

## Six Ways to Improve Your Small Business Today

**1. Take control of your website.** If your designer/ developer has control over your website (meaning you can't make changes to the site yourself), take steps to take control! Ideally your domain will be registered to you (or your business), you own the hosting, and you can easily make changes and updates to the site without having to contact the designer.

If this is not the case for you (yet), take the first steps today by reaching out to your designer. Tell them this: while you appreciate their help in developing your website, you (or someone from your office) will be making all of the updates from now on. To that end, you would like the following:

- Your domain transferred over to you (if they registered it in their name/ business' name). This is a multiple step process and may take some time, so be patient and be sure to follow all of the steps as directed by their registrar and yours.
- Hosting in your name. Believe it or not, you have probably been paying too much for hosting. When you get your own hosting in your own name, you'll pay about \$4/ month for it.
- Any and all ftp/ hosting account / Wordpress passwords. You will need all of these to establish your own accounts.

We recommend converting your site over to Wordpress (.org) for ease of use, but whatever your site is made of (html, Flash, Wordpress, Joomla), it is your property and it belongs on your hosting. You don't have to completely sever ties with your designer/ developer, but having the freedom to make additions/ changes to your website when you have ideas is extremely important and will make a huge difference to your business. Remove the "designer" block and you'll be that much closer to growing your business to where you want it to be!

Ninja trick: Convert your site to Wordpress. Every client we've recommended this to has loved it/ recouped the cost within a few months. This is especially true if your current site is made of Flash.

**2. Choose the social media platform that is right for your audience.** Contrary to popular belief, it is actually not necessary for you to have an active presence on every single social media outlet in existence. Who has that kind of time? While we do recommend having accounts set up on the "Top Seven" (that would be: Facebook Fan Page, Twitter, Google +, YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram), you can easily use a simple service like HootSuite or the Wordpress JetPack to distribute your blog out to

all of these platforms while you take a look and decide which one is exactly right for your demographic. For example, we recently did a consulting job for an antiques dealer in Los Angeles, during which time we determined that the majority of their business was actually coming straight from Instagram. Now they are spending much more time on there, communicating with and growing their user base, while the other social media platforms are updated regularly but are not the main focus.

Ninja trick: Not sure which social media outlet your user base prefers? Look in your analytics to see where the majority of your traffic comes from.

**3. Send an email to your mailing list!** In fact, send an email to that list every single week. Your goal with the mailing list is to get the members of that list to “know, like and trust” you, so you’re going to need to communicate with them more frequently than a monthly newsletter or when you’re having a BIG HUGE SALE. Make sure to tell them something useful/ non sales-y. After all, those are people who have opted in to receive emails from you, which in internet-land means those people are worth their weight in gold.

Communicating with your mailing list is a learned/ acquired skill, which means that everyone experiences a certain level of discomfort when they first do it. The only way to get better at this is to practice, so go over and write an email RIGHT NOW!

Ninja trick: Statistically speaking, Wednesday afternoon is the best day/ time to send your emails. NEVER send emails after hours—most people start each and every day by deleting many of the emails they received the night before.

**4. Do a little keyword research!** Believe it or not, 90% of the people we talk to have never done ANY keyword research when it comes to their area of specialization. This means it is still incredibly easy to rank well in the search engines if you are targeting “keyword + city + state.” By “keyword,” we simply mean something like “tailor” or “dog walker” and its derivatives/associated phrases, which you can discover by using the “Keyword Planner” within [Google Adwords](#) (you’ll need a free account to access this). You will also find this exercise interesting/ illustrative as a business owner, because it will give you some insight into the actual demand for the product or service you’re supplying. Put these keyword + city + state combinations into your website frequently (in pages, in blog posts, in social media—everywhere!). They will help Google know that you are a provider, and will bring you more customers!

Ninja trick: Make a YouTube video. Use your keyword + city + state in the title. Publish. Rank on Page One for that phrase. Make sure you include your contact information/ a link back to your website! Repeat for all the cities/ counties that you service.

**5. Get citations.** Another important way to strengthen your website and make it location/ keyword specific is to get citations (links from directories/ local aggregator websites). Make sure you have your company's name/ address clearly visible on your website (along with major keywords for your products or services), then go out and get some citations! Major directories include: Merchant Circle, Manta, Yelp, YellowPages.com, and many more.

Ninja trick: BrightLocal.com is a paid service that will submit your business to multiple directories at once. Just make sure you put keywords into each and every listing!

**6. Advertise.** Once you've got your conversion strategy nailed down (meaning you know that for X number of people, you get X number of phonecalls/ new customers/ sales), take that show on the road by advertising! Paid advertising services include AdWords (of course), but Bing Ads are a great deal, Facebook ads work well for building up communities, and LinkedIn ads have a killer demographic profiling interface. Depending on your area of specialization, running a \$5/ day ad can get you everything from new customers/ clients to valuable feedback on who is clicking what and why. Keep a close eye on your ads so you don't overspend, but don't be afraid to get yourself out there!

Ninja trick: If you're not to the paid level yet, go over and put up some free ads on Craigslist (for your specific area). Craigslist ads rank well in Google, they are highly-trafficked, and they will at least get you used to writing ad copy and putting your services out there.

And with that, we'll leave you to take some small steps today that will make a huge difference to your business' bottom line in the future. The key is to push yourself a little past your comfort zone every day (technologically speaking), but not so far that you get frustrated and give up. Growth lies in the "discomfort zone!"