INTRODUCTION

It’s no secret that the pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital. Stay-at-home orders, social distancing requirements and vulnerable customers avoiding the risks of the Covid-19 virus have caused businesses that have never considered an on-line presence to jump into the e-commerce pool with both feet.

Business owners new to e-commerce have to contend with a once-in-a-lifetime fall off in foot traffic compounded by the need to learn an entirely business model. Not only do these businesses have to set up and become proficient at selling their products on-line, they also have to manage their digital reputation, expand their social media presence, and learn how to market their business in an environment crowded with thousands of new on-line competitors looking for their piece of the digital pie.

For business owners struggling with the weight of the pandemic, the move to on-line selling can seem overwhelming. However, thinking back to before the onset of the pandemic, businesses of all kinds were steadily moving their sales to on-line channels. For better or worse, the current crisis has turbo charged this process and ripped the bandaid off this migration to digital.

But there is hope!

This good news is that there are a whole host of cost-effective and easy to use tools across all digital platforms that can help your business get noticed and compete in the digital world without a lot of time and effort. Because this digital explosion is here to stay, we know that whatever effort your business puts into developing your ecommerce platform is sure to provide benefits well beyond the end of this crisis.

Let’s get started...

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SACRAMENTO COVID RELIEF

Workforce Recovery Program
SMALL BUSINESS DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

It is important to understand that all digital platforms live within an ecosystem that can have an enormous impact on the success of your business. Consumers engage with your business in many ways online so it is important to understand how your business appears on other platforms, what you can do to own and optimize your own platforms, and how you can leverage tools to drive traffic to your business. A comprehensive strategy requires understanding the component parts.

This guide is organized to unpack and explain each part of the ecosystem, give guidance as to what you need to do to put your best foot forward in each, and provide tools and resources to maximizing your success in each.

This is how consumers evaluate you, discover you, and give you feedback. It is important to make sure that what they find is accurate and representative.
- Yelp
- Google
- TripAdvisor
- Third Party Ordering Sites
- Industry Sites

This is how you build your business online using innovate digital tools that help you reach your existing consumers and monetize capturing new ones.
- Paid Search
- Paid Social
- Email

This is how consumers conduct business with you, it should be efficient, attractive, easy to use, and as good or better as the experience they have inside your four walls.
- Desktop Site
- Mobile Site
- Online Store
- Industry Tools

This is how you grow your brand profile, build a loyal following, engage with your existing guest and hopefully reach out to new ones.
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- TikTok

This is how you create and grow your online commerce channels.

DIGITAL MARKETING

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

ONLINE COMMERCE

SOCIAL MEDIA
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE ...

We know how busy you are, so we’ve divided this playbook into four simple sections for you to grow your revenue with online tools. Each section contains links to additional resources, platforms, tools and services that can help you build back your business.

Digital Footprint
Take control of how and where consumers can find you online and make sure that what they see is accurate

Online Ordering
Establish or optimize your website for online ordering with a mobile friendly e-commerce platform for your small business

Social Media
Use social media to build an online following, reach new users and actively engage with your customers online

Digital Marketing
Leverage digital advertising to target customers in your area when they are looking for your services through email, search and paid social
Digital Footprint

Although it’s impossible to control everything that is said about your business online, there are basic steps that every business must take to clean up their presence online. This section outlines how to clean up your public profiles and take control of your business listings.
OWN YOUR BUSINESS LISTINGS

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS (GMB)

With almost 90% market-share, Google search is one of the main ways that your consumers - new and existing - encounter you online. It is critical for every business to own their google business listing, and know how to add, remove or adjust information. If you haven’t done so already, go onto the google my business platform and claim your business to gain access to your business listing. Once you have done this you can:

• Make sure that your business is categorized correctly
• Add or modify the description of your business so that it is accurate and easy to understand
• Add pictures that will show up first when your customers are searching for you

Beyond these simple basics, your business can use their GMB profile to add a link to your online ordering platform, list your phone number and hours of operation, add services and offerings, and even upload menus. For a step-by-step guide to owning and maintaining your Google My Business listing click on the links below:

Click through for a step-by-step tutorial on how to gain control of your Google listing and optimize it for your business.

For a deeper dive on the impact GMB can have on your business as well as further tips and tricks to leveraging it, click here

OTHER LISTINGS

Similar to Google, other platforms like Yelp and TripAdvisor allow you to take control of business profiles on their sites, adjust information to ensure it is accurate and manage your profile page. Note that many of these services will solicit payment for a premium version of their platform that provides you with benefits to users of their platforms, however, it still does not allow you to adjust or eliminate reviews so consider an investment like this carefully. Take the time to do an audit of the major review sites in your industry, ensure that you have easy access to your profiles, and that all the information found on them is accurate.

Click through for step-by-step instructions on managing all of your business listings around the web
CLEAN UP YOUR REVIEWS & RATINGS

As unfair and frustrating as many on-line reviews can be, they matter. Platforms like Yelp, Tripadvisor and Google are often the first place on-line consumers go when researching a business need - and the star ratings and feedback that appear on these sites can either put your business at the top of the list or immediately bounce you out of consideration. While it can be difficult to remove negative reviews, the best thing your business can do is to politely and professionally respond to reviews and manage customer feedback. Your replies will be visible by other users, so be polite, kind and courteous while you attempt to correct the issue at hand or thank a guest for their positive feedback. According to reputation tracker technology firm Review Trackers, “The best thing you can do is engage with the person who left the review, solve their issues, and ask them if they can edit or delete their review once you’ve fixed their issue.”

Once you have access to your Google My Business profile, you can more easily manage and respond to your reviews. With more than 57.5% of reviews directly on your google profile, the first thing many consumers see is your star rating and customer reviews. The same is true for sites like Yelp and TripAdvisor which are very influential in driving customer preference and spend. At the end of the day, we recommend that you know what people are saying about you on-line, respond as best as you can and, if you can, try not to take it personally.

For tips and tactics on how to respond to reviews online and manage your online reputation effectively click here
THIRD PARTY SITES

Consumers can also find information about you on other sites and platforms that you are listed upon, even sometimes when you don’t sign up or authorize their services. It is important for every business owner to regularly run a google search of their business and make sure that you only show up on the channels that you want to. This is particularly relevant for restaurants where delivery services can be disruptive to a managed or owned operation and sometimes can work against your restaurant by pointing guests to inaccurate menus, incorrect information or by providing a less than stellar guest experience. To opt-out of platforms you do not wish to appear on click through the links:

For information on how to remove your business from any third-party deliver platform or correct inaccurate information, click through

If you wish to use third-party platforms in order to build your business or access new guests, do make sure that all of your basic information is accurate, any photography is high-quality, menu and offerings are representative of what you are currently offering, and that all information about your business up-to-date.
Every business can control what consumers first find when they encounter them online. It is critical to put your best foot forward and get comfortable managing and optimizing their business listings. It’s free, it doesn’t require any specialized expertise and can have a huge impact on building back your business.

**CHECKLIST**

- Verify your business on Google My Business
- Claim your business profiles on Yelp & TripAdvisor
- Manage and edit all of your business profiles with accurate information
- Respond to reviews and encourage guests to review
- Run a search for your own business as a consumer
- Report any inaccurate information you find on third-party websites
- Opt-out of any services you don’t wish to be a part of
Online Commerce

Our mantra for the pandemic economy is: every business is now an online business. Grow your online business by optimizing your website and building an efficient online order platform.
QUICKLY ESTABLISHING AN ONLINE PRESENCE

Combining COVID-19 limitations with an ever more savvy user base, making money from your website has become a critical part of running a profitable small business.

For businesses new to ecommerce, there are a wide range of low cost platforms to quickly get your business on-line and ready for sales. We have found that the easiest ways for many businesses to make this leap is to look for industry-specific resources that provide a one-stop solution that include a clear and functioning website, an ecommerce platform, marketing tools, a loyalty program and the ability to integrate with your point of sale (POS) system right out of the gate. We have found these platforms and the support and tools that come with them, as the easiest way to get on-line and selling without the trial and error required by many businesses.

Many of these web platforms contain additional tools tailored to your business segment that allow you execute other marketing initiatives, drive customer traffic to your website, create new revenue streams like loyalty and subscription programs, and integrate with your POS so your digital and in-store experience are cohesive. Below are some examples by industry type.
EXAMPLES BY INDUSTRY TYPE

1. **Foodservice**
   - **Bento Box** - Get an optimized website up in weeks not months and have a simple landing page for all of your consumers to order directly from your website. Simple and effective menus that link directly to your POS for owned ordering and industry expertise on restaurant and bar website optimization techniques.

2. **Pizza**
   - **Slice** - Further specializing in Pizza websites and online ordering and delivery for the Pizza segment, Slice is both an online marketplace for customers as well as a full online ordering website builder for Pizza concepts that is a great place to start owning your online ordering experience if you don’t currently have one.

3. **Personal Care**
   - **SalonIris** - Personal Care businesses have a unique set of challenges for their digital business, they often require a physical visit but many frictionless actions can be facilitated online. For industry specific solutions to personal care websites that attract bookings, manage appointments, assist with marketing and foster digital brand engagement, take a look at SalonIris.

4. **Floral**
   - **FloraNext** - Part event and part retail, the flower shop has unique needs from it’s website that include event management, subscription, delivery, and of course compelling online retail. Floranext is a full service suite built by florists to create immersive websites that fit all those needs.
EXAMPLES BY INDUSTRY TYPE

5  Consumer Goods & Retail

As expected, eCommerce website building is a crowded marketplace. However, there are some simple digital storefront builders that make building an eCommerce site for your retail or consumer goods business possible with a little tech savvy and a clear vision. Each platform also provides direct links to favored developers that can help you get started in building an eCommerce platform.

Shopify
Lightspeed
Weebly / Square

6  Custom eCommerce Solutions

If you think you need a more customized solution but don’t know a strong designer that understands your industry or how to drive ecommerce, take a look at 99 Designs which develops feature rich websites for businesses from the ground up in a matter of weeks:

99 Designs
OPTIMIZING YOUR WEBSITE

For businesses that have established an ecommerce platform, but want to be more competitive in the online marketplace, there are many things you can do to optimize your website to make it an efficient sales and marketing tool for your business. The key to this process is stepping back and looking at your ecommerce offering through the eyes of someone shopping online, and not as a digital version of your in-store experience. These two audiences are very different, have different needs and different buying patterns. Applying a brick and mortar psychology to the digital environment is often a critical error.

The first step in this process is realizing that many of your online customers are looking at your business and your offerings on their phones and other mobile devices.

Mobile User Experience

Perhaps even more critical than having a big, beautiful website on an end-user’s computer is to have a fully functioning, “responsive” website to drive online orders. A responsive website (also referred to as Adaptive or Liquid Design) is a kind of website design that changes the content on your site based on the device that your customer is using. So your offerings look as good on your phone as well as they do on your laptop.

Why is this important? We know that roughly half of users who search for a business from their mobile device convert to a sale within one hour of their search. So it is important to make sure your website is designed to be responsive to both desktop and mobile users and your mobile ordering system is as easy and frictionless for the mobile user as possible.
Customize Your Offering to An On-Line Customer

Your in-store and on-line offerings do not have to be the same. It is important to think about how to present your on-line inventory in a way that is captivating and compelling without barraging your visitors with every item that you carry. A slimmed down and efficient selection is often the best way to drive orders and provide customers with an optimized user experience online or on their phone.

For restaurants, consider engineering your menu with items that travel well, shows well online, and have clear and concise categories that allow guests to build a full meal without having to hunt for what they are looking for. Also, make sure that you are putting your high-margin, profit friendly items on your on-line menus. With all the fees for third party ordering and delivery sites, the high-profit items will be your best chance at making a profit online.

POS provider Toast has an incredible Menu Engineering Course that covers all of these topics and more and is a great starting point for designing a menu that will drive sales online.

Curate your On-Line Experience

For retailers, curating your offerings and presenting them on your website in ways that compel customers to purchase can be as complex as merchandising beautiful retail displays in-store. Think about applying similar techniques to your online merchandise and organize your eCommerce store to curate the experience for your guest as well as provide a way to browse through your inventory by category.

For help in thinking about how to filter your product lines online, start here with an introduction to curated commerce and be sure to click through some of the examples to get ideas on how you can organize your online inventory in a way that best represents your brand.

WEBSITE CHECKLISTS

Restaurant
Retail
Personal Care
Web design and development can be complicated but there are easy to use, relatively low-cost platforms that can get you optimized for online commerce. Before you focus on driving guests to your website or ordering platform, make sure it works well for your business.

**CHECKLIST**

- Evaluate your website using the tools and checklists in this toolkit for your industry
- Work through each section of the checklist carefully and note what needs to change
- Review your website as a consumer and make sure it is easy to use
- Ensure that your website and ordering platform is mobile responsive
- Compel users to order directly from your owned commerce channels
- Leverage industry platforms to upgrade your website if it falls short
- Adjust your offerings online to have the most impact
Social Media

This section provides links and resources to teach you how to take advantage of social media to interact with your guests, build your brand image, market your offerings and grow your business.
SETTING GOALS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media channels like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat can be incredible tools to connect your business with your ideal customer profile. It can also be an amazing tool to learn about trends in your industry, build your brand and create a platform for your expertise. The key to an effective social media strategy is to know what you want to get out of your efforts. Take a minute to decide what your business wants to achieve from your social media efforts. Do you want to:

• Increase Direct Sales
• Build Your Brand Awareness
• Create a way to Support and Engage Your Customers
• Follow Emerging Trends
• Highlight your Knowledge of your Industry

Once you decide what you want your social channels to do for your business, you can decide which platforms are the best for your business.
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

All social media is not the same. Like children, each social media platform has its own unique personality that attracts a different kind of frequent user. As one of the earliest Social Media Platforms, Facebook tends toward a slightly older, more established crowd in the US, whereas new platforms like Snapchat and TikTok tend to attract a younger or more experimental demographic. While users of all stripes populate all social channels, it is important to evaluate all of your options to see which channel best suits your business.

To get started, we normally point businesses to the one-two punch of Facebook and Instagram. These two platforms both have an enormous user base, are easy to use, familiar to most, and are conducive to just about any small business. Newer entrants like Snapchat and TikTok skew younger, and have a bit higher learning curve with their emphasis on interactive and video content but can be an entertaining next step for a business to engage with new guests in fun and inventive ways. Read on for quick links on how to set up and manage pages on each platform, how to build your profile, and resources on getting the most out of your social media channels.

Instagram

Photosharing app Instagram, now almost ubiquitous, began in 2010 and has grown to more than 1 billion active users in just 10 years. A beautiful Instagram feed is almost a core requirement of any reputable business these days, so it is an important social media channel to get right. We have built a full user-guide for restaurants, retailers, and personal care businesses to get the most out of their Instagram page - [click here to open](#). This guide will teach you step-by-step how to craft expert content, interact with your followers and build your following. If you already have an Instagram page but don’t feel like it is driving business, we recommend you read our guide.
**Facebook**
The original social network, Facebook boasts 2.7 Billion users and a robust new selection on on-line selling tools, including the Facebook Marketplace, Stores and in app advertising. To support small businesses they offer a business page setup and tactical steps for promoting your business, and Facebook IQ provides ample learning material to get started and grow your business on their platforms (which includes Instagram).


Manage: [https://www.facebook.com/business/pages/manage](https://www.facebook.com/business/pages/manage)

**Snapchat**
This platform for photo sharing and short videos has changed quite a bit since its launch. One of the key components of the experience is that the user posted content is only available for a short period of time before it disappears. Combining this with geolocated tags, filters and quirky ‘lenses’ that are applied to photos or videos, the content is immediate, personal and location specific. Recently, Snapchat added sponsored filters and advertising capabilities on their platform. See Snapchat’s business references for information on setting up a Snapchat business account to monetize a user base and advertise to users as well as create content for users to engage with organically. Note that you don't have to only advertise on Snapchat but can also post content as a user from your business account.


**TikTok**
Exploding in popularity, using TikTok for business is a new way to engage users with captivating video content for tips on how to leverage TikTok’s user base to build your business.

[https://later.com/blog/tiktok-for-business/](https://later.com/blog/tiktok-for-business/)
HOW TO CREATE COMPELLING CONTENT

The great thing about social media for businesses is that getting started is either free or extremely inexpensive, your followers can grow organically over time and it can be an incredibly effective sales and marketing tool for a small business. But none of this happens by accident. Creating compelling and interesting content for your social channels requires a bit of planning and an understanding of the rules of the road for each social media platform. Below are some keys to building a successful social media following for your business:

Post Consistently
The biggest mistake we see small businesses make is inconsistency with the frequency of their social media posts. Businesses should post 2-3 times a week and should never let their feed lapse for more than one week. To keep things lively and authentic on your feed, highlight user generated content (things other people post about you), post behind the scenes snippets from your business, talk about new products, highlight your staff, and post about community engagements that your business is involved with. All of this fun and interesting content will provide balance to the more commerce-directed posts like deals, offers, or specials. We recommend creating a monthly calendar and filling in post ideas each week. You’d be surprised how many ideas you can come up with and if you get stuck, engage your staff, many of them probably post at least once a day themselves and may have some great ideas.

Encourage Engagement
Social Media is not just about pushing out sales content for your business, it is about fostering a community online. For a small business, this means encouraging your customers to engage with you on your social media channels. Once you begin posting regularly, you should be prepared to give and receive more comments on your posts, so be responsive, be polite, but have fun with it. You may even begin to get direct messages and inquiries about your businesses and services directly through your profiles. This is how you start building business from your following. Every platform has tools designed to let users and businesses communicate with each other with hashtags, mentions, and cross-posting. Being active on your feeds doesn’t just mean posting regularly, it means fostering a dialogue that helps consumers build trust in your business.

Be Authentic
More than anything else - Authenticity is key. Too many businesses try to mimic content from another site or the slick catalogue photography of larger brands or try to impress their followers. In reality, many of the best and most effective posts are the simple shots of your products or your business taken on your phone. Sprout Social, a company that consolidates, posts and tracks social media for businesses big and small, has a very good guide for small businesses on crafting interesting, click through the links below:
Restaurants & Bars

Retail & Digital Commerce
https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-for-retail/

Measure Impact
Social media platforms - for better or for worse - track everything their users do. This provides your business with an amazing amount of information about what people are doing on your page and how they find you. Leverage these insights to your advantage and learn what works and what doesn’t. Look at which posts are most popular, when you get the most mentions, what content is driving engagement and build some simple goals for you to grow your following or their level of interaction.

Click on the links below to better understand Facebook and Instagram’s analytics that measure the impact and reach of your efforts on social media:

Instagram Insights
Facebook Analytics
Social Media is a powerful way to build the public face of your business and can be a home for your most loyal fans to engage and interact with your business. The more time you invest in getting good at social media, the more customers you will convert with it.

**CHECKLIST**

- Select one or two platforms that are best for your audience
- Create business profiles on the channels you want to be active on
- Provide compelling content that is authentic to you and your business
- Post consistently with a mix of offerings, information, and inspiration
- Engage actively with your followers in comments, mentions, tags and messages
- Utilize your platforms analytics tools to know what is working
Digital Marketing

In the section below, we will explore the most common, cost-effective and targeted digital marketing strategies that your business can use to begin the process of driving traffic to your on-line offerings.
Once your business has launched a functional ecommerce platform and has activated its social channels to engage your customers, the next step is to drive on-line buyers to your channels so that they can see your offering and make purchases online. For many businesses that have relied on foot traffic and traditional marketing methods to drive business, diving into the world of on-line marketing can seem overwhelming.

**PAID SEARCH**

Google Ads (Formerly Google Ad Words or Google Ad Words Express) This is a paid on-line advertising solution that businesses can use to promote themselves on Google Search, YouTube and other sites across the internet.

**Why We Like It:**

Google owns 90% of the world’s search traffic and their Google Ad tools are a very effective way for a business of any size to tap into this flood of customers looking for products. What make these tools so compelling is:

1. It’s Easy. Though the Google Ads platform is very sophisticated, watching a few on-line tutorials can get you up-and-running with this tool in a couple of hours.

2. It Location-Specific: Google allows you to target the customers only in the geographic area that matters to your business. Whether you are trying to get a lunch crowd from a 5 block radius or drive traffic from 30 minutes away, these tools allow you to market only to customers within your specific trading area.

3. It’s Goal Based: This tool allows you to choose whether you want more web traffic, phone orders or in-store traffic and tailors the program to drive each of these.

4. It’s trackable: The tools allow you to understand exactly what you are getting for your money and exactly how effective it is for your business.

**Things to Keep in Mind:**

1. Trial and Error: It takes about a month of trial and error with your Google Ad campaign to get it right for your business. Google recommends budgeting for this amount of time before you start really seeing results.

2. Price: Google allows you to put whatever budget you’d like into a campaign and draws down on that money until it is depleted. The more popular the search terms, the more expensive they are to land, so making this cost effective takes a bit of creativity and work. Though it is a very cost-effective platform, throwing a bunch of money into a campaign before you get the hang of it is not recommended.

**Resources:**

- [Google Ads Youtube Video](#)
- [FAQ’s from Google](https://ads.google.com/home/faq/)
PAID SOCIAL

If your business has a strong engagement with your customers on social media, there are some cost effective ways to leverage the tools from Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and other social platforms to create ads that look like organic content, but boost your company’s awareness and link directly to your ecommerce platform. While the look and feel of advertising on these previously purely social channels can be tricky to navigate, entertaining and well-crafted ads can be a very effective tool to get to a highly targeted audience.

Why we like it: These tools allow businesses to target very, very specific users based on parameters such as age, demographics and specific interests. (Want to target male college students in Atlanta who play lacrosse, are interested in muscle cars and follow the Falcons - this can be done.) Like Google Ads, the Instagram and Facebook platforms are also trackable and easy to connect to specific results you are looking for. The key here is to really know your target audience and work with each platform to determine the best way to reach them.

Things to Keep in Mind: Paid social media ads are often more for brand awareness than driving immediate sales (see Social Commerce below for that), so be clear on what your business wants to get out of your efforts. Also, because these platforms were initially adopted to connect with friends and family, advertising can often be seen as intrusive and distasteful. Unless done well, paid social ads may work against your business.

Resources:
https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-advertising-strategy/
SOCIAL COMMERCE

A recent development on many social media channels is the formalization of sales tools that allow businesses to offer products for sale directly from platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Snapchat. These sales opportunities come in many different forms, such as Buyable Pins on Pinterest, Product Links within images on Instagram, sponsored layers and geofilters in SnapChat, listings on the Facebook Marketplace and many more. With social media influencing more than 70% of customers’ purchasing decisions, the ability to create an immediate link to purchase was a smart and inevitable next step.

Why We Like It:
While Social Commerce is not right for all businesses, if your business is engaging customers and has a strong following on your social channels, these sales tools are worth exploring. Facebook currently sees more than 800 million people a month on their Marketplace, Instagram has 130 million people a month tap on shopping posts - so this has become a huge opportunity for ecommerce.

Things to Keep in Mind:
Which channels you use for a social commerce campaign depends in large part on the profile of your core customers. Facebook, Instagram and SnapChat all have very different user profiles and adoption rates among different demographics and age groups. Which channels you have the highest following for your business should be a good indicator of where your audience is. Taking that into consideration, the largest and easiest place to start is the one-two punch of Instagram and Facebook. These platforms have formalized a wide variety of e-commerce offerings for small businesses including:

- Facebooks & Instagram Shops - Individual on-line stores from your Facebook or Instagram Profile
- Shopping Tags - That allow you to tag products on your feed that can be immediately purchased
- Facebook Marketplace for Business - While normally a selling platform for individual users, there are tools to create ads for small businesses
- Paid On-Line Events - Individual users are charged for participating in live events (such as a yoga class or tutorial) on your site.

And many more. This platform also comes with in-app checkout, a ‘Commerce Manager’ that allows you to customize your shop and track your performance. Overall, we think this is a good way for a business breaking into this space to get some experience. Set up is inexpensive and your business can begin selling very quickly.

We have included links to this and other social media selling platforms below.

Snapchat Business Resource Page
Instagram Business Resource Page
Facebook Business Resource Page
Depop Marketplace
Pinterest
Youtube

References:
Small Biz Trends – What is Social Commerce
Hootsuite Blog – 37 Instagram Stats that Matter
EMAIL MARKETING

Though often maligned by people inundated by mass produced spam, email marketing on a local level can be a very effective tool for a small business. If you have a website, a reservation system or a point of sale system, chances are your business has accumulated a significant number of email addresses from people who have interacted with your business. This can be a very valuable and effective tool if used properly.

Why We Like It:
Similar to social media, an email marketing campaign is all about providing value to your guests. Email marketing starts with creating compelling or valuable content for your customers. This can be to introduce new products or services, offer discounts or specials, share news about your business, or to target individual consumers through birthday, anniversary, or other celebratory events. All of this could be valuable information to your customer base.

Things to Keep In Mind:
Once you have an email database to start with, it is important to capture email signups everywhere you can - on your website, on your ecommerce platform, at the in-store checkout - and funnel all of your channels into your database. The next step is to create a compelling email template and that you will push to your customers. Finally you will need to send email to your user base.

It is important not to over-market to your guests, and to make it simple and convenient for them to unsubscribe to some or all of your email marketing communications. There are several ways of managing this process but the simplest is through an online service like MailChimp, MailerLite, and Drip. You should also make sure that every email contains a clear and obvious call to action like, “click here to order now” that links to the offer, deal, special or item you are highlighting. Compelling subjects are critical too so think carefully about how to craft a useful hook when crafting your email messages. Finally and most importantly, never spam your subscribers by sending more than one or two emails a week. And always remember to make your email offers compelling or useful. Like Social Media, your emails should be about building trust with your customer base and providing real value.

For more information, click through for some helpful tutorials on crafting email campaigns, managing your user database and maximizing your click throughs:

MailChimp – Email Marketing Field Guide

Retail: Constant Contact – Retail Email Marketing Strategy

Restaurants: eSputnik – Email Marketing Plan for Restaurants
Many small businesses do not realize the plethora of relatively low-cost and simple to use digital marketing tools available to them to capture new guests online. Focus on the strategies which drive the most traffic and revenue to your business and learn how to measure impact to make sure you get a return on investment of both time and money.

**CHECKLIST**

- Explore search ads and understand the power of keyword driven search in driving online traffic
- Understand how you can leverage paid social media to build your social following and advertise goods and service
- Look into whether social commerce through Instagram or Facebook are viable options to sell your items directly
- Initiate an effective email marketing campaign and start actively building your email list
- Measure and track the success of your digital marketing campaigns online and make adjustments and tweaks to maximize impact
Appendix

An Instagram Case Study for Small Businesses
INTRODUCTION

With more than 1 billion followers sharing content daily, Instagram can help you spur conversation with your audiences, engage your most loyal fans and be discovered by new, interested consumers. There are more than 25 million businesses currently active on Instagram with 200 million users clicking on a business profile each day. It’s not just about your existing customers but rather about expanding your reach (2 out of 3 visits to business profiles are from non-followers).

BUSINESS TOOLS

The first step in leveraging Instagram to grow your business is creating a business account and ensuring you have easy access to Instagram’s Business Tools. If you don’t have a business account or aren’t sure how to access your Business Tools Dashboard, click here to get started:

Facebook – A Beginner’s Guide to Instagram for Business

Once you have properly set up your business account and updated your profile, you will be able to access a streamlined inbox where your guests can communicate directly with your business, ask questions, provide ideas, share their love, and build a connection with your business that you should stay on top of and encourage.

You will also be able to access in-depth insights, which can help you determine how well your content is received, how many profile visits you earn and how users discover your business. Be sure to familiarize yourself with these tools as you jump into being more purposeful with your social media and start a conversation with your potential customers.

CONTENT

It can be a bit daunting to try and figure out what to post and exactly what it is that users look for. To start, there are some core principles that EVERY post should contain to make sure your posts have a chance to start conversation:

Compelling Captions

Be brief and be direct. Lead with the most important information and have a clear call-to-action (CTA) that encourages the user to interact further with your business. Further enhance the traction of your post with hashtags and tags that are relevant to your business and help an interested audience discover you when they search for topics or click on other posts. Do be mindful over overusing hashtags and long hashtags. To measure the prevalence of a hashtag, go to Instagram and in the “search” bar enter the hashtag.

Hootsuite (a social distribution platform) shared a post that provides recommendations on how to write a good Instagram caption.

Social Media Examiner – How to use Instagram Hashtags

SWEETGREEN:
TACO BELL:

Engaging Visuals
It’s not always about having the most expensive camera or professionally shot photography; it’s about composition and content. Think about interesting angles of your food, products or client work; use backgrounds of different textures, colors, and materials; pair your products with other relevant items and use basic compositional techniques to create focus.

Click through for a thorough guide on getting the most out of your iPhone and creating beautiful photography from your own device.

User generated content (UGC) and stock photography are other ways to identify and use quality imagery. When using UGC, reach out to the individual to get permission, then use Instagram Photo Download to download the image. You can find stock photography on Unsplash or Pexels. (*Note: do not solely rely on stock photography for content and imagery).
Creating Content

Instagram’s Learning Center has provided a helpful framework for thinking about what to post that will effectively tell your story on Instagram:

1. **Engage with your community**
   Examples:
   - Share behind the scenes of your business, how it started and who runs it
   - Show how you engage with your community, your neighbors and your staff
   - Talk about topics that matter within your community

2. **Educate your guests**
   Examples:
   - Explain what makes your product so special
   - Show how to best use your products

3. **Excite your followers**
   Examples:
   - Launch new products, menus or services
   - Share promotions or special discounts

Engage
**Educate**

@pressedjuicery

Here's a simple smoothie recipe to get you through your post-Halloween blues 😊

- Vanilla Almond
- Frozen banana
- Turmeric
- Cinnamon
- Persimmon
- Lemon

#pressedjuicery #smoothierecipes #smoothies #healthyrecipes #smoothie

6w

alohabyamanda yess

6w  1 like  Reply

710 likes

**Excite**

@chipotle

chipotle @ Follow

Just a bag of excitement...

chipotle @ Follow

chipotle @ Fa la la la la Holiday Goody's are live in our link in bio. Tag someone who deserves them today 🎄🎁

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**Instagram Stories**

Rather than evergreen posts that live on your feed, Instagram Stories are quick, customized videos that live at the top of your page for 24 hours (unless they are added to your “Highlights”). Cater your content to your most loyal fans and encourage engagement by using your Stories for timely announcements, polls, countdowns, product drops, or special promotions. Stories can also be a good way to highlight UGC or behind the scenes and can be cheeky and casual without bogging down the quality of your feed. Quick moving ideas work best and it’s a good idea to limit your text to simple, concise captions that have a clear CTA or instruct the user on what to do next. Engaging CTAs include but are not limited to:

- Location stickers
- DM Me or Tap Here stickers
- Polls
- Swipe-up links (*Note: swipe-up links only apply to accounts with 10K+ followers)
- Countdown

For Tactical Tips on getting the most out of Instagram Stories and see examples in action, check out these helpful resources:

[Hootsuite - How to use Instagram Stories](#)
[Sprout Social – Instagram Stories](#)
ENGAGEMENT

Creating a compelling conversation with your customers on Instagram can help you grow your digital following and help convert guests into advocates. It is important to understand when you should post and how often as well as what you do to foster communication with your guests both with your posts directly and with comments and messages. Finally, the beauty of digital engagement is that every action is measurable and Instagram has some powerful tools to watch and measure your progress as you build your following.
Post Regularly
One of the most critical aspects of driving engagement is to post on a regular cadence. This can be difficult to execute if you don’t plan for it, so create a posting (editorial) calendar and regularly jot down ideas that you can use later. Start by planning a month ahead and filling in any holidays, special promotions, or new announcements that you may already have dates for; then try and come up with a few posts a week in between that keep your audience entertained and provide them with value. Instagram does operate via an algorithm; however, your account insights will show you what day and times are best for you to post.

Creating a Conversation with Guests
There are a number of ways to organically build a following by having a meaningful conversation with collaborators, friends, vendors, partners and guests on your social media channels. First is by mentioning other businesses and people with whom you interact or feature on your social media feed (this is a great way to tap into a new set of followers).

@drinkbutterflyspirits

Our mobile bar cart reimagines the guest-bartender relationship in a socially-distanced way.

Sit back and relax as you enjoy custom-curated Butterfly Spirits cocktails in a lush garden oasis. Gather up your weekend crew and get ready to Sip, Savor, and Celebrate in the Butterfly Garden at @hookhall_dc 🍸

Show us your trip to the Butterfly Spirits Garden ➡️ tag @drinkbutterflyspirits and #HookHallxButterflySpirits in your pics 📸
Foster Guest Interactions
Participate in the activity your followers provide by responding to comments, checking DMs and re-sharing content in which you’re mentioned.

When people start talking about you or your brand click here to read more about how to leverage UGC for your store, restaurant or bar.
MEASURING IMPACT

Like most things digital, it’s pretty easy to see how you perform. Use Instagram Insights to learn about your guests’ activity, monitor your followers, understand where people are finding your content, see how successful your posts are and make small benchmarks for growth such as increasing your total following, driving likes and comments, increasing views, and driving interaction and engagement with your content.

Click here to learn more about how to use your profile data to drive decisions and behavior and create content that works for your audience

Instagram insights: what do they mean?

MEASURING IMPACT

When you feel comfortable with the basics and are ready to take your business’ Instagram page to the next level there are a lot of industry specific guides on how to market your business on Instagram to increase your following in your segment:

RESTAURANTS & BARS

Toast – How to Do Restaurant Marketing
Square – 6 Instagram Tips for Restaurants
Sprout Social – Complete Guide for Restaurants & Bars

RETAIL & DIGITAL COMMERCE

Sprout Social – How to master social media
Square – How to Use Instagram Shoppable Posts
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, LINKS & TOOLS

Instagram
Facebook – A Beginner’s Guide to Instagram for Business
Instagram – Business Resources
Sprout Social – Why and how to set up your Instagram business profile
Restaurant: Toast – How to Do Restaurant Marketing
Restaurant: Square – 6 Instagram Tips for Restaurants
Retail: Sprout Social – How to master social media for retail and win more customers
Retail: Square – How to Use Instagram Shoppable Posts to Sell on Social Media

Email Marketing
Retail: Constant Contact – A Retailer’s Guide to Email Marketing Strategy
Restaurants: eSputnik – Email Marketing Plan for Restaurants
MailChimp – Email Marketing Guide for Successful Campaigns

Business Listings / SEO
Birdeye – Business Listings Management
Hubspot – How to Respond to Yelp Reviews

Yelp – Responding to Reviews
GrubHub – How to Get the Most Out of Your Grubhub Listing
On the Line – How Restaurants Should Use Google My Business and Local Search
Bentobox – SEO Tips for Restaurant Websites
Convince & Convert – How to Optimize Content for Voice Search

Search Ads
Google – Your guide to Google Ads
Google – Get Started with Google Ads: What are Search Ads?
Google – Grow your business with Google Ads

Website
Toast – Restaurant Website Checklist
On the Line – Become a Menu Engineering Pro With This Worksheet