

DigitalMarketing**NOW**

A Breakthrough Guide for Small Business

5 REASONS

**WHY YOUR ONLINE MARKETING
SUCKS** (AND HOW TO FIX IT)

TO APP OR NOT TO APP

SHOULD YOUR
BUSINESS
HAVE ONE?

BEST ONLINE

**STRATEGIES TO
BOOST IN-STORE
SALES** 

HOW TO
MARKET
YOUR HOME

**SERVICES
FRANCHISE**



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One of the great things about living in the modern era is that you can hire somebody to do almost any task you can imagine. Our lives are busier than ever, and sometimes we need help around the house. Home service franchises are increasingly common, and we're going to break down the best ways to promote your franchise online.

Welcome To Digital Marketing NOW

Thanks for checking out Digital Marketing NOW, your online marketing resource guide for small business. Each month we will be covering topics that resonate with local businesses just like yours.

Our goal is simple. We want to enable you to do big things online, and it all starts by breaking down the complexities of marketing your business online.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting out, or an established business owner in your local community, you can always benefit from increasing your brand's visibility online.

To your Success,

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Digital Sapient Interactive is a leading small business marketing service provider. We help small businesses connect with more customers online.

If you want to build your business, you need to market, it's that simple. But you can lose thousands of dollars if you don't know what you are doing. So we urge you to take action with some of the strategies we recommend.

For a more "hands off" approach, we offer affordable solutions and can deliver results. We hope you enjoy this issue of Digital Marketing NOW and feel free to reach out to us anytime.



TO APP OR NOT TO APP

SHOULD YOUR BUSINESS HAVE ONE?



Today, it seems like there's a mobile app for just about anything you could possibly want to do or buy. You might think that having an app for your business is a must, but that might not be the case.

How can you determine whether designing and promoting an app makes sense for your business? There are a few important things to consider when you are making your decision:



1. Who are your customers? If you know that the majority of your customers use smartphones based on your web analytics, then having a mobile app might be a good idea. If the majority of your customers are finding your business on desktop computers, on the other hand, you might want to save your money and invest it elsewhere.

2. Can you afford the development costs? If you've got a background in software development you may be able to develop a great app on your own. But if you don't, you're

going to have to hire someone to do the work, and those costs can add up.

3. Is there a way for you to monetize your app? Some apps are aimed at making things easier for customers, and the financial benefits of having one might be difficult to quantify. However, if you can have in-app purchasing then it might be very easy for you to recoup your development expenses.

4. Does your business lend itself to having an app? Apps are popular and a lot of businesses have them, but that doesn't mean you should automatically jump on the bandwagon. Sometimes there's a clear use for an app. For example, a lot of restaurants that deliver food have apps to make it easy for customers to order from them.

The last question is arguably the most important one. Developing and promoting an app is only worthwhile if your customers are going to use it. That means that your app needs to cater to your customers' needs.





Offering Value to Customers

Even if your initial response is to think that your business doesn't lend itself to having a mobile app, it's worth taking a few minutes to think about apps in a big picture kind of way. What does a mobile app need to accomplish to be useful to customers? Any one of the following things might do in terms of offering value to your customers:

1. Increase customer engagement. Some companies offer apps that make suggestions about how to use products. For example, a food manufacturer might offer an app that features recipes, social sharing, and an occasional coupon or promotion.

2. Improve customers' experience. If a lot of your customers are mobile users, it might make sense to offer them a convenient way to make purchases or schedule services from their phones. The Dominos app that allows customers to order pizza using their phones is one good example. You might have a mobile site already, but an app can make purchasing even easier.

3. Make customers' lives easier. A lot of banks and credit unions now offer customers a way

to deposit checks using their smartphones. Not only are apps that allow deposits great for customer service, they legitimately make their customers' lives less hectic. Once they would have had to drive to the bank to make a deposit – now they can do it from the comfort of their own homes.

4. Give customers a reason to visit your store. Some apps use GPS to send out coupons and promotional codes when customers are close to a store.

I hope you get the idea. If you can conceptualize an app that will meet one or more of the above criteria, then it probably makes sense for you to spend the time and money to develop an app for your business.

Ideas for Apps

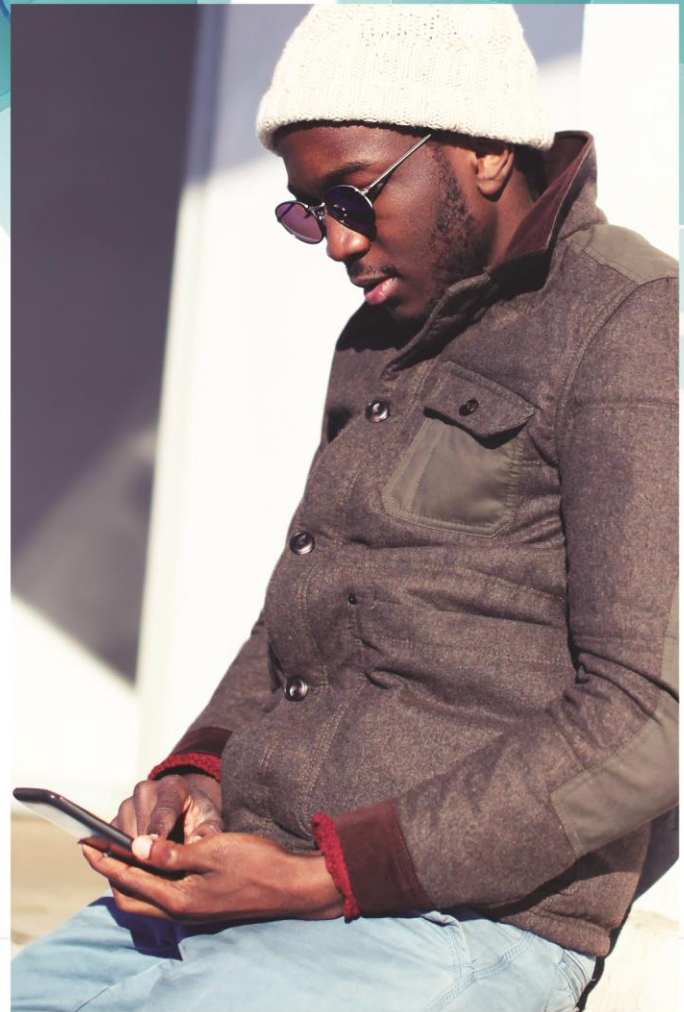
If you have decided that your business could benefit from having a mobile app, the next step is coming up with a concept for the app. In this section, I'll give you some ideas for apps that might work well in various industries:

1. Retail. Retail stores tend to do very well with monetized apps. Here are a few suggestions for how to use them:

- a. Send out coupons and promotional codes. Everyone loves to get a deal, and when you send a coupon you give customers a reason to come to your store.
- b. Give suggestions on how to use your product. For example, an apparel retailer might add images of items they sell to an app and let customers play mix and match with their merchandise.
- c. Enable in-app purchases. Building on the above idea, a great idea for a clothing store would be to let customers mix and match clothing, and then give them an option at the end to buy the ensemble they created.

2. Service industry. If you are a service provider and not a retailer, you might think that you don't need a mobile app. However, there are plenty of ways to offer customers value by selling a mobile app. For example:

- a. Combine fun and scheduling. A hair salon might offer an app that lets customers "try on" different hair styles, and then makes it possible for them to schedule an appointment when they're done.
- b. Give service reminders. There are plenty of services that require repeat appointments, such as dental cleanings and oil changes. One feature to include with an app might be a reminder to customers to schedule their next appointment and an in-app feature that lets them schedule it from their phone.
- c. Offer related information. Informational apps can be very useful in some instances. For example, an insurance agent might



offer an app that lets customers calculate their insurance needs and then request a quote.

3. Membership services. What if you own a gym or other membership service? Your app options might appear to be limited, but here are a couple of suggestions:

- a. Create an app that sends out daily tips and suggestions on a topic that's relevant to your members.
- b. Offer a related service. For example, a gym might offer an app that provided a calorie counter or some healthy recipes.

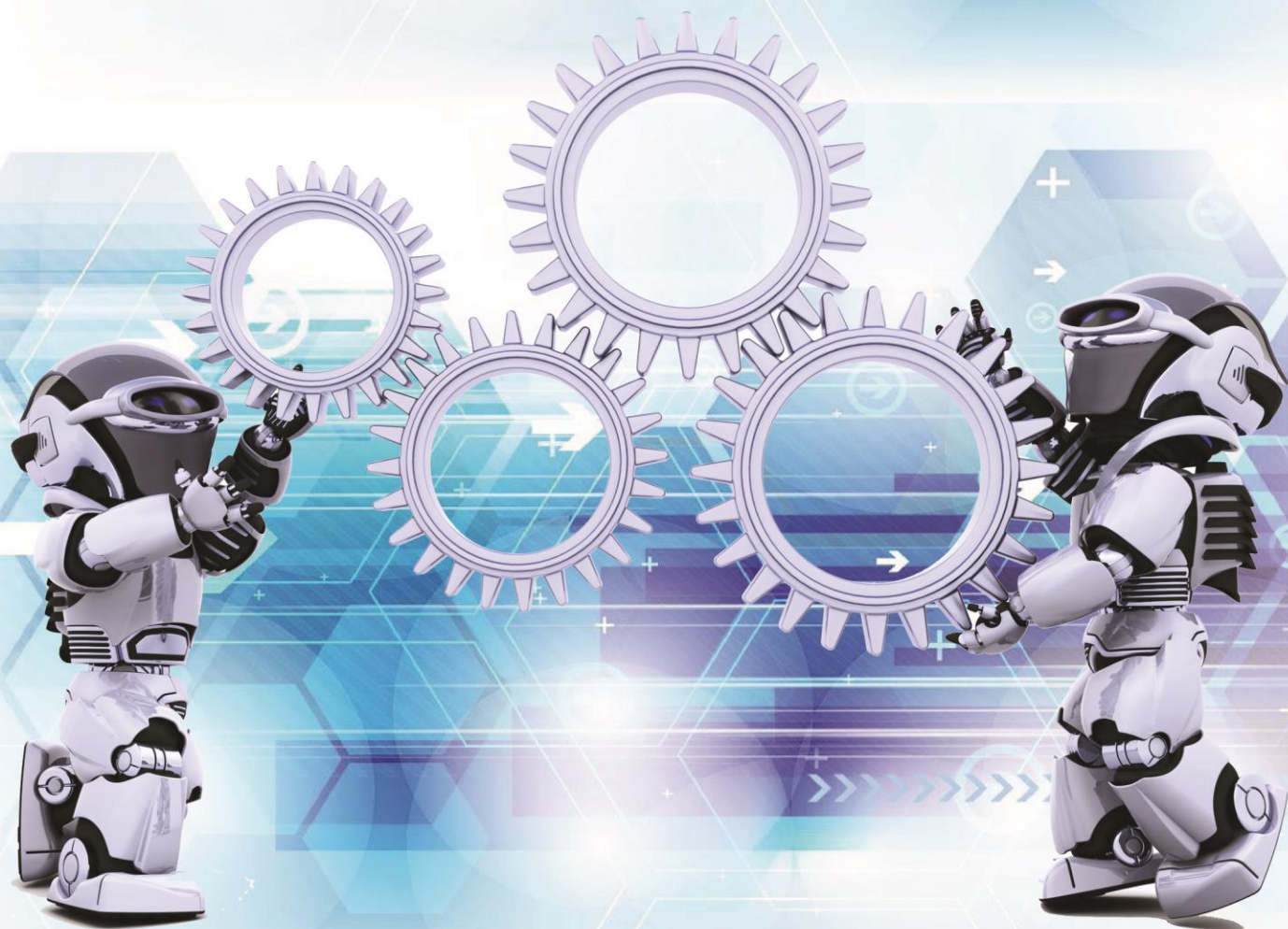
Some businesses don't need to have a mobile app to be successful. However, if you have a good idea for an app that offers value and convenience to your customers – and a chance for you to make money – then it's probably worth the up-front investment it will take to create and market an app of your own.

THE 5 BIGGEST REASONS YOUR ONLINE MARKETING SUCKS AND HOW TO FIX IT

Online marketing is an ever-evolving field. New websites, apps, and tools spring up every day. While online marketing is a must for any small business, the fact is that most small businesses aren't doing a very good job with their online marketing. The chances are that you aren't doing a great job either – in fact, your online marketing probably sucks.

Offended? Don't be. Instead, read on to learn about the five biggest reasons your online marketing isn't getting the job done – and specific steps you can take to remedy the mistakes you're making.





REASON #1: YOU'RE NOT OPTIMIZING YOUR WEBSITE PROPERLY

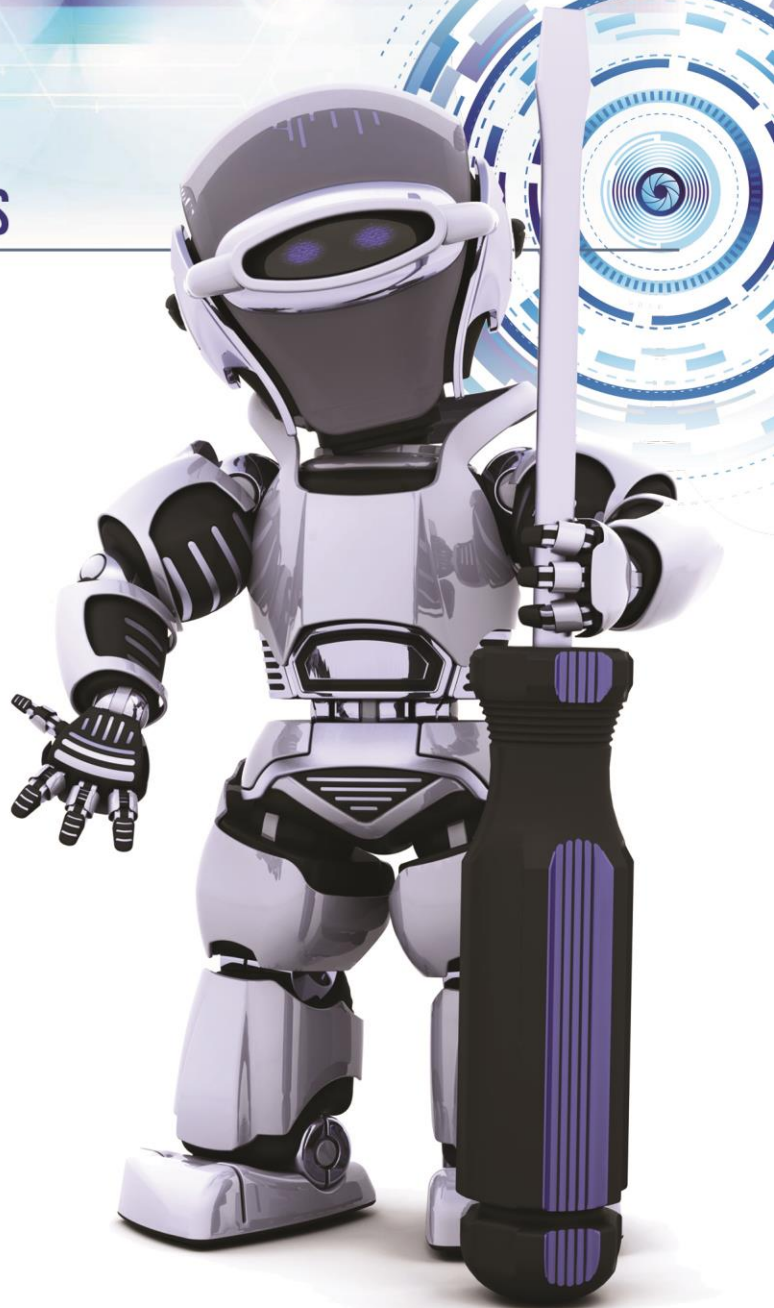
Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a complicated business. You might think that you have done everything you can to optimize your website, but I'm willing to bet that you haven't. Here are some things you can do to change that:

1. Pick the right keywords. A lot of small businesses try to optimize for head keywords. These are short, general keywords, and there tends to be a lot of competition for them. You should be aiming for medium-tail or long-tail keywords.
2. Think about keywords in the right way. A keyword isn't just a word – it's a question. When a potential customer goes to Google and types in a keyword, he's looking for information. He's asking a question, even if he isn't wording it like one.
3. Don't just include keywords in your content. Make sure to make use of H1 tags, image tags, and any other opportunity you have to use your keywords.
4. Don't overdo it with keywords. You need to use them, but the context in which you use them matters as much as the frequency.

REASON #2: YOU'RE NOT ANALYZING YOUR RESULTS

A lot of small businesses put up a website and use social media, but they never bother to look at how their marketing efforts are performing. There's no excuse not to be reviewing that data. Google Analytics provides detailed information showing how people are getting to your site, whether it's by clicking an ad, finding you on social media, or doing an organic search. Facebook provides detailed analytics too. Here's what you should be doing:

1. Look at your Google Analytics data to figure out which pages are attracting the most traffic and where people are bouncing (clicking away) from your website.
2. Review your Facebook page performance and identify the types of content that get the most views and shares.
3. Check the open rates and response rates for marketing emails to determine how well they are engaging customers.
4. Don't overdo it with keywords. You need to use them, but the context in which you use them matters as much as the frequency.



REASON #3: YOU'RE NOT TESTING AND REFINING YOUR PAGE BASED ON THE DATA

Reviewing the data from Google Analytics and other sources is important, but it won't help you unless you do something with the data you collect. When you have information about how customers are finding your website, when they're bouncing away from it, and how engaged they are with your email and social media posts, you can use it to improve your marketing campaigns. Here are some suggestions:

1. If a page on your website has a high bounce rate, do some A/B testing to see if you can fix the problems customers are having.
2. Make sure to test only one element at a time. For example, if you think your call to action is the problem, do a test to see how the old one performs against a new version.
3. Revamp your social media strategy to increase customer engagement. If you see that photographs you post are getting a much higher engagement rate than written posts, you can increase the number of photographs you share. The same goes for checking out engagement based on days of the week or times of day.
4. Rewrite and split test emails to improve your open and reply rates.

REASON #4: YOU'RE NOT CREATING ENOUGH CONTENT

In the early days of the internet, Bill Gates famously declared that "Content is king." His statement was a remarkably prescient one. Today, creating great content is the core of any successful online marketing strategy – yet many small companies drop the ball on this very important task. You can get back on track by:

1. Starting a blog. Blogging is still very popular, and it's a great way to engage your customers on a regular basis. Each blog post should offer something of value to your customers, whether it's a product explanation, some practical advice regarding a topic relevant to your industry, or a how-to video.
2. Setting up – and sticking to – a social media schedule. Not all of the content you share has to be original. The important thing is that it is (a) relevant to your industry, (b) useful to your customers, and (c) entertaining. To find content, you can follow industry publications and related pages and share their content. Facebook has an automatic scheduling option for businesses, or you can use an online tool to manage all of your social activity at once.
3. Set aside money in your budget to create videos. Videos are hugely popular and highly shareable, which makes them a great choice for any business.





REASON #5: YOU'RE NOT ENGAGING CUSTOMERS

Having a Facebook page is great – as far as it goes. However, if your business is forgetting the “social” in social media, then you’re not getting the most out of your pages. Here are some tips that can help you increase customer engagement and loyalty:

1. Make sure to monitor your page and reply to comments on a regular basis. Your comments don’t need to be long – sometimes a quick “Thank you” is fine. Customers like to feel that the brands they follow value their presence, and replying to comments is a good way to demonstrate that you do.
2. Don’t overreact to negative comments and complaints. Sometimes customers take to

social media to register a complaint about a product or service. Instead of getting defensive, be grateful for the opportunity to turn a customer’s experience around. Reply quickly and professionally. Other people will see the way you respond, and a courteous and useful response can help win you some new customers.

3. Give customers a reason to comment. Asking customers to share stories about your product, or asking their opinions about something, is a great way to drive engagement and get customers involved. The more comments you get, the more likely it is that additional people will see your post.

Do these five mistakes sound familiar to you? I’m willing to bet that they do. The good news is that now you know about them, and you’re in the perfect position to revamp your online marketing so that it gets the results you want.



BEST ONLINE STRATEGIES TO BOOST IN-STORE SALES

Owners of brick-and-mortar stores sometimes overlook the importance of online marketing. They focus their efforts on local and print advertising, and as a result, they end up missing out on ways to keep existing customers – and attract new ones. This article will explore the reasons you need to have an online presence even if you don't have an online store, and give you some great ideas to use online marketing to boost your sales.

WHY ONLINE MARKETING MATTERS

Marketing experts know that a potential customer must encounter a product or brand several times before making a purchase. It is difficult to know how much exposure is necessary to drive a sale, but repetition is clearly the key. While there may be some benefit to advertising in your local newspaper, online marketing may be the best way to familiarize customers with your brand. Here are some reasons to use online marketing:

1. Studies show that a huge majority of consumers research companies and products online before making a purchase. A study revealed that 89% of consumers used Google or an alternate search engine to do online research before buying.

Others studies reveal similar results for smartphone users.

2. Online marketing tends to yield a higher return on investment than other types of marketing, perhaps because it is so easy to target your efforts based on demographics and psychographics.
3. 71% of consumers expect to be able to view information about a retailer's products online even if they can't buy them there.

As you can see, it is probable that most of the customers who walk into your store have already checked you out online. You can translate that behavior into bigger sales if you make the most of online marketing.





HOW TO USE ONLINE MARKETING TO DRIVE SALES

Now that you understand why online marketing is so crucial for your local business, let's talk about some specific ways you can use online tools to increase your sales.

1. Use social media. Social media usage is growing daily. Regardless of your industry or product, it's safe to assume that most of your customers have at least one social media account. Many small businesses fail to use social media effectively. Here are some suggestions:

- a. Start with Facebook. It is still the largest and most popular social media site, and its versatility allows you to interact with customers in a variety of ways. Two great options are using Facebook Offers, or Local Awareness ads to reach more locals in your area.
- b. Don't rule out other sites. Pinterest users are more likely to make purchases based on what they see people share than users on any other social media site. They also tend to spend more money than

people on other sites – something to keep in mind.

- c. Integrate your marketing efforts with customer service to maximize customer engagement. Answering customer questions can go a long way toward building brand loyalty.
- d. Don't forget the "social" in social media. People want social media content to be fun and informative.

2. Use coupons and promotions. One of the primary reasons people give for following companies on social media (or subscribing to their email lists) is that they want to get special deals. Traditional retail stores can and should use coupons to encourage customers to visit. However, even businesses who don't normally use coupons can find ways to offer them. For example:

- a. Service-based industries can offer a free consultation or evaluation.
- b. Restaurants can offer a free appetizer or beverage with the purchase of one (or more) entrees.
- c. Offer a time-specific promotion to drive sales at slow times. For example, if you own a garage and Monday is your slow day for oil changes, you might offer 10% off to people who come in on Monday.
- d. Not all coupons need to be online. A lot of stores give out a coupon with a purchase to entice customers to come back to the store.

3. Sponsor a contest or giveaway. Everybody loves the idea of winning a free product or service, and online marketing lends itself to such things. Consider running a contest that encourages people to share your information with their social media followers. For example, you might offer one entry in a raffle to people who share information about the contest on Facebook, and a second entry if they also Tweet about it. Contests are a very effective way to get customers to share information about your company – and to get your products in front of new customers without having to spend any money.

4. Start a "Refer a Friend" program. This type of promotion won't work for every business, but for service-based businesses, it is a very effective marketing tool. Instead of giving out coupons, tell existing customers that you will give them a freebie or discount if they refer a friend and the friend makes a purchase. It's a way of increasing customer loyalty and attracting new customers at the same time – and it doesn't cost you anything up front.

5. Don't forget about mobile customers. If your website isn't mobile-adaptive, it might be time to think about revamping it. More people access the internet on smartphones today than ever before, and the numbers are still rising. In addition to updating your website, here are some other things to consider:

- a. Text messages have a 99% open rate (much higher than email) and they're a great way to reach local customers when they are out running errands.
- b. Consider offering mobile customers a special mobile-only coupon.
- c. Time text messages to coincide with subscribers' activities. For example, you might send out a coupon for a free appetizer during Happy Hour, and time it to go out right when most people are leaving work on a Thursday or Friday.

6. Start a blog. Blogging is easy and inexpensive, and it is a great way to engage your customers on an ongoing basis. With a blog, you can highlight new products as they arrive in your store, feature customer reviews, and even offer video demonstrations with ideas for how to use products. You can also:

- a. Share blog posts on social media.
- b. Include links to blog posts in text messages or emails.
- c. Invite customer comments and feedback.

These are just a few of the most effective ways to use online marketing to increase your in-store sales. Thanks to the popularity and versatility of social media and other online tools, the possibilities are endless – so use your imagination, and watch your sales go through the roof.





HOW TO MARKET YOUR **HOME SERVICES** FRANCHISE

One of the great things about living in the modern era is that you can hire somebody to do almost any task you can imagine. Our lives are busier than ever, and sometimes we need help around the house. Home service franchises are increasingly common, and they run the gamut from housecleaning services to pet care to health care.

One of the benefits of selling franchises – or buying one – is that you have brand recognition from the start. Most customers need to be exposed to a product or brand several times before they make a purchase. When a name is already familiar to a potential customer, it increases the likelihood that they will utilize your services. An example of a home service franchise with great name recognition is Comfort Keepers, a company that provides non-medical home health services.





CHALLENGES OF MARKETING A HOME SERVICE FRANCHISE

In spite of the name recognition you bought along with your franchise, there are some challenges associated with marketing a home service franchise.

1. No physical location. For services like home repair, home care, plumbing, electricians, etc. you probably won't have a brick and mortar location. Because your franchise is service-based and mobile, paying for office space probably isn't necessary. That can be a good thing in terms of your monthly budget, but it does mean that you are going to have to rely on online marketing, especially having a well-designed, high ranking website to help you attract customers.

2. Updating local listings. When you are marketing a business that has multiple locations, keeping your online listings consistent and up-to-date is crucial. Google's algorithms deliver search listings that are specific to each searcher's location, so it is es-

sential to have your local listings in line.

3. Duplicate content. You might think, because you want customers to know that your services are consistent from location to location, that each franchise's website should have the same content. However, that is not the case. Google can and does penalize websites that have duplicate content. While you might need to have similar content on each location's website, you also need to make sure that the content is original to avoid taking a hit in your search ranking.

4. Localizing your mobile websites. It is absolutely essential to have a website that is mobile-adaptive for your company. More customers

than ever before are accessing websites using their smartphones, and they are notoriously impatient. Your site needs to load quickly and be easy to read and use on a mobile device to be successful. You also need to make sure that your mobile sites are customized for the local area so they are easy to use.

5. Managing your reputation. One of the downsides of being part of a company that sells franchises is that sometimes, a single franchise location can get into trouble and, by association, taint the whole brand. When each location is fully localized, it becomes easy to reap the benefits of brand recognition while also distancing yourself from any trouble or negative press.

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FOR MANY PEOPLE, THE BENEFITS OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH A FRANCHISE – ESPECIALLY ONE WITH A GREAT REPUTATION – FAR OUTWEIGH THE RISKS. BUT THE RIGHT MARKETING STRATEGY IS CRITICAL.”



MARKETING TIPS FOR HOME SERVICE FRANCHISES

Now that you understand what the challenges of marketing a home service franchise are, let's talk about some of the ways you can overcome those challenges.

1. Standardize your local listings. Your NAP (name, address, and phone) listings are essential for local SEO and marketing. Even a small discrepancy in the way your name is listed (such as writing out 'Avenue' in one listing and abbreviating it as 'Ave' in another) can have a negative effect on your search ranking. Review your online listings and make sure they are consistent.

2. Make the content similar, but your own. Take the information on the company's main website as a suggestion and rewrite the content to be specific to your area and customers. That way, you will improve your local optimization by including keywords specific to your service area, and avoid the inevitable penalties from Google for having duplicate content on your site.

3. Check out local options for your mobile site and make sure to use them. You want customers to be able to access your site from anywhere, and that means not skimping on having a mobile-friendly or (even better) mobile-adaptive website. Your site needs to be quick to load, easy to read, and simple to navigate. It also needs to have the same information and functionality as your regular site.

4. Separate your franchise. If one franchisee runs into a reputation problem, do what you can to distance yourself from the problem without badmouthing the company. For example, you might make a point of telling customers on your website or social media that you are "independently owned and operated" or something like that. There are ways to create a buffer zone and preserve the reputation of the company while also reassuring customers.



5. Make use of two important services, Amazon Home Services, and Google Home Services.

amazon home services

a. Amazon Home Services is currently available in 15 major metropolitan areas. The way it works is that when customers buy a product on Amazon that's related to your service, they see a suggestion of local service providers that can help them with it. For example, a customer who buys a new air conditioner might see a selection of HVAC companies in their area who can help them install it. The service is also usable as a stand-alone option to search for services. Providers pay a small fee to Amazon to be included.

Google HomeServices

b. Google Home Services works on a similar principle, but it is specific to Google searches. This service is currently being tested in the San Francisco area with plans to expand. When you search for something, part of what you will end up seeing in your search results is a list of local service providers. There are two basic ways to get your company included. First, you can optimize your site for keywords and hope that it shows up in a list of organic search results. Second, you can pay for a Google ad to have your company featured when someone searches for the service you offer.



AS LONG AS YOU PAY ATTENTION TO THE FIVE AREAS DETAILED ABOVE, YOU CAN BE SURE THAT YOU ARE GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MARKETING YOUR HOME SERVICE FRANCHISE.

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