

5 Ways To Expand Your Business Using Social Media



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Social media can be your business's best friend if you follow these experts's tips.

DECEMBER 30, 2013 When [Melt Bar and Grilled](#) opened in 2006 serving up handmade gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches and beer in an eclectic atmosphere, spreading the word via social media seemed like a good choice for the new Cleveland-area business. Today the restaurant's [Facebook fan page](#) boasts **62,556 likes**, and owner Matt Fish, who just opened up his fifth restaurant, credits social media.

"We created a fun, interactive website and started our Facebook page, and that's been our biggest and best social media outlet," says Fish, who also has a [Twitter account with 13,512 followers](#). "From day one, we used Facebook to advertise promotions and get the gospel out about what we do."



Shawn Prez is president and CEO of [Power Moves](#), a grass roots and alternative marketing agency that serves small businesses, as well as music industry personalities. "We live in a digital age where the majority of consumers are tuned in electronically, and it's imperative that small-business owners embrace that world," Prez says. "Social media is your first line of defense."

If you don't have a social media presence, you are missing an exponential opportunity for growth, agrees "Captain of Online Branding" [Sue B. Zimmerman](#), who increased business for her Cape Cod seasonal retail shop, [Sueb.Do](#), by 40 percent using Instagram, and now teaches other entrepreneurs how to take advantage of the site.

"Social media provides you with the opportunity to amplify your message, address customer service issues and build relationships with clients that you wouldn't be able to otherwise," Zimmerman says. "You get the opportunity to create a personality behind your brand, which leads to trust, credibility and potentially more sales."

How can you expand your business using social media?

Sign Up Existing Customers

"Take advantage of your clients and their potential followings," Prez says. "When people visit your brick-and-mortar or online store, request their cellphone numbers and email addresses and then send exclusive promotional incentives as a thank you, along with requests to 'like' and 'follow' your company. This creates a connection between you and your customers that people want and expect," Prez instructs.

Act Like A Hit Band

Fish has found success treating his restaurant "like a rock-and-roll" band. "Just like a record producer will do when a record is coming out, we promote new products with gimmicky giveaways and posters that we post on Facebook," he says.

Prez agrees with the tactic. "Building a fan club is done all of the time in the entertainment industry. Record labels and independent musicians don't wait for the fans to discover the video and music. If an artist drops a new video, it's uploaded to YouTube, and the video link is sent out to all of the artist's fans. Small-business owners can post short video promos and photos and then send out links via email and text."

Hatch Zany, Out-Of-The-Box Ideas

"In order to build a big fan base, it's important to do more than post promotions and daily specials on Facebook. The key is to keep your name in front of the media and on the top of customer's minds, and this requires wacky promotions," says Fish, whose restaurant has appeared on the Food Network. "Rather than thinking about what will make money, come up with ideas that will attract attention."

In 2009, Fish started a logo tattoo promotion that he continues to this day. "When people get our logo tattooed on themselves, they get 25 percent off food and drink for life," says Fish. "When we ran the promotion, I figured we'd get maybe 15 to 30 customers interested in becoming what is essentially a walking promotion, but to date we've had more than 500 takers. When customers come in with their new tattoos, we welcome them to the 'club' and post their pictures on Facebook. Those posts immediately go viral."

Hire Your Own Celebrity Spokesperson

You may not have the budget to hire a national star to endorse your product, but you can take advantage of local celebrities, says Prez. "Look for an influencer in your industry and ask the person to be your spokesperson. If you're selling women's beauty products, for instance, post some promos on social media and your website featuring a well-known hairdresser. In addition to attracting attention from your followers, that person will have his or her own following, which can increase yours exponentially."

Be Authentic

For social media efforts to be effective, it's critical that your personality shines through, says Zimmerman. "Staying true to who you are, what you do and who you serve is critical," she says. "When you're yourself and do what you love, you stand out from the crowd."