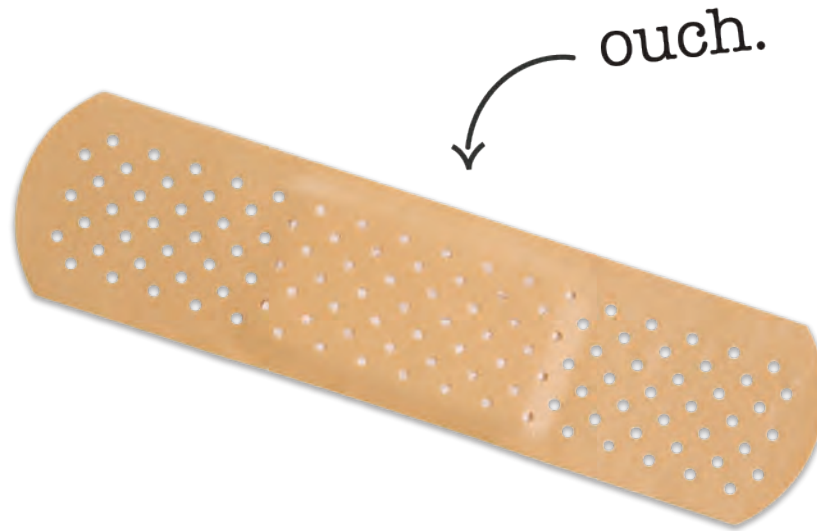


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TOP 5

LOCAL MARKETING
MISTAKES

and how to avoid them



Avoid the usual mistakes

The goal of every local marketing initiative – and the goal of this guide – is to help you drive new business. The challenges and solutions discussed in this guide come from decades of experience in guiding small businesses marketing strategies. The Top 5 Local Marketing Mistakes was created to help you avoid common local marketing pitfalls and to shed light on new tactics and strategies that can make a positive impact on your business.

Think about the last few programs you launched to drive new clients to your businesses. With those in mind, here are the top 5 local marketing mistakes...

#5 – Trying to Build a Website On Your Own

Your website is an important piece of your business's local marketing efforts – today's customers expect that you'll have one. It can't just have a nice design, some photos and list your services. Your website needs to do one thing well – convince visitors that you are the best business for their needs. Many small business owners create a website that they think is well designed or tell a friend how they want it to look. It may feel like an easy and fun project that requires a little time and effort, but it is as critical as choosing a location or name for the business. Just because it seems easy, doesn't make it so.

It's a science.

Enticing a website visitor to call your business is quite literally a science – something easily done incorrectly. Every word and image plays an important role and requires a specific skill set not commonly found by your average web designer or creative individual. Here are few common website design pitfalls to avoid:

- Not making it clear what you want the visitor to do (i.e. make an appointment).
- Not using web friendly copy – too much, brochure style.
- Not satisfying various types of visitors (i.e. age, need, etc.).
- Not optimizing your website based on customer feedback, new services and usage data.

What can you do to avoid the #5 local marketing mistake?

We know it's hard to resist using the free web design software that comes with your computer, ready-made site templates or your tech-savvy niece or nephew to build your company's website.

Resist the urge!

On the internet, people are easily distracted and are always one click away from visiting your competition. Every choice made with regard to headlines, buttons, photography and colors can drastically alter its effectiveness. Help is available in the way of online marketing service providers that can ensure you're guiding as many people as possible toward calling or emailing your business. Unfortunately, most site-building tools and family members don't know how to create a site that does this, robbing you of customers that could have been yours.

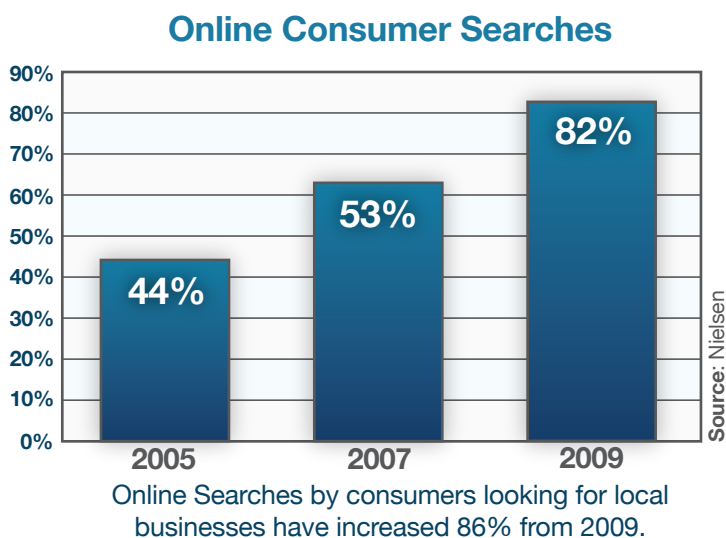
#4 – Creating a Site No One Visits

So, you spent lots of money and time creating the perfect website for your business, but no one ever visits! These days, there are many great ways to get people to your website. You can include it on your business cards, brochures, newsletters or post it in your office. These are all good ways to drive traffic, but what about getting prospective customers there? After all, it's these people that you want learning about your business and coming to your site. If they do, it's likely they will contact you for more information and hopefully become your customer.

When publishing a website, a common misconception is that people will just show up. Unlike a storefront – where you can receive walk in traffic – over 100 million other websites are competing for site visitors. Unless you take action to drive traffic, the only person visiting your site will be you.

What can you do to avoid the #4 local marketing mistake?

Online marketing could be your answer. Today, over 82% of people use search engines to find local services and 54% say they substitute the use of a phone book with a search engine. This audience also tends to be more affluent. Search engines are the only form of advertising where a potential customer tells you exactly what they want... giving you the opportunity to fulfil their need immediately. Not only do search engines drive considerable website traffic, almost every search-based visitor is looking to buy your exact product or service! What could be better?



Given these statistics, you might think that a huge percentage of the \$100 billion businesses spend on local marketing goes towards online marketing. In actuality, only 3% of local marketing budgets are spent on online but this number is growing rapidly – at a rate of over 30% a year. Now is the time to take the initiative and start marketing online before the rest of your competition does.

Focus on your business.

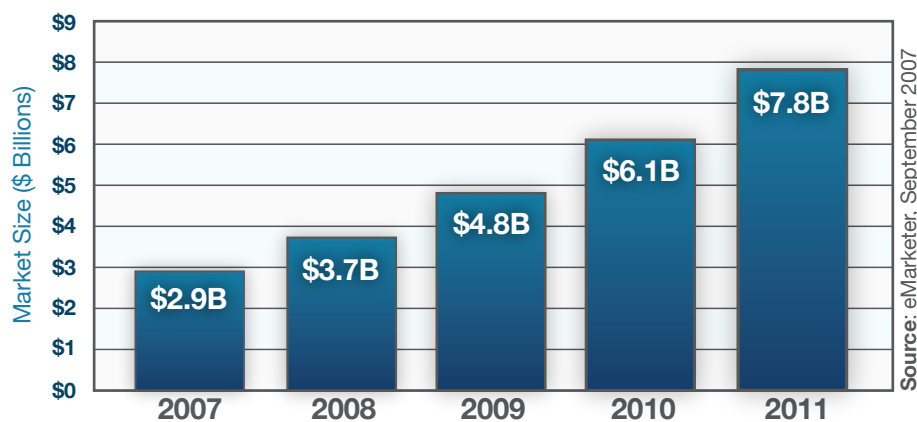
You have a business to run and less energy to focus on decoding the mysterious jargon of internet advertising; terms like CPC, CPA, max bid, exact match, broad match or rich media. Unlike large national advertisers who pay digital advertising agencies to guide them through the online world, you need a solution that is more cost effective. Luckily, experts in the field of online marketing have begun offering unique services to local businesses like yours. This takes the burden off of your shoulders and provides you with access to a virtually limitless source of potential customers for your business.

#3 – Not Knowing if Your Marketing is Really Working

Wait, you are already marketing your business? Maybe you put an ad in the yellow pages, handed out brochures or made a big bet by sponsoring a local event. That is great, but you have to ask yourself a difficult question – do you know how many people visited your site or called or emailed your business as a direct result of these marketing tactics? If you are having trouble answering this question, don't worry – over 80% of small businesses can't either.

Your local marketing efforts can easily be wasted when you don't know the number of leads and customers your advertising is generating. Larger businesses have also shifted more of their marketing budgets online for that very reason. Often, traditional media channels like print, television and radio are far more difficult to monitor and usually not as cost effective as their online counterparts.

Local Online Ad Spending



Experts say local online ad spending will continue to grow substantially over the next decade.

What can you do to avoid the #3 local marketing mistake?

There are many different techniques you can use to monitor the performance of your local advertising. You could use a different phone number in each ad, set up multiple web pages and track "hits", or ask people how they heard about you. These methods work, but take considerable effort to coordinate and won't give you the confidence to answer questions like:

- Should I continue spending money on this marketing activity?
- Will it scale? If a marketing activity worked well on a small level, will it be even more successful if I spend more money on it?
- Was it profitable? After accounting for fixed costs plus the price of advertising; did the amount of additional revenue earned add to my bottom line?

Again, beyond its effectiveness at driving qualified traffic to your business, the great thing about online marketing is that everything is measurable. The best way to avoid failure is to make sure that you have a system in place to track the source of all website traffic, calls and emails. You'll also want to put this information to good use by avoiding the advertising methods that are not cost effective and potentially spending more on those that are. Ideally, these refinements should just happen automatically while you are busy serving an increased customer base!

#2 – Using Directory Services

Another marketing option that local businesses usually consider trying are directory services that charge for referrals. On the surface, it sounds like directories can potentially reduce the level of effort and costs associated with bringing you new customers. However, here are some insights into directory services you should know before paying that enrollment fee.

Market your business, not a 3rd party or competitors.

Directory services need to drive a significant amount of traffic to their websites in order to satisfy the thousands of small businesses that have paid an enrollment fee to be listed there. How do they generate traffic? Most advertise their “Comparison Services” via search engines, enticing consumers shopping for multiple quotes and the best possible deal to “click-through” and provide their personal information and a description of their needs. The directory service then sends this information to 5 or more businesses. All of these businesses pay a fee to the directory service for the same referral. Whichever business closes the sale ends up being the sole beneficiary. What are the downsides?

- You still have to pay for the referral even if you can’t take the job due to scheduling conflicts or a shortage of resources.
- If you don’t respond quickly, the odds of winning the business decrease significantly.
- The individual looking for your services is more likely to negotiate heavily on price due to all of the other quotes they are receiving.

The big winner is the directory service that ends up with 5 or more payments in return for providing 1 referral!

What can you do to avoid the #2 local marketing mistake?

Get to the source! You can take control by leveraging a system that promotes your services directly to local prospective customers on the most popular search engines like Yahoo! and Google. Rather than learning about you and your competitors through a third-party, these people can be directed to your company’s website instead. Ideally that is optimized by industry experts to convert visits into calls and customers.

#1 – Not Turning Calls Into Sales Effectively

Generating qualified inquiries to your business will get you close to success, but you or your staff will need to take it the last mile and close the sale. Managing dozens of leads, following up and scheduling can be a challenge. However, when it comes to getting a return on investment for your marketing activities, sales effectiveness is critical.

Please pick up.

You've done it. You managed to turn your carefully spent marketing dollars into a phone call from a qualified prospect ready to learn more about your services. What's more, you are so excited that you are only 36% likely to answer the phone! That's right – as reported by FastCall411 in April 2006 with a test of 5,000 local businesses – two-thirds didn't answer their phone. Moreover, a study by market research firm Synovate found that four out of five Americans regard "immediate availability" by phone as an "important" or the "most important" factor when selecting a local service provider.

Missed calls are going to happen at every business and will never be avoided completely. However, missing a call is a sure fire way to drive your potential customers to keep researching and find your competitors. If you can't answer, you have to think about a system to help you manage all of your business inquiries to ensure you are making the most out of your marketing efforts.

Another big reason local businesses don't answer the phone is that your prospects are calling the wrong number. How is this possible? Did you change your phone number or move locations? Your customers may be searching in an online or offline directory that is not updated regularly or referring to a brochure with your old phone number. Either way, if they can't reach you, you are missing out on a potential sale. As the owner of a business where every sale counts, you have to control what prospects see and have the ability to make changes to your contact information quickly and easily.

Don't let your leads manage you.

It's a great problem to have until you have it. The problem, of course, is having to juggle and respond to so many leads that it becomes difficult to track and ensure follow-through with all of them. There are several reasons this could happen:

- Instead of pacing your marketing efforts, you launch one large campaign causing a rush of activity.
- No systems or tools are in place to help manage your incoming leads and ensure timely follow-up.
- You are not using call recording to track your conversations with customers or prospects.
- A system is not in place to aggregate leads from multiple sources such as web forms and phone calls.
- Your receptionist is not trained or evaluated for his/her ability to further sell prospects on the benefits of your services.

What can you do to avoid the #1 local marketing mistake?

Now is the time for you to upgrade your systems and control how your potential customers are contacting you. Competition with larger companies is difficult enough without the added cost of having a lead management system. You have the opportunity to level the playing field by investing in a system that can be your single source for superior sales effectiveness. It's very easy to believe your situation is unique and that no other businesses are experiencing the same challenges as yours, but such problems are common and simple solutions exists.

Also, working with experts in your specific field to build a website that can act as your own online presence can empower you update your in information real-time and ensure that you are not missing out on potential customers.

Conclusion

You've made it through all 5 local marketing mistakes... hopefully you've thought about how to apply them to your business and your various marketing activities. We've discussed strategies for building and driving traffic to your website and how to measure campaign performance to drive future marketing decisions. And we explored some of the downsides to working with a pay-per-lead company and the importance of sales effectiveness.

If we tried to get one point across, it's that you don't have to go it alone. Companies like Yodle have helped countless small businesses like yours to generate calls and customers with a single system, dedicated account manager and industry expertise.

About Yodle

Yodle provides local businesses with a simple way to get more customers and phone calls using online marketing. Yodle has created a platform and offers services that ensure you will avoid all 5 local marketing mistakes:

#5 – Trying to Build a Website on Your Own: Yodle's websites are built with a single goal in mind – to generate phone calls and customers for your business. Your website will be built by experts in your specific industry and can be up and ready to start receiving traffic in days instead of weeks.

#4 – Creating a Site No One Visits: Using the major search engines, Yahoo, MSN, Google, SuperPages, Yodle places your business in front of your local customers. We make sure that your advertising shows up in the right place, at the right time across dozens of high profile local search sites.

#3 – Not Knowing if Your Marketing is Really Working: Yodle provides your business with state of the art measurement tools to track results and review your return on investment.

#2 – Using Directory Services: Unlike director services that use your hard earned dollars to market their comparison services and simply list your business in a directory, Yodle promotes your business only and never sends your leads to a competitor.

#1 – Not Turning Calls into Sales Effectively: With Yodle's industry leading lead management system, you can actually listen to all your incoming phone calls. You can use the recordings to review how professionally your staff answers calls, make improvements to your sales process and finally determine who is turning calls into new appointment.

To find out more about Yodle you can visit, call or email us at:

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