

## 12 Marketing Tips for the Local Business Owner



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## Introduction

You as a Local Business Owner really don't care about me other than you're hoping I'm competent and that I can help you attain what you want, which is EXACTLY why I've put the effort into such a document as this.

Zig Ziglar put it best when he said, *"You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want."*

Not only do I live by this, but I'd recommend you learn to live by it too if you aren't already. Its NOT about what you sell, its about helping people in some fashion, and I'm here to help **YOU help more people.**

I know that with all the rapid and constantly changing face of business with recessions, economic downturns, growth in the internet, and loss of personal interaction, just looking at new marketing ideas can put you into tilt.

This document will help **"untilt"** you by giving you a game plan and tiny little baby steps like in the movie "What About Bob?"

If something stumps you or you just don't want to do a tip, SKIP IT! I'm not here to increase your stress level, I want you to help more people, and just a few tips done properly can do just that.

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### Tip #1 – The Unique Selling Proposition

I've talked to hundreds of business owners only to find that the vast majority of them have absolutely NO IDEA of what sets them apart from their competitors, none, zip, nada, and just a note, its rarely price!

Its the norm these days to ask people to do business with you for **NO** apparent reason. I live in a town that was hit with a huge hail storm, I mean 3 to 6 inch hail stones, crashing through roofs, pulverizing cars, houses, and signs. Fortunately the storm went just yards south of my house and we got no damage, but with the town name in my address, I started getting card after card after card from roofing companies. As I started collecting them, I noticed a trend, **NOT ONE SINGLE COMPANY** gave me a good reason to call *them*. Sure, one had \$500 off a complete roof, a couple had \$200 off, **EVERYONE** had a "**FREE**" quote or estimate, they all had been around for EVER, everyone was Certified, Skilled, Honest, Reliable, blah, blah, blah.

Not one of them had a **Unique Sell Proposition** (USP)!

As I asked around, no one had ever asked them for one so they hadn't given it much thought. But I guarantee you,

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the **COMPANY** who did, does, or will, can **DOMINATE** their market in their town for their Industry.

Come on Nicholas, this ONE tip can help me dominate my market and industry? **YES**, because all of a sudden, you'll stand out from the crowd like a sore thumb, getting noticed when before you were overlooked.

My good friends Dan Kennedy and Bill Glazer are perhaps the most recognized Marketing Experts in America. They tell you to look at what your competitors are doing, **AND DO THE OPPOSITE! Be Outrageous!** In a market filled with look-a likes, being **different** will put you in a league of your own.

So here's your homework for Tip #1: set aside a couple of hours this weekend and figure out what makes you different from everyone else. Then write it out and start promoting that difference in everything you do, business cards, flyers, ads, website, etc. - **EVERYTHING!**

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### Tip #2 – Go Local!

More and more people are turning to the web to locate “local” businesses instead of the phone book. Apps on smart phones will help people locate anything from a Thai restaurant to a Shoe Shine guy and if you're not listed, then chances are you'll be **overlooked**.

The easiest way to find out how well you are doing on the search engines is to go to <https://moz.com/local/search> and put in your business and zip code. This will give you an evaluation of some 10-12 search engines and let you know if there is a listing and if it is consistent.

The other option is to go to the 4 major places to get listed and see if or how you show up.

<http://business.google.com> - <http://local.yahoo.com> -  
<http://www.bingplaces.com> - <http://biz.yelp.com>

Start with Google My Business beings Google is the #1 place most people start when doing a search. You'll have to get a “Google” account, usually consisting of a Gmail account which is free. Then you can register your business in your town on Google.

When it comes to Google, just do whatever they ask,

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they are essentially the 800 lb gorilla and it always pays to play by their rules.

If you have a website, get the verification/validation code or better yet add Google Analytics and have your webmaster add it to your home page, it will boost your ranking on Google very quickly. Also be able to "verify" via a postcard pin so that you will be the "Merchant Verified" company when someone does the search.

Next I'd go to Local Yahoo! <http://local.yahoo.com> which is the second most used search engine. And you'll also have to get an account with Yahoo!, usually consisting of a Yahoo email account. I'd use the same for both gmail and yahoo mail. I use nicholas.stjon@ and the same password so I don't confuse myself. Its also good to have multiple accounts so when you sign up for newsletters you can use an account, if you think you'll get bombarded use a different one.

Next I'd get listed on <https://www.bingplaces.com/> as more people are starting to use Microsoft's Bing to locate "local" businesses, they'll even generate a free mobile website for you. You'll need a Microsoft account (@hotmail)

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Finally, you'll want to have a Yelp account at <http://biz.yelp.com> . Yelp has become the number one search for reviews about business. Remember, what goes around comes around, so if you'll give reviews to businesses you frequent, they'll do the same.

With nearly 80% of all business coming from web searches, the printed Yellow Pages is quickly becoming obsolete. YP.com does have a place for free listings if you so choose but my experience is that very little business comes from them online.

For each of them, make sure you have an accurate address for the mapping systems and a good phone number so you can be verified. Also, make sure all your business names, address, and phone number are the same. Be sure to use your key words when describing what you do, and for your description, use your USP (Unique Selling Proposition).

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### Tip #3 – Your Company Website

If you don't have one, get one. They are inexpensive and are worth their weight in gold if set up properly.

For those of you who don't have a website, I'd recommend using HostGator to host and WordPress to build the site. Google loves WordPress sites and ranks them very well. You can get a HostGator account by following this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/HG-stnick007>

For as little as \$3.86/month and WordPress is free, this is a great deal and takes away any reason NOT to have a web presence.

Even though WordPress is usually thought of as useful for Blogs, its also very useful to set up a “static” website with a few pages.

There are even a few companies like Yola and Zoho that allow you to design and build a website for free using drag and drop if you want to do it yourself and if you use their “subdomain” format, hosting is free as well. To demonstrate the technology, we built duplicate sites for Wichita Plus at

<http://wichitaplus.yolasites.com> and

<http://wichitaplus.zohosite.com> .

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Wix and Web.com will build your site for you but hosting can be expensive.

I'm not going to go into detail here about your "headline", above the fold, and a call to action, but suffice it to say they all are important.

Another tip about your website, in the "title" tag of your website, make sure it tells what your USP is, ensuring it is kept to 65 characters or less. As a for instance, my brother owns a couple of laundromats and his website title had: "Coin operated, self-serve laundromat" which everyone already knew because that's what they Googled for. When I made one simple change to: "Cleanest,nicest,most comfortable,Never Closes,free wi-fi in Wichita" his click-thru rate went up by over 1000% and it helped move him from the 4<sup>th</sup> page on Google to the first position for Googling "wichita laundromats".

If you have pictures, make sure the "alt" attribute has a couple of your keywords, many people leave this blank so its like eating half your dinner, it looked great but didn't really do you all that much good.

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Three pages that are highly recommended for any site are:

- 1) An **About Us** page, include a "smiling" picture of each team member and a "short" bio, enough to build confidence and not too much so they skip reading it. Better yet, do a short personal video introducing yourself.
- 2) And a **Contact Us** page, with a webform so they can fill it out and it is emailed to you, include a business location address, and a phone number. Even though you don't necessarily want them calling you, having a phone number there will calm them and builds trust that you are in fact someone they can get a hold of should the need arise.
- 3) A **Testimonials** page, where you can post video testimonials. People want to hear what others are saying about using your services and nothing is more powerful. Its also a good place to post links for your customers to use to go and write a Review for you.

And one special note about Flash. While it looks great, it turns Google and some of the other robots for indexing OFF. In many cases, it doesn't index you at all so you never get ranked. Flash is like a movie and all the words, keywords,

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etc. in this movie can't be read by the indexing robots, so it just skips you and goes to the next page.

Also flash has a tendency to take up a huge part of the top of your page, so visitors have to scroll down even to see your USP or Headline, many will not scroll down and simply go to the next link in their search plus it usually loads slow and with the fast paced world of today, impatience will prevail.

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### Tip #4 – Reviews

Nothing says to your customers “Come to us” than a good half dozen 4 or 5 star reviews.

Again, you don't need a website to get reviews, each of the “Local” sites you listed your company with have reviews. It takes work because you have to “ask” your customers to write the review. On one website I added a menu item for Reviews and put in the links of the 5 or 6 places they could add a review, mostly depending on if they had a gmail account or yahoo, etc. and now if they have a Facebook account, you can write a review just about anywhere.

People do it all the time, but they're not supposed to, and that is writing your own reviews.

If you are in business and have satisfied customers, handing them a piece of paper with the “Review” links on it and asking them to write one for you shouldn't be a big problem. Now if you DON'T have satisfied customers, DON'T ask them to write a review, one BAD review can do a lot of damage to your reputation.

If you can get people to review on Yelp, this is the best.

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### Tip #5 – Craig's List

Craig's List is probably one of the most underutilized tools on the web for Local Businesses.

First of all, its free to advertise. Putting “free” and “advertise” in the same sentence you'll learn to love. Its local and you can do it as much as you like within reason and certain parameters. But posting “Got Hail Damage?” 10 times a day in the same or even different cities can get you banned, so don't push it.

Secondly, in each ad you get to put a link, these are called “backlinks” which when Google reads your ad on Craig's List, it sees your backlink and this raises your ranking on Google.

Special tip for using Craig's List: in your headline, start with some “odd” characters such as the “#” sign, “\*” asterisk, “!” exclamation point, “\$” dollar sign, or even the “^” carrot to make it more eye catching such as

# # # Special of the day is Shrimp Scampi

This is very eye catching, but mix it up.

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### Tip #6 – Business Cards

There are two major philosophies to business cards.

Don't have them at all. SAY WHAT? I'm in business, I MUST have a business card! No you don't. I haven't used business cards in probably 6 or 7 years. When I did, they just ended up in the pile with the other 300 people who handed them a business card too. How did that make me “different” from everyone else? It didn't!

Everyone else has business cards, if they want your information, ask for their card and write it on the back of it and take one for yourself, making a note about the conversation that you had to remind you who they were and what their interest was.

And the other is if you MUST have a business card and you want glossy, ONLY do the front, leave the back so you can write on it. In the design, I'm not sure why designers make your company name **BIG** and your phone number **small**, I'd rather have them be able to see the phone number to call me than to read my company name and not call.

Add your Quick Response code to the back of the card this makes it very easy to get your info into their phone.

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### Tip #7 – Social Media

When its good its very good, but when its bad, it will drain the life out of you. So be very careful what you do with Social Media. It can be fun and it can generate you a lot of business if done properly and you are in the right industry.

If you are a “professional” such as banker, cpa, attorney, consultant, etc., you definitely should have a LinkedIn account. Anymore, its almost a necessity if you're going to be taken seriously. This is NOT an account you want 5,000 friends, its an account where you may have several hundred and you are consistently writing entries of which are tips, tricks, or have some other value to those in your network. This indicates a willingness to “give” first and freely. Others will refer clients to the person who does so. This is known as Attraction Marketing.

Facebook is another extremely popular social media site that can add tremendous value to your company. Its also a way of keeping communications going with current customers.

For Facebook, its better to have a fan page or form a group that specializes in your industry.

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Twitter came out of no where and quickly established itself as a major contender in the social media world. It can be very useful or a drain on your time and energy. You'll just have to evaluate its use.

And now there is Pinterest and Instagram, these lend themselves very well to some types of businesses.

One of the major advantages of these social media sites is that it can get you well known and if used properly, can generate a ton of backlinks for your site.

Be sure to include keywords for your USP in tweeting, posting to Facebook, or writing in LinkedIn, these all add to the ranking of your website.

When you are making more money than you know what to do with or you are at a point where hiring people to tweet or post for you makes sense and its adding value to your business, get someone else to do these tasks for you.

Always be aware of whether they are beneficial or being a drain and taking you away from what you need to be doing or what you do best. **DON'T LET IT DISTRACT YOU.**

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### Tip #8 – Becoming the Expert

When we are deciding who we should deal with or select a product or service from, we would all prefer to deal with the “Expert” in that field.

I'm a huge tennis fan and a fairly serious player. If I had all the local “Pros” at the clubhouse and in walked Andre Agassi, you better believe I'd pick Andre. Why? Without a doubt he'd be the “Expert” even among the local “Pros”.

In your industry, your potential customers or clients are the same way.

So to further set yourself apart from the competition, you need to establish yourself as the “Local” expert. How do you do that? Glad you asked.

You make it a goal to learn as much about your Industry as you can. You'll probably have to set aside 30 minutes to an hour each day to study, doing web searches, reading articles, getting books on the subject, etc.

Look at it as getting a degree that will pay off in HUGE dividends in the near future.

The other benefit is that it will give you tremendous

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confidence when speaking to customers or clients, even though its intangible, it will boost respect from customers and that will translate into referrals.

As you gain in this knowledge and become the “expert”, keep in mind also that the reason you are doing so is to better help your customers, not to gloat and hold it over the heads of your competitors. Arrogance will destroy the position of expert in a millisecond.

So spend the time and energy to become the Expert in your Industry, it will set you apart and will be well worth the investment.

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### Tip #9 – The SEO Scam

If you have an email address, you've probably gotten one of these "we'll put you at the top of page one on Google guaranteed" emails.

First, let's explain what SEO is. SEO stands for **S**earch **E**ngine **O**ptimization. In plain English, its a way to make Google, Yahoo, Bing, and about 30 other "search" websites find and index your website so that when someone searches for the keywords you use for your site, its found.

Most of these so-called SEO companies do little to boost your ranking on Google and can cost you a considerable amount of money.

Its really better and safer (for your money) to do what's called "organic" SEO where backlinks, social media posting, article writing, blogs, and joint ventures "organically" lift your website's ranking on these search engine databases.

Optimizing your website doesn't need to be any "mystical" cards held close to the vest type of work. I've already covered several in the tips about websites such as using alt attributes in images, having a keyword rich "title", entering your keywords in the "meta" tag, having a good

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keyword rich description meta tag, etc.

Also getting listed on the “Local” directories for Google places, local Yahoo, and local Bing are also very powerful organic SEO methods you can do yourself.

If you like doing videos, adding videos of relevant material on YouTube, Viddler, Daily Motion, MetaCafe, Vimeo, and other video posting sites with your keywords can almost permanently anchor you to page One of Google as Google which owns YouTube loves those videos.

Article writing with a “Resource” box at the end of each article with your USP and a link to your website is another organic SEO method.

Don't push the boundaries by using what's called “Black Hat” methods. Some SEO companies resort to using these methods and when you're caught, you can get dropped like a hot potato and lose all chances of EVER getting indexed and a good ranking on Google.

Its just NOT worth the risk. Do it right.

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### Tip #10 – Contact Management

If you are going to go through the trouble of increasing the number of potential customers you get, you'll need a system for making sure none of them fall through the cracks.

And no, a business card, piece of paper, day timer, Rolodex, or any other manual system for keeping track of customers will do, unless you are Ron White the 2 time National Memory Champion.

There are many “systems” out there but most immediately take you to an 11 on a scale of 1 to 10 for frustration or priced out of your league.

I've personally worked with ACT!, which is a good system but like most software companies that are continually trying to upgrade and thus charge you for upgrades, has become a complex system that will do what you want if you want to take the week or so to figure it out.

The same with Goldmine. Tons of features, infinitely expandable, bells and whistles, but frustrating to learn.

And the big wig Salesforce.com. A terrific system, import and export capabilities, alerts, etc., and for the newbie, expensive and hard to learn.

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And that brings us to a simple and quick to learn web-based system that has plenty of power should you want to use it. [Http://www.myLittleHelper.biz](http://www.myLittleHelper.biz) is a system that can be learned in 5 minutes, has notes to help you remember where you obtained the contact, notes on what you spoke about last, date and time stamped, the "next action" field, place of next meeting, a to-do list for you before you call them next, and reports for follow up. It also has the ability to categorize contacts and do a blast e-mail to any or all of your contacts at the click of a couple buttons. Its Free to sign up for a 30 day trial and starts at only \$14.95 per month, it beats the pants off all the others I've seen.

Not following up with potential customers is losing you money and possibly referrals. So don't neglect this most often overlooked critical part of managing customers. Keep in mind that selling to someone who has already purchased from you is a lot easier than obtaining and gaining the trust of a NEW customer. Having a system to notify customers of a sale or new product is extremely valuable.

The business owner who stays in touch, **WINS**.

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### Tip #11 – Testimonials

One of the wisest men to ever live said, Let another sing your praise, and testimonials are absolutely the best way to do that.

While online reviews are powerful and great to have, testimonials will do more for your company than just about any other single thing (other than your Unique Selling Proposition) to gain trust from your clients or patrons.

There are 3 types of testimonials, written, audio, and video. On a scale of 1 to 10, written rank around 1–3 in building trust, better than nothing, but you need a lot of them to make up for how little trust they build because anyone, including the business owner, could have written them and really not mean it.

Next is audio, these immediately jump to about a 5 on that scale because they start conveying emotions which unless the person making the audio is a trained professional actor, most of us can't fake it.

Last, but not least, is video, these jump to 8–10 because they are virtually impossible to fake or being insincere. But there is a “right” way and “wrong” way to do these. Many

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that attempt to do them use their smart phone and start recording some guy rambling on and on about how great you are. There is a proven ideal format to get the absolute best testimonials that people will get the information, emotion, and the call to action that will get you terrific results and referrals.

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### Tip #12 – Referrals

Word of mouth is still the most powerful way to get new business. Its also known as a referral.

Again the problem is unless you have an off the charts experience for your customers or clients, it's just not something most people are thinking about very often. So its your job to help them think about it a bit more often and having a system in place is the best way to do that.

Many businesses have a referral card where they reward someone for each referral that comes through their door. One of the most often used methods is in the Restaurant business when they give their customers an incentive to bring in a friend by enticing them with a 2<sup>nd</sup> Entree at 50% off.

Others have utilized current technology by sending an e-mail to their customer with a short video explaining the importance of referrals and then providing a place for their customer to enter the name and e-mail address that can be used to automatically send an e-mail with a video with an explanation that their friend thought highly enough of them to encourage them to visit and experience your business as well.

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What ever method you use, develop and use one, there's nothing like a warm or hot prospect who already has some level of trust because a friend, family member, co-worker, or neighbor recommended you.

You do have to make it a priority or its one of those things that kind of just never gets done.

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### Conclusion

In conclusion, there are about a thousand things you could do to improve your marketing.

The drawback is, with a thousand things, it violates the “get your client to do the NEXT thing” rule and whenever we give people too many things to do or decide upon, they simply shut down from overload.

So of the 12 Tips in this document, pick one this week, set aside 30 minutes to an hour, and just do it. If you get stumped or frustrated, STOP!

Pick another one and implement it next week.

The key is to be consistent. Doing something every week will move you forward. Doing something every day moves you forward faster. But take it at your own pace, commit to doing or at least trying a new marketing tip each week. Before long, you start seeing results, you'll become the Expert in your Industry in your town and people will start Finding you instead of you having to hunt them down.

All the best to you and your endeavor,

Nicholas St Jon – Wichita Plus