



The Update: Small Business News, Tips & Ideas

Helping You Reach Your Goals!

May, 2016



How much time do you have?

The reason I ask is I saw this article the other day providing a list of the small business blogs you should follow, <https://www-qa3.kabbage.com/blog/100-blogs-every-small-business-follow/>

I suspect you probably don't have the time to do that along with following trade journals plus reading, watching, and listening to other media to keep up with trends and the news.

The goal of our efforts, this newsletter plus newspaper articles, blog posts ([Small Business Survival](#) and [Power of Business](#)), and social media posts ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) and occasional emails, is to help you cut through this mountain of information.

We hope you find our efforts useful. Please send your suggestions for improvement as well as things we need to keep.

Have a great summer.

Till next time,
Glenn Muske
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In Cooperation With



Quotes of the Month

The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity – Amelia Earhart

Don't be afraid to go for positions, jobs, or take on clients just outside of your knowledge base. It's when you are uncomfortable that you learn and grow the most – Barbara Corcoran

Value is the outcome of being relevant - @jeffhyde

The biggest asset of a small business is its personality – Jessica Davis

Upcoming Events

June 21-23, 2016 – EDND Summer Conference – Bowman, ND – Sessions on leadership, economic diversification, program evaluation and measurement and succession planning. Find more at:

<http://www.ednd.org/index.asp?Type=QUICKFORM&SEC={B6834AB9-ABDD-4C7F-85A5-AC49F82074F9}>

Do You Know??

Are you a specialty crop grower or a crop that before has not been eligible for the USDA crop disaster programs? Are you aware of the new Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program now available?

This program provides for coverage grown for crops such as those grown for food, specialty crops, value loss crops and crops grown in a controlled environment such as floriculture.

Lindsey Abentroth from USDA contacted me about this new program. She provided this link, https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2016/NAP_for_2015_and_Subsequent_Years.pdf.

The link provides more information and indicates you should contact a crop insurance agent for further questions.

Thanks Lindsey.

This Month's Tips

What's the Problem?

This video asks the basic question that a successful business must understand, "what's the problem you are solving?" Not only does the short video challenge you to know what the problem is but it reminds us that you need to be able to explain that problem in simple terms and then outline how you are solving it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VdjaOpY30k&list=TLQVf38-EwctwxMDA1MjAxNg>

Getting Press Release Published

So often I hear business owners who are disappointed that so few of their press releases ever get in the paper or on the air. Remember that these outlets are involved in the news so you need to provide a story that is "news worthy." Here are 12 story ideas you might try. And don't forget to work with the editor or writer assigned to the business section. Get to know them and what they specifically are looking for as news stories. <http://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/business-development/12-ideas-to-inspire-your-next-press-release>

Ethics – It Starts Before You Open Your Doors

We hear a lot about ethical business practices today. Yet cases of unethical treatment still make the press on a regular basis. Remember that you, the owner, set the example. And you start setting that example before you ever open your doors. Don't let the next story about your business be an ethics issue. It's a quick way to lose your customer base.

<http://blog.startupprofessionals.com/2015/01/startup-founders-face-serious-business.html>

Stay In Touch with Customers

Today there is a great deal of competition for your customer. As a business owner you need to do everything in your power to hold on to those you have. And by doing this, you also will create advocates for your business for the future. How? Ask for feedback. Write them a note (yes, an old fashioned, hand-written note). Engage on FB. Learn about them. Just a few ideas.

More can be found at: <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/241014>

Is the Government Part of Your Market?

State, Federal, and local governments and related agencies are a substantial customer for all types of goods and services. Getting into that market takes time. It also requires you to get your business in shape and ready to be a supplier. The SBA offers some tips on what you need to do. <https://www.sba.gov/blogs/your-small-business-ready-sell-government>

Compete on Quality

Quite often business owners decide that their competitive advantage should be price. That is a hard objective to achieve and even harder to maintain. Think instead of other ways to be viewed in the customer's mind. Quality is one way. <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242322>

Emulate the Big Brands

There is nothing you, as a small business owner, can't do to make your brand as important in your market as big brands do in their market. Tell your story, establish your credibility, let people know what you stand for, and network are just some of the keys.

<http://smallbiztrends.com/2015/02/how-to-emulate-top-brands.html?tr=amat>

Size Up the Local Competition

To be successful, you need to know what the competition is doing. Here is an article that helps you do such an analysis. It uses an SBA tool, <https://www.sba.gov/tools/sizeup>. It also gives you some hints on the questions you should be asking.

<https://www.kabbage.com/blog/competitive-analysis-local-level-size-neighborhood-competition/>

Customer Service – What Do Your Customers Think?

Have you been asked to rate a service you have received as this article notes. I have. And I can't say I enjoy it. You ask for ratings so you can improved. This method doesn't help. Remember the saying that you can learn more from one angry customer than from 10 satisfied customers. <http://www.inc.com/paul-b-brown/why-you-probably-need-to-rethink-your-approach-to-customer-service.html?cid=sf01001>

Standing Apart

How do you differ? It might be use of technology or it might be an old school way of networks. Your image and reputation are tremendously important . What about the size of your offerings or the markets you reach? <http://smallbiztrends.com/2015/02/how-to-stand-apart-in-business.html>

Marketing Myths

Marketing is key to your business success. As this article notes, great products don't sell themselves. It also notes that marketing is both an art and a science. See what else they note as the myths of marketing. <http://techcrunch.com/2014/11/22/debunking-the-7-myths-of-marketing-in-the-enterprise/>

Online Tools and Tech Tips

Powerful Websites

Are your websites filled with cornerstone content? Content that forms a core of knowledge and information. And do you then build around that content. This short video will make you think. And it is not only relevant for your online information but all of your efforts.

<http://www.copyblogger.com/content-marketing-glossary/#cornerstone-content>

Negative Reviews

More and more businesses have an online presence whether they do it or the public does it for them. One reason some businesses have avoided going online is the fear of having a negative review that the public can see. The reality of the situation is that these can happen anyway. So what do you do? Plan your strategy, respond immediately and publicly (responders get better ratings), also respond in private, and get more reviews. <http://www.inc.com/aj-agrawal/how-to-respond-to-critics-5-strategies-for-dealing-with-negative-reviews.html>

Why Blog?

Blogs can bring attention. They can bring potential clients. They keep you connected to existing clients. They can bring long term results. <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/the-benefits-of-business-blogging-ht>

Use Digital to Break into the Market

People are busy. To help ourselves control that we use lots of routines including when we shop. Digital offers some ways to break into the habit and have people try your product over the routine item purchased. Good read by Nielson.

<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/digitally-disrupting-the-habitual-shopping-routine.html>

Maximize Your Website

One of the first steps when developing an online presence for your business is a website. However it is easy to be lost in the thousands of other websites that exist. This article provides some ways to help ensure your site will appear high in the rankings over time.

<http://searchenginewatch.com/sew/opinion/2428640/7-ways-you-might-be-losing-out-on-search-rankings>

More Website Development Tips

Navigation, images, and good use of text are just three ways to improve the performance of your website. <http://www.searchenginejournal.com/seo-101-5-things-small-business-owners-know-seo-friendly-web-design/140325/>

Using Video in Marketing

Video can be used in many ways in your marketing effort. It tells a story, shows how to use a product, it can interest people, and make the pitch to buy.

<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/10/use-video-content-marketing/>

Why Video?

How about a study that shows 76% of people who watch then buy? Or 70% share? But it must be entertaining as it can also hurt sales and your reputation.

<http://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/7-eye-opening-stats-thatll-make-you-better-video-marketing>

What's Going on in the Office?

Who provides your broadband and telephone service? If you live in a rural area, there is a good chance that it is a rural telecomm.

Like any other business, these organizations are challenged with daily requests from local charities, sports organizations, civic clubs and others for support through donations. It makes them, and you, sometimes feel like you are being "\$20 dollared to death."

I had the chance to work with this group as we discussed how to avoid feeling this way. More importantly, we talked about how donations can be an important part of marketing and establishing one's brand and identify.

Check out my webpage, <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness>, for a video, podcast and slides from the event. I also have done a blog at [Small Business Survival](#) offering the highlights of our conversation.

This link provides another look at what they entitle "[cause marketing](#)."

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