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## Tips to Run Business Online

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In this digital age, you don't need a brick and mortar store to run a business. Many successful companies operate almost entirely online. Especially for small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), digital stores are increasingly appealing. Why? Because they don't need as many employees or funds. Still, it can be a struggle to figure out the best practices for running an online business.

That's why we compiled a list of tips to help you get set up for success:

- How to optimize your online storefront.
- Operations tips for online small businesses.
- Marketing ideas for virtual SMBs.
- How to get your finances in order.

### Website design: How to optimize your online storefront

Your business's website is its virtual storefront. Meaning: it's important that it looks good, and that customers can find exactly what they need. Let's dive deeper into how to make the most of your digital real estate!

#### 1. Build a functional website

Turn on your virtual "we're open" sign by building a website for your virtual business. Keep it simple and start with these basic pages:

- **About Page:** Make a connection with customers by telling them about yourself, or your company's origin story.
- **Products and Services:** People need to know what you're selling if you want them to buy it.
- **Contact:** Make sure visitors know how they can get in touch with you.

#### 2. Use SEO to help customers find your site

According to a study by BrightEdge, half of all web traffic comes from search engine results. If your prospective customers can't find your website on Google, you're essentially losing half of your potential business!

Implement search engine optimization (SEO) on each page of your site to ensure that your website shows up whenever someone conducts a Google search that's relevant to your business. If you need more help to get started, we also recommend this [blog post](#) about WordPress SEO.

#### 3. Optimize product pages and services pages

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One of the best tips to run a small business online is to make every page on your website work hard. Your product and services pages should do the selling for you.

Maximize your product pages by:

- Uploading high quality photos of your products from various angles.
- Writing detailed product descriptions.
- Sharing information about product materials and dimensions.
- Using a call to action, like "Add to Cart".

Optimize services pages by:

- Describing what you offer.
- Explaining why customers need it.
- Anticipating and responding to customer questions with FAQs.
- Using a call to action, like "Book Now".

#### **4. Build trust**

Customers are wary of online scams. Especially if they have to leave behind personal information. That is why you should show customers that your business is legitimate and trustworthy.

How? By:

- Adding customer testimonials to your site.
- Enabling customer reviews on product pages.
- Establishing profiles on review sites like Yelp and Google.
- Becoming accredited by the Better Business Bureau.
- Maintaining an active social media presence.

#### **5. Pay attention to analytics**

Your website shouldn't be a "set it and forget it" part of your business. You should regularly update and strive to improve your site's effectiveness. After all, you want to offer your customers quality content that they *want to* read.

You can use tools like Google Analytics to scrutinize your website, and learn what does and doesn't work. Monitor data about time spent on pages and bounce rates to see where you can improve the usability of your site and increase sales. If a lot of people leave your site on the homepage, they might be confused about what you're selling or how to buy your products!

#### **Operations: How to run a tight ship as an online SMB**

Running your startup like a well-oiled machine minimizes waste and maximizes profits. Keep reading for operations tips to run a small business online.

#### **6. Streamline processes**

Efficiency is key when you run an SMB. Especially if you only have a few people on your team. That's why it's smart to identify repetitive tasks, then write down processes your team can follow. Not only will you cut down on the time it takes to figure out how to complete each task, you'll increase efficiency with organizational consistency, as well as create a system that'll allow you to delegate the tasks that aren't best suited to your strengths.

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For example, if customers frequently email you with similar inquiries, create templates that you and your team can copy and paste into responses.

## **7. Hire help**

As the owner of a small business, there are lots of tasks that only you are equipped to handle. So make sure you actually have time to do them! Free yourself up by assigning other time-consuming jobs to other people.

You can also use digital tools to automatically handle specific tasks, where possible. There are a multitude of digital tools designed to increase your business's productivity. Automate repetitive tasks with software services from businesses like Zapier, HubSpot, and Hootsuite.

Once you've automated as much as possible, outsource anything you can feasibly let someone else do. If you're nervous about the cost of hiring help, start small by paying for a virtual assistant, intern, or part-time contractor.

## **Marketing: How to reach customers online**

Marketing connects products and services to the people who need them. However, as a small business, it might be challenging to find enough funds for your marketing. But there's still plenty you can do to attract your customers. So, get creative with the following marketing tips!

## **8. Use social media to spread the word**

Nowadays, the number one marketing tool for small businesses is social media. Especially if your customer base consists of teens and young adults. In addition, an active social media presence adds credibility to your business and keeps it top of mind for your followers.

Tip: Create accounts on social media networks where your customers spend time, and share posts regularly.

## **9. Create a newsletter**

Social media is a useful marketing tool. However, due to each platform's restrictive algorithms that prioritize paid media, there is no guarantee that all of your followers will see your posts.

That's where a newsletter comes in. Your newsletter will certainly land in the inbox of anyone who's signed up for your email list. So use it wisely! Send newsletters to update your customers about your products and services, share success stories, and build connections.

## **10. Start a blog**

Blogging is a content marketing tool that establishes expertise and builds SEO authority. Because if you write regularly, Google will see your site as active and relevant. Which will help your overall rankings. But don't forget that you're writing for your customers and *not* for Google.

At minimum, your blog posts should answer common questions your customer is searching for. Ideally, though, you want to write whatever interests your users have. For example, say your business offers a time-management tool for restaurateurs. You could write a blog post filled with productivity tips for restaurant managers, or a how-to guide for maximizing time in the food business.

## **Finances: How to keep your books in order**

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## 11. Accept online payments

If you're running a small business online you *absolutely* need a way to accept online payments. There are a wide variety of options. Do some research to find the payment processor that charges the lowest fees for your volume of sales. And, of course, that best fits your business.

## 12. Hire an expert

As a small business owner, you probably want to DIY as much of your business as possible. There are some things, however, that are better left to the experts. Outsource tasks related to bookkeeping, accounting, and payroll compliance to avoid costly mistakes.

## In summary

You have to keep an eye on a lot of thing when running an online business. First, your online storefront needs to be functional, optimized, and guide customers to your products and/or services. Second, make sure you spend your valuable time on tasks only you can do. Try to automate or delegate everything else to others. Third, don't underestimate the importance of marketing! Invest time and energy into creating posts and content that your customers want to engage with. And finally, make sure your finances are in order. Good luck!

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