

# Small Business Marketing: The Ultimate Guide for Non-Marketers



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Let's get down to it.

You need to market your small business but you don't have a marketing team or a huge marketing budget.

The thought of learning small business marketing can make it hard to breathe and send you into a panic.

The time.

The money.

The learning curve.

You're in the midst of a mental freefall. You want to give up before you even start.

But you can't. You have bills to pay. Mouths to feed. A business to grow.

It's easy to get discouraged when you're facing the daunting task of learning to market while still running your business.

Often, it takes time to realize the benefits of marketing, making it hard to know which techniques work and which don't. Unfortunately, you can't close your eyes, cross your fingers, and hope really hard that what you're doing is right for your business and customers.

So, what can you do?

Well, it turns out you can do a lot.

In this post, you will learn how to assemble a custom and sophisticated marketing structure that fits your business like a glove.

Let's dive in.

## Save Time, Money, and Your Sanity



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You don't want to start off sprinting, only to find yourself stranded in the middle of nowhere because you went down the wrong path.

So, before we get started, let's take a look at how you can stay on target while executing the small business marketing plan you are going to create.

### **Understand Marketing - It's Alive!**

Small business marketing isn't a one-and-done endeavor. It is a living and breathing entity that learns and grows.

To nurture your small business marketing, take it one step at a time and lay a strong basic foundation. Then, periodically circle back to expand on what's working. This allows you to assemble a custom and sophisticated marketing structure that fits your business.

### **But Don't Let It Turn Into a Monster**

Running your small business and being your own marketing executive can feel overwhelming and cause you to lose any momentum you've created.

Don't let the marketing process turn into more than you can handle. Stay on-track and efficient by:

- Embracing quarterly check-ins
- Limiting the small business marketing tips you're implementing each quarter

Applying a couple of marketing tips at a time and evaluating their effectiveness frequently allows you to keep working on your business and not just your marketing.

If a marketing technique isn't working well, you can quickly pivot, letting you manage your budget, time, and stress.

### **Take Action:**

- Keep yourself honest and on-target: Schedule your quarterly check-ins by setting up calendar notifications...right now. Don't wait. Don't worry about not having started anything yet, this will keep you on task regardless of your progress today.



## Map Out a Simple Small Business Marketing Plan



*Photo by N. on Unsplash*

Your small business marketing plan is the marketing roadmap your business will follow. It lays out the implementation of marketing strategies and includes a schedule to evaluate their effectiveness.

Your plan should be something simple and flexible, keeping you on task without overburdening you with details and constraints.

The clearer your map, the less derailed you'll get, which will save you time and money.

It may sound intimidating, but don't let that deter you. This doesn't have to be a complicated 100-page monstrosity. You can get your plan down to a 1-pager, if you really want to refine it.

Let's get your marketing plan mapped out.

## 1. Your Marketing Goal: Choose a S.M.A.R.T. Destination



Starting with the end in mind, define measurable marketing goals so you know where you're headed and can gauge your progress.

Small business marketing goals are 1-to-5-year objectives that support your overall business goals.

They are quantitative or [S.M.A.R.T.](#) (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) so that you can easily assess your progress.

A good goal is realistic, keeping you from getting overwhelmed and discouraged, but makes you stretch so you grow.

Some examples of quantitative marketing goals could be:

- Increase monthly sales by 15% in the next 12 months.
- Double your website traffic every 3 months for the next year.
- Grow product training event attendance by 10% in the next 12 months.

Although you may have several objectives that you would like to achieve within the next 1-5 years, paring down and only focusing on 1 or 2 of them at a time will help drive their successful completion.

Further, break down each objective into incremental steps that fit the quarterly model we discussed above.

It is important to be mindful that the execution of small business marketing strategies requires traction, so progress may not be linear. If you want to increase sales by 15% over 12 months, the progress may take the form of doubling sales each quarter, rather than increasing equally, 3.75%, each quarter.

## 2. Your Customer: Get Acquainted with Your Travel Buddy



Photo by [Mesut Kaya](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Want to make your marketing seem effortless and get a great return on your marketing investment?

Then you need to define your ideal customer.

Creating a detailed [customer persona](#) is an important step in developing your marketing structure.

Your goal is to create a realistic person that you can picture when marketing your small business.

Some traits to consider are:

- Age
- Gender
- Marriage/Family
- Income Level
- Profession
- Spending Habits
- Hobbies
- Where do they spend their time online?
- Where do they spend their time locally?
- What problems can your business solve for them?

Focusing on the right leads will increase your conversion rate and decrease waste from misguided marketing efforts. For example, a mortgage company shouldn't spend resources targeting college freshmen who live in dorms.

Recognize that your customer persona will evolve as your marketing does, so be disciplined and keep coming back to refine it.



### 3. Your Budget: Fund Your Marketing Roadtrip with Loose Change



*Photo by [Josh Appel](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

If you're concerned about your small business marketing budget, don't be. You don't have to spend a lot of money to get this ball rolling. In fact, you don't have to add to your debt if you improve what you're already spending your money on, like your website.

This post contains small business marketing tips that fit any budget, even the smallest ones.

As you build up your small business marketing strategies and become more successful, your marketing budget may grow along with your business.



#### 4. Your Strategy: Choose Your Method of Travel



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Using your research, and the information in this post, list out the small business marketing strategies you will use to achieve your goals.

Keep in mind, you will be focusing on 1 or 2 strategies at a time. If your goal is to double your website traffic every 3 months for the next year, then your first 2 strategies could be:

- Updating your site's outdated content.
- Creating a business profile on 3 online platforms such as LinkedIn, Google, and Facebook.

The above 2 tasks may not seem that difficult or time-consuming, but you want to give yourself room to learn, grow, and gain momentum.

Since you are only working on 1 or 2 marketing strategies at a time, throw yourself into them and squeeze out all of their potential.

To continue with the example above, learn and grow by taking the time to thoroughly research what makes a great landing page and then use the techniques during your landing page refresh.

Do this for all your website pages and you will make deliberate improvements rather than spotty ones.

That's it. A simple and solid marketing plan to get you up and running, keep you focused, yet give you the flexibility to modify it when needed.

**Take Action:**

- Get a jump start on your small business marketing plan by jotting down a thought or two on the items above. Don't critique, just write them down.
- Want to dig into this more deeply into marketing plans? Coschedule has a list of [examples and templates too](#).

Now that you've scheduled your quarterly check-ins and started your small business marketing plan, let's take the first step toward better marketing of your business.

## Crunch Data Even If You Failed Math

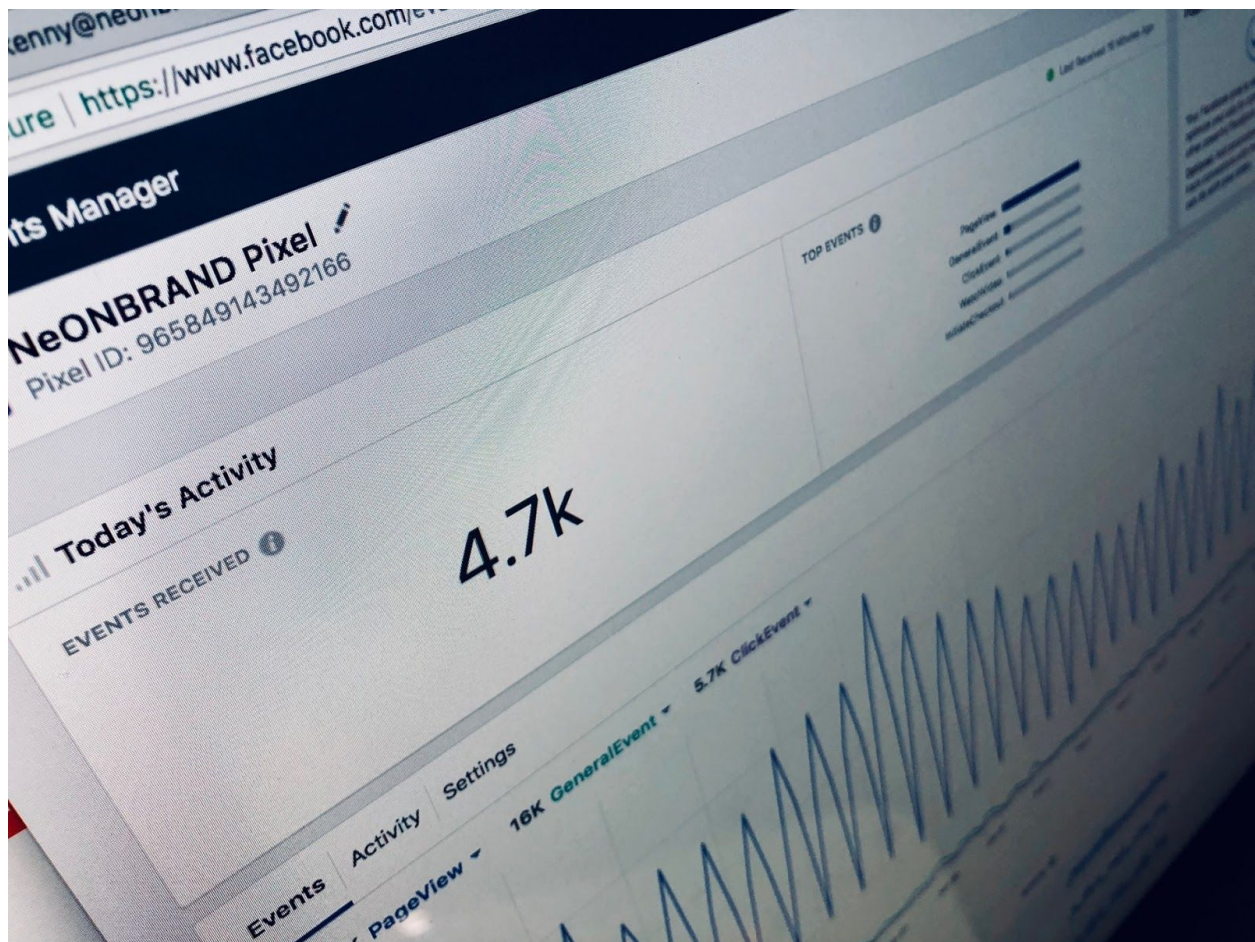


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How will you know if the marketing strategy is working for your small business?

Numerous analytical tools exist to help you keep track of your marketing statistics. This data will be useful when developing strategies and evaluating progress.

Some software tracks website traffic, keywords and SEO, and social media shares.

There are platform-specific tools, such as [Facebook Analytics](#), and third-party apps and services too, like [Buzzsumo](#).

It seems that every platform has an analytical tool to help you track your progress and determine how successful and effective your marketing is.

Which ones will you use?

As you develop your marketing strategies, you will naturally gravitate toward the best analytical tools for that specific strategy.

Consider the tools below and get an idea of the type of data available.

- Use [Google Analytics](#) to trend and analyze your website traffic, keywords, and target audience behavior.
- [Buzzsumo](#) can monitor and trend your content, industry, and competition.
- Use social media platform analytics to track and analyze social shares and audience engagement. Example: [Facebook Analytics](#)

## Enjoy Quick Wins Without Destroying Your Small Business Marketing Budget



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It doesn't matter if your business is strictly online, offline, or somewhere between, certain standard business tools should be in everyone's repertoire. They are the building blocks of small business marketing.



To layout the basics:

- Online marketing for small business includes a website, social media presence, email list, and online ads.
- Local marketing is more personal and includes business cards, events, flyers, and print advertising.

These two areas are not exclusive and, done correctly, can be mutually beneficial by presenting and reinforcing your business from different angles.

Let's take a look.

## 5. True-Up Your Brand and Get People Talking



Photo by [Pavan Trikutam](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Your brand is the focal point of your business and guides the decisions you make so that the marketing pieces fall into place with little resistance.

The more on-point your brand is with your ideal customer, the easier it will be to connect with them.

When your [brand's message](#) resonates with your ideal customers, they will become ambassadors and help you spread the word about your business. BigCommerce cites several [word-of-mouth marketing statistics](#), including a Nielsen report that 92% of consumers trust their friends and family more than advertising.

To help hone your message, let's start with your [Unique Selling Proposition](#)? Is it well defined?

Brainstorm how your business is different from others. Keep in mind that you're not selling an item (home alarm system), but a feeling (peace of mind that your home is safe).

Think about your [brand colors, packaging, and logo, too](#). What message are they projecting? Luxury, boho, eco-friendly, or something else? Do you have a cohesive motif throughout your business?

For example, if you have packaging, does it match the theme of your website and logo? A silver ring presented in a black velvet box generates a different experience than one showcased in a box made of recycled cardboard.

Now it's your turn. Strengthen and clarify your brand.

**Take Action:**

- Tighten-up your business's message, mission, and values to be clear and concise.
- Develop a solid USP.
- Pick colors and styling that suit the message you're sending.

## 6. Shine Like a Beacon Online



*Photo by [Evgeni Tcherkasski](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Having a [website for your small business is super important](#), no matter what type of business you're in (I'm talkin' to you, plumbers and auto mechanics).

In fact, your website is your most reliable employee. It never calls in sick, isn't moody, and is always ready to help visitors—24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

According to Blue List's article titled [60+ SEO Statistics to Help You Rank #1 in 2019](#), "70% of consumers will go to a store because of the information they find online."

So if you don't already have a website, it's time to get one.



## 7. Make Your Website a Welcoming Place



Regardless of what your specific small business marketing objectives are, they should all lead to more website traffic.

Your website should be a warm and friendly place for your customers to learn about your business and product.

Marketing's purpose is to get customers, keep customers, and encourage them to bring their friends.

So, the more time visitors spend on your website, the more comfortable they are with your business and the more likely they will be to market your business for you.

### Take Action:

- Arrange your website so it is [easy to navigate](#).
- Refresh the pages on your website. Some examples to review are: [About Us](#), [Contact](#), and [Product pages \(even Nike does it\)](#).
- Make a simple FAQ page for your product. Start with one or two questions, you will add to it later. HubSpot has a list of [FAQ WordPress Plugins](#) to get you started.
- Set up a simple [opt-in form to capture email addresses](#). You don't have to do anything with them right now, only collect them.
- Add [testimonials](#) to your site to help humanize your business.



- Now that you've updated your content, finish up by ensuring that your desktop site loads quickly. This post on [WordPress Speed and Performance](#) can help.

## 8. Be In the Palm of Your Customer's Hand



*Photo by Thom Holmes on Unsplash*

It doesn't stop with having an informative and good looking desktop website, you need a fast and pretty mobile site too.

Worldwide, in [2018, more than 52% of all website traffic was generated through mobile phones](#).

So the power of your mobile site cannot be ignored.

More and more people are using their mobile phones to research and buy, yet companies are not putting mobile website optimization on their to-do list. According to Forbes, [slow mobile sites frustrate consumers and hinder business](#).

Google says, [62% of customers who have a negative experience on mobile are less likely to purchase from that brand in the future](#).

Get ahead of the curve and ensure your customer's mobile experience is pleasant and fast.

### Take Action:

- Test your website using Google's [Mobile-Friendly Test site](#).
- Increase font and button sizes.
- Add more mobile optimization by applying ideas from [HostGator](#) and [DreamHost](#).

## 9. Simplify Your Social Media Marketing



Using social media marketing for your small business is a must.

If you're like most people, you spend some time on social media each day. According to research performed by [Survey Monkey and HubSpot](#), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter are the favorites.

Social media is a great way for your small business to connect with potential and existing customers.

Some benefits include [humanizing your brand, generating leads, and reputation management](#), to name a few.

Notice that I didn't say anything about hard selling. Use social media marketing to show the people and beliefs behind your business and to develop trust, connection, and community.

Keep your social media presence professional, thoughtful, and relevant to your business. Post content that helps your customers and community while keeping in harmony with your brand.

Remember that social media is only a marketing tool. It is not a substitute for a good product and excellent customer service.

**Take Action:**

- Set up a business page on the social media platform where your customers hang out most.
- Follow people and topics that pertain to your business, industry, or customers.
- Begin posting consistently. Posting regularly can be challenging. You're better off doing it less often but consistently rather than in fits and spurts.
  - To determine the frequency, consider how often your competitors post, what you think is reasonable for your niche, and what you can actually commit to doing.
- Some ideas for posts are:
  - Mention or expand on the FAQ's that you added to your website (see above).
  - Discuss a new product or service that you have or that you're working on.
  - Go into depth on an existing product or service.
  - Survey your audience for business, product, or FAQ ideas
  - Share some ways your customers have had success using your product or service
- Use the positive posts from customers as testimonials on your website.

## 10. Unplug With Offline and Local Small Business Marketing Ideas



*Photo by [Cytton Photography](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Small business advertising was around well before the internet. Smiles and handshakes, along with business cards and flyers get your business's name out there and build trust by putting a face to that name.

I know this can sound outdated in our digital age, but these avenues are still useful. And, often have a low barrier of entry both financially and with regards to marketing experience.

Hand out business cards and engage with your potential customers by spending time where they do.

Ask them what problems they have and what types of solutions they may be looking for. If you have a product or prototype, show it to them and ask their opinion.

Take note of who you are meeting and how interested they are in what you have to offer. Also, keep a list of the problems and questions that keep coming up as you talk to people.



These are the pain points of your market and exactly what you want to highlight in your business and marketing efforts. Advertising, whether it be print or online, can be very expensive and needs to be well-targeted to give good results.

Pound the pavement and make human connections. This will keep your small business marketing budget under control and fine-tune your target market knowledge.

The more connections you make, the better you will be at picking your ideal customer out of the crowd.

**Take Action:**

- Continue to update the customer persona you created earlier.
- Dust off those business cards or flyers and hand them out.
- Set a goal to talk to one new person a day about your business.
- Volunteer at a local event.
- Sponsor your kid's little league or soccer team so people know what you do.
- Take out an ad in your local paper or business journal after you've honed your target audience.

**11. Don't Be a Wallflower: Local Marketing Event Ideas for Small Business**



Photo by [Markus Spiske](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Events are a great way to get your business noticed and build authority and credibility in your community or industry.

In the last section, you met people who shared their problems and asked you questions. Become a resource for your community by expanding on those pain points.

Below is a list of local marketing ideas to inspire you.

- Based on the list of problems and questions you collected, create a solution — a package, deal, or consultation that you could sell or donate.
- Donate your products or services to a silent auction at your child's school or charity event.
- Offer your services in exchange for a testimonial.
- Volunteer at a downtown or community event.
- Host or co-host a meetup at your favorite local cafe.
- Get involved with your local chambers, business associations, or community groups.
- Support a local cause or non-profit and it aligns with your small business. Save the Bees, anyone?

These activities will step you toward becoming the go-to business for certain problems.

**Take Action:**

- Choose from the list above, or come up with your own marketing event idea or donation package.
- Tie it to the marketing goals you're currently working on.
- Plan and schedule your event or donation.

## 12. How Do You Market Your Small Business? Put on Your Customer Hat



Photo by [freestocks](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Small business marketing ideas come in all shapes and sizes. Below are a few to consider for your business.

Use [Google My Business](#) to build another angle of your online presence, for free. Fill out your profile and your business will show up more readily in searches and provide an easy path to your website.

While you're at it, [add your location and some photos to Google Maps](#) so potential customers can find you at a moment's notice.

Do you have a Starbucks Rewards Card or deli punch card? Do you clip coupons? If you use them, odds are, your customers do too.

Rewarding your customers is a solid route to developing relationships that will last. ThriveHive has several examples of great [discount ideas for small businesses](#) like frequent buyer cards and flash sales.

You can also set up a [customer referral program](#) and turn loyal customers into brand ambassadors.

Depending on the type of business you are in, Yelp and other review platforms may not be on your radar, but they can help you build trust with your customers.

According to [BrightLocal, 82% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses](#).

Take a look at this [Forbes article](#) for ideas on getting online reviews and handling negative ones.

**Take Action:**

- Use [Google My Business](#) and get your small business profile set up.
- [Add your location to Google Maps](#) and include some photos.
- Showcase your customer service skills by engaging with customers on Yelp and Google Reviews.
- Set up coupons (online and offline) or giveaways
- Set up a referral program for your brand ambassadors. HubSpot lays out 7 simple steps to [building a customer referral program](#).



## Level Up: Expand & Evolve Your Small Business Marketing Strategies



*Photo by [Scott Blake](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Take your marketing to the next level by strengthening the small business marketing foundation that you've built.

Working through your marketing plan, you have researched and amassed wealth of knowledge about your business and customers.

Through your quarterly evaluations, you have filtered out the best marketing strategies for your business.

Now it is time to put those two together and evolve your strategies.

### 13. Become a Trusted Resource and Watch Your Credibility Grow



*Photo by [Valentin Rechitean](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Your credibility has been growing effortlessly as a byproduct of the development of your small business marketing strategy. In other words, people are getting to know and trust you and your business to solve their problems.

You now know your community and your target customer much better than you did before.

You've connected with them and answered their questions in person and on social media.

You also added the more frequently asked questions to your website's FAQ page, making it a useful reference for people to find the answers they need at any time, day or night.

You've graduated to working events in your community, donating services, and hosting meetups. These live events have put you out in front of the crowd as an authority.

In this next section, you will harness this momentum and continue to expand your authority offline as well as expanding your reach by developing authority online.

- Answer questions by writing a blog post, or a series of posts.
- Make instructional videos to stand alone or use to enhance your blog posts.
- Answer questions on Quora, Redditt, YouTube, and other help platforms. Add the links to your website.
- Teach an adult class or seminar at your community center. You can film that seminar and put it on YouTube or your website.
- Sign up to be a resource on [HARO \(Help A Reporter Out\)](#) or with your local newspaper.
- Write an article for your local paper or industry publication. These can be either offline or online depending on your location and your industry.
- Give a speech at your next business association or non-profit meeting

Whether it's DIY home repairs or how to make a roux, you know things that others don't. Continue to answer questions that are in your business's wheelhouse. You already know how to do this stuff, so help people out and build your credibility at the same time.

**Take Action:**

- Choose one or two of the ideas above and implement them.
- Make a plan and schedule. For example, if you are going to write blog posts, set up an [editorial calendar](#).
- Work on transitioning your FAQ page to a trusted and thorough resource for your industry, product, or service. Continue to add information, reorganize it for ease of use, and start adding videos.



## 14. Revisit Social Media Marketing for Small Business



*Photo by [William Iven](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Social media platforms have many layers and you may not be using them to their fullest capacity.

Technology changes continuously, so it is a good idea to periodically refamiliarize yourself with the platforms you're using.

Take note of what features were added and how you can fold them into your marketing plan. An example would be hosting a Facebook Live or writing an article on LinkedIn.

### **Take Action:**

- Learn how to use a new feature on the social media platform of your choice.



## Level Up, Part 2: Get Help With Small Business Marketing Automation and Services



*Photo by [Kristopher Roller](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

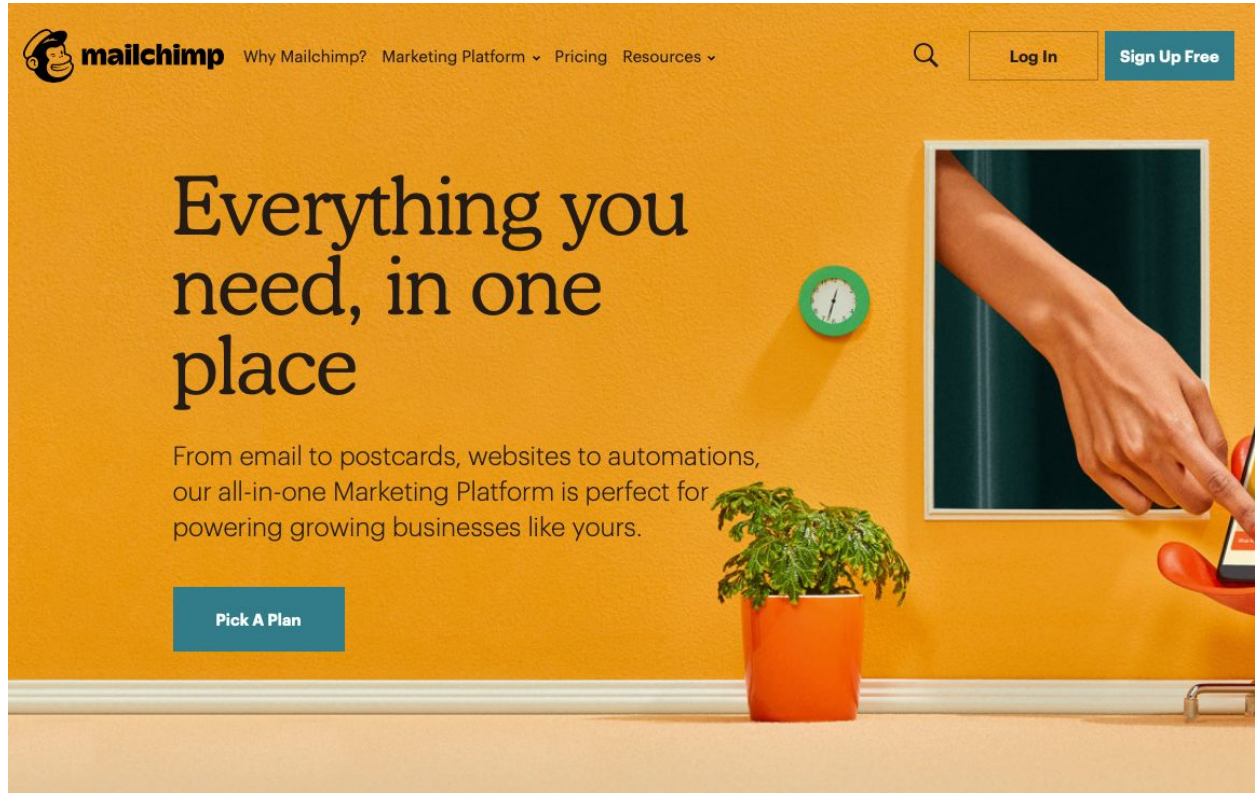
At this point, you have had several quarterly check-ins since elevating your marketing game.

You've expanded your website, social media presence, and developed some credibility and authority.

The consequence of good marketing is having more customers. As your business becomes more successful, you may discover you have less time to dedicate to executing your marketing plan.

It may be time to look into [small business marketing automation](#) software so that you can more effectively market over websites, email, or social media.

## 15. Email Marketing Services

The image shows the Mailchimp website landing page. At the top left is the Mailchimp logo, followed by navigation links: "Why Mailchimp?", "Marketing Platform", "Pricing", and "Resources". On the top right, there is a search icon, a "Log In" button, and a "Sign Up Free" button. The main content area has a large heading "Everything you need, in one place" in a serif font. Below the heading is a sub-headline: "From email to postcards, websites to automations, our all-in-one Marketing Platform is perfect for powering growing businesses like yours." A blue button labeled "Pick A Plan" is positioned below the sub-headline. The background features a warm orange wall with a green clock, a potted plant, and a framed image of a hand using a smartphone.

Email marketing can be a game-changer when getting your small business in front of its target audience.

HubSpot's article titled [The Ultimate List of Email Marketing Stats for 2020](#) states that email is the biggest source of ROI for over 59% of marketers.

Email marketing's ROI keeps getting better. According to [Campaign Monitor's 2016 Report](#), there was a \$44 return on every \$1 invested in email marketing, which was up a staggering 15% or \$6 from the previous year.

Remember, way back, you optimized your website, and made it more inviting for potential customers? You added an opt-in form and started building an email list. We didn't do anything with it then.

Now it is time to put that list to use.

You're not going it alone. Email marketing services can help you every step of the way. The costs start at free and move up depending on how large your email list is.

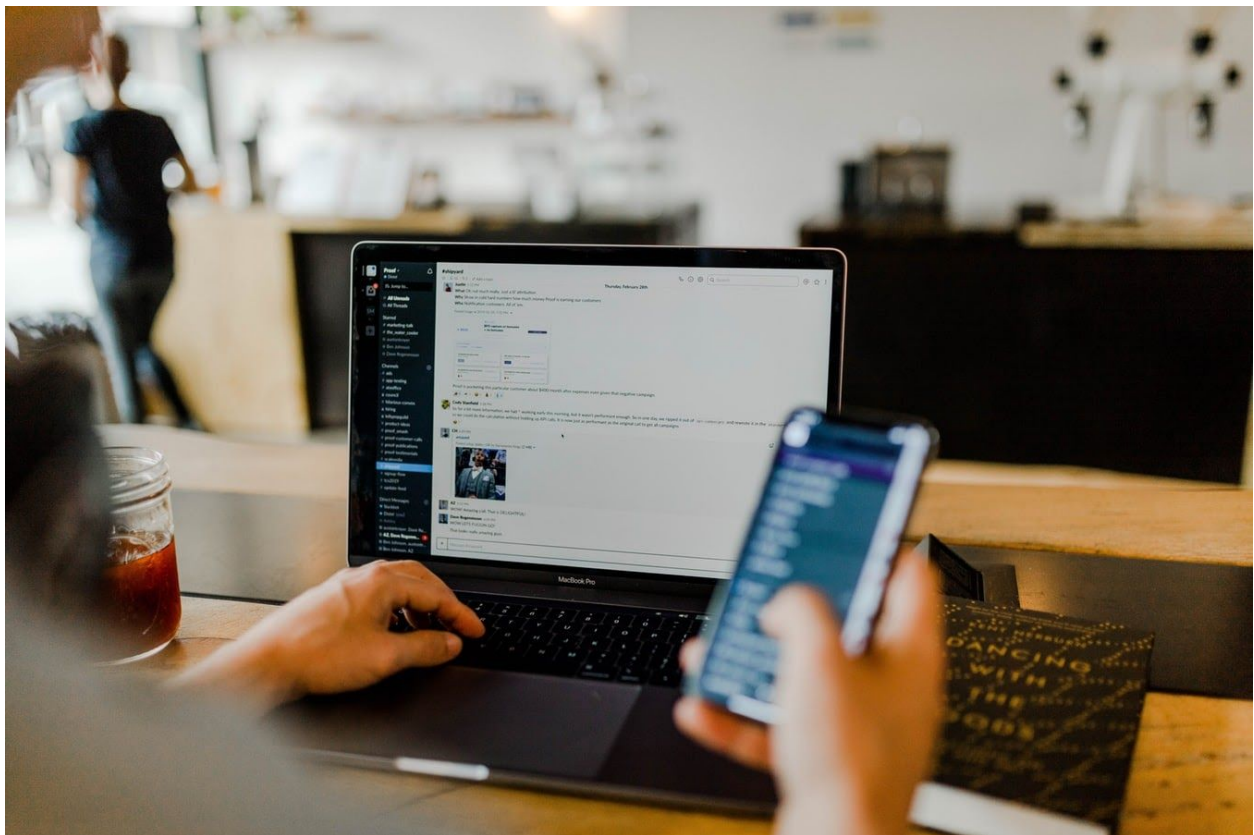
As with everything, start small and simple because you will add to your email marketing program as you learn and grow.

Email marketing services offer automated email scheduling, data tracking, and built-in social media sharing tools that can take your customer targeting to a whole new level.

**Take Action:**

- Sign up for a free or low-cost email marketing platform like [Mailchimp](#).
- Get familiar with some email marketing templates. You can usually find some templates on the platform that you sign up for. Here is one for [Mailchimp](#).

## 16. Outsourcing: Small Business Marketing Services



*Photo by [Austin Distel](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

Eventually, you may consider using small business marketing services to outsource some or all your marketing.

Full-service companies, consultants, and freelancers are all options.

Full-service companies and consultants that specialize in small business marketing can help you every step of the way, from setting up your plan through meeting your goals.



You can call on a freelancer when you need some extra help or want to outsource only certain portions of your marketing. Freelancers can help you write blog posts, shoot and edit videos, and post on your social media pages.

Wherever and whenever you need a hand, you'll be able to find it.

## 17. Other Avenues of Online Marketing for Small Business



[Affiliate Marketing in 2020: What It Is + How Beginners Can Start](#)

Online advertising can be exciting, but also a money-suck if it isn't targeted well.

Through executing your marketing plan you have learned who your ideal customer is and effective ways to connect with them online.

Using this knowledge, you can drive traffic to your business through online advertising.

### Take Action:

- Familiarize yourself with advertising on the social media platform you use to engage with your customers. ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#))
- [Affiliate Marketing](#) can attract a more interested customer while taking the ickiness out of selling because it's more transparent.
- Research [Google Ads](#) to determine if they can be helpful. Watch the cost.



## No Small Business Marketing Department? No Problem.



*Photo by [Pablo Heimplatz](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

You ARE your small business marketing team, so it's time to get out there and start marketing.

Small business marketing used to feel daunting and appear insurmountable. It used to lead to panic and overwhelm.

Not anymore, because now you know better.

You have an arsenal of simple effective tactics that you can implement today and keep adding to in the future.

Taking it one step at a time, the learning curve will wane as you get more confident in your marketing role.

Your successful marketing will shine in social shares. You'll turn regular customers into brand ambassadors. You and your business will be an authority.

Take your business to the next level by starting your small business marketing journey today.

