

3 Cheap Marketing Ideas for Businesses on a Budget

Marketing can be one of your largest business expenses, particularly if you're unknown and just starting off. If your business has a storefront on a well-traveled Main Street, you're in luck. If not, you have some work to do.

New business owners who haven't tackled their own marketing before will be shocked at the amount of work needed to be successful at digital marketing (the newfangled kind of marketing that helps people get to know, like and trust you through virtual techniques). It doesn't seem like there are enough hours in the day.

However, there is a trade-off. You can accomplish a successful marketing campaign through digital and content marketing that requires very little money. Twenty years ago a new business would've had to invest huge amounts of money in an ad campaign and radio spots to drive traffic. Today, you can create a cult following through social media and digital interaction with very little financial investment, outside of time. Here are 3 non-social media ideas to get you started.

Content Marketing

It's estimated as many as 70% of customers perform research before making a purchase. This is one of the many reasons content marketing is so effective. Content marketing aims at producing content your audience finds valuable. It can be in the form of a blog, podcast, webinar, e-book, infographic, or a dozen other formats.



Providing this valuable content does a number of things such as:

- Drives traffic to your website
- Encourages people to share your content
- Helps your customers with their buying decision
- Promotes you/your business as a thought leader in the industry you serve
- Helps people get to know you and like you (two important points when trying to close a sale)
- Shows Google and other search engines that your business is legitimate and worth ranking highly in organic search

That's a lot of marketing bang for your time to produce content in an area you are already an expert in. The only investment in content marketing is your time to produce the content and the website hosting that gives you somewhere to share it.

For even further reach, you can create a larger piece of content that your audience is really interested in and place it behind a "gate" on your website. Visitors can have the free piece if they sign up to be "in the know" and receive periodic helpful information from you. All they need to provide is a name and valid email address. The content is theirs and you have a way to stay in touch.

Create a Group

Birds of a feather flock together. Depending on the nature of your business, you can work with existing community groups, or create your own, to entice more people to your place of business. For instance, a coffee shop might approach a local writer's group or book club to start meeting at their location.

You can also start your own MeetUp and host it at your business after hours (or stay open later just for your group). Enticing people to walk in the door is the first step to getting people to remember you.

The price to do this is minimum (MeetUp groups have a maintenance fee to be on the MeetUp site) and may even yield a source of revenue for you when people come to your business.

Drip Campaigns

This is particularly effective if you have a long sales cycle or you are a business that wants to build its repeat customer base. Create an email marketing campaign that provides your list (those who have requested to be on your mailing list or have signed up for content.) with helpful information. This could be tips, things to consider, best practices, etc.

You can begin an email marketing campaign with an inexpensive service like MailChimp or ConstantContact.

These marketing ideas yield results through consistent practice. They take time but they also build loyal audiences because your customers get to know, like, and trust you. For the greatest success they should be implemented alongside social media marketing.

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Christina R. Green teaches small businesses, chambers and associations how to connect through content. Her articles have appeared in the Midwest Society of Association Executives' Magazine, NTEN.org, AssociationTech, and Socialfish. She is a regular blogger at Frankjenny.com and the Event Manager Blog.

She's a bookish writer on a quest to bring great storytelling to organizations everywhere.
