

InThe Loop

Your magazine of personal finance

September–October | 2021

FAQs: Multichannel marketing for small businesses



New hobby hacks | Future business trends

Boost your business with social media | Amazing apple trivia

Fall sightseeing tours

Fall is here...and so is opportunity

It's hard to believe we're already heading into autumn. Summer may be coming to an end, but fall—the calm before the chaos of the holidays—can be an inspiring time to make some of those changes you've considered in your personal and professional life.

What kind of changes? Well, now is an ideal time to try a new hobby that taps into interests you'd like to explore. Check out our hobby hacks article for some inspiration.

And if you're looking for more inspiration, you could take a fall color tour. We have a list of some of the best places near and far to see those fall colors. Plus, you can revel further in the spirit of fall with our amazing apple trivia and learn more about this luscious fruit.

From a business perspective, we've rounded up a list of future business trends so you can start planning for your 2022 goals. Or you may want to up your social media game. We have a lot of good information to help you optimize your marketing and social media presence... and connect with customers and potential new fans of your company.

Our firm is dedicated to continually expanding the ways we can serve and assist you in achieving your goals now and in years to come. Please reach out if you need assistance—and have fun doing the things you enjoy most this fall!

Your Trusted Advisors

We have a lot of good information to help you optimize your social media presence and connect with customers and potential new fans of your company.

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FAQs: Multichannel marketing for small businesses



From remote work to food delivery and curbside pickup at restaurants, from digital entertainment to on-demand health and wellness services, the COVID-19 pandemic forced even avowed fans of brick-and-mortar businesses to adjust to virtual interaction with the businesses they patronize. And even as things slowly return to (sort of) normal, this touchless way of doing business doesn't appear to be going away.

If your customers and potential leads have scattered off to the cyberwinds in the past year, how do you find more? The key is to be where they are—and that's where multichannel marketing (also known as omnichannel or cross-channel marketing) can come in.

If you've never heard of multichannel marketing... and even the idea sends you into a tizzy because you already have your hands full with one-channel marketing, don't panic: You may already be doing it without realizing it.

The following FAQs offer the basics for taking your marketing to the next level.

Q: What is multichannel marketing?

A: Multichannel marketing is a marketing strategy that works on the theory that customers are more likely to buy when they can use their favorite channel. It's all about the choices both existing and potential customers have to communicate with your brand—and it makes it easy for them to switch between channels if they

choose to do so. Those channels can include:

- A brick-and-mortar store/office
- Your website's e-commerce store
- Catalogs
- Phone ordering
- An email newsletter
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Google My Business and/or Google Ads

Q: What's so great about multichannel marketing?

A: You'll reach more customers on the channels where they're most likely to make a purchase. Grandma Sue might never look for deals on Facebook, but she'll order from a paper catalog in a heartbeat. Granddaughter Sara, on the other hand, haunts Instagram daily, looking for the latest products endorsed by her favorite influencers. You'll also be able to get customer feedback that allows you to make more informed decisions about your products and services and proactively fix issues.

**Q: Okay, I have those channels.
That means I don't have to do
anything else, right?**

A: Not exactly. If you're active in any or all of these channels, you've taken the first step. However, for effective multichannel marketing, you'll need to tailor your marketing content to and speak the language of the audience in each channel.

Q: Uh...speak the language?

A: Social media followers tend to fall into different personality types, depending on the platform(s). It's possible that not all of these channels are right for your business, but if you keep these brief profiles in mind, you'll be able to speak the right language for the audiences on the platforms you do use.

■ **Facebook** is the place for news, updates, interaction and connection. It's how family and friends stay in touch with each other, so you may find a real diversity of ages and backgrounds among your followers. Warmth, personality and humanity will go a long way toward building a connection here.

■ **Instagram** is the place to see and be seen. It's all about the visual: carefully curated photos and other content. Followers tend to skew younger here, so work with visuals in mind and offer a casual, friendly and honest tone.

■ **Twitter** is the place for fast-breaking, to-the-point news. Like Facebook, you'll find diversity here, but you'll also find a group that isn't shy about letting businesses know when they're happy or unhappy—and those tweets may be shared *ad infinitum*. Keep it short and snappy...and pay attention to the replies.

■ **LinkedIn** is the place for businesspeople. Every company should have a LinkedIn profile; it's where followers "meet" your business and get an idea of your products and services. Keep posts professional and share interesting content about your company or industry in general.

■ **Google My Business and Google Ads**

will reach a broader, more diverse audience. This is where many prospects will meet you for the first time so try extra hard to put your best foot forward here. It may be the place to include great reviews to highlight your professionalism, sincerity and credibility.

Q: What about emails, newsletters or snail mail? Should I bother?

A: Yes! Email and newsletters are a good way to keep in touch with your audience. People are hungry for readable, credible and informational content. And given the screen fatigue so prevalent these days, snail mail is having its moment in the sun again. A fun and intriguing postcard or catalog offers a nice change of pace.

Q: Do I need to do a different campaign in each channel?

A: If you have the time and energy, go for it. But you can also take one great idea and use it between all channels, adjusting the voice and look to match the audience. For example, a newsletter can reward loyal customers with a discount coupon while a video on Instagram offers followers an exclusive sale preview.

Wrapping it up...

This article only scratches the surface of multichannel marketing, but it offers a good roadmap to get you moving. And you can start slow. For example, if you know your potential customers aren't on Instagram, skip it and focus on the channels where you know prospects are. Experiment with different aspects of a campaign—colors, images, copy, calls to action—to see what works within the different channels. Don't be afraid to try new things as you create marketing ideas that allow all of your channels to work together. Above all, allow yourself to have fun building a marketing strategy to bolster your business. ■

New hobby hacks



Are you tired of doing the same activities over and over? Are you ready for something interesting and different that stretches your abilities? Maybe it's time to find a new hobby. You never know what undiscovered talents lie waiting to be discovered in yourself, and this list of hobbies could help you bring those talents to life.

■ **Stone skipping**

Just being by open water can be refreshing. Walk along the edge of the shore and find yourself the "perfect" stone, give it a whirl and see how many times you can get it to walk on water before it sinks.

■ **Metal detecting**

During those long walks on the beach or through a park, why not bring a metal detector along? You never know what kind of treasure you might find.

■ **Flying drones**

This popular new hobby is fun—and provides a whole new way to see the world from a bird's-eye view.

■ **Sand art**

Such a calming way to ease the mind. Use your creativity to make a masterpiece with sand, rocks and water.

■ **Line dancing**

Have a wedding coming up? Get ready by learning to line dance, whether in a class or from YouTube. It's a great way to be active.

■ **Host board game nights**

Researching and sampling different board games together is a great way to spend time with friends and family. Make it a weekly or monthly ritual and spice it up with fun snacks and drinks that match the theme of your games.

■ **Photography**

From taking selfies that make you happy (no need to post them unless they make you feel good) to capturing life's special moments, spend some time playing with lights and filters. Find a pretty piece of nature and make your own masterpiece or pick your favorite shots and make an album to share.

■ **Flea market flipping**

Someone's old junk is another person's treasure. Find some old furniture at a flea market, and give it new life with a new coat of paint to create a new statement piece for your home...or sell it yourself.

■ **Canoeing or kayaking**

This is a fun way to get some fresh air and spend time on the water. Oh, the places you can go in a canoe or kayak! For safety and fun, get a friend to join you and take on this new hobby together.

■ **Volunteer at an animal shelter**

Not only will you be helping our animal friends, you'll feel better when you're surrounded by stress-relieving pets—and good people who care about their well-being.

If you're looking for enjoyable ways to expand your mind and your creativity, don't be shy—get out there and try one or more of these fun new activities. Who knows, you could find you're a natural at something new! ■



Future business trends

The past year has been a whirlwind for everyone, particularly businesses impacted by COVID-19. While it's been a challenge to adapt and navigate through so many uncertainties and changes, the pandemic has also brought new and exciting opportunities for businesses willing to adapt. Here are some key trends to be aware of as you work to optimize business results in this new environment.

■ **E-commerce is booming**

While online shopping was on the rise before COVID-19, it's now a necessity for many people—and these purchasing patterns are here to stay. A report from IBM shows that, over the past five years, customers have shifted away from physical to online shopping in significant numbers that are only expected to rise as mobile apps for shopping become more popular and easier to use. If your business sells products online or you're considering doing so, make sure you offer a smooth and stress-free experience to keep your customers coming back for more.

■ **Alternative payment options**

Like the no-contact shopping associated with e-commerce, in-store no-contact payments have also increased. Busy shoppers like sending a payment through their phone or by tapping a credit or bank card, and there are a variety of apps to facilitate this type of payment. Venmo lets you send a payment to a friend, business or customer. Apple Pay, which lets you simply hold your iPhone or Apple Watch up to a payment screen, is also very popular. Other options include PayPal, Cash App...and more. A study done by the National Retail Federation found that more and more retailers will be implementing contactless payments throughout their stores. Offering this type of payment option in your business will help you adapt to today's consumer expectations.

■ **Remote work**

Working from home was a necessity for many non-essential workers during the pandemic. Many businesses have made this an ongoing option for their workers and will continue to do so, as it can offer the added benefits of work-life balance and less in overhead costs. Although you may have to invest in new technology and software for remote employees, the long-term benefits of doing so—cost savings, efficiency and employee retention—are worth your consideration.

■ **Virtual services are in demand**

If you're expanding your business, you may need help with day-to-day tasks. A virtual assistant can help free up your schedule and let you focus on growth opportunities. If you want to start a business, consider virtual services that others may find useful. Cybersecurity, at-home fitness, food delivery, gaming, home improvement and telemedicine are all trending business growth categories that could help you create a profitable enterprise.

With a new year just over the horizon, now is the time to think about emerging trends in the current business environment, and how you can use them to your advantage. The trends covered above are worth considering if you want to strengthen your business and improve your chances of continued success. ■



Boost your business with social media

Social media can be one of the most effective ways to market your business. But before you can truly leverage it, you need to define your goals and determine which platforms can help you meet them.

Consider the following goals as starting points:

- ① Generate new leads on LinkedIn and other platforms for your business that you can use to make connections with potential new clients/customers.
- ② Develop a stronger following for your company on Facebook to increase your ability to promote new products and deliver valuable content.
- ③ Increase awareness in your local market of your business and all the services you have to offer.

Here are some tips for using social media to help you meet these three goals and any others you may have.

■ Choose the right social media platform for your business

With so many social media platforms, how do you know which one will be the most effective? Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are still the top platforms to use for business, with Instagram and TikTok close behind.

Consider which platforms your target audience uses and prioritize them first. Don't "follow the herd" and set up a business account on a channel just because you think it's popular. If it isn't relevant or frequently used by your intended audience, it may not provide enough ROI to make it worth spending time to develop and post content.

■ Generate more leads from your social channels by increasing engagement

Nurturing leads on social media requires dedication and a commitment to engaging with your chosen audience. As the social media platform Hootsuite notes on its blog, it's better to have fewer high-quality leads than many low-quality leads.

Consider giving valuable content to your audience in exchange for their information by promoting it on social media and directing them to a form on your website. You could also create a group on Facebook, LinkedIn or another platform and ask some simple questions to determine the quality of the lead for each person who requests to join the group.

■ Social media success starts with the fundamentals

While it may seem basic, optimizing your social profiles really is the first step in succeeding in social media from a business perspective. Businesses get excited about being on social media, but often fail to spend the necessary time creating a profile

that complements their brand. With this in mind, for each platform make sure you pay attention to these tips from Hootsuite:

Optimize your profile for lead generation.

Your profile should provide links where your customer can easily contact you, sign up for emails and newsletters, shop, etc.

Offer the right incentive to share information.

Contests, sweepstakes, discount code or top-quality content are all great reasons for your potential customer to share information, join your email list or Facebook group, or attend a webinar.

Personalize your offer.

When it comes to social media lead generation, personalization is key. A study done by Heinz Marketing and Uberflip shows that personalized content helps more with lead generation.

■ Measure your social media success

Collecting analytics is another important aspect of boosting your business's social media. Most platforms have an analytics dashboard that can help you identify the type(s) of posts that work best for engagement. This is the true test of social media success: Getting a positive reaction from your followers. Keep track of the activity on your various platforms and use it to plan the content you'll share.

These tips are just a starting point for growing your social media presence. It's important to regularly evaluate your goals and the strategies and tactics you use to achieve them. Just like any other part of your business, social media requires a commitment of time, thought and energy. Focus on being efficient as you work to maximize the positive impact of the platforms you use. If something isn't working, don't be afraid to switch it up for something that better fits your current social media needs. ■

Fall sightseeing tours

Blue Ridge Parkway

The trees are changing color, the air is getting colder and the crisp smell of leaves is in the air. Autumn is here! And we've got a list of some of the best and most brilliant places to take a memorable leaf-peeping tour this fall.

New England and New York

■ Acadia National Park

in Maine has a one-third mile trail that leads to Cadillac Mountain overlooking the park. There's also a scenic driving trail that overlooks the ocean, mountains and forests.

■ Mount Washington

in New Hampshire boasts the Mount Washington Cog Railway, a three-hour round trip to the top of the mountain and back.

■ Finger Lakes National

Forest in upstate New York was once used by the native Americans of the "Six Nations" Iroquois Indian Confederacy.

California

■ Anadel State Park,

60 miles north of San Francisco, is perfect for hiking with its big-leaf maple and black oak trees.

■ Clear Lake State Park,

located in wine country, includes the largest freshwater lake in the state for added beauty.

■ McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park

has every fall color you can think of thanks to black and white oak, alder, redbud, dogwood, maple, deer brushes, red flowering currants and many other trees.



McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park

Southern states

■ Tennessee's Great Smoky Mountains

Cades Cove Loop Road is a one-way 11-mile road that passes through historical sites and wildlife hot spots.

■ The Blue Ridge Parkway,

which runs through North Carolina and Virginia, has an option for camping.

■ Bankhead National Forest,

the first declared wilderness area in Alabama,

is populated with old-growth hardwood trees, including a 500-year-old tulip tree.

Of course, always research your destination before you go to be sure all trails are open and to stay informed of any safety considerations. But whether you choose the east coast, west coast, north or south, just get out there and take in everything nature has to offer with one or more of these gorgeous destinations for viewing fall foliage. ■



Amazing apple trivia

Test your knowledge
with these bite-sized
fun facts about apples.

- 1 How many calories are in a medium-sized apple?
- 2 Which state has named the apple blossom its state flower?
- 3 What is the science of apple growing called?
- 4 How much did the largest recorded apple weigh?
- 5 How many varieties of apples are grown in the United States?
- 6 Where in the United States were the first apple trees planted?
- 7 How many years does it take for an apple tree to produce its first fruit?
- 8 How many years does an apple tree live?

- 9 Which countries produce the most apples?
- 10 What are the top apple-producing states in the United States?
- 11 Which kind of apple is native to the United States?
- 12 Where did the apple tree originate?
- 13 Which flower family do apples belong to?
- 14 About how many acres is the average apple orchard?
- 15 What were apples called in the colonial era?

Answers

1. 80 calories 2. Michigan 3. Pomology 4. 3 pounds 5. 2,500 6. Massachusetts Bay Colony 7. 4 to 5 years 8. They can live over 100 years 9. China, United States, Turkey, Poland and Italy 10. Washington, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, California and Virginia 11. The crabapple 12. Between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea 13. The rose 14. 50 acres 15. Banana or melt-in-the-mouth



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