

Tools and Tips for Inviting Customers into Your Business

By Sue Marceau

Invitation is the new persuasion in the quest for business success among marketers in a digital world. The alphabet soup of B2B, B2C and C2C targeting among businesses and consumers has transformed into person-to-person conversation via evolving technology platforms.

Successful businesses invest in their most valuable asset: themselves. Storytelling in the right time and space inspires readers to follow, engage, refer and/or buy. The marketer becomes the trusted friend and advisor to a nurtured fan base on the worldwide web.

The catch is fishing the best waters while hooking elusive nibblers. Three local marketing experts — Cadu Medina of Craf2M, Tim Lewis of Iron Springs Design, and Donna Werking of Northern AZ Social — can help cast the net.

“Marketing has always been about storytelling,” Medina said. “We are human beings, right? Storytelling is what connects us. It’s the only reason we pay attention to anyone and what they say. Forget the people behind the computer, social media or any type of advertising and marketing. Sometimes we talk to them like they are gathered in a room with 25 people behind them. It’s a one-on-one conversation. In that moment, you are talking to a person. So own that moment, because it is that important.”

Today’s marketers must follow customers’ attention and habits in an environment where entertainment looms large, buying choices are virtually infinite, quality and value are demanded, and the competition could be anyone in the world with a computer, camera, and subscribers, Medina said.

“You can’t afford to ignore social media,” Werking asserts. “It’s an inexpensive way to create relationships” among 2.44 billion social media users predicted through 2018 and more than 40 million small businesses on Facebook in 2015.

Businesses may be missing referrals if they think their customers are not using social media, Werking cautioned, enumerating the medium’s diverse benefits: driving traffic through posts; showcasing products; encouraging testimonials; enhancing relationships; and improving customer service.

“Content will always win, but the context of where it happens and when it happens is more important,” Medina said. “I control what I see, what I consume, when I want it, where I want it. Time is my most precious asset. So let’s stop wasting their time. We need to be there when (customers) are ready to talk to us and communicate with us.”

Loyal fans generating referrals are result of a good social media strategy, Werking said. She encouraged taking time to craft content properly to retain the brand voice and retain a cohesive strategy across all platforms. Tactics include providing a website link; mentioning (tagging)

other businesses; optimizing posts for mobile users; and utilizing hash tags (including on Facebook). She recommends promotions via social media once or twice a year and keeping current on trends and paid advertising.

Lewis identified domain names as business assets which should be protected, developed and maintained. His tips include ensuring a mobile-friendly site, tying the website to traditional media, and optimizing searches with new domain extensions (.dentist or .church, for example, instead of .com or .net).

In building a website, Lewis favors gathering great pictures and strong, clear messages, while employing calls to action (buy now, call today, click here to register, make an appointment, contact us). Over time, he said, updated products, specials, and blogs should be added. The objective is to position oneself as an authority.

“(People) don’t buy your product,” Medina said. “They buy you. There is one unique thing about what you do and sell. That one thing is you. No two people can approach me and sell me a product or service the same way. If you are not bringing that into your business and your marketing, you are not optimizing your marketing.”

Werking shared trending 2016 social media tools, including Facebook Livestream (which was being used to cover the seminar); Periscope (Twitter Livestream); Fanpage Karma (competitor comparisons across multiple social channels); Likealyzer (Facebook page optimization); Klear (analytics on profiles and top interactions); and the 2015 Social Media Marketing Report (for which more than 3,700 marketers were surveyed for answers about social media trends and results).

Multiple free tools also are available to website developers, Lewis said, including WordPress, Joomla and Drupal. More than 90 percent of websites today offer online store, newsletter and event management plugins through WordPress.

Google controls about 75 to 80 percent of SEO marketing, Lewis explained, with Bing and Yahoo carrying most of the remainder. Since more than 60 percent of searches are requested on mobile devices, it’s important to have a responsive design which queries the device and displays accordingly.

Frequent changes to SEO must be monitored and adapted, Lewis advised, noting the April 2015 Google de-ranking of sites not mobile friendly. Mobile friendliness can be determined by searching “google mobile friendly page” to obtain a free report. Additional tools include Google Analytics and Google Adwords.

Start simply, the experts say, by picking one social media platform and seeing it through before trying something else. Keep it simple when baiting the hook and the fans will follow.

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