



Top 5 Local Marketing Mistakes (And How To Avoid Them)

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The goal of all local marketing initiatives -- and the goal of this article -- is to help you drive in new business. So how can small businesses avoid the common local marketing pitfalls that claim so many would-be marketers? Below are the Top 5 Local Marketing Mistakes with advice on how to utilize some basic strategies that can make a positive impact on your business growth.

Mistake #5: Trying to build your own Web site

Enticing a website visitor to call your business is quite literally a science – and something easily done incorrectly. Common website design pitfalls include not making it clear what you want the visitor to do (i.e. make an appointment), not using Web friendly copy (i.e. too much information/brochure style), and not satisfying varying visitor groups (i.e. age, need, etc).

How do you avoid this? Resist the urge to use ready-made site templates or your tech-savvy nephew to build your company's Web site. Be sure to use an online marketing service provider to ensure you're guiding as many people as possible toward calling your business.

Mistake #4: Creating a site no one visits

A common misconception is that people will magically show up to your newly created Web site. Unlike a storefront – where you can receive walk-in traffic – over 100 million other websites are competing for site visitors. After all the time and money you spent on creating the website, you now have to make sure that it gets seen.

Fortunately, online marketing professionals have begun offering unique services to small businesses like yours. Some encouraging numbers: over 63% of people use search engines to find local business, and 54% use search engines in place of a phone book. And yet, still only 3% of local marketing budgets are spent on online.

Mistake #3: Not Knowing if Your Marketing is Really Working

Maybe you advertise in the yellow pages, hand out brochures, or sponsor a local event. But do you know how many people visit your site or call or email your business as a direct result of these marketing tactics? Your efforts can easily be wasted when you don't know the number of leads and customers your advertising is generating.

A great thing about online marketing is that everything is measurable. Professionals have developed techniques to measure exactly how many clicks, calls and emails are generated from a single advertisement. This gives you the confidence to continue your online efforts if they are successful or the information to know that you should change your approach if they are not.

Mistake #2: Using Directory Services

Directory services are a popular and seemingly effortless way to drive in new business. However, most directories offer their "Comparison Services," meaning you are still competing for a customer even after the service gives a referral. The directory service ends up with 5+ payments in return for providing only 1 referral. So if you don't respond quickly enough, you have low odds of winning the business.

To avoid this, you must simply get to the source. Take control by using a system that promotes your services directly to prospective local customers, directing them straight to your own website. Industry experts can help turn visits into calls and customers.

Mistake #1: Not Turning Calls Into Sales Effectively

Generating interest in your business will get you close to success, but you and your employees need to take it that last mile and close the sale. You simply must pick up the phone. Studies show that small businesses only answer 36% of their incoming phone calls. Remember: one missed call is a missed opportunity for you and often a new opportunity for a competitor.

How do you avoid this? Upgrade your systems and control how your potential customers are contacting you. Level the playing field by investing in a system that can be your single source for sales effectiveness: advertise online, set up your business's website, and manage your leads all at once.