

Greater Hartford SCORE's Version of Online Marketing 101

Many small businesses understand their products or services and how to deliver those products to their customers or clients. To acquire customers, you must put that product or service in front of potential buyers so that they know it is available, why they should want it and where to get it.

That's where marketing comes in.

Online Marketing or Digital Marketing

Whether you decide to go with traditional marketing or online marketing, finding your way as a marketer can be so confusing. Even if you hire out the task, as the business owner you still have some basic elements to determine:

1. Define whose attention you want
2. Determine what you want them to know as well as what they would want to know.
3. Determine your budget.



Sounds easy enough, right? It's not. Expect to go through many scenarios throughout the lifetime of your business.

You don't have to go through this process alone.

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You can now logically weigh your online marketing choices with these elements in mind. If you have a local service or shop you may choose to market online differently than a business with National range. But the basic marketing tools are the same.

Build a Website

You look for products or vet services online, don't you? Having a website, even a simple 'brochure' website of just a few pages, is central to marketing regardless of what you choose to do. That's where you can 'sell' the service or product and take a potential customer further into their decision process.

Branding on Social Media

- Social media provides an opportunity to collect an audience through friends of friends.
- Create your own content or use third party content on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter
- Your business must be present repeatedly and consistently to make an impact.
- Potentially less costly, but more time consuming with less results (ROI or return on your investment)

Online Advertising

- Many of the current social media sites depend on ad revenue. If the site is where your customers are, you can pay to extend your presence, usually by impressions (how often your ad is viewed)
- PPC (pay per click) using specific keywords on services such as [Google Adwords](#) and [Bing Ads](#). You only pay when a searcher clicks on your ad. Make sure that the page you drive traffic to is compelling and appropriate for the keywords you selected.
- Banner Ads on niche websites that attract your target customers
- [Amazon](#), if you have promotional offers for local customers, Amazon and other major marketers will be happy to show your ads.
- Make sure that you consistently watch your ads, so that you are sure you are getting the results you are hoping for.

Email Marketing

- You can collect the emails of people you meet, do business with or during a promotion (providing the visitor with something in exchange for their email).
- Do not buy an email list. They are riddled with out of date emails, and considered SPAM by many email hosts due to delivery problems. You are better off starting small and building your own email list.
- If you are collecting emails, plan to do something regularly to keep these potential customers interested.

Search Engine Marketing

- The competition online for 'eyeballs' is fierce. Vendors get there by:
 - having content that is appealing to potential clients (so they have a good search experience which is proven because they don't leave you immediately)
 - having a domain with history (it takes time to be found!)
 - having a domain with existing traffic, showing the search engines that your domain is worthwhile.
- While it would be nice to be on the first page of natural searches, it is hard to do when so many marketers are willing to pay for traffic.

Directory Listings

- You can get free listings with a number of online directories. Depending on your business, research to find where your customers look.
- The most valuable is [Google My Business](#).
- Also consider [Bing](#), [Yahoo!](#), [Yelp](#), [Facebook](#), [Better Business Bureau](#), [Angie's List](#), [Merchant Circle](#), [YP.com](#)

Conclusion

The most important thing to remember is that you can't do everything right away. Marketing takes time. Plan out what you determine to be most important, and build from there.

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