

Five ways to market your business on a shoestring budget

 By [Robyn Hazekamp](#)

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Marketing is absolutely essential for any business to achieve real success and stay relevant, but a traditional marketing campaign can be costly for a small company. How can you reach new customers and retain your existing ones if you have a lot of time, but very little money?

1. Use social media

Social media is free to use and is an extremely effective way to communicate with current customers and encourage new ones. You can use it in multiple ways, so set aside at least a few hours every week to work on the following:

- Start a blog related to your industry and updated it regularly - at least once a week, preferably more. Talk about projects you're working on or give tips related to your business.
- Be active on your Facebook and Twitter pages. If you aren't tweeting and updating regularly, your customers won't be thinking about you.
- Create a Pinterest account. It is now more popular than Twitter and is a great way to reach clients in certain industries.
- Make a low-cost video and share it. People love entertaining or informative videos and are likely to share them with friends. Videos can also make you more visible on Google.

Regular activity on social media can improve your SEO results and reminds your clients that you exist.

2. Encourage referrals

Customer referrals are, traditionally, a good way to build up your customer base. Offer existing customers discounts or small rewards in "refer-a-friend" promotions. For example, a customer could earn a 10% discount for referring a friend, and the friend could earn a 5% discount on their first purchase.

3. Get reviews

On a similar note, encourage customers to review your services online. A survey in 2013 found that 79% of customers trust online reviews as much as recommendations from their friends, and 73% said good reviews make them trust a business more. Some commonly used online review sites include Yowzit and HelloPeter. Remember, reviews can be negative too, so make sure that you follow up with customers who have complaints and resolve them!

4. Collaborate

Find a local business with a target market that crosses over with yours and work with them to promote both your businesses.

Some ideas:

- Give them a special offer to hand out only to their customers.
- Trade products or services with a nearby business in exchange for advertising space.
- Combine your efforts to create something newsworthy that will promote both of you

As long as that business is not a direct competitor, you can both benefit!

5. Support fundraisers

Supporting fundraisers is a great way to raise awareness of your business name. It has the added benefits of giving your business a reputation for caring and of raising customer goodwill towards you, and the cost is limited to services or products given away. You can also use creative strategies like donating R1 for each product sold on a certain day.

Just because your business doesn't have a huge budget for marketing doesn't mean that you have to give up the possibility of marketing altogether. These are only a few of the strategies your business could use. Most cost little more than time, and, done right, they can be extremely effective at drumming up business.

ABOUT ROBYN HAZEKAMP

As a Knowledge Officer at Red & Yellow, Robyn Hazekamp contributes to the online learning side of the business, ensuring that course content meets the highest possible standards and is always up-to-date, relevant, and accessible to everyone from recent school-leavers to people who have been in the marketing business for years.

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