



The Online Marketing Guide For Local Business

DALLAS MEDIA

Internet Marketing For Local Businesses

**THE 5 BIGGEST
IN LOCAL SEARCH
RIGHT NOW**



HOW TO CRUSH IT WITH
VIDEO 
MARKETING



IT'S TIME TO 86 YOUR
TESTIMONIAL
“ PAGE ”

**CRAFTING THE
PERFECT EMAIL
NEWSLETTER**
LOCAL BUSINESS EDITION

Contents

03 The 5 Biggest Trends in Local Search Right Now

2015 saw some big changes in local search, with Google basically demanding that all websites be mobile-friendly or pay a price. Clearly, the times are changing when it comes to local search. Here's what you need to know to stay on top of what's happening in the New Year.

07 It's Time to 86 Your Testimonial Page

You know that a huge majority of internet users rely on reviews of businesses to make purchasing decisions, and you've probably put a lot of effort into managing your reviews. But if you're sticking those reviews on your website testimonials page, you're undoing all your hard work. And here's why.

11 How to Crush It with Video Marketing

Are you convinced you're doing everything you can do to market your business online? You probably have blog posts, photographs, and client testimonials – all the things you're supposed to have. If your list of great content doesn't include videos, though, you're missing out.

15 Crafting the Perfect Email Newsletter (Local Business Edition)

So you *finally* want to start a newsletter for your local business? Email newsletters can help boost your sales dramatically but most small business owners simply overlook its significance. Email open rates are still very high, making an email newsletter a solid investment - if you do it right.

Welcome To Our Magazine

Thanks for checking out the February 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 are 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

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www.DallasMediacorp.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.



5 BIGGEST TRENDS IN LOCAL SEARCH RIGHT NOW

2015 saw some big changes in local search, with Google basically demanding that all websites be mobile-friendly or pay a price. Mobile searches outpaced computer searches for the first time, and Google searches now return only three local search results where there used to be seven. Clearly, the times are changing when it comes to local search. Here's what you need to know to stay on top of what's happening in the New Year.

LOCAL DATA AND LOCAL SEARCH ARE LINKED



You probably already know that it's important to make sure that your business name, address, and phone number (your NAP listings) are in sync with one another for SEO purposes. Even small variations in the way you list that information can impact your search rank, so if you haven't already done so, take a tour of your online listings and make sure everything matches.

In 2016, Google is taking things beyond SEO and using NAP listings to help gather relevant local search information. This trend is especially important given the surge in mobile searches in 2015. When your customers are out and about, you want them to be able to find you – and you can be sure that if they can't locate you because of confusing information, they'll find your competitor instead.

Speaking of local search, one of the most popular kinds of searches on mobile devices is the "near me" function that uses NAP information and GPS to direct users to local businesses. No local business can afford to ignore this trend.

GOOGLE IS PRIORITIZING LOCAL SEARCH

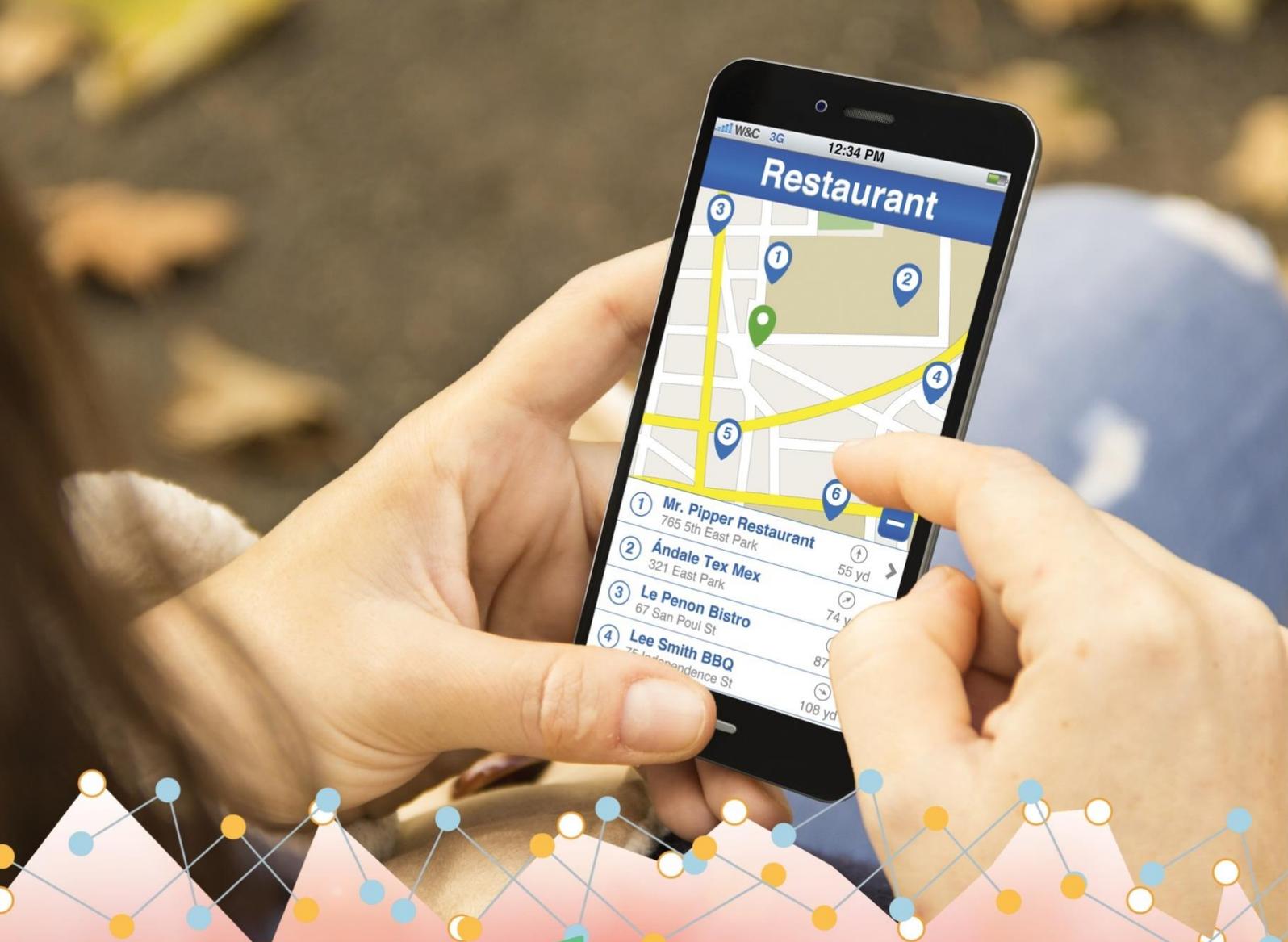


Just as Google made mobile readiness a priority in 2015, they are making local search a priority in 2016. The latest Search Quality Ratings Guidelines put a lot of emphasis on local search, to the point where they included a Google My Business API to allow business owners and managers to control information about their companies.

The first sign of disruption from Google regarding local search was the removal of local business information from social media site Google+. It's safe to assume that more disruptions will be coming, so keep your eyes and ears open for changes. The businesses that stay on top of Google's priorities won't end up getting caught flat-footed the way some companies did with 2015's Mobilegeddon.

Google never makes their algorithms public, but if you notice a big change in your local search listing, it's a good indication that Google has been tweaking their formulas. There's no way to predict how or when that will happen, so for now, the smart business owner should focus on standardizing all NAP listings.





MOBILE WALLET USAGE IS ON THE RISE

2015 was the year of the beacon, with many companies making use of the store-based devices to interact with customers as they neared the store. While some retailers are still using beacons, the wave of the future appears to be moving away from beacons and embracing the idea of mobile wallets.

A mobile wallet is a mobile storage app that allows users to store a variety of things to make shopping easier. For example, they might store their credit card information, identification, and special offers and coupons from their favorite companies.

The uses for mobile wallets are always expanding. The popularity of "near me" searches on mobile devices combined with customers' desire to get insider information and special deals are on trend to make mobile wallet usage go through the roof in 2016. You can expect to see retailers moving away from beacons and getting on board with communicating with customers' mobile wallets, instead.

APPS ARE GETTING IN ON THE LOCAL MARKETING GAME

There has been a lot of talk about apps in recent years, as one expert after another weighs in on whether local businesses should have their own apps. Now there's a new trend, which involves using well-established global apps, such as Periscope and Snapchat, to target local customers.

One recent example involved Dunkin' Donuts using Snapchat to promote National Coffee Day. Using an established app offers the opportunity for big corporations to reach out to local customers, enticing them to visit a particular location. Local businesses would do well to notice the trend, as it could easily be adapted to their purposes too.

It might be worth experimenting with Snapchat or Periscope to see if your customers might be influenced by app-based local marketing.



THERE'S NEW COMPETITION FOR GOOGLE

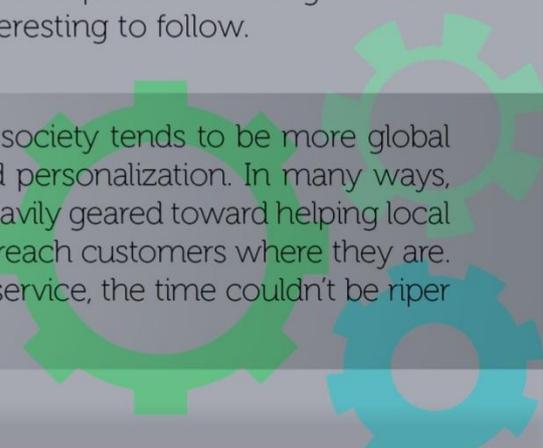
While Google is still the undisputed king of search, there are barbarians at the gate. As local search gains in importance, Facebook has an eye on giving them a run for it when it comes to search.

Facebook is already a popular search engine for users seeking out local businesses. The social media giant already has a good handle on user demographics thanks to the profile information of its users. They continue to fine-tune their search function, and it's probable that

before long, they'll be displaying local business information next to queries about what to buy.

Apple iOS is in on the game too, offering a powerful local search tool with iOS 9. Google is still in the lead for now, but for the first time in a long time, they have some serious competition. Facebook appears to be the bigger threat based on reach, but don't underestimate Apple, either. The trends in local search may end up attracting other competitors to the game too. It should be interesting to follow.

No matter how you slice it, the trends for 2016 are clear. While our society tends to be more global than ever before, the marketing trends are all about localization and personalization. In many ways, 2016 looks to be an ideal year for local marketing. The trends are all heavily geared toward helping local businesses (or local locations of national or international businesses) reach customers where they are. And with the increasing importance that Millennials put on personal service, the time couldn't be riper for making the most of your local search options.



IT'S TIME TO 86 YOUR TESTIMONIAL PAGE

If you're like a lot of business owners, you've done your research about the importance of reviews. You know that a huge majority of internet users rely on reviews of businesses to make purchasing decisions, and you've probably put a lot of effort into managing your review pages, responding to negative reviews, and demonstrating how helpful you are to potential customers. All of that is great, and you should keep doing it.

What's the problem, then? If you're taking those reviews and sticking them on a Testimonials page on your website, you're undoing all your hard work. Here's why.



66 TESTIMONIALS AND TRUST 99

The first thing you need to know is that customers don't trust testimonials.

But wait, you might be thinking. Didn't I just say that the majority of customers rely on reviews when making purchasing decisions?

Note the language. They rely on reviews, not testimonials. It doesn't matter if your testimonials started out as reviews. The moment you pick one out and stick it on your website, it's a testimonial – something you solicited from a customer you knew was happy and satisfied.

Even if you include a few less than stellar reviews in the mix, it's unlikely that customers will even bother to visit the page. They are going to assume that you picked out the best of the best, and that they won't learn anything real about your company, products, or service by visiting the page.

In case you're still not convinced, let's envision a scenario where a company culls their best online reviews to put on their website. A customer decides to read them, and then – still unconvinced – decides to bounce over to Yelp to see what the people there have to say.

How do you think it will affect your credibility if there's a significant disconnect between what's on your site and your average Yelp rating? I'll give you a hint: it's not going to do you any favors. Customers want to see honest reviews, including the negative ones – and they want to see how you respond to the bad reviews.

It's also important to note that the changes that Google made to local business information on Google+ mean that the only thing customers will see there are your location information and your reviews. You might as well make the most of them.

The first thing you need to know is that customers don't trust testimonials.





“ HOW TO LINK TO REVIEWS ”

If you're wondering how you can harness the power of reviews while avoiding the pitfalls I have described above, don't worry. I'm about to tell you. The key here is to link to (not copy) reviews from your website, and to do so in a way that doesn't step on anybody's toes. Here's what you need to do.

1. Ditch the "Testimonials" page and make it a "Reviews" page instead.
2. At the top of the page, put a few sentences about how you think it's important for potential customers to hear what existing customers think of you. With that in mind, you're providing them with some quick and easy links so they can see for themselves.
3. For every link you include, make sure to use the `target="_blank"` command so that the review site opens in a separate tab. You don't want to encourage people to navigate away from your page, so don't skip this step.
4. Put a link to Google reviews at the top of your page. Google reviews are always going to be at the top of any list of search results, so you might as well list them first on your page.

5. Do not link directly to your Yelp page. That might not seem to make sense, but Yelp frowns on direct links, so you want to make it look like visitors from your site are arriving at Yelp via organic search. The way to do that is to do a Google search for [your business] Yelp, and then copy the link to the SERP (search engine results page) url. When visitors click it, they will be taken to the Google SERP page with Yelp at the top of the listings where they can easily click it.
6. Do the same thing for any other relevant review sites, including Angie's List and industry-specific sites.

The point of doing things like this is that you get all the benefit of directing customers to reviews without the suspicious element of listing them on your own website. Whether you agree with the perception that Testimonial pages are not to be trusted or not, the fact is that customers want to feel they have access to unbiased and honest reviews that are a true reflection of what they can expect if they do business with you.



66 TIPS FOR HANDLING REVIEWS 99

If you're worried about linking to unfiltered review pages, there is actually a very easy two-part solution that can alleviate that fear altogether:

1. Do a great job of monitoring your review pages and replying in a professional and helpful manner to negative reviews. I know, it seems obvious – but sometimes the obvious solution really is the best one. If you want to be sure that customers are getting a clear picture of your great products and services, show them how important customers are by giving great customer service. It's not rocket science – nor should it be.
2. If you want to get more reviews up on sites like Yelp and Angie's List, consider handing out review postcards to customers when they leave your business. Some customers might leave a review anyway, but there's no harm in encouraging them to do so. By providing a card, you're making it easy.

If you find yourself resisting the idea of doing away with Testimonials, think of it this way. You still have them, you're only changing the name.

If you were listing only rave reviews on your site, the chances are good that your customers would go seek out the rest of your reviews in spite of that. This way, you're being up front with them about your reviews, which shows them you have nothing to hide.

If you want to get more reviews up on sites like Yelp and Angie's List, consider handing out review postcards to customers when they leave your business



HOW TO CRUSH IT WITH VIDEO MARKETING

Are you convinced you're doing everything you can do to market your business online? You probably have blog posts, photographs, and client testimonials – all the things you're supposed to have. If your list of great content doesn't include videos, though, you're missing out.

THE LOWDOWN ON VIDEO MARKETING

Video marketing is hugely popular with internet users. While people might not make time to read a couple of thousand words, most will take a few minutes to watch a short video. If that's not reason enough to add video to your content, here are a few statistics that might help you make the leap:

- » 55% of all internet users watch video online at least once a day, and 78% do so once a week
- » Online video accounts for 50% of all mobile traffic as of 2015
- » 81% of all brands feature videos on their websites
- » Just using the word "video" in the subject line of an email boosts open rates by 19%, and click-through rates by 65%
- » Internet users stay on sites that have video an average of two minutes longer than sites that don't have video

You have to admit, those are some pretty impressive numbers. In case that's not enough to convince you, the next step is to learn about some of the concrete benefits of video marketing.



WHAT VIDEO MARKETING CAN DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS

It's no accident that video marketing is so popular. Most marketers find video marketing to be an effective way to communicate with existing customers and attract new ones. Here are just a few of the ways getting into video marketing can help you:

1. It can boost your SEO. You might not be aware of this, but YouTube (which is owned by Google) is actually the world's second-largest search engine. It's also the world's third-most trafficked website. Not only is YouTube a great way to share your videos, the information you include (such as keywords and links to your website) can boost your search ranking, and that's a big benefit.
2. It can increase conversions. Research shows that customers are about 80% more likely to convert on a page that includes video – and they're 64% more likely to make a purchase.
3. It encourages social sharing. Videos are some of the most popular content on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. In fact, Facebook has recently added features like auto play and view count to its embedded video player, and Twitter now has a native app that allows viewers to make and edit videos up to 30 seconds long.
4. It gives you a leg up in marketing to mobile customers. As mentioned earlier, videos account for about 50% of mobile traffic – and 40% of customers say that video on a website increases the chances they will make a purchase using a mobile device.

The benefits are undeniable.

WHAT YOU NEED TO MAKE A VIDEO

The thing that ends up stopping a lot of local business owners from using video marketing is that they can't get past a string of questions like these:

Aren't videos expensive to make?

Don't I need to know a lot of technical information to make a good-looking video?

What about equipment?

Let's talk about those things. None of these questions should stop you – and if they are, it's time to get over it. The truth is that you probably already have most of what you need to make an effective marketing video.

Here are the nuts and bolts of what you need to make a video:

- » A camera. Most smart phones will shoot video, or you can buy a point-and-shoot digital camera or DSLR to record HD video
- » A microphone. While most cameras come with a built-in mic, the sound quality tends to be terrible. Invest in a separate microphone – they don't cost much and they can make a huge difference.
- » A tripod. A marketing video is not the place for herky-jerky, handheld footage. A tripod will keep the camera still.
- » Editing software. Most new computers come with basic editing software, such as iMovie (Mac) or MovieMaker (Windows).

That's it. The chances are good that you already have most of what you need, and it won't cost much to get the rest. If you don't have a decent camera, keep in mind that most digital cameras can shoot short videos. It won't cost much to get what you need – at most, a couple of hundred dollars – and you'll earn your money back quickly because you'll be able to use the equipment over and over again.



The thing about video marketing is that it's so incredibly versatile. You can make almost any type of video you want, but here are a few ideas to get you started:

- » Demo a product or shoot a how-to video. The key to any kind of online marketing is to offer value to your customers. How-tos and demos are easy and inexpensive to make – and the truth is, nobody is more qualified than you are to tell people about your product.
- » Give a behind the scenes tour. Do you have a unique manufacturing process, an enthusiastic staff, or an interesting origin story? Make a video to let your customers know about it.
- » Record interviews with company leaders or staff, or shoot some "man on the street" style videos with customers. This can be a terrific way to grab some off-the-cuff client testimonials and product reviews.
- » Speaking of testimonials, ask some of your customers if they'd be willing to sit down to record a video testimonial. Or, take it a step further and make a video case study of one of your clients. Most consumers today say that they look up reviews and testimonials online before making a purchase, and videos add a personal touch that makes them hard to resist.

Those are just a few ideas, but you could also consider doing a white board "explainer" video for your product or service, or making an animated video about your company.

MAKE SURE PEOPLE SEE YOUR VIDEO

After you've shot and edited your video, the final step is to make sure that it's out where people can see it. We've already talked about YouTube a bit, but creating your own station there and uploading your video is an important first step. You can also:

- » Embed the video on your website, and link to it in marketing emails
- » Post it as a vlog (video blog)
- » Share the video on your social media pages. Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn are all good options

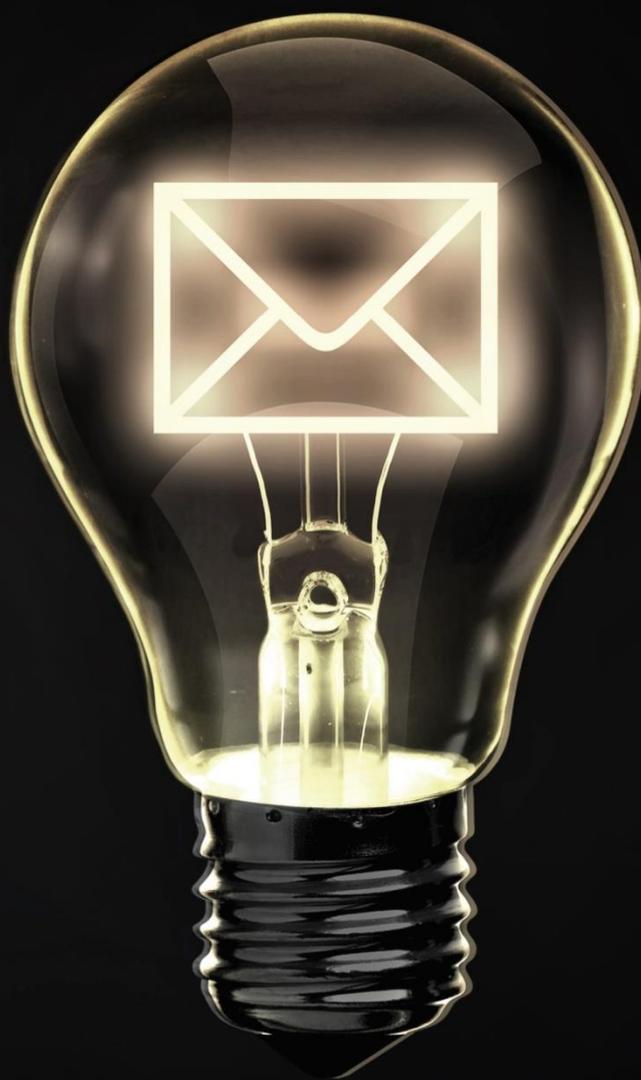
You can also consider sponsoring a contest or giveaway to encourage social sharing.

The bottom line is that adding videos to your marketing mix can make a huge difference in areas like brand recognition and conversions. Why not give it a try?



CRAFTING THE PERFECT EMAIL NEWSLETTER

LOCAL BUSINESS EDITION



So you finally want to start a newsletter for your local business? It's a good idea for local businesses. In fact, email newsletters can help boost your sales dramatically but most small business owners simply overlook its significance. Email open rates are still very high, making an email newsletter a solid investment - if you do it right.

However, a lot of companies start newsletters without really thinking about what they want to accomplish. Don't be one of them. Follow the advice here, and you can use your newsletter to increase your revenue.

FIND A FOCUS

The first thing you need to do is to avoid the biggest mistake companies make when putting together a newsletter: they try to cover everything. A traditional marketing email is a relatively simple beast. It covers a single topic, and concludes with a single call to action. It's quick to write, easy to read, and if you do it well, it can convert like crazy.

The problem with the average newsletter is that it tries to be all things to all people. If you want people to read your newsletter, you need to give them a compelling reason to do so. Pick one vertical and stick to that. You can always segment newsletters for other aspects of your business if you want to.

INFORMATION FIRST, SALES SECOND

The second thing to keep in mind is that you are writing a newsletter, not a sales letter. People subscribe to a newsletter to get information, not to get a hard-core sales pitch delivered to their inbox. (Of course in many cases, they also want to hear about special promotions and deals, but we'll get to that later.)



The ratio of information to sales pitch should be about nine to one in your newsletter. That means that 90% of the content you include is about educating and entertaining your subscribers. It's fine to include a call to action at the end – you should do so – but if you spend all your time selling, you're going to end up with a huge unsubscribe rate.

The benefit of leading with value for your subscribers is that it takes advantage of the psychological principle of reciprocity. It's the same approach used by a lot of internet marketers who give away a freebie like an eBook or a list of tips to get people to sign up for their mailing lists. When you give a subscriber something for nothing, you create a sense of obligation in them. You have provided them with something valuable, and they feel they owe you.

KEEP IT SHORT, SWEET, AND SIMPLE

The third thing to remember when putting together your newsletter is that you want the content to come in small, easily-digestible chunks. It should be arranged in a single column with a few attractive images. If you want to include a long piece of content, embed a link back to your blog or website rather than copying the whole text into your email.

You should also choose a few relevant and dynamic images to illustrate your content. You don't want to overdo it with pictures and video, so keep in mind that everything you add has the potential to slow a subscriber down when they scroll through the newsletter. Make sure to use alt image tags, too, so that if the pictures don't display your subscribers will still know what they are.

Simplicity is also key for mobile search.



ADD VIDEO – AND MENTION IT IN YOUR SUBJECT LINE

Video is hugely popular, and recent research shows that simply including the word “video” in the subject line of an email increases open rates by 19%. If videos are already part of your marketing mix, then you should include them in your newsletter. If not, you might think about adding them. Even a short, 30-second video can add a lot of appeal.

WRITE KILLER SUBJECT LINES

Speaking of subject lines, make sure yours are clear (you should state that you’re including your newsletter) and intriguing. You want to give subscribers a compelling reason to open your newsletter instead of ignoring it. For example, a local clothing store might try something like this:

April Newsletter: Spring Scarves and a Special Coupon for You!

That’s just one possibility, but you might try including a compelling line from a story, a mention of a product, or a detail about a promotion. However, make sure to stay away from clickbait headlines that have nothing to do with your news-

letter. Your subscribers won’t thank you if they open your newsletter expecting something you promised in the subject line and don’t find it.

INCLUDE A SINGLE CALL TO ACTION

It might be tempting to include multiple calls to action, but remember that 80/20 ratio and stick with one. You might offer subscribers a chance to click your CTA (call to action) to get a special coupon or discount code. Alternatively, you might link back to your online store, or give customers an opportunity to buy tickets to a special event. There’s really no limit to what you can do, but make sure that your call to action is relevant to your newsletter for the best results.

For local business owners, it’s also a good idea to offer customers the opportunity of downloading coupons or discount codes onto their mobile phones or mobile wallets.





Subscribe to the Newsletter!

TEST, TEST, TEST

The final thing I want to mention is the importance of testing. If you're using an email automation service like MailChimp or Constant Contact, it's very easy to test multiple versions of your headlines, colors, images, or content. Just because it's a newsletter doesn't mean you can't benefit from studying variations in open rates and click-through rates. The important thing to remember is that you should always test one option at a time. Testing more than one muddies the water, making it impossible for you to identify what's working and what's not.

Last but not least, make sure that you offer an easy-to-see, easy-to-use way for subscribers to opt out of getting your newsletter. No customer enjoys the feeling of trying to unsubscribe and not being able to do so. Of course you would prefer that they stay subscribed, but you don't want to aggravate them to the point where you lose them as customers. As long as you put your subscribers' needs before your own, you can create a great newsletter that will help you grow your business.





HOW

DO I MAKE MY WEBSITE MOBILE FRIENDLY?



WHAT

CAN I DO TO REACH MY CUSTOMERS ON FACEBOOK?



WHY

DOESN'T MY WEBSITE SHOW UP ON GOOGLE?



YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS. WE'VE GOT ANSWERS.
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