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creators in your niche. You don't need to collaborate with celebrities to see results from influencer marketing. In fact, I've seen micro-influencers — creators with 1,000 to 50,000 followers — drive better outcomes for small businesses than big-name partnerships. Their audiences are more engaged, and their recommendations feel more genuine. And the numbers back that up. According to a recent report, micro-influencers on Instagram see an average engagement rate of 3.86% — compared to just 1.21% for mega-influencers. That kind of connection makes a real impact, especially when you're trying to grow on a budget. One client I worked with partnered with a few niche creators in the HR and operations space. Instead of a huge campaign, we sent each one a sneak peek of our tool, let them test it, and asked them to share their honest take. A handful of Instagram stories and LinkedIn shout-outs later, we saw a steady uptick in demos booked—and even better, we built relationships we could tap into again later. Here's what I've found works well: Find creators who already speak to your target audience Focus on relevance and authenticity, not follower count Let them tell your story in their own voice—it comes across more naturally Micro-influencers are often more open to creative or non-cash partnerships, like offering free access to your product, an affiliate link, or co-branded content. It doesn't have to be a massive spend to be effective. You never know until you ask! Pro tip: Download HubSpot's free Influencer Marketing Guide to get started with your partnerships. Source 11. Encourage user-generated content and customer shout-outs. There's nothing quite as powerful — or budget-friendly — as having your customers talk about you. Whether it's a tagged Instagram post, a product review, or a casual shout-out in a LinkedIn comment, user-generated content (UGC) builds trust in a way no paid ad ever could. That said, I know not every business has a lineup of customers ready to post. Especially in the early days, you might need to get a little creative. I've worked with startups who hired UGC creators — freelancers who record short, natural-feeling videos that look just like a real customer review. These aren't high-production ads — they're simple, relatable clips that work great for paid social, landing pages, and organic posts. For one B2B SaaS client, we hired a UGC creator to simulate a first-time user experience with our platform. The video was short, honest, and shot on an iPhone — and it outperformed our polished explainer video 3 to 1 on click-throughs. Whether you're working with real customers or hired creators, the goal is the same: help people see themselves in the story you're telling. Try this: Ask happy customers to tag you or share a quick video. Offer a small incentive (gift card, feature, shout-out). Hire a UGC creator to model the customer journey if you're just getting started. Pro tip: Even a handful of videos or testimonials can be repurposed across social, landing pages, and ads. And if you're not sure where to find UGC creators, platforms like Upwork or Fiverr are great starting points. 12. Collaborate with other businesses for co-marketing opportunities. One of the fastest (and most underrated) ways to expand your reach is to partner with another business that shares your audience — but doesn't compete with you. I've seen this work incredibly well for small teams, especially when budgets are tight. One saalestech platform I worked with partnered with a CRM company to co-host a webinar on streamlining sales processes. They promoted it to both of their email lists, shared the content across social media, and followed up with a joint blog recap. The result? Double the visibility, double the leads, and half the work. You don't have to do anything elaborate. Some ideas I've seen work: Run a co-hosted event or webinar. Create a bundled offer or promo code swap. Write a guest post or feature each other in newsletters. Do a simple Instagram or LinkedIn Live together. Pro tip: Pick a strategic partner whose audience overlaps with yours but solves a different problem. That way, you're adding value without stepping on toes, and your content feels like a win for everyone involved. 13. Incorporate short-form video into your content mix. Short-form video is another one of the fastest ways to get discovered — and the good news is, you don't need a studio setup or a big production budget to get started. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts reward content that's real, relatable, and quick to consume. Whether it's hopping on a trending audio clip or sharing a behind-the-scenes moment, short videos can punch way above their weight. One early-stage SaaS company I worked with posted a quick video using a trending sound to show a "before and after" of their product in action. It was shot on an iPhone in under 10 minutes and ended up driving more traffic than a full week of paid ads. You don't have to be a creator to try this. Some of the best-performing videos are simple, helpful, or funny takes that speak directly to your audience. Just stay authentic, and don't be afraid to experiment. A few simple video ideas to try: Use trending audio to highlight a relatable customer pain point. Share a quick product tip or FAQ using a green screen mode. Record a founder reaction to a recent stat or headline. Show the transformation your product delivers. Pro tip: Repurpose what you already have. Take a blog post, FAQ, or stat you've shared elsewhere and turn it into a 15-second script. Tools like HubSpot's free Clip Creator make it even easier to get started. 14. Experiment with webinars, ebooks, or downloadable content. Long-form content might not be the flashiest tactic, but when it's done right, it can generate leads for months. Webinars, guides, checklists, and reports give you a way to go deeper on topics your audience cares about — and collect email addresses while you're at it. At one company I worked with, we ran a survey to gather fresh data on B2B sales teams. Once we had the results, we turned them into a gated report, a blog post highlighting the key takeaways, and a series of quick-hit tips based on the insights. We also repurposed stats and quotes into social posts, and hosted a follow-up webinar to walk through the findings live. That single project gave us a full month of content — and filled our pipeline with leads who were already engaged. And you don't need a research budget to get started. You can get scrappy: Ask your audience 3-5 questions with a free tool like Typeform. Host a casual, no-fluff webinar with a customer or partner. Package up your top blog posts into a downloadable PDF. Turn internal templates or checklists into lead magnets. Pro tip: Evergreen content like webinars and guides can keep generating leads long after launch — if you make it easy to find. Add it to your homepage, link to it in blog posts, and promote it on social regularly (not just once). On that note... 15. Repurpose your best-performing content across channels. If you've already put in the work to create a webinar, guide, or tip-packed blog post, don't let it be a one-and-done. Some of the most effective content strategies I've seen aren't about producing more — they're about squeezing every last drop of value out of what you already have, especially when resources are scarce. That AI sales survey I mentioned? Like I said before, we spun it into a full campaign. The gated report turned into a blog post, which turned into a carousel for LinkedIn, which turned into a short video script. We even used snippets for an email nurture sequence. Same story, five formats. Here are a few ideas to get more mileage from what you've already made: Turn blog posts into short-form videos or carousel posts. Break up long webinars into 15-30 second video clips. Pull key stats or quotes into graphics or caption-style images. Convert your most popular email by identitying one area that's slowing you down or keeping you stuck, and then hire a freelancer to help you move it forward. Even a small win (like getting your blog backlog cleared or landing page refreshed) can create momentum and free up your time to focus on what you do best. Should you outsource marketing for your small business? If bringing in a freelancer for a single project can help you gain momentum, you might be wondering: Should I outsource more? Maybe even all of it? It's a question I've seen a lot of small business owners ask — especially once marketing starts pulling you away from the work you actually want to be doing. And honestly, it makes sense. According to a recent report, 37% of small businesses are outsourcing at least one business process, and digital marketing is one of the most common areas they hand off. I've worked with scrappy teams who outsourced everything from blog writing to paid ad management so they could stay focused on product and customers. I've also seen founders keep things in-house until they nailed their messaging — then brought in experts to help scale. There's no one-size-fits-all approach. It really comes down to your goals, your bandwidth, and your budget. If any of these sound like you, it might be time to outsource: You're spending way too much time on marketing tasks you don't love (or fully understand). You have great ideas, but no time to execute them. You've hit a plateau and need a fresh outside perspective. You're ready to grow, but not quite ready to hire a full team. The good news is: Outsourcing doesn't mean giving up control. It means adding capacity. The same study found that 59% of businesses outsource to reduce costs, and 57% say it helps increase focus and productivity. In other words, outsourcing that didn't have the time or bandwidth to create content in-house. Sometimes that meant ghostwriting blog posts, and other times it was helping launch a new email campaign or tightening up web copy. I've also been on the other side, working with freelance designers and SEO specialists to fill in skill gaps and move things forward faster for my own projects. You don't need to be guessing what will land — you're just amplifying it. Social ad spend is projected to hit \$219.8 billion globally this year, and small businesses make up a big part of that. Why? Because social ads are flexible, easy to test, and can be highly targeted. To make the most of your budget: Focus on one platform where your audience is active. Test one variable at a time (headline, image, CTA). Use retargeting to stay in front of people who've already interacted with your brand. Pro tip: Pull your best-performing organic posts and turn them into ad tests. If it worked once, it's likely to work again — with a bigger audience behind it. 3. Offer discounts, coupons, or incentives. Earlier, we talked about offering a freebie or discount to encourage email sign-ups. This takes that idea a step further, using strategic incentives to turn interest into actual purchases. Whether it's a limited-time promo, a seasonal coupon, or a simple "10% off your first order," incentives give people a reason to act now instead of waiting. I've worked with businesses that saw real results by pairing a small discount with a clear next step — like redeeming it in a follow-up email or applying it on a landing page. In fact, 62% of U.S. consumers say they actively search for promo codes or coupons when shopping online, according to a recent eMarketer report. I mean, I know I do. A few ways to test this: Add a "new subscriber" promo code to your email welcome series. Promote a weekend flash sale on social to drive urgency. Create a custom landing page tied to a specific campaign or audience segment. Pro tip: Your incentive doesn't always have to be a discount. Early access, free shipping, or even a bonus download can be just as effective when aligned with your brand and audience. 4. Sponsor your products on marketplaces like Amazon and Etsy. If you're selling a physical product, marketplaces like Amazon's sponsored products, Etsy Ads, and even eBay can be a great way to reach people who are already in buying mode. And while simply listing your products is a good start, sponsoring them gives you a serious visibility boost — especially in crowded categories. I've seen small businesses unlock major growth by simply trying something new — a new channel, a different CTA, a reworked headline. Sometimes it fails. But sometimes it's the thing that changes everything. The point isn't to get it perfect. It's to learn what works for your audience, your offer, and your brand. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them. A few ways to start small: Test two different headlines in a social ad. Try a limited-time offer and track responses. Swap out the CTA on your homepage and watch what happens. Pro tip: Keep a simple spreadsheet or dashboard where you track what you tested, what changed, and what you learned. Over time, those small learnings add up and help you build a strategy rooted in what actually works for your business. Download the Free Advertising Planning Kit Small Business Marketing Tools & Resources You've got the ideas — now it's time to bring them to life. Whether you're planning content, sending emails, or building your first website, the right marketing tools can make it a whole lot easier to stay consistent and get things done. I've tested dozens of tools across startups and small teams, and these are the ones I keep coming back to. They're simple, budget-friendly, and powerful enough to help you build real momentum — without adding complexity or cost. 1. Canva Source Canva is hands-down one of my favorite small business marketing tools. I've been using Canva for years and I still recommend it to almost every small business I work with. It's one of the easiest ways to create polished, professional-looking content without needing a designer (or any real design skills at all). Whether I'm putting together a blog header, a social post, or a slide deck, Canva is my go-to. The drag-and-drop interface is super intuitive, and the templates make it easy to stay on-brand without starting from scratch every time. I've even used it to build mockups for landing pages and marketing emails. It's especially great for small teams or solo founders who want their brand to look put-together without blowing the budget — or spending hours in Photoshop. If you're just getting started, it's one of the most beginner-friendly tools out there. Plus, their free version is great too! 2. Wix Source I've used Wix a few times over the years to help small businesses get a website up and running — and it's one of the easiest ways to launch something that looks clean and professional without hiring a developer. There's a bit of a learning curve if you've never built a site before, but it's pretty quick to pick up. The drag-and-drop editor gives you a lot of flexibility, and there are tons of templates you can customize for different industries and use cases. I've used it to help teams launch everything from one-page lead capture sites to more detailed product pages. One thing I appreciate is that Wix also offers the option to get direct support or design help from their team. That's a nice safety net if you run into something tricky or want a bit more polish. If you're looking for a solid "set it and forget it" website option, this is a great place to start. 3. Hubspot Marketing Hub Source I personally believe that if you're looking for an all-in-one platform to manage email, automation, forms, and more, HubSpot's Marketing Hub is the best. I've used it with small teams that needed to get serious about marketing without stitching together a bunch of tools, and it made a huge difference. And that's my honest opinion! The email editor is easy to use, and like I said earlier, you can segment your list, build workflows, and track results without needing a developer or a full-time ops person. I especially love the way it integrates with HubSpot CRM so you're not just sending emails into the void — you're actually tracking what happens after someone clicks. One team I worked with used HubSpot to launch their first email newsletter and lead nurture flow. It was intuitive enough for them to set up quickly, but powerful enough to scale as they grew. If you're planning to grow your list and need more than the basics, this is definitely something worth exploring. 4. Later Source If you're trying to stay consistent on social media — and not just post when you remember to — Later is one of the most approachable scheduling tools I've used. It's especially great for visual planning, which makes it a nice fit for platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. I've used Later to plan and schedule content across multiple channels, and it's helped me (and clients) stay organized without needing to log in and post manually every day. The drag-and-drop calendar makes it easy to see how your content is spaced out, and I like that it includes link-in-bio functionality and basic analytics in the free plan. If you're building your presence on social media and want a low-lift way to stay consistent, Later is a great starting point. You can plan ahead, track what's working, and keep your content on brand — even if it's just you running the show. 5. Google Analytics & Search Console Source Technically two tools, but these are some of the first things I set up anytime I launch a new website. They're free, surprisingly powerful, and give you a clearer picture of what's actually happening when people visit your site. Google Analytics (GA4) helps you understand how people are engaging with your content — what pages they're visiting, how long they stay, where they drop off, and what's driving conversions. If you've ever wondered "Is anyone actually reading this?" or "Which blog post is bringing in traffic?" GA4 has your answers. Search Console, on the other hand, gives you insight into how your site appears in Google search results. I use it to see what keywords I'm ranking for, what pages are getting impressions, and where there are opportunities to improve SEO. It's also great for spotting technical issues that could affect your visibility. If you're investing time into content or SEO, these tools are essential. They help you stop guessing and start optimizing. Start Marketing Your Business Today If you've made it this far, take that as your cue to get started (or keep going). I've worked with a lot of small businesses and startups over the years, and I've seen how much impact even the smallest marketing effort can make. Sometimes it's one blog post that starts bringing in search traffic. Or a one-page site that helps convert that first customer. Or a welcome email that turns into a real relationship. You don't need a perfect strategy to start — you just need a place to begin. Whether it's publishing your first post, testing a new tool, or finally organizing your contacts, each small move helps build momentum. And that momentum matters. The effort you put in today will keep paying off long after the post goes live. Good luck — you've got this! Editor's note: This post was originally published in February 2017 and has been updated for comprehensiveness. Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. 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