers $75 - $344 per click, depending on where they are. Whether or not you gain a sale, you’re going to be paying for those clicks.

Considering that sites like Amazon are bidding top-dollar for the most relevant keywords, it’s likely to be impossible to edge them out.

Moreover, if advertisers end up making an all-too-human mistake of misspelling a keyword, neglecting a landing page while managing an ad campaign, or committing any number of simple errors, Google will downright penalize you.

Not to mention that if you ever forget to turn your campaign off, it
could cost you thousands.

If this all sounds too complicated for your taste, fear not, for there is other options.

**Offer Premium Content**

Content is the ultimate driver of web traffic. Considering that ecommerce is not only about selling products, but providing consumers with helpful assistance, a blog is the perfect solution.

Your target audience has a variety of problems and pain points that they need solving. In the ecommerce space, this is about finding the perfect product within a certain category, new techniques for using merchandise that will optimize their experience, and other how-to information.

Producing a blog that offers consumers honest product reviews, tutorials, and other informative advice in related topics is a stellar avenue for driving traffic to your site; just be sure to include the product’s URL in the post, optimize it for SEO purposes, and share it across your social media accounts.

**Let Influencers Do the Lifting**

Influencer marketing has effectively allowed advertisers to gain access to sizeable, highly-targeted audiences to promote their products or services with credence.

By leveraging the creativity, trust, and reach of various social media influencers, your webstore can be put in front of thousands of new customers who will very likely visit your digital shop.

As it stands, influencer marketing generates, on average, $6.50 in earned media value for every $1.00 of paid media. Plus, an influencer’s recommendation is trusted as much as that of a real-life friend.

Leveraging platforms like Famebit, HYPR, and the myriad of others out there has made entering the influencer arena easier than ever.

Driving traffic to your site doesn’t have to be a maddening endeavor. The key to success lies not in the number of tactics you employ, but the depth and expertise with which you execute. Play to your strengths and become a master of two or three strategies, devote yourself to the long haul, and you will see positive results.

“Play to your strengths and become a master of two or three strategies.”

By Itai Elizur
Small Business Trends Contributor
Once we establish a target audience, then we can talk about types of content:

Think of each blog as an opportunity to subtly work in your sales pitch.

**Products and services.** Share photos of products on your shelves or testimonials from clients you’ve helped.

**Show off your growth.** Brag a little. Find a way to visualize that your business is growing.

**Social media.** Share a different side or behind-the-scenes secrets of your business through sites like Facebook and Instagram.

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**SIMPLE TIPS FOR GOOD COPY**

Web surfers are usually impatient. Give them just enough to satisfy them, and then provide a clear directive (such as a contact form) if they want to know more.

Let your content create a smooth transition from the conversation you’re having with the customer to the CTA.

Don’t misspell or use bad grammar. This hurts your credibility.

Let your content have energetic and descriptive words. Active writing engages your audience.

Do your homework. Use analytic tools to research what people want to know more about, and then write on these topics. Cater to your customer with your content.

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**3 TYPES OF GREAT CONTENT**

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If you have a small business or startup, you’re probably an all-in-one shipper, customer representative, and web developer.

While you want a flashy website with video, audio, and all sorts of other material, marketing research finds quality website content drives sales and is the biggest factor affecting online traffic.

Ninety-two percent of marketers report that content creation is either “very” or “somewhat” effective. Search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing love high-quality content.

You can have all the content in the world, but if you’re missing your target audience, it’s not going to have the desired results.

First, determine who your high-value customers are. This can help you find a persona for your website and determine how to target an audience.

The biggest key to your success online is your content. You don’t need a huge budget to create quality content. High-quality website content drives sales and gives you a great SEO boost. Know your audience, and see that every blog post or news article is just another opportunity to educate and subtly sell to your audience.

By Amie Marse
Small Business Trends Contributor
In 2016, a staggering 209.6 million people in the U.S. browsed products, compared priced and bought items online. Having a website to showcase your services or products is pivotal in remaining commercially competitive in the 21st century. That said, if nobody is visiting your website to browse your products or services, it might as well not exist.

Take a look at the following 25 ways to get more people to your website.

**Use Social Media to Attract Visitors**

Use social media to promote your website and attract visitors. Post interesting and engaging content on social media with a link to your website, to encourage people to head to your site.

**Ensure Your Site is Search Engine Optimized**

Optimizing your site by using the right keywords and regularly updating it with fresh content will help it rank better on the search engines, boosting your organic traffic.

**Have a Blog on Your Site and Regularly Update It**

Regularly update your blog with informative, entertaining and engaging content to encourage visitors to keep returning to your site.

**Use Pay Per Click Campaigns**

As online marketing influencer Neil Patel notes, one of the basic ways to drive traffic to a business website is through paid campaigns. PPC, where you bid on different types of keywords, is an easy way to promote your website to an audience who might not otherwise see it.

**Use Business Cards for Offline Promotion**

Good old-fashioned business cards are by no means
dead and buried. Handing out business cards with details of your site's URL printed on them at every opportunity to lure prospects to your site, is one of the most cost-effective offline marketing strategies.

Visit Trade Shows

Trade shows are a great way to promote your brand, build your network and attract prospects. Use trade shows as a means of handing out fliers and business cards, which has details of your website on them.

Use Influencer Marketing to Attract Traffic

Influencer marketing, whereby an influential individual in your niche with hordes of followers deliberately promotes your brand, products or services, is a proven way for businesses to attract people to their website.

Include Your Web Address on Branded Uniforms

If your business requires branded uniforms, utilize employees' uniforms to the maximum by including your website address on branded shirts and jackets.

Make Your Website Mobile Friendly

A record amount of digital traffic is now coming from mobile devices. Ensure your website is navigational from the likes of smartphones and tablets, by making it mobile friendly.

Guest Blog on Other Sites

Rather than limiting new blogs to your own site, aim to get them published as guest blogs on other sites. Having links to your website on credible sites with high Domain Authority (DA), is a great way to boost your SEO and the organic traffic to your site.

Invite Other People to Guest Blog on Your Site

This is a great way to increase traffic to your site, as the author of the guest blogs are likely to share the content and build up rapport with your brand.

Post Content on LinkedIn Pulse

As WordStream founder and CEO of MobileMonkey Larry Kim notes, "LinkedIn Pulse is a killer way to get your best content in front of a larger audience." Drive traffic to your site by posting unique and engaging content on LinkedIn Pulse.

Display Your Website Details in Your Office or Shop Window

Promote your site’s URL to those passing by your shop or office by simply displaying your web address in the window – an incredibly simple and cost-effective marketing tactic.

Use Car Wraps to Promote Your URL

Ensure your vehicle acts as marketing pedestal to every passer-by by wrapping it with your business's logo and your website's URL.

Advertise in Print Media

With 17% of small businesses still advertising regularly in newspaper, print advertising is by no means dead. Use the likes of newspapers and magazines to advertise your business, including details of your website to encourage readers to visit your site.

Use Direct Mail Campaigns

Leaving promotional material on coffee tables in waiting rooms and posting it through letter boxes that includes your URL can be a highly successful way to alert prospects to your website.

Publish Interviews with Thought Leaders on Your Website

Publishing interviews or commentary from leading figures in your market can be a great way to encourage people to head to your site and boost its credibility.

Be Interviewed for Other Sites

By the same token, why not start doing interviews yourself as a thought leader in your industry to help raise your online credibility and presence and attract people to your site?

Attend Networking Events

Networking brings a multitude of benefits to small businesses, including the opportunity to promote your website to the right audience.

Place Internal Links on Your Site

When publishing content on your website, use relevant and credible internal links in the content to help boost your SEO and make the content a more useful experience for the reader – a key attribute in increasing website traffic.

Publish Original Research on Your Site

Original research helps drive traffic to a website, so endeavour to get your hands on research that’s not available anywhere else, whether it’s through webinars, whitepapers or how-tos.

By Gabrielle Pickard-Whitehead
Small Business Trends Staff Writer
10 EXPERT TIPS ON BOOSTING WEB TRAFFIC

You’ve built a beautiful and functional website. Now, you need to create a strategy around building traffic to your website. Here are some expert tips and tricks ranging from content creation to SEO to social media from digital marketing and small business experts.

Compiled by Annie Pilon

NEIL PATEL
Referrals. Somehow, someway, you need other websites to talk about you, link to you...

REBEKAH RADICE
Writing a blog post without investigating your topic is a recipe for disaster.

ANDY CRESTODINA
There’s one type of content that crushes anything else. Original research.
STEVE SCOTT
80% of your results often come from 20% of your activities.

HEIDI COHEN
The most effective content can be improved, updated and/or repromoted.

PAT FLYNN
Interview them -- “Demonstrating leadership and authority is a complete no-brainer.”

DONNA MORITZ
Add an image to an existing post that highlights your content.

BRENT CSUTORAS
To figure out where your audience is socially, look where your competitors are.

STONEY DEGEYTER
If you provide valuable information, they will keep coming back.

DARREN ROWSE
You may need to step out of your comfort zone, but that can be rewarding.
LOCAL MARKETING AND YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

Has location, location, location turned into mobile, mobile, mobile? Does store foot traffic still matter?

By Paul Chaney
Small Business Trends Staff Writer

Bridget Weston Pollack, vice president of marketing and communications for SCORE, said that the priority depends on the business type and other factors.

“Even though mobile marketing is becoming more important, the short answer is that it depends on the kind of business, the city you’re in and what you’re trying to sell,” she said. “Location is everything to a coffee shop, bistro or even a trampoline park. But what’s critical is marrying the two: utilizing geo-targeting and mobile marketing to drive traffic in-store.”

Pollack added that for service businesses, such as plumbers or home repair, location retains some degree of importance, though not to the same extent as retail shops.

“Operationally, depending on the area you want to serve, you need to pay attention to how far drivers are driving,” she said. “You want to be located in a place that has easy access to customers.”

Matt Wagner, vice president of revitalization programs at the National Main Street Center in Chicago, told Small Business Trends, “People have been utilizing mobile devices to shop and find things for some time. As such, web content must be mobile-friendly. When developing a retail website, business owners must keep that in mind.”

By Paul Chaney
Small Business Trends Staff Writer
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HOW TO MONITOR COMPETITOR TRAFFIC

The entire goal of SEO (search engine optimization) is to get ahead of your competitors, by whatever Google-friendly means necessary. And just like in warfare, if you want to know how to get ahead of your adversary, you need to know their strategies.

Luckily, Google and other search engines make it pretty easy for you to monitor competitor website traffic strategies by using a number of useful tools.

Identify Competitors

To begin, know your enemy. You can’t expect to get ahead of your competitors if you don’t know exactly who they are, what their mission is, and how they plan to execute it. Your biggest competitors may not be who you think they are.

Take the time to jot down a list of your biggest challengers by searching your own top keywords in search engines. The first 10-20 most common competitors on the list are most likely your biggest threat.

Assess Their Websites

You can gauge competitor performance and generate new ideas for your own website by performing a close analysis of competitors websites. In general, you’ll want to look closely at their home page, user interface, speed, performance, and content.

If their sites are ranking higher than you for the same keywords, they must be doing something right in all of these categories. Try to identify the positive features these websites have that yours doesn’t and make a plan to try out some of those strategies in your own marketing plan so that you can compete.

Check Out Social Media Pages

The second best place to go to monitor competitor website traffic strategies involves fraternization with social media networks. There you can access an entirely free tool
that will allow you to see how your competition carries out their social media engagement.

Next to your long list of competitor names, write down all of the social media networks your rival companies are involved with, and then analyze the way they spread their brand mentions and content. Begin with Facebook, the largest by far of all social networks, and then move to Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Based off the number of likes, shares, and user engagement, you can determine what content is working and where your strategy can improve.

Furthermore, use analytics tools that can gather data about the impact of opponent social media pages on customers. For example, you're probably familiar with Klout, which is a free tool used to rank the influence of certain Twitter members on their followers. This tool and more are very helpful for assessing the social influence of your rivals.

**Analyze Web Traffic**

Why do people seem to like your competitor's website better than yours? It's probably not you; it's them.

Find out exactly how much traffic competitor sites are receiving and what they're doing to make it happen. There are many tools, both free versions and subscription platforms that will derive comprehensive data sets to allow you to compare component's website traffic. Look at what's working and what's not working to come up with a full strategy.

Out of all the tools out there, choose one that will give you the most accurate and high-quality of analytics tools. For example, you may have heard of SimilarWeb, which is a website traffic tool built on a global platform to ensure accurate and high quality data. It's not the only one available, but it comes highly recommended by Orbit Media Studios. By analyzing that data, you can learn much about the changes you need to make for your marketing strategy.

**Subscribe to Newsletters**

Finally, listen in on your competitors' online conversations. Monitor the content they share on social networks, and subscribe to their newsletters and email marketing. Use a private email to collect the information rather than a company one.

It's important to monitor competitor website traffic, but it's also an often overlooked aspect of digital marketing. If you want to know exactly how you can compete in the crowded online market, one of your first steps should always be to learn from the adversary and improve your strategy to surpass theirs.

**By Drew Hendricks**

Small Business Trends Contributor
TURN TESTIMONIALS INTO CONVERSIONS

No one’s doubting the power of a good customer testimonial. They’re among the most trusted forms of advertising your business can offer; they cost nothing on your part; and customers who write them for you.

Of course, what makes testimonials so powerful is the fact that they’re written by people who have no financial stake whatsoever in your business. And the lack of bias that presumes is refreshing. It’s why we all turn to platforms like Yelp or read online reviews before we head to that restaurant for lunch or purchase that next gadget.

But what about the testimonials on your company’s website?

Those testimonials are only going to serve you if they meet certain criteria and are skillfully placed on your site. If they do and are, they’ll make a world of difference to your site’s conversions. Here’s how to make that happen:

Know a Good Testimonial

Stellar testimonials contain these four essential elements:

- They offer specifics (think numbers, percentages, pain points, benefits, and outcomes).
- They use those details to tell a before-and-after story.
- They raise and then dispel objections.
- They look and sound authentic.

Know Where to Look

It’s possible that some of the best “testimonials” you can offer didn’t begin as testimonials at all.

Search your inbox for emails from your most loyal customers, or from those who’ve benefitted most from your business.

There’s likely also a breadcrumb trail of testimonial material in comments customers have left on your company blog, on their own blogs, on public review sites, and on social media.

Make use of these! Don’t let those exceptional comments about your
company linger in the black hole of internet oblivion.

**Know How to Ask**

Once you’ve exhausted your virtual search, it may be time to make an ask. Here’s how:

Send an email to your customers asking if they’d be willing to plug your business on a review site.

Give visitors the opportunity to submit a testimonial on your website.

**Know What to Ask**

You’ll want to pose questions that ensure customers are giving you numbers, details, initial doubts, and narratives.

Questions bound to produce strong testimonials include:

Did you have any hesitations about our offering; and what happened to those hesitations after you used our product or hired our service?

What was the nature of the problem you had when you contacted our company; and how was that problem ultimately solved for you?

**Strive for Variety**

You’ve been on the internet long enough to know that prospects will be more compelled by moving images than they will by consecutive blocks of testimonial text.

So give them some eye candy.

Video testimonials do wonders for conversions; so do images of any kind. This is your think-outside-the-box moment. Have at it.

After all, a testimonial can only convert once it’s been seen and read.
5 TIPS TO STOP HACKERS

Each passing day brings with it news of a brand new leak of personal information. Be it credit card information or email IDs and passwords, personal pictures or even top secret classified government data — the world of hackers has democratized the internet and its lack of security at every possible level.

Hackers can turn your nondescript website into a malicious spy bot in a matter of minutes. Worse, they can hack into your website databases and destroy or manipulate important information.

But enough of this scare fest. There are things that you can do to secure your website from hackers. Here’s a roundup of the easiest steps you can take:

Keep All Software Updated. Clean out your website of any unused, old and non-updated plugins — they are sitting ducks for hackers.

Build Layers of Security Around Your Site. These solutions are designed to inspect incoming traffic, provide and weed out malicious requests.

Switch to HTTPS. Besides the security aspect, it now makes even more sense to shift your entire website to HTTPS to improve your search rankings simultaneously.

Use Strong Passwords. Do not use the same password for all your different website logins. Change your passwords regularly to keep them doubly secure.

Make Admin Directories Tough to Spot. Pick innocuous sounding names for your admin folders that are known only to your webmasters.

Itai Elizur, Small Business Trends Contributor
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