

BUILDING YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS BRAND ONLINE



SMART AND EASY WAYS TO INCREASE HOME PAGE CONVERSIONS



HOW TO GET LEADS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA LIKE THE PROS

GETTING STARTED WITH SMS MARKETING

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If you're like a lot of business owners, you spend your days wearing many different hats, handling everything from accounting to ordering to marketing. So brand building might be a low priority – but it shouldn't be. Recent research shows that 80% of consumers research brands and products online before making a purchase. With that in mind, here are some tips to help you build a solid online brand for your business starting today.

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2015 was the first year that mobile searches topped computer searches. Any business that isn't targeting mobile customers effectively is missing out. One of the best ways to target mobile customers is to use SMS marketing. It's readily accessible, affordable, and very effective.

Welcome To Our Magazine

Thanks for checking out the April 2016 issue of Dallas Media Magazine, your online marketing resource guide for small business. Each month we will be covering topics that resonate with local businesses just like yours.

Our goal is simple. We want to enable you to do big things online, and it all starts by breaking down the complexities of marketing your business online.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting out, or an established business owner in your local community, you can always benefit from increasing your brand's visibility online.

To your Success,
Robert Corrotto
Editor

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

www.DallasMediaMagazine.com the leading small business marketing service in the Dallas area. We help small businesses connect with more customers online.

If you want to build your business, you need to market, it's that simple. But you can lose thousands of dollars if you don't know what you are doing. So we urge you to take action with some of the strategies we recommend.

For a more "hands off" approach, we offer affordable solutions and can deliver results. We hope you enjoy this issue of Dallas Media. Feel free to reach out to us anytime.



HOW TO BUILD YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS BRAND ONLINE

Have you given much thought to building a brand for your small business? If you're like a lot of business owners, you haven't. You spend your days wearing many different hats, handling everything from accounting to ordering to marketing. If you don't have a dedicated marketing person, then brand building might be a low priority – but it shouldn't be.

The truth is that even if you don't have a website, online store, or social media presence, you have an online brand. Recent research shows that 80% of consumers research brands and products online before making a purchase. With that in mind, here are some tips to help you build a solid online brand for your business starting today.



TIP #1: MAKE SURE YOUR LISTINGS ARE CONSISTENT

The first thing you need to do, even if you don't have a website, is to check out your listings online and make sure they are consistent. Your name, address and phone number – also known as your NAP listing – plays a big role in how easy it is to find you online. Even if you have a professional website, inconsistent NAP listings can affect your rank on Google and other search engines. To give you an idea of how nitpicky these things are, keep in mind that even something as simple as having “Ave” on one listing and “Avenue” on another can be a problem. Pick the format you want and then stick with it.

To ensure that you catch everything, do a Google search and then check specific listings that you think might be relevant. For example, even if you have never claimed your listing on Yelp, you might have one there. The same goes for Google My Business and local business directories. It might be time-consuming, but make the effort to go through and claim everything.

If you search a promising directory and find that your business isn't listed there, find out how to get it listed. Citations, even if they're just a listing of your NAP, can help to build your online profile and attract people to your business. Keep in mind that it may take a few days or even weeks for your new or updated listings to appear.

TIP #2: OPTIMIZE FOR MOBILE USERS

2015 marked a turning point in online search. It was the first year that mobile searches outpaced searches done on desktop computers, a trend that is expected to continue going forward. Combine that statistic with Google's recent “Mobilegeddon” update – and the promise of more such updates to come – and there is no denying that you have to make your business easy to find for mobile customers if you want to succeed.

If you have a website, then the best option is a mobile-responsive design – one that automatically detects the type of device being used to view the site and adapts accordingly. Such designs ensure that mobile users won't have to scroll horizontally to read your content, or have to deal with trying to hit a teeny call to action button on their screen.

It's not enough just to make your site accessible on mobile devices. You also need to do user testing to ensure that your pages load quickly and respond well to user activities. Mobile users are notoriously impatient, and a page that takes more than a few seconds to load will likely see a high bounce rate. If you have a WordPress site, making it mobile-responsive should be easy. All you need to do is choose a mobile-responsive theme for your site. However, if you want a more detailed overview of what is required to get your site mobile-ready, click [**here**](#).



TIP #3:
NETWORK WITH OTHER LOCAL BUSINESSES

The #LoveLocal movement is gaining traction online as a way of encouraging people to buy from local and small businesses. One way to build your local reputation is to take the time to network with other small business owners. They know better than anybody else how difficult it can be to keep a small business afloat, and they are often very eager to refer customers to other local businesses to keep the community thriving.

Consider visiting Townsquared and seeking out other entrepreneurs and business owners in your area. You can establish yourself as an authority, learn about other local companies, and even build partnerships and referral sources.



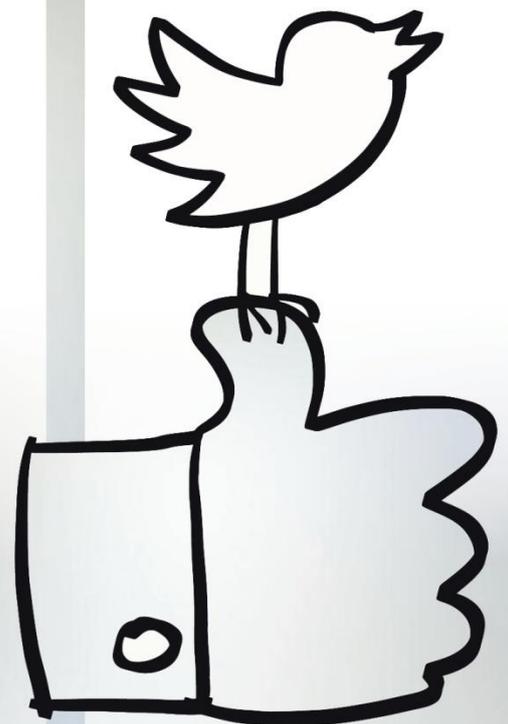
TIP #4:
USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY

There's no denying that social media use is high – and getting higher every day. If you aren't already using social media to build your brand, then it's time to get serious about it.

A well-thought-out social media strategy can help you connect with existing customers and attract new ones. People love to connect with their favorite brands, but it's important to remember the "social" in social media. Nobody is going to follow you on Facebook or Pinterest in the hopes of being hit with a barrage of aggressive sales pitches. Your social media content should follow the 80/20 rule. 80% of what you post should be interesting and relevant content that provides value to your followers, and only 20% should address your specific products and services.

Certain industries and businesses are better adapted to some social media sites than others. For example, if you sell an aspirational product that lends itself well to being photographed, especially if your product appeals to women, then Pinterest is a great choice. Facebook is still the most widely-used social media site, and the most versatile. Instagram and Snapchat are highly visual and tend to lend themselves to marketing to young people.

Whatever sites you decide to use, make sure to post regularly and always keep your brand in mind. The voice you use on social media should reflect how you want people to perceive you.



TIP #5:

STRETCH YOUR AD DOLLARS BY FOCUSING ON PAID SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

Finally, if you're on a tight budget and don't have much money for advertising, consider using your dollars wisely by advertising on social media. Ranking for top keywords on Google can be difficult, and the competition (and the cost) is high. Social media advertising is very affordable and versatile. You can target your ad so that it reaches one of two groups: your followers and their friends; or a chosen group targeted by demographics and interests. Research shows that users are most likely to make a purchase when they have repeated exposure to a company or brand. Every time a user sees your ad, it increases the likelihood that they will eventually buy from you.

Advertising on some social media sites is still rolling out and not available to everyone, but Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter all have well-established programs. You can run a Facebook ad for as little as a dollar a day, and they provide free analytics so you can see how your ad is performing.



The bottom line is that you have an online brand. Whether you are managing it properly is another question. By using the tips provided above, you can claim your online brand and build it into something that accurately represents your business – and you.

HOW TO GET LEADS FROM **SOCIAL MEDIA LIKE THE PROS**



Are you making the most of your social media pages? Sites like Facebook and Twitter are a wonderful way to interact with current customers, but if you handle them properly, they can also be a great source of new leads. A lot of local businesses don't do a good job of using social media to generate leads because they're not sure how to go about it. With that in mind, let's talk about some of the ways you can use social media to get qualified leads for your company.

STRATEGY #1:

FILL OUT YOUR PROFILES COMPLETELY

A lot of small business owners skip the step of completing a profile, but that's a mistake. Take the time to fill in your company's full name, address, and phone number, provide a brief description, and link back to your website. Choose a compelling profile picture and cover photo. The more complete your profile is, the more compelling it will be to potential customers.

STRATEGY #2:

LINK YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS TO LANDING PAGES, NOT YOUR HOME PAGE



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Post Code *
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Speed of Sale Presume *

Valuation & Offer Estimate

If you're posting in an effort to get people to buy a particular product, make sure you link directly to it. Prospective leads shouldn't have to guess what you want

them to do. When you send them directly to a page – especially one that will require them to opt in to see the content – you greatly increase the chances that they will convert. Also, make sure that every page has your name and address, and an easy way to contact you.

STRATEGY #3:

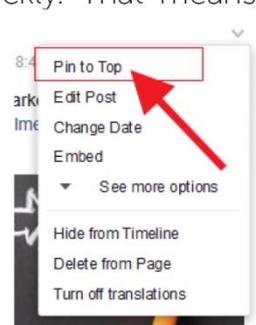
SPONSOR A CONTEST

This one is a pretty popular strategy that's been around for a while, but it's worth including because it is so effective. People who are already following you on social media are highly likely to be interested in anything you are giving away. You can maximize your exposure by offering one entry to people who like the post, and a second entry to those who share it. Your most loyal customers will always be willing to share, and the shared post will get your company in front of a whole new audience, many of whom will also be local.

STRATEGY #4:

USE A TWITTER CARD OR PINNED FACEBOOK NOTE TO ATTRACT LEADS

One downside of using social media is that content turns over very quickly. That means that a call to action that you post can easily get lost in the shuffle – unless you pin it. Facebook allows you to write a note and pin it at the top of your page. Likewise, Twitter allows you to create a Twitter card with relevant information and pin it to the top of your profile. The benefit of pinning is that it leaves your content in a highly visible location for as long as you want, thus increasing visits to your website – and also visits to your business.





STRATEGY #5:

SPONSOR A GOOGLE HANGOUT WITH LOCAL CUSTOMERS

One of the trickiest things about getting people to buy from you is overcoming the objections that they hear inside their heads. If you can get an opportunity to talk to them directly, you can address those concerns easily. A Google Hangout is a nice way to accomplish that. Set up a time for the Google Hangout using your Google+ or Google My Business account. Your Hangout can be a round table discussion with potential customers or even a live Q & A with people online. The benefit of live online events like this is that you can interact directly with customers, and also post the Hangout for people who couldn't make it to watch later.

STRATEGY #6:

USE GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING FOR YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

Social media advertising is a cost-effective option for local companies. One of the best

reasons to invest in paid social media advertising is that you can easily target your ads to the people who are in your geographical area and are interested in your products.

The benefit of this kind of targeting is that it prevents you from having to pay for clicks and leads that are not relevant. Your ad will be seen only by people who are in your area. On Facebook, you also have the option of sponsoring a post and targeting your followers and their followers. The geographical targeting won't be as tight as it would be with locational targeting, but the chances are good that a high percentage of your followers' friends are in your area, too.

STRATEGY #7:

USE WHISPER CODES TO INCREASE TRAFFIC TO YOUR STORE

When you own a brick and mortar store, figuring out who's responding to your social media marketing efforts can be tricky. One way to help track your ROI is to send out a "whisper code" to your followers. A whisper code is basically a verbal coupon. Instead of sending a bar code that needs to be scanned, you give customers a word or phrase to whisper in return for a freebie.

The benefit of whisper codes is that you can track your social media campaigns to figure out if they're working. The chances are that any customer who comes to your store in anticipation of getting something free will end up buying more than they otherwise would have.

STRATEGY #8:

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE EVENTS AND APPEARANCES

Local people come to local events. If your company is sponsoring a local event, or if you regularly sell at a farmer's market, use social media to spread the word. You might remind people of the hours, let them know what you'll be selling, or even invite them to stop by to get a free sample.

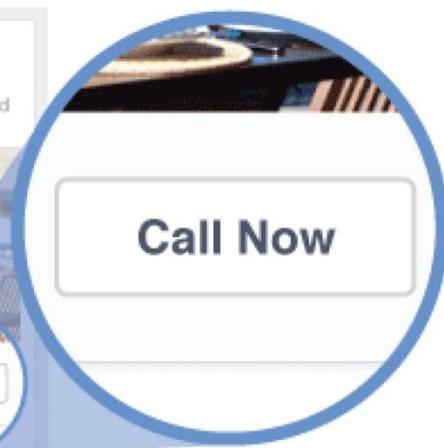
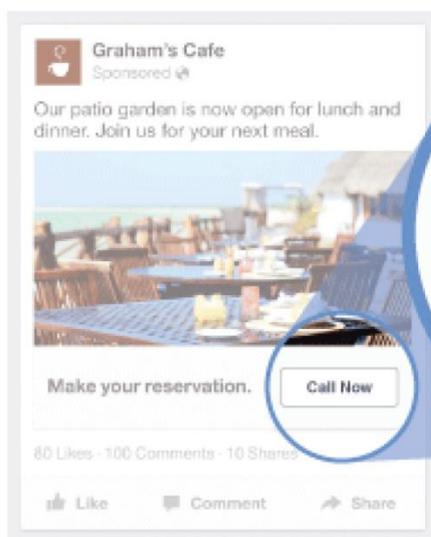
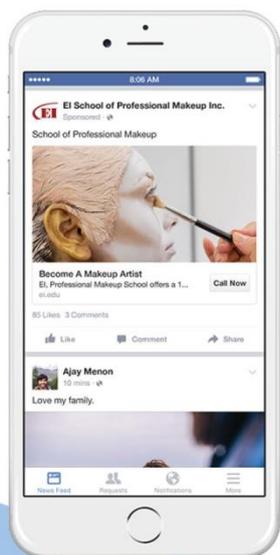
A related pro tip is to interact with other local businesses and find ways to cross-promote your products. Using the farmer's market example again, a local baker might tag-team with a creamery to get people to buy both bread and butter. If each of you promotes your own product as well as the other person's, you

can increase the traffic on the day of the event – and possibly gain some new social media followers, too!

STRATEGY #9:

USE FACEBOOK'S "CALL NOW" FEATURE TO TARGET MOBILE USERS

When you advertise on Facebook, you have the choice of targeting mobile users by including a "Call Now" button on your ad. The button enables mobile users to call you directly by touching the button instead of having to look up and dial your number. It's a great way to encourage contact – and give you the opportunity to pitch a lead directly.



Social media strategies may vary from business to business, but the strategies listed here will help you make the most of the time and effort you put in to your social media campaigns.

SMART AND EASY WAYS TO INCREASE HOME PAGE CONVERSIONS



Are conversions on your home page lagging behind your expectations? There is an art to designing a high-converting home page, and a lot of small businesses simply don't give the content and appearance of their website enough attention.

The good news is that there are some very simple things you can do to increase your conversions without having to spend a ton of time and money.

1

The first thing you need to consider is the quality of the images on your home page. A page that's densely packed with text is not going to be appealing to the majority of internet users. On the other hand, a page that mixes text with effective images is far more likely to convert. A great image is one that accurately reflects your product or industry. If you can afford it, the best option is to hire a photographer to take pictures of your business and employees. However, if budget is a concern, don't be afraid to use stock photos as long as they are unique and not cheesy. Stay away from anything that is obviously a stock photo and go for images that are striking and appealing. Also, you should strongly consider using pictures of people's faces, which tend to draw customers in.

2

Use strong marketing copy that focuses on the things that are most important to your customers. When people search for a keyword, they are really asking a question – and most often, they are asking about a problem that they want to solve. When your home page uses language that plays to your visitors' emotions, it can trigger a powerful response – one that's very effective in terms of increasing conversions. There's an old advertising trope that says that using fear, uncertainty, and doubt (FUD) helps drive sales. The most effective home pages don't market openly in fear. Instead, they focus on a user's problem (which may be making them feel one of those three emotions), empathize with it, and then offer a concrete solution.

3

Make sure that your value proposition is clear. What are you offering, and why should people be interested? It's not enough to have well-written copy. You need a strong headline that will immediately put visitors to your site in the proper frame of mind.

4

Don't be coy about your product. You are offering a product or service that you want people to buy, and that should be clear from your home page. It's one thing to focus on selling the sizzle and not the steak – but remember that there





is no sizzle without the steak. Your home page should not leave visitors to your site in doubt about what you sell or the service you provide. You don't have to provide all the details on the home page, but you do need to show people what it is you sell. If you don't, they may very well end up navigating away.

5

Collect leads using an easy opt-in form. Marketing wisdom says that most users require between seven and ten exposures to a brand or product before they make a purchase online. In practical terms, that means that the overwhelming majority of visitors to your site will not make a purchase on their first visit. One way to mitigate that effect is to have a simple opt-in form that allows you to collect user email addresses – and follow

up with them to increase your brand recognition. Your opt-in form should be extremely short, asking for no more than an email address and a name.

6

Create an appealing and valuable lead magnet to convince people to opt in to your list. Many companies use the promise of a freebie to get potential leads to hand over their email addresses. For example, a short eBook, email series, or course can be a good way to entice users to join your list. Not only will it allow you to collect email addresses, but giving away a valuable item for free also builds something called reciprocity – a cognitive bias that greatly increases the chances that customers will buy from you. The free item creates a sense of obligation in the same way that doing a favor for someone in person does.

7

Make sure you have a compelling and effective email series to send to people after they opt in. Every email you send is an opportunity to provide value and increase your authority, as well as building brand recognition.

8

Make good use of testimonials and social proof. 80% of all internet users say that they read reviews before making a purchase. If you aren't including testimonials and social proof in the form of trust symbols, you could very well be missing out on conversions as a result. Remember, a first-time visitor to your site knows very little about your company. Seeing enthusiastic testimonials and reviews and other trust symbols can be a very effective way of increasing your authority and overriding the objections that a user might have to opting in or making a purchase.

9

Consider adding a video to your home page. Videos are very popular – in fact, they are the most popular kind of online content. When you add an interesting and relevant video to your home page, you encourage people to spend time there, listening and watching. If your product or service lends itself to demonstration, a video is a great way to highlight what you're selling. Even highly technical products can benefit from certain types of video, such as a white board video. The best way to incorporate video is to let users decide whether to play the video or not. Videos that play automatically can be off-putting and distracting.

10

Add social following buttons to your home page. New users to your site may not make a purchase on their first visit, and they might not even give you their email address. However,

following you on social media is a risk-free way for them to learn more about your company and products. Why not make it as easy as possible for them to do so?

11

Test everything on your home page to optimize it fully. Every element of your website needs to shine if you want to maximize your conversions. Split testing, which is also known as A-B testing, is the best way to do it. Using a split-testing software like Optimizely, test each element of your website individually. The software splits your traffic, sending half to your original page, and half to the page with the new element you are testing, such as a headline or call to action. After the test has run long enough to get you a statistically significant result, you can switch to the new option if it results in better conversions and then move on to testing the next one.



Increasing conversions on your home page doesn't have to be difficult. The most important thing you can do is to look at it from the standpoint of your ideal customer. What problem do they want solved, and what do they hope to see on your home page? If you tailor your home page to meet those needs, the conversions will follow.



HOW TO GET **STARTED WITH SMS MARKETING**

Regardless of what product or service you sell, the chances are good that the vast majority of your customers are avid mobile users. In the United States, more than 90% of all adults own cell phones, and more than 60% own smart phones. 2015 was the first year that mobile searches outstripped computer searches. Any business that isn't targeting mobile customers effectively is missing out.

One of the best ways to target mobile customers is to use SMS marketing. It's readily accessible, affordable, and very effective.

WHAT IS SMS MARKETING?

Let's start with the basics. SMS stands for "short message marketing" – in other words, it's marketing with text messages. This is a form of marketing that works in a way that's similar to email marketing in that users must opt in to receive SMS messages. They may do so by entering a mobile number on your website, if you offer that option, or by texting a short confirmation code to a number you provide.

The open rate for text messages is nearly 100% -- much higher than the open rate for emails. That means that it's a virtual certainty that the people on your list will see every text you send them. For that reason, SMS is a very effective marketing option for businesses of all kinds. However, it is particularly effective for local companies because it enables owners to reach out to people when they are most likely to patronize local businesses – when they are already out of the house.





HOW MUCH DOES SMS MARKETING COST?

Most small companies have a limited budget for advertising and marketing. It's natural to want to stretch your marketing dollars as far as you can, and SMS marketing is a good way to do that. While costs vary depending on the service you use and the size of your list, here is a basic idea of what you can expect to pay.

- » Some providers offer free monthly services with limited texting. If you're just starting out or unsure about using SMS, a free option can be a good way to begin. If you want to get the full features of a service, you can probably expect to pay between \$50 and \$100 per month for a premium service.
- » Most services charge a small fee for each SMS message you sent, usually about

four or five cents apiece. However, the charges are tiered so companies that send a high volume of messages pay less per message. MMS (multimedia) messages usually cost a bit more than that, around eight or nine cents per message.

- » Some small companies end up sharing a response number and then renting a chosen keyword. For example, you might band together with other local business who use SMS marketing and share the opt-in number "12345." To differentiate people who are opting in to your list, you would choose a short, relevant keyword and rent it for \$15 to \$25 per month.

It's always a good idea to shop around and check out all of your options before you commit to a service.

HOW TO USE SMS MARKETING EFFECTIVELY



If you decide you want to give SMS marketing a try, here are some ideas that you may want to consider to help you engage customers and increase sales.

1. One of the most popular ways to use SMS marketing is to send out coupons and promotional codes to customers. Coupons are a great way to get people to visit your store or business because they create a sense of obligation, triggering a psychological phenomenon known as reciprocity. When you send out a coupon (especially one that offers something free, such as a free appetizer or other item), customers feel obligated to you. You can also build the idea of reciprocity into your coupon code by offering a two-for-one or other similar option that requires a purchase.
2. Target customers at the times they are most likely to frequent your business. Not every business is time-sensitive, but some are. Many restaurants use well-timed SMS messages to get people to come in. For example, a happy hour announcement and coupon sent in the late afternoon on a Friday could catch people when they're on their way home from work. If your business lends itself to this type of marketing, then SMS can be the perfect way to do it.

3. Poll your customers to learn their preferences. One nice thing about SMS marketing is that it makes it very easy to collect valuable information from your customers. All you have to do is send out a question and provide instructions about responding, including where to send responses and what keywords to use. It's a very inexpensive and easy form of market research that you can use to your advantage.
4. Sponsor a sweepstakes or giveaway and let people enter via text message. Everybody loves a freebie, and SMS marketing can be a good way to get people to enter your contest. If you have a new product or are introducing a new service, a contest can be a very effective option when it comes to building awareness and anticipation. The anticipation may increase the chances of making a sale to the people who aren't lucky enough to win.
5. Use SMS marketing to set up a drip campaign. When people opt in to your list, you may want to send them a little thank you such as 5% off coupon. You can set up automatic follow-up texts with greater discounts to entice people to come into your store and make a purchase. The nice thing about this option is that you don't have to send individual text messages. You set everything up when the customer first opts in, so it works very much like an email autoresponder series.
6. Create groups to target customers effectively. Once people have opted in to your list, you can ask questions to narrow down the messages you send them. For example, an apparel store owner might ask people to text words like WOMEN, MEN, or INFANTS to specify what kind of apparel they are most interested in. Follow-up messages can be tailored to individual interests.
7. If you have the budget for it, a slightly pricier option is to use GPS to ping customers when they are close to your business. It is definitely more expensive than traditional SMS marketing, but it can also be an extremely effective way of getting people to come to your business.

These are just a few ways you can use SMS marketing to your advantage. Use your imagination, and think about what your customers are most likely to want. The more closely you tailor your campaign to your target customers, the better return you will get on your SMS marketing campaign.

A man with short brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a patterned tie, stands with his arms crossed and a confident smile. The background is a gradient from light to dark brown.

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