



# *The Update:* Small Business News, Tips & Ideas

*Helping You Reach Your Goals!*

January, 2016



Here we are in 2016. Another year, another chance to start and/or build your business.

In that spirit of growth and development, let me offer this quote:

*In every day, there are 1,440 minutes. That means we have 1,440 daily opportunities to make a positive impact – Les Brown*

That attitude is a key to achieving the goals you have set for your business this year. Owning your own business is not an 8 to 5 job. You are thinking about and working on the business morning, noon, and night. This is especially true for small businesses where your identity as the owner and the business's identity and brand are all one.

So make every minute count. Yet when saying this, it doesn't mean that you need to be at the store or even thinking about the business at all time. In the January issue of *National Geographic*, there is an article discussing how after taking a walk in the woods found a rise in a person's creativity. It also reduces stress and anxiety.

Also, your work in and around your community as well as your service in professional and service organizations are included as times you can make a positive impact. The research finds that such work can increase the bottom line of your business as well.

Finally, some of those minutes must be spent with family and friends. Again, more positive impacts but also elements that show a potential relationship to a stronger business.

So make this a year of making every minute count. I wish you success.

Till next time,  
Glenn Muske  
[glenn.muske@ndsu.edu](mailto:glenn.muske@ndsu.edu)

In Cooperation With



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## Quotes of the Month

***Do not wait until the conditions are perfect to begin. Beginning makes the conditions perfect*** – Alan Cohen

***Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not*** – Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

***When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new*** – Dalai Lama

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## This Month's Tips

### Building a Brand

What do you want your brand to mean? Then check to see if every process, every employee, and every product/service supports what you want. Make sure your target audience desires those traits and understands your brand. And make sure your products and services are focused on the key spot of the brand and not on the fringes. These are just a few elements to building your brand. <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/branding-101-essential-guide-developing-brand-identity/>

### Good Branding

It touches the emotions. It is multi-sensory. It says what it is in a few words. It doesn't change (think Sears versus Coke). It's colors, images, graphics, etc are consistency. <http://www.marketingprofs.com/opinions/2015/27569/five-whopping-branding-mistakes-you-might-be-making>

### Branding and Your Small Business

As the article notes, often we think of branding as something only large companies do. Yet branding for small businesses is as important. When you are branding think about who and where your customers are and then develop your brand accordingly. <http://bigredcloud.com/blog/2015/04/why-is-branding-so-important-to-small-businesses/>

### Using Online Tools to Build Your Brand

If you take nothing else away from this article (but there are lots of other good hints), remember the first two sentences. Letting people know your there is where you get your traction. <http://tweakyourbiz.com/growth/2015/06/22/4-ways-build-brand-awareness-online/>

## **Rebranding**

Establishing your brand is not something you do once and then stop. Branding is a continuous process. There are times when you might just freshen up the logo or the colors but other times require you to make deeper, business-personality changes. Get ideas from the SBA. <https://www.sba.gov/blogs/rebrand-your-business-step-step>

## **Building Your Brand**

As you build a brand, think of it as defining a person. Who would that person be? What are your brand differentiators? Just two of six tips offered.

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/253750>

## **Drip Marketing**

Many people start their day with coffee. Much of that coffee comes out of a machine one drip at a time. Or how about that leaky faucet that keeps you awake, one drip at a time. Well drip marketing is like that. It is steady, consistent marketing. Each drip by itself isn't much but add them up and you get a great campaign (remember though the goal isn't to annoy).

<http://tweakyourbiz.com/marketing/2014/11/14/5-reasons-start-drip-marketing-campaign-today/>

## **Building Trust**

Trust has been a common topic in these newsletters. It is key in building relationships that are ongoing and of value. This article offers some additional ideas on how one can build trust. An obvious idea is using customer testimonials and data. But how about taking the time to explain, and maybe over-explain, a contract or a new product. Customers can always ask you to stop but are typically afraid or tentative to say they don't understand. And finally, think about your online presence. Customers are checking you out as much as they are looking at your products and services. <http://www.inc.com/aj-agrawal/how-to-create-trust-with-customers.html>

## **Use All the Tools When Marketing**

Today marketing seems to focus on the use of social media and online tools. Yet there are all of the traditional tools that you must also employ. You need visibility across the board, it must look like you are everywhere. <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2014/11/14/connecting-social-media/>

## **Marketing – What Works?**

You can get some idea of what might or might not work with your audiences. But probably the best way is to do some of your own A/B testing. While this article discusses landing pages, you can do it with anything. And it need just be for lead generation. Think about trying it with your next marketing campaign. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/a-b-test-landing-page-form-copy>

## **New Marketing Angles**

Have you thought about setting up a booth at a farmers market? May reach an entirely new audience. <http://www.news-press.com/story/money/2014/11/16/storefronts-find-new-sale-marketing-avenues-farmers-markets/19139703/>

Beyond Showcase – Give an Experience

Do you use showcases to show your product or do you SHOWCASE? The latter is to create an experience, excitement, a look, a brand. <http://smallbiztrends.com/2014/11/johnny-cupcakes-clothing-experience.html>

## **Customer Service = Great Marketing**

This article call customer service the “new marketing.” I personally never knew that it wasn’t part of the mix. Customers like service. Some say customers demand service. When I hear that it’s sad. Service should be the base of marketing. But that is just my, and American Express’s opinion. <https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/customer-service-new-marketing/>

## **3 Step Marketing**

Awareness. Education. Action. If you cover each of these well, your business has a good chance. If you skip a step or focus on one step over the others, it also may be a struggle to get and keep your business going. [http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths\\_blog/2014/11/a-three-step-marketing-ladder.html](http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2014/11/a-three-step-marketing-ladder.html)

## **Product Demos that Work**

Have you ever been asked to demonstrate your product? How did it go? You are the expert. You probably know your product better than anyone and can make it run through its paces as well as anyone. But do you know your audience? Did you answer their questions? Did you demonstrate the problems they most often have that your product can answer? Did you allow plenty of time for them to ask questions? Did you engage? Get more ideas from <http://firstround.com/article/Your-Product-Demos-Suck-Because-Theyre-Focused-on-Your-Product>

## **Handling Small Business Insurance Claims**

Intuit provides a short reminder list of what to do if and when you may have to file an insurance claim. First, stop the damage. And the list goes on. Print this list and put it someplace where you can grab it quickly. When something happens, our minds start to get all jumbled and this list can help you get things done right. One thing they didn’t list that I would encourage you to add – TAKE PICTURES AND VIDEOS! Hope you never need this list but the odds are you will. <http://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/compliance-licensing/handling-small-business-insurance-claims>

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## **Online Tools and Tech Tips**

### **Be Ready for Mobile**

Is your website mobile-friendly or mobile responsive? Don't know there is a difference? You may want to check it out. And how about your marketing? Does it appeal to the mobile user? It should since the odds are that is how many people are viewing it. Just a couple of questions you need to look at. Get more: <http://tweakyourbiz.com/technology/2015/06/23/does-your-business-need-a-mobile-makeover/>

### **34 Minutes a Day Social Media**

It takes too much time is a concern of many when considering the use of social media. This infographic suggests it can take less. <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-business/carianeking/2015-06-23/how-manage-your-social-media-34-minutes-or-less-infographic>

### **Social Media Customer Service is NOT a Spectator Sport**

How does your business view its customer support offered through social media? Do you just stop by to see what people are saying? If you do, you are missing the boat (and perhaps have sent potential customers to your competitor). You need to be engaging with people, not just watching and listening. <http://blog.hootsuite.com/the-end-of-social-media-customer-service-as-a-spectator-sport/>

### **Hashtag Use**

Hashtags are important in your marketing effort. They allow you to easily group things together. They also may help with a search and can even become a link to your site. Learn more about them at: <http://www.edupristine.com/blog/how-to-use-hashtags>

### **Location-Based Marketing**

If you have a tablet, smartphone, or use a computer (or drive a car), you are probably using some type of location-based services. Such efforts can offer some great opportunities to connect and engage with consumers. It might be a great fit for your business. <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/2015/27958/five-ways-to-use-location-based-marketing-right-now?adref=nl062915>

### **More Search Engine Optimization**

Want to get the most out of your online presence. Then check out these tips. <https://www.xero.com/blog/2015/07/how-to-do-small-business-seo/>

## **Online is More Than Social Media**

Social media is a good place to invest some of your marketing effort. However, as pointed out in this article, you don't control those sites. They can change overnight and then your investment is lost. A website should be at your core. <http://www.business2community.com/small-business/social-media-not-enough-every-small-business-needs-good-website-01270481>

## **Blogging Because??**

As I read this article, I was disappointed in the information. Not in what the information was but how it was presented. Yes, blogs help with items 1 and 2, search rank and filters. In my mind, however, small business owners should blog because of #3 – exposure, trust, and authority. That's the key. That's your brand. That's your reputation and how word of mouth begins. The first and second reasons are only an extra. (Oh by the way, I would split #3 into three separate reasons. <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/donna-duncan/2015-06-25/why-small-business-owners-should-seriously-consider-blogging>

## **Blog Stories**

Thinking about doing a blog but not sure you have anything to say. Here are 16 ways to find an idea. <http://www.copyblogger.com/16-article-ideas/>

## **What can you do with 15 minutes?**

Everyone has spare moments. Maybe they aren't 15 minutes but maybe only 5 minutes. You can either let them slip away or do something with them (taking a quick nap is an acceptable choice if you have made it a conscious choice). Here are some ways to use those open minutes to move your online marketing program forward. <http://why-social-media-for-business.com/social-media-15-minute-marketing-tips-for-small-business-owners/>

## **Examining Blog Analytics**

This article is detailed. But it provides a great how-to if you want to get something from your blog analytics. (And the concepts would work for other social media platforms as well). Keep this in your how-to file. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/excel-blog-content-analysis>

## **Social Media Ads**

Social media ads are another way that you can reach your target audience. While they have been around for some time, recently they are starting to see more use as companies make them easier for you to use. Here is one article on how to use the Facebook ad possibilities. You can even now include a call-to-action. <http://www.smallfoodbiz.com/2015/04/27/facebook-ads-now-offers-call-to-action/>

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## What's Going on in the Office?

During the last three years, I have been involved in a North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education project focused on developing local foods in North Dakota. It has been a great experience.

Through the project, we were able to provide small seed grants that were put to use in developing local projects that expanded local foods in the community. These projects were based on the needs of the community. Some looked at developing producers while others looked at developing the market side of the equation.

We are now putting together our final report about the project. You may be interested in seeing the impact report outlining just some of what was accomplished. You can find that report at: <https://www.ext.nodak.edu/misc-sites/smallbusiness/documents/expanding-local-foods-in-nd-nc-sare-impact-report>

Lots of things were accomplished with many of the projects still on-going. There are great things happening with local food in ND. **Take part in the fun and fresh food.**

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## Upcoming Events

**April 27 – 28, 2016 – Igniting Legendary Leaders** – Learn how to build the community you want to live in with Morris Morrison, Greg Tehven, and others. This event will be held at Bismarck State College National Energy Center of Excellence. More information go to:

<http://ndsuhq.ndsu.edu/ignite>

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## Stay Up-to-Date at:

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz](https://www.facebook.com/NDSUextsmallbiz) [www.facebook.com/eXtensionentrepreneurs](https://www.facebook.com/eXtensionentrepreneurs)  
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Blogs: <http://powerofbusiness.net/blog/> <http://smallbizsurvival.com/>  
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