

# 7 Ways to Make Your Small Business Stand Out Online

Whether you're just starting out or you'd like to increase your presence in your market, below are SEVEN tips to help your small business stand out on the Web.

## 1. Be an Educational Hub

In case you haven't noticed, we are in the middle of a content marketing revolution. And that's something you need to be a part of. Regardless of what industry you serve, setting yourself up to be THE educational hub on the topic is going to help you win favor and reputation in your space. For example, in my corner of the world, [Search Engine Land](#)<sup>[1]</sup> is the hub for everything Internet marketing-related. That means when I'm looking for information, I go there. When I need a source for a story, I go there. When I need expert opinion, I go there.

See the power? Setting yourself up as that hub by focusing on creating resource guides, putting out consistent authoritative content, and being seen participating in subject matter webinars/conferences/interviews will help you to establish trust and visibility. Two things vital to your success online.

## 2. Be a Resource

Sure, you're going to establish yourself as a resource by the educational content you provide on your Web site, but don't stop there. Make time to be on Twitter participating in chats, fields questions on LinkedIn, responding to comments on other blogs, guest post on niche sites, etc. By providing content and being seen on sites outside of just your own, you establish yourself as a subject-matter expert. While we can all understand the desire to hoard all your knowledge on your own site, let it go. You'll be rewarded in the form of referrals, new traffic, and business karma.

## 3. Be a Promoter

Learn to be a better promoter. Not of yourself, but of other people. Seek out the awesome work that other people are doing and then share it with your audience. You look smarter by sharing other people's smart work, and you win some goodwill with the person you're highlighting. We remember people who promoted us when we need it. Find ways to promote other people on your blog, in your company newsletter, in social media, at events, etc. It will help you get far more attention than just talking about yourself. [Let other people do that!]

## 4. Be Social

Yeah, yeah, you already know you're supposed to be on social media channels like Twitter and Facebook and LinkedIn, but don't just *be* there, really use them. Use these channels to do market research on your industry, use them to interact and ask questions, and use them to make yourself part of your customers' everyday lives and their routine. This is very often the difference between the local café I frequent and the one I just know about – it's that the owner has taken the time to chat with me on Twitter or they let me know what's fresh out of the oven on Facebook. These things matter. They especially matter in business where everything is based on relationships.

There's a great cafe in my hometown called [Francesca's Cafe](#)<sup>[2]</sup>. I go there in part because the food is delicious and cost effective, but I also go because the owner, Francesca, [tweets me](#)<sup>[3]</sup> when she has a fresh stock of pumpkin syrup for my lattes or when blueberry muffins have come out of the oven. These little bits of humanization are powerful and things customers latch onto and remember.

## 5. Be an Email Ninja

There are few relationships more intimate than the relationships you have with the people in your email inbox. That's sacred space. You don't give that to just anyone. You give it to the brands and the companies and the people that you want to keep in touch with. That you want to hear about it and remain aware of their happenings. If you're not building an email list, maybe check out a company like [Infusionsoft](#) <sup>[4]</sup> and see if it's not something you think would help your business create those all-important relationships. It's one thing to talk to your customers on Twitter. It's another to be the first email they see when they're sipping their morning coffee. It's a whole new level of relationship.

## 6. Be Specific about Who You Are

Standing out in a sea of competition means giving people something to remember. To do that, be specific about who you are.

- Maybe you're a local print shop that only uses recycled inks or papers. Or you use a process that others don't.
- You're a caterer who only uses locally-grown meat and vegetables. Or you're the most expensive guy in town because of how elaborate your events are.

Who you are in business, create your [marketing story](#) <sup>[5]</sup> and work that into your marketing strategy. Where businesses get lost is when they're unable to define themselves and what's different about the way they do business. Know what's different about you and then talk about it. Talk about it a lot.

## 7. Be What's Missing

...okay, so we're not all sure what's different about us or who we are in the niche. If you're looking for a place to start, identify what's missing. Map out your competition and look at their price points, their offerings, how they (appear) to do what they do, and find the holes. Is there a segment of the population they're ignoring? Is there a process they're not doing? Is there room for you to identify yourself as being an alternative to the norm? Keep your eyes open for opportunities that your competitors are missing.

Those are just a handful of ways I'd encourage a small business to make themselves stand out online. What other techniques do you use?

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