

Multichannel marketing for your small business

The benefits of being where your
customers and clients are



Your quick guide to multichannel marketing for small businesses

We're happy to see you here, digging into another educational resource developed to offer you valuable information on marketing for small businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a major shift in relation to the customer experience—forcing small businesses to pivot to virtual/touchless interaction. Because many of those changes turned out to be positive (e.g., convenience, well-being, cost savings), it's safe to say this model of service will remain with us long after COVID is a distant memory. That's why we created this helpful guide, outlining several of the benefits of using multichannel marketing to help you reach your customers where they are.

If you'd like to free up your time to concentrate on this new way of marketing, we invite you to ask us about our other services, which are designed to relieve you of accounting, payroll and other business-related tasks.

We're here to help, so if you have questions or would like to consult with a member of our team, please reach out to our firm today.



What *is* multichannel marketing?

Multichannel marketing (also sometimes referred to as omnichannel or cross-channel marketing) is the blending of different distribution and promotional channels for the purpose of marketing. Those channels can include:

- A website and e-commerce store
- Mobile-friendly website and communications
- Text messages
- Catalogs
- Phone orders
- An email newsletter
- Social media
(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Google My Business and/or Google Ads
- A brick-and-mortar store/office

It's all about the choices both existing and potential customers have to communicate with your brand and makes it easy for them to switch between channels if they so choose.

The key is to be where your customers are— and that's how you can increase your audience reach, heighten awareness of your brand and increase interactions with your followers to ultimately grow your small business. So, if you're worried about the added burden of more marketing campaigns, take a deep breath, relax and read on, because you may actually be doing multichannel marketing now without even realizing it.



63
percent of
companies
say their
#1 marketing
challenge is
generating
leads and
traffic.

The benefits of multichannel marketing

Thanks to the close integration of online activity and our lives today, customers expect access to companies and information on their terms. Businesses that are willing to meet their customers and prospects where they are, rather than sit back and wait to be found, are much more likely to find a competitive edge.

The sheer number of choices your customers have these days for interacting with brands has made marketing more challenging, but businesses that take advantage of the insight gained in the different channels will realize a number of benefits.

■ Benefit: You'll catch customers' attention in "the wild"

A report from e-commerce software company BigCommerce found the following consumer behavior among Americans:

- 43 percent shop from their bed
- 25 percent shop online while they're standing in a retail store
- 23 percent shop in the office
- 20 percent shop in the car
- 20 percent shop while they're in the bathroom

That's how fragmented the customer journey has become—in no small part, thanks to the mobile devices that let us conduct business from (obviously) anywhere. The more times your prospects and customers see you, the more you'll stick in their mind. So why not give them a chance to conveniently discover you in their natural online habitats?

A study by research firm Gartner found that campaigns that use four or more channels outperform campaigns that use only one or two channels by 300 percent.



■ Benefit: You'll unify your message

Much as we'd love it to happen, most prospects require several touches before they convert to customer status (a minimum of six to eight touches is the commonly cited figure). Even if the experiences in the different channels aren't identical, today's consumers still expect a strong, consistent message and experience whenever they interact with you.

If your customers tend to use four channels—as an example, let's say your e-commerce site, email newsletter, Facebook and your physical store—you don't need to develop four different campaigns. One overarching campaign, with a similar look and messaging that's altered just enough to speak the different “language” of each channel, will reinforce your brand and also feel more seamless to anyone who frequents more than one channel.

■ Benefit: You'll be in the lead with mobile

It's estimated that in 2021, nearly 54 percent of all retail e-commerce will be generated via mobile devices. According to cloud commerce solutions provider Kibo, smartphone conversion has increased enough over the last year or so that there's now only a small difference between desktop and mobile conversion rates—and globally, tablet conversion rates are actually higher than desktop rates.

And yet, even with these startling statistics there are many businesses whose websites or marketing isn't mobile-friendly. Multichannel marketing, especially when combined with a mobile-friendly website and marketing communication layouts, gives you a chance to step in and find the prospects and customers your competitors don't know how to look for.

■ Benefit: You'll beat “banner blindness”

A few years ago, an eye-tracking study discovered that only 14 percent of respondents could recall the last display ad they saw, or the company or product it promoted—a phenomenon dubbed “banner blindness.” That means up to 86 percent of visitors aren't paying attention to the banner ads on your site. Well, if they even see them, since worldwide use of ad blocking technology has quadrupled in recent years.

This is where stepping into other channels can pay off. Keep using banner ads if they're working—but supplement them with an email or social media campaign that conveys a consistent message to match.



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■ Benefit: You'll enjoy the advantage of social commerce

So, what is social commerce? It's the use of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) to introduce your brand to new people and promote your products and services. We're not talking about a hard sell; we're talking about one of the most potent forms of advertising—word of mouth—along with interesting (aka not salesy) content like stories, photos and videos—things that bring your business and the people who work there to life.

It's been estimated that 92 percent of people will trust reviews from their peers—even if they're not personally acquainted—over branded advertising. That's what we do every time we check out a business's Google reviews or read reviews of books or products on Amazon before we buy. Positive reviews influence purchases in a positive way.

Of course, negative reviews can also influence prospects negatively. However, the great thing about social media is the instant opportunity to not only thank your positive posters, but to make things right for customers who have had a negative experience. And once things are right, it gives those newly delighted customers/clients a chance to share how great you were to work with.



Speaking the social media language

Social media followers tend to fall into different personality types, depending on the platform(s) they're active in. Keep these brief profiles in mind as you plan your campaigns.

	Platform	This is the place for...	Keep in mind...
	Facebook	News, updates, connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You'll find a diversity of ages and backgrounds Warmth, personality and humanity in your posts will help build a connection
	Instagram	Seeing and being seen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All about the visuals: curated photos and content Followers tend to skew younger Keep posts casual, friendly and honest
	Twitter	Fast-breaking, to-the-point news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You'll find a diversity of backgrounds Users can make or break a business with their posts—and they share their experience Keep posts short and snappy Pay attention to replies—don't let a customer service issue get out of hand
	LinkedIn	Business people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a LinkedIn profile so followers can "meet" your business and products/services Keep posts professional, but not stuffy Share interesting and informative (NOT salesy) content about your company, industry, general business topics

■ Benefit: You'll increase your brand's visibility

Speaking of social, if there's one thing social media is good at, it's sharing—and we're not just talking about cat videos or photos of potato chips that look like Elvis. We're talking about things like a prospective customer sharing an informative blog article from your site. Or your area Board of Education sharing that your employees collected a truckload of school supplies to help local teachers. Or someone simply posting, "Hey, friends, check out this business! They're great to work with." (An added benefit to all this sharing is that it can also boost your search engine rankings.)

You can also swap visibility opportunities with other businesses—a guest blog, a video of a new location, a promotion for Small Business Saturday—to help other small businesses in your area grow. Social media gets a lot of bad publicity for the negative things, but when you use it to lift up other businesses and people in your community, wonderful things can happen.

Are there challenges to multichannel marketing?

Just like any new process, there are a few challenging aspects to multichannel marketing. To a large degree, they're centered around having the right technology to collect the data and analytics that allow you to take advantage of (for instance) marketing automation to track and personalize campaigns. You'll also want to look into optimizing your website for the rapidly growing number of mobile prospects and customers. And, of course, there's always a learning curve (and usually some cost) in connection with any new technology.

You'll also need to walk a fine line as you become—and remain—consistent with the messaging and look of your campaigns, while tailoring the message only as much as needed for each channel. That consistency tends to fall by the wayside if more pressing matters vie for your attention. But to prevent confusion for your audience, it's something multichannel marketers must commit to if you don't want customers and prospects to ignore or block your messages.



Summing it all up...

Because you're approaching your customers and prospects from different angles, multichannel marketing has proven to be an effective strategy for many small businesses. If a prospect ignores an email, they may see a Facebook post. If a customer misses that Facebook post, they might catch your catalog in the next mail delivery. And if no one reads the catalog, they may see your latest blog post.

The number of opportunities to introduce your brand to your audience and keep it top of mind are limited only by your creativity and dedication. Yes, it takes some practice and consistency, but the rewards will be there: Increased engagement and conversion rates for your customers and prospects.

One last word of advice and encouragement: Please don't be intimidated by the idea of creating content for multiple channels. Remember, you're not executing multiple campaigns; you're executing one campaign with slight variations for each audience. Start with one channel, and when you're satisfied with that, move on to the others. Finally, check out our list of resources if you'd like to learn more about the benefits of multichannel marketing.

Resources

- **How to use multichannel marketing for your business** (The Balance Small Business)
<https://tinyurl.com/jta2swfs>
- **Multichannel marketing: What is it and how to start using it effectively** (Sprout Social)
<https://tinyurl.com/5784mj34>
- **Complete guide to multichannel marketing strategies** (Indeed)
<https://tinyurl.com/2xw4svd7>
- **What is multichannel marketing?** (Strategy and examples) (Upwork)
<https://tinyurl.com/yr885mjv>
- **How to structure an effective multichannel marketing plan** (Smart Insights)
<https://tinyurl.com/nr794scn>

We hope our guide has answered some of your questions about the benefits of using multichannel marketing in your small business. While we can't help much with the actual marketing, if you'd like to free up some of your time to concentrate on multichannel marketing and growing your business, ask us about our other services—designed to relieve you of accounting, payroll and other business-related tasks.

Would you like help with your small business accounting?

Contact us today! Simply click the **GET IN TOUCH** button and complete the brief form or give us a call. Remember, we're here to help.

