

## 3 Secrets of Successful Small Business Marketing



You know you want to get more customers for your business—but how? The first step, according to Russell McClellan, is understanding who your ideal customers are.

### By Rieva Lesonsky

“Marketing is all about attracting and selling [to] the customers that are the best for the business,” explains McClellan. If you don’t know what kind of customer you want, don’t understand what’s important to them, and don’t understand how they decide what to buy, your marketing won’t be as successful as it should be.

As an instructor for the Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses* program, McClellan teaches entrepreneurs how marketing can take their companies to the next level. (Goldman Sachs *10,000 Small Businesses* is an intensive education program that gives growth-oriented entrepreneurs the tools they need to create jobs and economic opportunity; read more about [how the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program works.](#))

SmallBizDaily asked McClellan to share some best practices for small business marketing.

### Understand Your Target Customer

“All successful small business marketing plans must start with understanding their customers,” says McClellan. “This is something most small businesses don’t do.”



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**To create a successful marketing plan, he says you must answer these questions:**

Who are my best customers? Knowing which customers are the most valuable to your business is key to successful marketing.

- How are they different from my other customers?
- What problem are my customers trying to solve?
- How do my customers search for and make decisions on what and where they will buy?
- Who are my competitors for the customer's business?
- What's the most important thing customers want from my business?

To get answers, do market research, conduct customer surveys, and assess the customer data your business gathers using tools such as customer relationship management (CRM) or website analytics software.

## **Go Beyond the Business Website**

A compelling, effective website is the foundation of your business marketing—but that alone isn't enough, says McClellan. "Internet marketing has moved beyond simply having a website. To be successful today, a small business must develop an integrated marketing strategy." That includes online marketing, social media marketing and online reviews.

Online marketing, such as search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click advertising, is extremely valuable for small businesses. McClellan says this type of marketing is highly targeted, has relatively low costs and is easy for most small businesses to manage.

Social media marketing is another huge opportunity for small businesses, McClellan says. "It's highly targeted, relatively inexpensive and can be used with a variety of inexpensive or free analytic tools so the business can know exactly what's working and what's not."

Online reviews can not only boost your business's reputation, but also provide opportunities to get insights into customers' expectations and experiences. McClellan suggests you use them to identify ways you can better meet your target customers' needs.

Last, but not least, measure the results of your online marketing using analytics tools such as Google Analytics. It's important to regularly analyze if your marketing is actually delivering the kinds of customers you want in a cost-effective way.