

15 Ways To Better Communicate With

Target

Customers



E-Book

SmallBiz Ladies 
Melinda Emerson

www.SucceedAsYourOwnboss.com

HOW TO BETTER COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TARGET CUSTOMERS

People do business with others who they know, like and trust. However, many small business owners find it challenging to earn a position in their customers' inner circle of trusted resources. Succeeding with this involves breaking through the clutter that customers are bombarded with on a daily basis.

To develop a reputation as a valuable resource and have customers turn to your business when they need help, you must maintain a steady stream of communications. This resource was developed as a supplement to the "How to Better Communicate with Your Target Customers" webinar and explains how to improve your communications and in turn, increase your marketing ROI and drive sales.



WHO IS YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER?

The first part of improving your communications starts with knowing who you want to communicate with. Although this may seem obvious, many small business owners don't have a solid understanding of their ideal customers. The following questions can help you delve into the minds of your ideal customers:

1. Who is your target customer? Be as specific as possible when you answer this question.
2. Do you have a detailed customer profile? If not, or if the profile is out of date, create a new one. Keep the customer profile handy – such as next to your computer – so you can easily refer to it when planning your next marketing move.
3. What are your customers' biggest challenges, aspirations, needs and concerns? Always put your customers' needs front and center in your communications.

The answers to these questions will give you a much better understanding of your target customers. You can then use this knowledge to create communications that resonate with them.



DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The next part of improving your marketing involves creating a communications plan that drives sales. The rest of this resource explores the key elements of a successful communications strategy, including:

1. List building
2. When to connect with customers
3. How to connect with customers

The strategies outlined below are ideal for busy small business owners, since they are effective, low-cost and easy to implement.



List Building: 5 Low-Cost and Effective Ways to Grow Your List

A list of engaged subscribers can be one of the most powerful tools in your marketing toolbox. These subscribers will often be your best customers and the most likely to refer you to their friends. One of your top marketing priorities should be to add as many qualified leads as possible to your list.

Since your website is the center of all of your online marketing activities, it is also the best place to capture the contact information of potential customers. To get leads to give you their email addresses, you'll need to provide them with something valuable in return. Make them an offer that is so enticing that they will be willing to join your list and hear from you on a regular basis. Just remember to provide your leads with the highest quality free content. If a lead receives low-quality content from you at the beginning of the relationship, they will never pay for your product or service in the future.



Here are five low-cost ways to encourage customers to subscribe to your list:

1. Give away a free special report, book chapter or audio interview. Use a pop-up window invite potential customers to download your content. This content can be an article, summary of research or anything else that helps your target customers solve one of their key problems. You can also give away 1-3 chapters of your book, an audio interview with another expert in your industry or a podcast. Not everyone prefers to read content, so creating offers for auditory and visual learners can add significantly more leads to your list.
2. Ask visitors to subscribe to your blog and newsletter. Give leads the option to sign-up to receive your blog updates or e-newsletter when they request your premium content. You can make this option more enticing by posting an archive of your previous e-newsletters, so customers can get a sneak peek of the valuable information that they will receive.
3. Invite customers to connect with you using social media. Your website should include information about all of your social networks, along with buttons that link directly to your social profiles. Ask potential customers to connect with you on Facebook, follow you on Twitter or subscribe to your YouTube channel. The more ways that potential customers connect with you, the greater chances you have of making your message stick.
4. Offer free samples or a free gift. Everybody loves free stuff. Offering product samples, a free trial or gift cards will motivate more people to subscribe to your list.
5. Give your subscribers options. Your opt-in form should ask potential customers how they prefer to receive communications. For example, do they prefer email, regular mail, a phone call, text message or Skype? The form should also clearly state what you are offering (e.g. a product sample, quote, free consultation or coaching).



When to Connect With Customers: 6 Reasons to Contact Your List Today

Once your list-building systems are in place, you'll need to ramp up your communications efforts. Many small business owners don't maintain frequent communications with their customers because they don't know what to say. However, if you don't stay in contact on a regular basis, customers may forget who you are or why they subscribed to your list. This can result in a loss of subscribers and increased spam complaints.



Here are six good reasons to contact your customers:

1. To educate them. Sending subscribers relevant and educational articles can help position you as an invaluable resource and industry leader. However, you don't need to spend tons of time writing original articles for this strategy to work. You can repurpose your blog posts or send subscribers helpful articles that were written by others.
2. To give them coupons or discounts. One of the best ways to bring traffic to your store or website is to give out coupons or discounts. Consider offering a buy one/get one deal, a 50% off coupon or free shipping.
3. To inform them of new products or services. Whenever your company has a new product or service offering, make sure that your subscribers know about it! Don't assume that your customers know all of the ways that they can do business with you.
4. To announce website and social media updates. Inform customers of website improvements and new social media profiles. You can also send out a notification whenever you publish a new blog post to attract more readers.
5. To invite them to events. Plan special events for your customers. For example, invite them to a grand opening, launch party or open house with free food and drinks. These exclusive events show your customers that they are appreciated and can help drive business.
6. To follow up. Always check in with a customer 7-10 days after a sale to make sure that they had a good experience. If so, you can ask them for a testimonial or upsell them another product or service.

Just remember to respect your customer's wishes and make sure that you have permission to contact them. Contacting a customer without their permission can result in spam complaints and lost business.



How to Connect with Customers: The Top Marketing Channels for Small Businesses

Once you develop a strong list and quality content, the next step is selecting the right marketing channels to connect with customers. With the abundance of marketing options, it may be hard to determine where to devote your time and resources to get the best results. Below are six marketing channels that have been proven to deliver strong ROI for small businesses:

Email.

Email marketing is a quick and low-cost way to connect with customers. Here are a few ideas to jumpstart your email marketing:

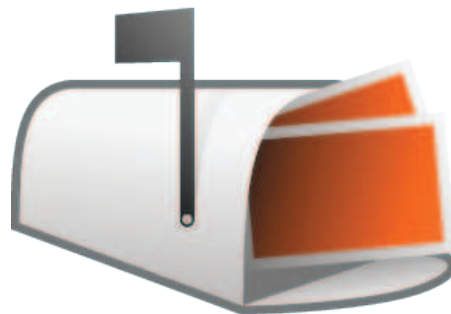
- Send weekly, monthly or quarterly email newsletters.
- Send broadcast emails, which are sporadic announcements that inform subscribers about one topic (such as a special promotion, event or product launch).
- Set up a series of autoresponders, or automated messages, in your email marketing system. For example, if someone downloads a free report from your website, send them an autoresponder series that thanks them for opting in and encourages them to sign up for your next webinar or schedule a consultation with you.

Direct Mail.

Letters, postcards, menus and flyers are all forms of direct mail that can be targeted geographically by zip code or mailed to your existing customer base. You can also mail potential customers a package containing a promotional item. The bulky package may pique their interest and motivate them to open your mailer. If the promotional item is something useful, potential customers will think of you whenever they use it.

SMS Text/Mobile.

With your customers' permission, you can contact them using text messages on their mobile phones. Text messages are useful for announcing coupons, specials, appointment reminders or openings.





QR Codes.

If you've thought about using Quick Response (QR) Codes to attract customers, now is a great time to try them. They're affordable and have the unique ability to bridge your offline marketing to your online destinations. For example, including a QR code in a print advertisement can bring more customers to your website, where they can download a coupon or shop online. Here are three questions to help you determine if QR codes should be part of your marketing strategy.

- Does your audience use QR codes?
- Can you optimize your QR codes to display correctly on a variety of mobile devices?
- Where can you place QR codes so they will get noticed?



Social Media.

Social media marketing puts your Rolodex on steroids. Using social media allows you to communicate with your entire database at one time, depending on the method used. Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are three of the top social media networking sites and a solid way to expand your prospects beyond your existing customers. Just be sure to observe how others interact on each site before diving into conversations. Each social network has a unique culture and language.



Event Marketing.

A great way to use event marketing is to invite people to a grand opening, workshop or holiday party. You can send invitations using evite.com, or use eventbrite.com to conduct an event marketing campaign. These services allow users to create tickets, make contact or name tag lists and send automatic reminder emails to invitees and attendees.

Building a high-quality list, developing compelling content and selecting the right marketing channels can help you nurture relationships with potential and existing customers. If you can position your business as the ultimate solution and stay in touch on a regular basis, you will have customers for life.

BECOME YOUR OWN BOSS

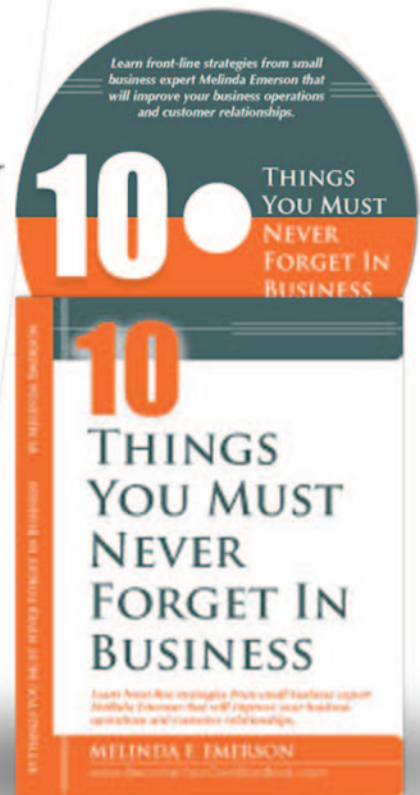
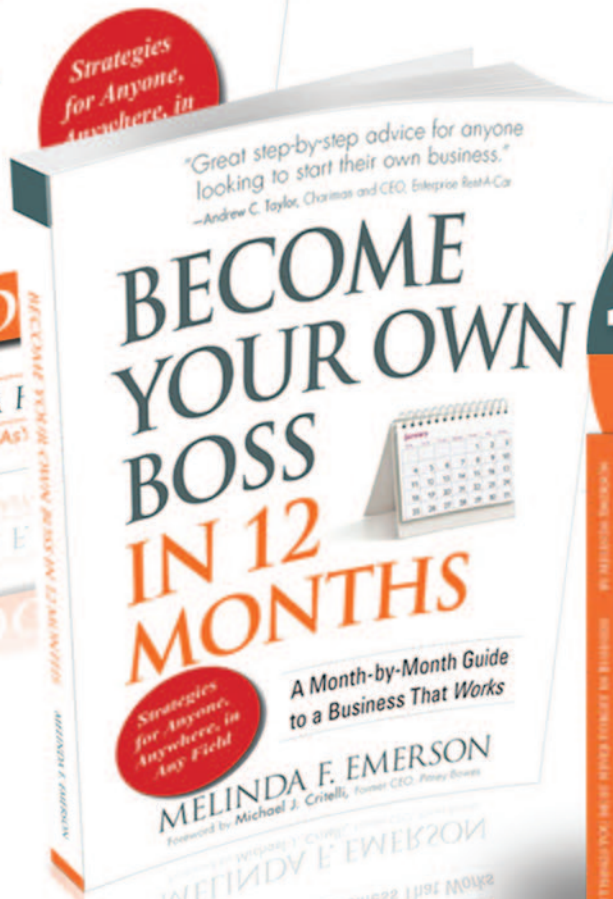
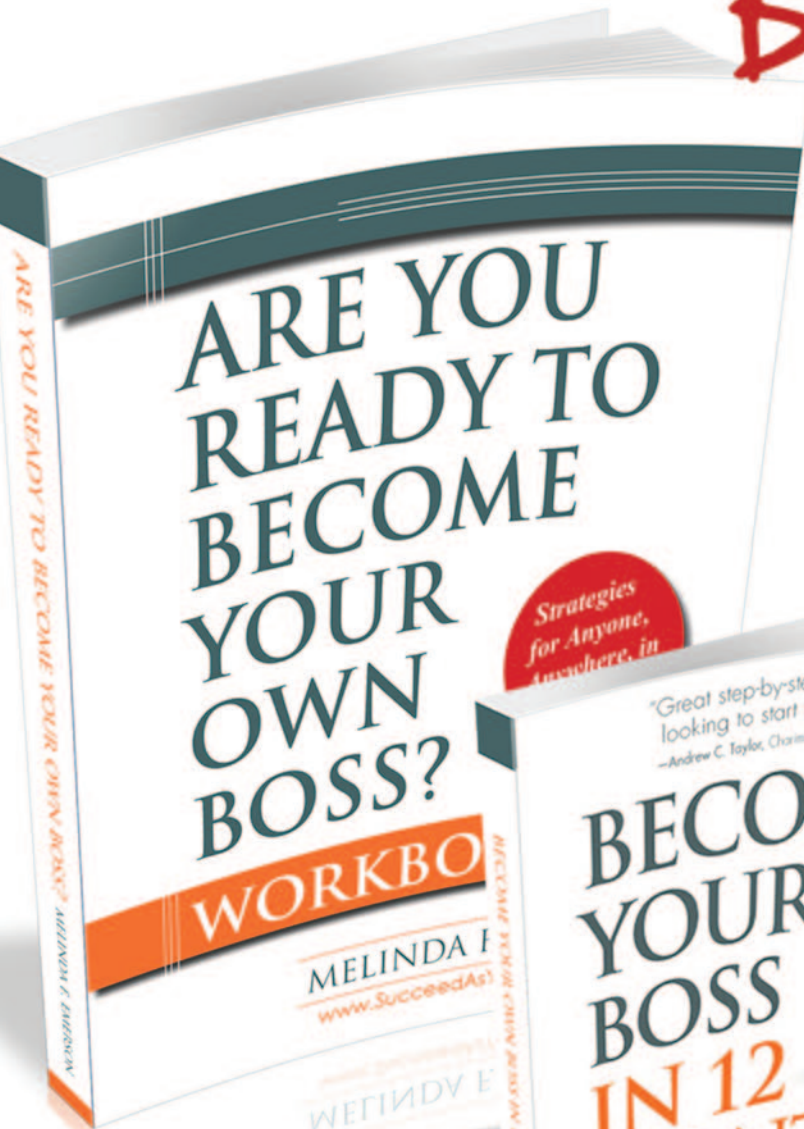
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SmallBizLady
Melinda Emerson

www.SucceedAsYourOwnBoss.com

ABOUT MELINDA EMERSON

Melinda F. Emerson, **SmallBizLady**, is America's #1 small business expert. She is an author, speaker and small business coach whose areas of expertise include small business start-up, business development and social media marketing. As CEO of Quintessence Multimedia, Melinda develops audio, video and written content to help her Fortune 500 clients engage small business customers. She is a weekly columnist for the You're The Boss blog for the New York Times. She publishes a resource blog, www.succeedasyourownboss.com which is syndicated by the Huffington Post and hosts a weekly talk show on Twitter called #SmallBizChat for today's entrepreneurs. She reaches 1.5 million small business owners weekly on the internet. *Forbes Magazine* named Melinda Emerson #1 Woman for Entrepreneurs to follow on Twitter. Melinda has been featured on MSNBC, Fox News, NBC Nightly News and in *The Washington Post*, *Fortune*, *Essence* and *Black Enterprise*. She is also the author of the bestselling book "Become Your Own Boss in 12 months; A Month-by-Month Guide to a Business That Works." Melinda is a graduate of Virginia Tech.



To your success,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Melinda Emerson'.

Melinda F. Emerson "Smallbizlady"

MFE Consulting, LLC
P.O. Box 280
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
610-352-0680

Email: melinda@melindaemerson.com

Web: <http://www.succeedasyourownboss.com>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/smallbizlady>

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/in/melindaemerson>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/smallbizlady>

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