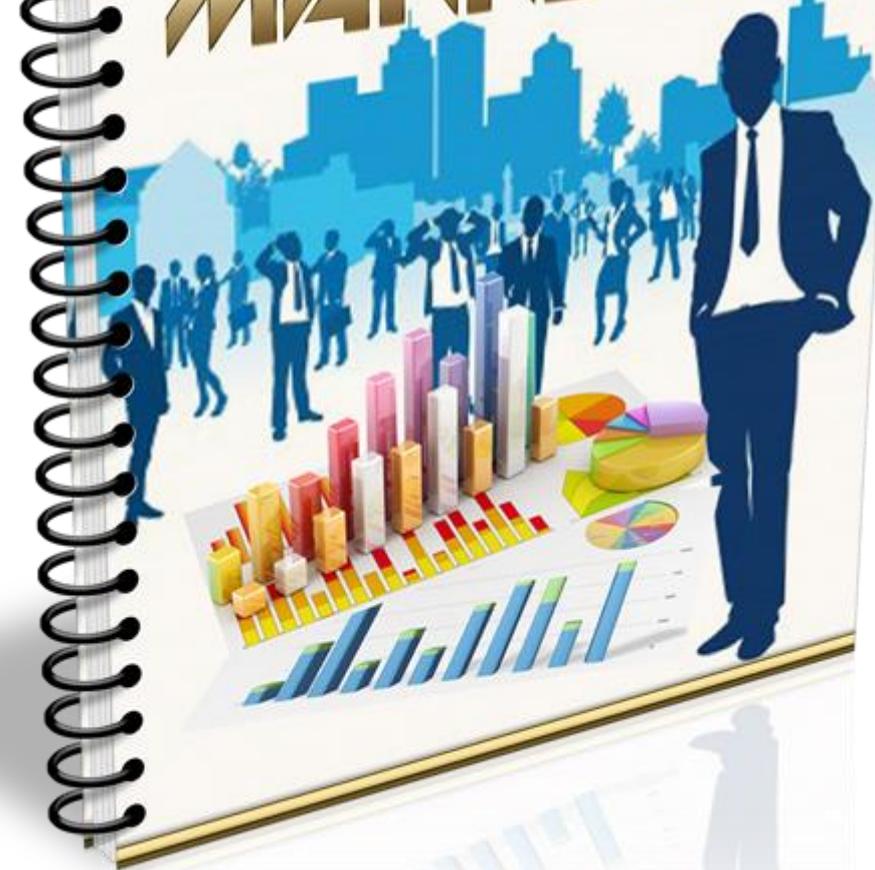


TWITTER MARKETING



What Your Local Business Needs To Know About Twitter

An increasing number of local businesses are turning to online marketing over traditional print, video, and radio advertising techniques. In general, internet marketing methods are faster, cheaper, and far more flexible, giving your businesses a chance to compete against much larger corporations. Twitter is just one of the many online advertising platforms available, but its 500 million active users make it an invaluable tool.

What Is Twitter?

Twitter is officially described as a 'microblogging' site, as all posts made by users are limited to 140 characters each. Companies and individuals can create a profile and use it as a platform to 'tweet' information about themselves to their followers.

Twitter is particularly popular among celebrities and organizations because it allows them to reach out to a worldwide audience. As a result, Twitter is used just as much for business connections as it is for social interactions. 50 million of the site's daily users follow brands, and 66% of tweets are of a commercial nature.

How To Implement A Twitter Strategy

When broadcasting information via Twitter, it is important to have a well-planned strategy in place. A successful Twitter marketing strategy needs to work for both Twitter users and search engines. The following steps should be considered:

- Creating A Profile

The first step in a Twitter campaign is to create a profile that is interesting and informative. Your business's Twitter name needs to be short and snappy to catch user's attention and accurately describe your company. Your 160 character profile description should be rich in keyword phrases associated with your field so that your profile appears in related search results.

- Building Up Followers

Advertising your business on Twitter works best when you have a large audience of followers to communicate with. Building up followers is an on-going process, but there are certain methods you can use to speed it up. Here are just a couple of ideas to increase your Twitter numbers:

Inform everyone you know - Ask your employees, friends, and contacts to follow you on Twitter. This might seem like only a small step up, but it is a great way to give your

follower numbers a kick start.

Advertise - Your existing customers are unlikely to search for your company out on Twitter unless you tell them to. Advertise the fact that you have joined the site on all of your existing online platforms, such as your website, blog, and Facebook business page. You should also provide your Twitter URL on your offline marketing material such as your business cards and brochures.

Follow other people - Following people within your own industry lets them know you are on the site and can help you to build up relevant contacts. Communicating with them directly by commenting on their tweets makes you visible to their followers as well.

- Tweet Content

The main way to convert interest on Twitter into benefits for your business is through tweeting valuable information. Tweets can give your Twitter followers an insight into new products, great offers, or exclusive vouchers. If you need to get across a lot of information in you tweets, you can use the Twitdoc tool to add videos, images, or documents. Including SEO keywords and hashtags in your comments helps users to find them more easily.

To maintain your follower numbers and create a positive image of your company, it is crucial that your tweets are interesting rather than exclusively promotional. You could occasionally tweet amusing comments or fun information just to peak users' curiosity and get your business's name out there.

Re-tweeting is a particularly useful way to spread entertaining tweets across Twitter. When a person re-tweets your message it is broadcast to all of their own followers. Re-tweeting is the Twitter equivalent of going viral.

- Putting Good Practices In Place

To make sure that you keep your followers, it is important to put good long-term practices in place. Producing too many overly promotional messages will quickly turn potential customers off. On the other hand, responding to comments on your profile as soon as possible shows that you value your followers' opinions.

The Results You Can Expect From Twitter Marketing

An engaging and well-designed Twitter marketing strategy can benefit your business in a number of ways:

- More Sales

By displaying a link to your website clearly in your profile description and on some of your tweets, you can direct interested followers to your business website. Think carefully about the page a link directs someone to. You could also include your address, phone number and other contact details in your profile so that followers can reach you through a variety of channels.

- Better Online Visibility

Twitter has a high authority with Google so it is very likely that your Twitter profile will show up in searches related to your company. By filling your profile with valuable search engine optimized content you can ensure it ranks well in search results. Keep in mind, although unregistered users cannot make comments, they will be able to read tweets and other information on your Twitter profile.

- Wider Customer Base

With 340 million tweets and 1.6 billion search queries every day, Twitter reaches out to a vast audience worldwide. Through the site it is possible to expand your customer base globally, or by using region-specific keywords and selective marketing, you can target users specifically in your local area.

How To Get Started On Twitter

Twitter is a useful marketing tool for small businesses. The site enables you to inexpensively increase your online visibility, widen your customer base and most importantly - increase your sales. However, for business owners with little experience navigating the social network, building up followers quickly, maintaining their numbers and tweeting content that is interesting as well as promotional can be difficult.

For newcomers, one of the best ideas is to hire an online marketing specialist to guide you through the process and take on some of the more complicated aspects. A qualified expert can help you to increase your follower numbers and convert those numbers into sales. For many business owners, putting your Twitter profile in the hands of a marketing specialist can save you both time and money.