

5 Ways to Market Your Business for the Holiday Season

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The holiday season is quickly approaching, and the time is now to make sure you get the most of your marketing efforts to help secure sales success in the coming months. Here are a few budget-friendly ideas to help get you started.



Social Media Contests

If your small business has a social media presence, contests on Facebook and Twitter are often a popular way to highlight your brand and engage with customers, reminding them that your product or service is available - and a potentially great gift idea. With a few rules, a clever hashtag and incentive such as a prize or discount on your offerings, you can drum up excitement about - and draw people in to - your business.

Extra Appeal for Your Loyal Customers

Take this time to make your loyal customers feel extra special - it may come back to you by way of additional business and referrals. Without breaking the bank, you can provide special offers, sneak previews, free shipping or secret sales.

Special Events or Open Houses

Make your small business stand out by hosting an open house or special event at your store or restaurant. Use it to showcase holiday season gifts, menus and merchandise so customers can get a glimpse of your seasonal goods in advance. Pair the browsing with light refreshments - a mug of hot cocoa or a glass of cider - to get people in the holiday spirit. On their way out, give a special offer or coupon that invites customers back to make their purchases at a discount.

Holiday Help

This is a great idea from Illana Bercovitz at [Small Business Trends](#): use social media to offer helpful tips during a stressful holiday season. Consider your industry, product or service and related advice you could offer to make customers' lives easier. "Everyone appreciates useful advice and your customers will thank you for pushing content that makes their holidays slightly less stressful," Bercovitz says. Use an original hashtag to maintain brand awareness across platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Email

Although it's often considered overused, email remains inexpensive and easy to implement when it comes to maintaining contact with existing customers. That's a key to remember - to be effective, email marketing should be used with folks you have already done business with or who have expressed an interest in your business and have requested email from you (otherwise known as permission marketing).

Keep these tips in mind if you plan to use email to support your holiday marketing efforts:

- **Keep the e-mail short and sweet.** Link directly to the content of interest so you make the process as easy as possible for your customers.
- **Clearly state the email's intent in the subject line.** For example, "A Special Offer Just for You. Thanks for Your Business in 2013."
- **Be festive in your design.** Appeal to the sights of the season with a special design for the holidays.
- **Follow online marketing rules.** Don't forget that online marketing is regulated, so whatever tactics you employ be sure to follow government guidelines that apply to list management, SPAM and other guidelines.

About the Author: kMurray is an author and moderator for the the SBA.gov Community. She'll share useful information for your entrepreneurial endeavors and help point you in the right direction to find other resources for your small business needs.