

Does my small business need a facebook page?

By Lisa Pecunia

Lately, when business owners are asked what they are doing to market their business on the Internet, more often than not the answer is "Well... we have a web site, and we just created a Facebook page."

But if you ask why the business needs a facebook page, the answer is usually something like, "My competitor has one," or "My neighbor who

designs web sites said I should have one," or even "I heard that people are going to facebook to search for businesses now."

The problem with these answers is that there is no specific goal to be reached or problem to be solved. This is social pressure at its finest. Everyone else is doing it so it must be working. Besides... how hard can it be?

The businesses that tend to get good results using facebook for e-

marketing generally have a strong combination of the following:

1. Local businesses who market directly to consumers and have new items, events, or specials to talk about every week or so. Salons, coffee shops, retail outlets, entertainment venues, garden centers, etc.

2. There is a committed resource that is organized, diligent, and knowledgeable about the business' offerings and customers, as well as the desires of those customers.

3. The business' owners and staff already have a wide network of friends and associates who will "like" their page and help spread the word.

4. The business has a solid overall marketing strategy, and the facebook page easily complements their other marketing efforts.

5. There is a plan for measuring the effectiveness of the program, and using those measurements to regularly revise the program and improve its results.

6. The business is generally good at building relationships and being "social" with their customers offline as well as online.

7. The person in charge of maintaining the page is technically capable of doing so.

Many businesses can easily satisfy number one and number six, and for the most part their technical



skills (number seven) are at least adequate. Sadly this is not enough to be successful.

Without a clear answer to the question "Why?" any marketing effort is just a shot in the dark.

Many business owners jump into social media quickly and without much of a plan because it's relatively cheap. Traditional offline advertising programs, like radio and newspaper, typically have direct budgetary impact; therefore you want to make sure you will get your money's worth before proceeding. In addition, because the cost of social media marketing is so low it's natural to reach the conclusion that it's easy to use as well.

It's not easy. It's just as much work as traditional advertising, maybe even more so since you'll be doing most of it yourself.

It's just cheaper from a cash perspective. It certainly takes as much planning as traditional advertising.

There's also a right way and a

wrong way to do social marketing. Doing it wrong can damage your reputation before you even realize what you did wrong. But doing it right can help knock your sales out of the park.

So, if you're thinking of starting a facebook page, or already have one that isn't producing leads for your business, ask yourself exactly what you need to get out of it in order for it to be worth your efforts, and in what timeframe.

Your answer should be specific and measurable – "We want to get at least 20 new "Likes" every week, five weekly wall posts from customers, and 10 extra people through our doors every month."

Doing this exercise will make you think hard about exactly what you are going to do with your page, and how you're going to use it to achieve your goals.

Then you'll have a shot at being successful with your facebook business page.

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How to save money and grow your business with a virtual assistant

By Chela Hardy

You're a small business owner, your company is growing by leaps and bounds and you're finding it hard to keep up with all the administrative tasks you've been handling on your own to save money.

Or perhaps you've been in business for a while and you just can't seem to get anywhere with it because the time you should be spending following leads and nurturing potential client relationships is spent instead, well, keeping up with all those administrative tasks you've been handling on your own to save money.

So what do you do?

If you're the business owner in the first scenario, perhaps you're in a position to hire administrative assistance. Then again, the expense of bringing on permanent help is costly no matter how you add it up and will take a substantial bite out of your company's profits. And if you're the entrepreneur in the second scenario, well, chances are your business is not yet profitable enough for you to be able to afford the help anyway.

It's your classic Catch-22 situation. Or at least it was before what was once just a best-kept secret became a thriving industry. We're talking about virtual assistance.

You've probably heard of it by now. It's a working arrangement that allows you, the business owner, to hire an administrative professional – working from his or her own home office and using his or her own equipment – to take on all those tasks that are crucial to a growing business, but that cut into your billable hours.

Things such as contact management, data entry, research, document preparation, paperwork, creative services, web design and social media management just to name a few. Assignments are communicated through email, by fax, over the phone, etc. And the occasional Skype or conference call isn't unheard of.

It's certainly not a new concept. Forward-thinking executives have utilized the services of virtual professionals for years and have enjoyed superior office support for far less money than they would otherwise spend if they were to hire full support staff.

After all, they're paying for only the exact time their virtual assistant actually spends working on their project. No more footing the bill for lunch breaks, vacation/time off, or numerous wasted, non-productive hours on the clock.

The fact that the virtual assistant is an independent contractor responsible for his or her own benefits, insurances, and employment-related taxes makes the arrangement even more attractive to small business owners, and even large corporations.

Chela Hardy is president of Agenda Administrative Services. She can be reached at (703) 466-0253. For more information, go to www.whatsonyouragenda.com.

A True Member of the Community Offering Unique, High End, Individualized Service

H&R Block is the world's largest tax preparation business, having served 400 million clients since 1955. It's goal says Tax Professional Steve Dickey, "is to save our clients as much possible, to keep up with the ever changing tax laws, and to help clients to pay as little as legally possible."

Because they are an international corporation, clients can continue to use H&R Block no matter where they move. Past tax records can be easily transferred to your new location.

In the past year the government has issued substantial tax changes that will affect everyone. Mr. Dickey says, "If you only see a tax professional every three to four years, this is the year to talk to someone." Stop by their Westwood Office Park branch today and see how they can help you.



Steve Dickey is just one of the business owners finding success at Westwood Office Park. Call or go online today for more information about how this great location can help your business grow.



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