

The 8 Essentials of Every Great Marketing Strategy

Creating a great marketing strategy is like baking a pie — you don't want to leave out the most important ingredients.

For many small business owners, taking time off is a great opportunity to spend time with family and friends but also a chance to take a step back from day-to-day business operations and look at the parts of their business that they appreciate as well as what needs to be addressed.

When it comes to marketing, a lot of businesses make the mistake of leaving it to the end of their budgets and business plans — just like pie is left for dessert — when in actuality it holds a lot of weight on the success of the business.

When you take a look at your own business marketing pie, here are the eight most important pieces. Each on their own is great, but when you put them all together, the results will expand your bottom line immensely (pun intended).

- 1. Web Presence:** Your website is your first marketing opportunity for most new customers. Make sure your website is attractive, clearly presents what you do and who you are, and provides social proof of success. Your online presence, branding and marketing materials are a great place to start in building your marketing message and attracting clients.
- 2. Customer Relationships:** This is the most active and important piece of your pie. Keeping your current customers happy and engaged with you and your business is the most profitable area of marketing. Happy customers stay loyal and also bring new customers. Continually find ways to bring value and service to your existing customers in unique and personal ways. Customer success is quickly becoming the epicenter of the marketing department.
- 3. Social Media:** Stay active with your community — even if it's just an image or a quick update. Social media presence is now becoming the indicator of life in a business. People do business with people, and social media is the No. 1 place where people are interacting. Keeping content fresh on your social media profiles indicates an active online presence. It also becomes a place for quick customer support, and if comments and requests are missed, it can look poorly on your business reputation.
- 4. Content Creation:** Creating content that is valuable to your users not only builds engagement and loyalty but also helps build your website value to search engines and will increase your organic traffic as you increase in your search engine ranking. If you're looking for a long-term marketing effort that pays big dividends for your business, rich, informative content is a great investment.
- 5. Joint Ventures and Partnerships:** This is often overlooked but is one of the best-known secrets of small business marketing. Finding joint venture partners who service the same target market group can help you promote your services to additional customers and provide better service. Seek events and partnerships with businesses that are non-competing and align with your company values. Expand your reach with either joint promotions or events.

6. **Affiliates and Brand Ambassadors:** Reward your raving fans and referrers. Incentivise your customers and online influencers to mention you and share your business. More than ever, purchasers are depending on reviews, referrals and social influence to make buying decisions. Once you've taken the time to set up an affiliate or referral system, your circle of influence can grow beyond your specific reach. This is a great way to reach new markets and reward raving fans which end up costing a lot less than investing in advertising and sales.
7. **Speaking Events and Local Outreach:** Small business still depends on a lot of exposure. There is no better way to create impact with the exposure of speaking events. Share your expertise, customer focus and mission statement from a stage and you instantly show credibility and personal connection. Get over your fear of public speaking and discover the marketing power of sharing your own voice on a stage.
8. **Networking:** Never stop networking! To stay in business, you always need to keep building it and working on it. Networking is the continual practice of making new relationships and maintaining the ones you have. Your presence at events and conferences with potential customers, employees and partners matters and may not pay off right away, but over time you come, you reaffirm your consistency in business and your commitment to growing relationships and community.

Just like pie, marketing takes effort, many ingredients and time to create the final results. The great part is, when you add it all together, nothing beats the smell of sweet success.

Source: "The 8 Essentials of Every Great Marketing Strategy," Arash Asli, Business Collective