

SOCIAL MEDIA TIMES

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BLOCKBETA MARKETING:
A BIG PICTURE APPROACH TO
SMALL BUSINESS
Facebook.com/Blockbeta

TELEPHONE
(206) 335-5929

TWITTER
ROBBINBLOCK

Making Sense of Social Media for Local Marketing

There's more to social media marketing than Facebook, LinkedIn & Twitter

A SMALL BUSINESS'S BEST CUSTOMERS MAY BE RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

Social media has the ability to touch people around the world, but tapping into its local side is key to its usefulness as a promotional tool.

JOIN SITES THAT ATTRACT THE RIGHT PEOPLE

There's a lot of hype surrounding the royal three, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, but they don't always focus on a local audience. Change that up by joining location-specific groups on those sites or create one of your own. Find niche sites designed for local audiences, like local magazines and blogs, government sites and Chambers of Commerce. Use online services like Quantcast, Alexa and Compete to see if they have enough traffic to make participation worthwhile.

LEVERAGE SITES WITH BUILT-IN SOCIAL TOOLS

Rather than paying for advertising at the sites you've chosen, look for site swag. These are social tools you can use for free, like Q&A's, forums and discussion boards. Post comments in blogs.

More ideas on the next page ➡



Inviting flower shop in Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, WA



Local coffee shop encourages live interaction



Charming entryway grabs attention

Small businesses deal with less volume, so they have the opportunity to touch customers in a way big businesses can't. This fits in very nicely with social media.



The Web is global, but your customers are local.

TRY SOME OF THESE METHODS TO CONNECT WITH THEM

by Robbin Block

Here are more ideas to help you take advantage of social media for reaching local customers.

Think Neighborhoods

Many websites are designed for a broad audience, yet there are those that allow the visitor to select by city or neighborhood, like the review site Yelp or mobile-centric Foursquare. Online newspapers, like Seattle's KOMO, are going local with news reports for Columbia City, Green Lake, Ballard and more. There are also hyperlocal sites like Everyblock and Outside.in. Also remember that neighborhoods have distinct personalities. Make a real connection with the people there by talking about their concerns and interests.

Online Yellow Pages

Even Yellow Pages are getting into the act. Kudzu is a good example, combining a directory with shared advice, discounts and reviews. There's also Localindex with a mobile version. The beauty of Yellow Pages, and other locally targeted niche sites, is that they attract an audience looking for something in particular, which means they have the mindset of a buyer rather than a browser.

Localize Keywords

When writing about your business for directories or commenting on social sites, use

geographically and culturally relevant words. Use the actual city and neighborhood names and the more familiar terms and nicknames, as well. These will help people locate products and services in their area. It will also help to distinguish you from other regional or national companies. When you can't build these words in, add them as tags. Add your zip code as a tag, too.

Social Tells a Story

Data at the micro-level isn't always easy to come by without custom research, but reading posts and comments on local social sites may yield valuable insights about customers. People will also say things on social sites they may not feel comfortable saying to your face; that can be especially useful for improving or coming up with new products and services.

Go the Distance

When it comes to using social media for local marketing, it's up to you to be where they're looking. Always take into account how people find information. Residents and commuters will read local blogs or the newspaper, or simply notice a sign on the street. Destination seekers may research a new restaurant at a review site. For personal services, like a haircut, people may ask for advice from their online social network. Visitors from out of town will discover the new and unusual in a travel guide like TripAdvisor.

Keep Tabs on Conversations

It's important to see what people are saying so you can respond in a timely manner, correct misstatements and see if you're getting any traction. Use free tools like Google Alerts, Samepoint, Socialmention and Tweetdeck.

Track Your Progress

All this social media participation isn't valuable unless you're getting results -- more foot and website traffic, inquiries and ultimately sales. Use tools like Google Analytics to measure your website traffic and to see where it's coming from. Look at the stats on the social sites you're using, review your transaction data and don't forget to ask callers and visitors how they heard about you.

Robbin Block is a Marketing Strategist and Speaker at Blockbeta Marketing. Learn more about making social media work for your business in her new book, *Social Persuasion: Making Sense of Social Media for Small Business*. Her unique perspectives on marketing and irreverent style are what keep her local customers coming back for more. For information, visit Blockbeta.com.

