



3 *Progressive* Ideas for Your 2010 Marketing Strategy

J House Media

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1. List Your Business in the Top Three Local Listing Services

Data collection agencies report that between 80% and 90% of all web searches are performed by individuals seeking local products or services. The top search providers have created a more usable presentation for these types of searches by combining search results with mapping applications.

Here is a likely scenario with which you may be familiar:

Perhaps recently you were looking for a local restaurant for an outing with some friends. You went into your web browser and performed a search that looked something like this: "restaurants, city, state."

Perhaps you noticed that at the top of your search results page there was a nifty little map with a list of restaurants where you could access a larger map showing (almost) all the restaurants in your area.

And since you're a business owner, you may have thought, "It sure would be nice if I could get my business listed here when people search for my type of services." Well, here's the good news; you can!

Local listing services for businesses are provided by the top three search providers which, combined, make up over 90% of the market share. In each of these three venues, Google, Yahoo, and Bing, business owners can list their business profiles or "claim" their existing profiles which give detailed information about the businesses, display photos and provide a website link.

It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to fill out each profile, and you will want to be near your business phone to authorize the listing.

Here are some tips to keep in mind while you are filling in your business details:

1. Use keywords in your business description that your customers will likely use to find you.
2. Upload as many quality photos as possible
3. Ask your best customers to write a review in your listing telling why they love your business
4. Categorize your business into as many appropriate fields as allowed
5. Don't list your personal email address. Use a business address that serves as a "catch-all" for business communications such as contact@yourwebsite.com.

Google Local Business Center: www.google.com/local/add

Yahoo! Local Listings: <http://listings.local.yahoo.com/>

Bing Local Listing Center: <https://ssl.bing.com/listings/ListingCenter.aspx>

2. Use Contests or Discounts to Engage Your Brand in Social Media

Recently, I was the fortunate winner of a pair of tickets to a local music event. I won them by being drawn from among a list of users to “retweet” a promotional post from the venue on Twitter. “How brilliant,” I thought. By offering an incentive (free tickets) and invoking a sense of urgency (contest lasted one hour), the venue was able to earn thousands of impressions of the event promotion in one afternoon.

Not only did all of the venue’s followers receive their event promotion, but all of my followers received it, and so did all the followers of everyone who “retweeted” their post. And the real value here is not only the promotion for that particular event, but the expanded brand awareness for the venue. Because they have kept these types of promotions going, the venue’s followers now know to keep a close watch for free tickets to shows!

Social media is the most powerful method of viral marketing, and the best news is that it is absolutely free to use. In your 2010 marketing efforts, I recommend that you explore methods of creating a network of current and potential customers using at least one social media platform. An easy approach for novices or those of you who are just strapped for time is to try something similar to the music event promotion I discussed above.

What is it that you can offer your fan or friend base that will immediately engage them with your social profile? Don’t forget, you need not only an incentive, but urgency as well. If you are a home cleaning professional, try a Facebook contest where you draw a winner of a free house cleaning from all those who become a fan of your profile on that day. Watch your fan base grow exponentially.

In the end, the promotion has cost you a couple hours of additional work, but you’ve done more than get in front of one qualified lead. You now you have the attention of many more potential customers and you can continue to market to them for free! Run several promotions back to back, and your fan base will not only continue to grow, all eyes will be on you as your fans wait for the next opportunity to win.

Try these tips to keep your social media profiles fresh and exciting:

1. Post expert advice and articles: How much time do you spend answering questions and giving advice to friends and family regarding what you do for a living? Instead, try keeping a running list of questions and topics to use as ideas for a blog or discussion board. Choose one or two a week to write about and post the material to your social media pages.

When someone asks for free advice, simply say, “I think you’ll find the tips you’re looking for if you check out my [social media] profile. Let me know if you don’t find what you’re looking for, and I’ll be sure to write something on the subject soon.”

2. Be an industry watcher: Use your social profiles to refer your followers to noteworthy news items related to what you do. Provide your personal commentary or summarize articles to give followers a go-to place to get the latest news for your industry.
3. Throw in a few laughs: People love humor. Mix some rare and funny finds into your daily posts to keep people smiling when they read what you’ve got to say for the day.

3. Run a Prime Time TV Commercial Using Google TV Ads

Most small business wouldn't even dream of television advertising as a part of their marketing strategy. There are a ton of obstacles such as outrageous cost, barrier to entry, lack of knowledge to effectively track results, limited resources for video production, and on and on.

What if I told you that you can now use a Google advertising platform to easily upload a commercial and select channels and hours for the commercial to run? What if I told you that you can change or manage all the settings and track results right from your computer? What if I also told you that you can do all of this for a small fraction of what television advertising normally costs?

Google Adwords features a [TV advertising service](#) that brings this opportunity to small business owners like your self. Here is how it works:

1. Create your Ad: If you do not already have a commercial, there is likely a local videographer that can provide you with the service at a reasonable rate. Call us to help you find one.
2. Choose Networks and Blocks: Using the provided interface, you can select the networks on which you would like your ad to appear. Keep in mind your target audience when making your choices. For example, if you have a flooring business, your target audience will be home owners interested in remodeling. You would try networks like the Home and Garden Channel. Next, you select the time of day for your ads to appear. Again, keep in mind the audience that will be viewing programming at that time of day. Check out current ratings on <http://en-us.nielsen.com/rankings/insights/rankings/television>
3. Upload: Your ad can be 15, 30, 45, 60, 90 or 120 seconds long. Simply upload it to the interface or mail your tape to the address provided. You can even add multiple commercials if you have them.
4. Choose Date Range and Budget: You can set a date range for when your ad will appear. Select your daily budget and the system will automatically control the account spending according to the parameters you set.
5. Watch Your Results: A reporting interface will allow you to see how many times your ad was shown, the number of people who watched the entire ad, and the number of seconds the ad was viewed by audiences who either tuned in during the middle of the ad or were viewing when it began.

Here are some tips for planning an effective ad:

1. Define Your Audience: Who is it you are trying to reach? Know your target customer, their demographics information and viewing habits.
2. Form Your Message: Choose the focus of your message. Will it be to give product information, offer a promotion, or to define your brand? Narrow your message to one focus directed at your target audience.
3. Back Yourself Up: Offer supporting materials for your message such as a client testimonial or a product demonstration.
4. Give a Call to Action: What is it you want your audience to do as a result of seeing your ad? Make sure you give your audience an invitation to become your customer. We recommend inviting them to your website!