

SelfInformed

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Member Spotlight

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8 TIPS TO Turbo-Charge YOUR MARKETING

Without Spending a Bundle



Everyone knows that marketing and advertising have the power to increase awareness of your business, boost sales and create customer loyalty. If you don't invest marketing dollars wisely, backed by a solid brand strategy, you can end up spending a lot with little ROI. Consider these free or low-cost tips for growing sales and building your brand by marketing smart.



1. Create a powerful and concise marketing strategy

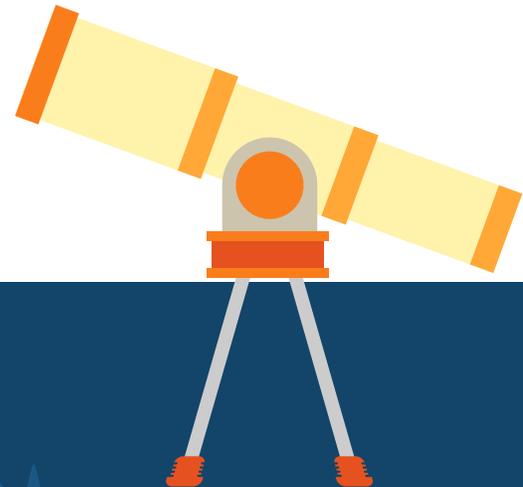
Your marketing strategy should be the North Star of everything you do and every dollar you spend on marketing. It will help you decide what to invest in and what to pass on. It will improve your ability to talk about your business to others and explain why you're different from than the competition. Here are five questions you want to answer when you put pen to paper.

- What are your objectives? For example, do you want to increase awareness, crack a new market or double sales?
- Who is your target? Define your target in as specific terms as possible. Not just demographically but psychographically. Where do they live and work? What do they read? How do they approach the purchase decision in your category? Be as specific as you can.
- What is your unique benefit? Your benefit should distinguish you from the competition and highlight the one or two main things your service or product does which is meaningful and important to your target. Think about how your brand fits into their lives, not just its specific features. Create a sentence that sums it up powerfully.

- What is your overall budget for marketing?
- Based on your objectives, target, benefit and budget which tactics will you employ to deliver your message? Do some research into the cost of the local options. Are there above-the-line media that target your market efficiently (i.e. radio, newspaper, posters) or is online media your best bet? Or maybe it's a combination of both. Devise a media mix and determine your budgets for each over the next six months. Don't overcommit to more than you need during this early time. See what works and optimize along the way.

2. Make your business easier to find online, for free

Register with Google Places, Yahoo Local and Microsoft's Bing to allow your target to find your business more easily when they use online searches and search engine maps. It's easy to set up and doesn't cost a penny.



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3. Work on your website

Every small business needs a great website. For one, it will increase your credibility with your target. In 2015 Versign conducted a study finding that 84% of consumers believe that small businesses with websites are more credible than ones without an online presence.

Make sure your site doesn't look tired and out-of-date. It should powerfully reflect your brand's personality and communicate that your approach is modern and customer-centric. Consider redesigning with a platform like Squarespace. They offer a variety of customizable, designer-created templates that make it easy to drag and drop images. You can even sell unlimited products and services from your site with end-to-end data security for you and your customers.

4. Be Social

Consider using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest or LinkedIn profiles to gain exposure, cultivate your relationship with regular customers and offer promotions. Creating a social media presence doesn't cost a dime and doesn't have to take up a lot of your time in maintenance. You can build your audience from scratch or invest in an audience development platform like OneQube. Investigate what the competition is doing on these platforms and invent an online "persona" which is consistent with your brand's marketing strategy and fits the particular social environment.

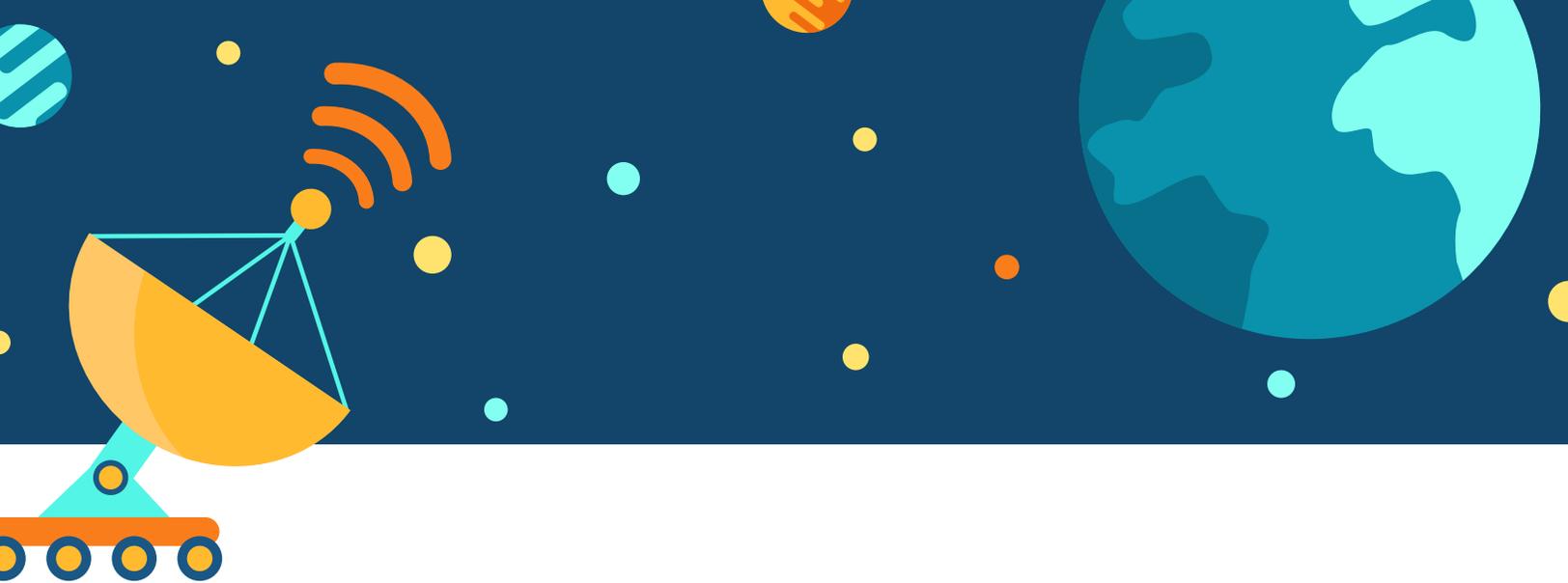
84% of consumers find small businesses with websites are more credible than ones without

5. Pay-Per-Click Advertising or "Paid Search"

Many claim that every business benefits from Search Engine Optimization but the truth is, if you're a smaller business, it may be very tough and expensive to rank in the first five search engine results even with optimization. Consider instead a pay-per-click advertising strategy. Google AdWords, Bing Ads, Yahoo, Yelp and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest all offer pay-per-click programs. Each platform works a little differently but all of them rely on identifying the right key words and understanding your target audience. Once you've identified start and stop dates, your maximum "pay-per-click" price and posted your ad, sit back and watch the results roll in. Facebook in particular offers advertisers robust monitoring capability so you optimize along the way.



HELLO



6. Cultivate an email list and send out regular newsletters

An email newsletter allows you to maintain “personal” contact with customers. Nielsen Norman Group’s “Email Newsletter Usability Report” explains why. “Newsletters feel personal because they arrive in users’ inboxes, and users have an ongoing relationship with them... The positive aspect of this emotional relationship is that newsletters can create much more of a bond between users and a company than a website can” (verticalresponse.com blog, February 28, 2017). Email is also a low-cost way to target mobile customers and best of all, companies that use email marketing report it delivers some of the highest ROI. Email analytics can also help you learn a lot about who is responding to which messages. Consider using your newsletter to send them updates, industry news, upcoming events, photos, infographics and special promotions.

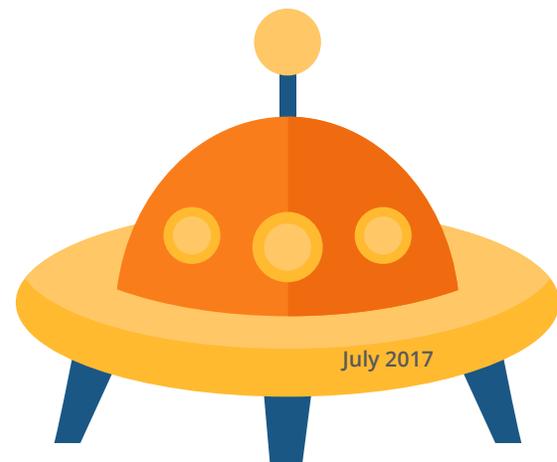
7. Get PR

Local media is always looking for a good local story. “Earned media” or PR is a great way to let a broader audience know that your business is doing newsworthy things. Consider visiting the “how to” section of PRLog to help you develop a powerful press release (you can even make a YouTube or Vimeo video press release). Send it off to every outlet you think might bite. You never know, they might just go for it.

8. Measure and optimize

Monitor and measure what works and then optimize your plan on an ongoing basis. Not getting traction with Facebook? Change your approach or focus on the social media outlets that are working more effectively. Is there a particular promotion that’s getting a great response? Consider rolling it out across media or building an event around it. In today’s environment, flexibility and the ability to measure and pivot are big advantages especially online.

In their survey of 350 small business owners and managers, B2B research firm Clutch found that 49% of small businesses expect to increase their 2017 marketing and advertising budgets. There are more ways than ever for small businesses to use traditional marketing techniques and new technology to increase sales in the short and long term. To ensure your marketing dollars are spent wisely, take the time to map out a strategy, research the media landscape that can work for you and factor in time and money for experimentation.





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Mary G. Mora is the owner of [MGM Speakers Bureau](#), located in Winston Salem, North Carolina with services available worldwide. MGM Speakers Bureau is a Talent Agency who works with Corporations, Event Planners, Associations, For-profit and Non-profit Organizations, HR Departments, Individuals, and others.

When and why did you join the NASE?

You don't become a success by yourself. When I heard of NASE and everything they offered I knew that I had to join. I have been a member since 2011.

When and why did you start your business?

I had wanted to work for myself for a while. I decided it was time to take a leap of faith and go for # 1 on my bucket list and in January 2009, I decided to become a solopreneur. Working with the "Talent" that has a passion for what they share and leave audiences with content they can use, gives me great satisfaction.

What challenges have you faced in your business? How have you overcome them?

There are and will be trials and tribulations when you own a business. One of the main challenges is the area of Finances, not getting the expected client and low cash flow can keep you up at night! Having people that you thought were on your side show their true colors can be painful. But I have found that the best formula to follow is "Integrity + Persistence + Perseverance and letting go of Pride" works all the time!

How do you market your business?

I market my business mainly through social media, word of mouth, remaining in contact with business connections and continuing to build relationships with them. Being based in North Carolina but available worldwide, it's fun to connect with professionals all over the world. And I still use the "sort of dreaded" telephone calls!

Do you have any employees?

I do not have any employees at the present time, but work with independent contractors for various areas of the business. Maybe will add in the future, but no time frame yet.

What's your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?

Mornings usually: Search for events, conferences that just can't wait to hear from us and are in need of speakers, etc., as well as companies that require training for their employees. Submit proposals. Maintain roster and update the profiles with the latest offerings. Afternoons: Reach out and stay in touch with connections and team members, always a joy to catch up. This may continue into the early evening, depends on where/which coast they are.

What's the best thing about being self-employed?

It may turn into a 24/7 job some days, but most of the time you are able to set your own hours. Getting to know each of the team members on a personal basis and building relationships with them and those that we work with is very cool! And, of course, there is the feeling of satisfaction knowing that you were able to help and took stress away from someone makes it even better!



What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?

A recent and great compliment that I received is "I just wanted to send a quick thank you your way for all of your help with The Summit! The presenter was amazing! Thanks again and I look forward to working with you in the future!"

What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?

As I said before, you don't become a success by yourself. Surround yourself with knowledgeable individuals. Listen to suggestions. Read motivational books. Learn and grow from your mistakes! , And, remember, there is nothing wrong with asking for help.

Any other information you would like to share?

Be open to building a relationship with a competitor. You may be able to share things that they have been done and worked for them that you have not tried. You can become a sounding board for each other.



ACA Repeal/Replace Sputters

Late in June, Senate Republicans introduced their long awaited legislation to repeal/replace the Affordable Care Act. However, unlike the House version, which passed the House, the Senate bill was met with immediate skepticism from within the Senate Republican caucus. Members of the Conservative and Moderate wing, immediately called for continued negotiations—with very different and in many cases, conflicting demands. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell had to scrap an anticipated pre-July 4th vote on the legislation as he has been unable to secure 50 Republican votes to move the measure forward.

The challenge for Leader McConnell is that he will have to pick: the Conservatives or the Moderates and then even then, he still might not get the 50 votes necessary. Picking the Conservative side means further eliminating key protections that are very popular with voters and siding with the Moderates means going against the Conservative Think Tanks (Heritage) who have deep pockets and will not hold back on striking out against those who they perceive as threats, even within the Republican Party.

It seems surprising that for what was a mantra and promised campaign slogan for the Republicans

that they really were not prepared with legislation that was vetted, debated, and popular within its own caucus, let alone the American people. For five years, they promised a repeal/replace bill but both chambers have introduced vastly different pieces of legislation that would both have a hard time getting to the President's desk for signature.

I am sure by now the Republicans would have loved to have seen a repeal/replace billed signed into law and with that, the necessary \$\$ to move onto comprehensive tax reform, which would be vastly more popular with its base and the American people. However, it seems that Republicans are literally stuck in the mud. Without an ACA repeal/replace bill that savings the government north of \$1B, the Republicans cannot push through tax reform—they lack the offsets necessary to garner the support from the influential Freedom Caucus. So, here we are—with a collapsing insurance market, scared consumers, and no real path forward. One would have thought controlling the House, Senate, and White House would have been more productive than this.

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