**10 ESSENTIAL TOOLS & TIPS TO GENERATE LEADS TODAY**

****

*Cindy Metzler is President of Omm Media, a marketing consulting firm. For 20 years she has helped startups, entrepreneurs and Fortune 500 companies grow, including Proctor & Gamble®, Tyco® and Rheem®.*

**By Cindy Metzler**

@cindy\_metzler



****

*Meaghan Edelstein is a digital marketing expert. She is a nationally recognized speaker and consultant. Meaghan is a contributor to Mashable and Social Media Examiner.*

**Co-authored by Meaghan Edelstein**

@Megs334

**#1 - WEBSITE**

These days, having a website is no longer just another element of your business plan. An online presence is a must-have if you want to keep and engage customers. It’s that simple.

There are literally countless reasons to turn your website into a profit-making platform but here are my top 10 reasons why your website is a money making machine…. because it:

**• Captures leads**

Your website should capture leads and collect your potential customer’s emails. Make it easy for visitors to subscribe to your newsletter or blog, social channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), and share their contact information so you can share “exclusive tips, savings and information!” with them.

**• Keeps you Competitive**

80% of the US population searches the web BEFORE choosing a product, service or business. That figure, on its own, should be persuasive enough to push your web presence. If your prospect cannot find you on the web (and they *can* find your competitor), you are missing opportunities. Without a well established website, your business will wane.

**• Promotes your business 24/7**

The Internet is open for business 24/7, it doesn’t close on weekends or holidays––and best of all you don’t have to pay overtime! A website gives your business an opportunity to speak directly to your customers and prospects at all hours. You open yourself up to a world of opportunity in reaching people who might not otherwise find you. A few clicks and anyone can access your products and/or services 365.

**• Educates and Boosts your Credibility**

A professional and polished website positions you as an expert in your field. Whether you have one employee or 1,000, now you have an even playing field. A user-friendly website can immediately increase your credibility. The right website lets visitors know you know your stuff. Your optimized, useful website will absolutely increase your sales.

**• Augments advertising**

You can have as much information as you want on your website with a much lower cost than other traditional outlets. Plus, by including your website address you are providing instant access to your company information and ‘its story’ in your way, in your words. You are in essence including a comprehensive overview on every business card, letter, on-hold message, etc. It’s a great way to get your word out without breaking the bank.

**• Establishes Local and Global Outreach**

Take your products and/or services to totally new markets. Whether it’s down the street, or ‘down under’ –– with your website, your opportunities (and outreach) are limitless!

**• Effective Sales Tool**

A website is your online storefront, open all hours, and for a fraction of the cost of a brick and mortar location –– plus it reaches countless more people. Whether you sell directly from the web or not, your website can quickly convert casual browsers into buyers. It can convince your visitors to contact you and educate them as to why they need your services.

**• Improves Customer Service & Keeps you Connected**

It costs a fraction the amount to keep a customer than to gain a new one. Staying in touch with your customers is one of the most valuable ways to service them. By making information readily available your website makes this very easy. Helpful hints or tips of the trade can help you keep your customers engaged, knowledgeable –– and loyal –– all at the same time!

**• Saves Money**

Quickly lower printing costs by referring clients and prospects to a current, up-to-date website. Email communication instead of postage is much less expensive. Your website can also replace other more expensive advertising costs because you can measure the results it will produce and compare and adjust other advertising mediums.

**•  Source of referrals**

Referrals are a valuable source of new customers. A website makes it easy to encourage referrals because customers can simply provide friends and contacts your website address. No obligation, no pressure, no strings attached. Plus, a website is typically much easier to remember than a telephone number.

**• Easily tracks and measures ROI**

A website is one of the few advertising mediums that can track virtually every visitor. You can measure exactly how many people have visited your web, where those searches came from, which search-term(s) were used, which search engine, the pages they visited on your site and how long they spent there. Not many other advertising forms can provide this level of detailed feedback on your investment! And not many other mediums have such a persuasive––and compelling––list of reasons to engage.

**#2. BLOGGING/ARTICLE MARKETING**

A blog within your website (or on other online source) is yet another way to position yourself as an influencer/expert, plus it has added benefits of search engine optimization! Here are some tips to keep in mind when you are blogging.

**• Provide Solutions** – With blogging you don’t provide a textbook of facts. Instead, focus on sharing solutions to problems through examples as well as how-tos. A blog is a great platform to build relationships, grow affinity and help people.

**• DIY with Search Benefits** – A blog isn’t hard to create, no need to hire an IT person. In the matter of minutes you can build your own blog via free sites such as Tumblr, WordPress or Blogger. This not only shows your expertise on a subject but also makes you very “search-engine friendly”. That means you get picked up and noticed on sites like Google when people do searches for words you talk about in your article.

**• Original Content is King** – An original article in your own words will go much further in showing your authority on a specific topic versus copying information from existing articles or a group or forum. It will also give you the opportunity to share your voice as an authority in your field.

**• Set a Realistic Goal –** You don’t have to do a new article every day. Set a realistic goal of one article per month and stick to it.

• **Share it** – After you write it and publish it, it’s important to share it on your blog and your social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn Groups, Email. Failing to share your article is like creating a painting and having a gallery opening but never inviting anyone to it!

Blog consistently and you will be pleasantly surprised with the amount of new exposure you will start to receive!

* Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty, emotional connection
* Viral sharing
* Chronicle company culture
* Showcase products, people
* Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition
* Publicize events and generate awareness

• Reputation management

**#3 – Public Relations**

In today’s social savvy word, journalists are no longer the only ones creating news! You can be your own publicist and create your own PR buzz using a few simple strategies.

**• Create a PR Strategy** – Get the word about your product and/or service, and you need to shine a light on what you do. A well developed press kit and series of effective press releases can accomplish this and educate others about your services! Focus on telling your story and change up the angles to target different media outlets (ex: rotate product, people and business pitches).

**• Build relationships** – make a list of your top 10 or 20-targeted media outlets, including your local newspaper, radio and television stations. Don’t forget to include relevant bloggers too! Customize your content and send every contact a separate email. Yes, it takes time, but remember your goal. It's not about mass publication of your press release. It’s about a relationship with a journalist, editor, or blogger. You want them to think of you when they are writing a story about your area of expertise.

**• Bloggers**

Don't forget this ever-growing group. Bloggers are a great source of coverage and connections. You will probably be able to find contact for these influencers easily... But they will also make it clear whether they want to be contacted for PR. If so, send. If not, look into getting to know them through social media first and building an online relationship.

**• Don’t be Shy**

Don't feel pressured by formal “press releases”. If you don't have the skill set or don’t think something is newsworthy, just introduce yourself. Share your knowledge, add value, ask if they need ideas, and inquire how you can help and potentially work together. There’s nothing wrong with sending a note or a letter to connect.

Now, if you have news and are ready for a press release, be sure you focus on a good topic and find a good angle or hook!

**• Cause Marketing** – Align yourself with a local charitable organization and co-host events or offer to provide them a portion of the proceeds when you do host an event. This tactic is not only admirable; it is a beneficial strategy that many times helps to promote your event and your business.

**• Consistent is Key**

Creating publicity doesn't happen overnight. It should be thoughtful and proactive. It takes time, but the payoff of media coverage/publicity is worth the investment. Consistency creates connections and results in press coverage and ultimately new clients!

Benefits:

* Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty, emotional connection
* Viral sharing
* Chronicle company culture
* Showcase products, people
* Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition
* Publicize events and generate awareness

• Reputation management



**#4 - Videos**

Videos boost search engine rankings! Videos are one of the most powerful marketing tools available today. If a picture is worth a thousand words––according to Forrester Group, a 60-second video is worth 1.8 million words! Tell your story in a quick, fun, engaging and memorable way. People remember what they watch and it helps in their decision-making. Customers connect emotionally with videos and it builds relationships and loyalty. Adding a video––or a series of videos––to your website makes it 53x more likely to get a first page search ranking. That translates to more leads! Adding a video to your email newsletter increases click-through rates up to 300%. Videos tell your story and increase your bottom line.

A mix of search engine optimization with videos can influence your niche, increase your credibility and brand awareness while increasing your website traffic. You want to create followers by positioning yourself an expert source and a resource/solution to their “pain points”.

Video optimization is becoming increasingly vital aspect in search engine optimization. It can lead to viral marketing and help spread the word (quickly) about your product/services.

• Videos do not have to be professionally created to be beneficial

• Frequency: “New” Videos get more views

• Educational, Solution-oriented topics are most beneficial

• Set up a YouTube Channel

Benefits:

* Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty, emotional connection
* Viral sharing
* Chronicle company culture
* Showcase product videos and demos
* Tell your story in a series
* Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition
* Publicize events and generate awareness

• Reputation management



**#5 Facebook**

Facebook is the world’s largest social network with over 1.3 billion users. It can also be one of the most frustrating social networks, especially for a business.

With changes to Facebook’s algorithm, only a handful of the people now who like your page actually see the content you are sharing with them. That is because Facebook wants you to spend money on their various advertising programs. This new “pay- to- play” strategy, which opens the door for your content to be seen by more eyeballs, is how Facebook is making millions in revenue. But it’s not necessarily the avenue recommended to get more visibility for your business.

There are a variety of best practices that can assist you in getting exposure without having to get out the credit card. Here are a few tips:

* **Keep Your Posts Short.** Just because Facebook gives you more room than Twitter to write content doesn’t mean you should use it. Always include short URLs and keep your posts under 250 characters. Studies show this can lead to 60% more engagement.
* **Post Videos**. Facebook loves videos! Posting videos gives your content much more weight as compared to the exposure you will garner through photos alone.
* **Stay Away From “Sale-sy” Messages.** Facebook doesn’t want individual news feeds turning into a “coupon feed” social network. Words like "sale” and “free” should be limited from your Facebook vocabulary as those posts could get red-flagged by Facebook and get seen by even fewer of your followers. Instead use the terms like exclusive, private.
* **Hop On The Trending Topics Bandwagon**. Facebook always shows trending topics that are going on through its social network. Create relevant posts that involve these trending topics. By adding to the overall conversation of what people care about can help get more eyeballs on your post and your page.

Facebook marketing can be tricky. That doesn’t mean it should be ignored. Try these various strategies to maximize exposure!

Benefits:

* Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty
* Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition
* Sharing relevant links, blog posts, and engaging content that drives traffic
* Publicize events and increase attendance
* Chronicle company culture

• Build relationships with influencers

• Connect and correspond with customers and employees

• Reputation management

* Potential of virality through friends and followers

**#6 LinkedIn **

LinkedIn is a POWERFUL tool to grow any business globally! Whether it’s “you” you’re selling, your product, or your service, this biosphere has no boundaries.

With over 300 million users, LinkedIn is the biggest professional social network on the planet. Not only can LinkedIn help you get a build connections and network, but it can also help you garner attention and become an authority in your field. Features such as LinkedIn “publishing” and “groups” make it very easy to connect and show your expertise on a specific subject. Their publication Pulse is a great way to publish news and garner followers.

Make it your goal to do the following on your LinkedIn profile. It can only produce great things for your business:

**Update your photo**. Like it or not, LinkedIn is a professional network (keyword “professional”), and while everyone has their own flavor and style, it’s important not to lose sight of that. Your photo should be reflective of yourself and the organization you represent. Plus we all change. So that picture from high school might not be the best choice (unless of course you are still in high school ;). The last thing you want to do is connect with someone online and have him or her go to another social channel of yours and not recognize you. Or if you ever meet in person and you look nothing like your photo. Take the time to get an updated professional photo and upload it to your profile. Remember first impressions last! The photos you choose represent your company and your brand.

**Update your profile.** Add a blurb about your new business, clients or services to your profile and include a fresh description. If you don’t include it, it’s a missed opportunity. If no one sees it or doesn’t know what you do, that’s your loss. An up- to-date accurate profile can go along way in generating new business. Be sure to include both your website and important data such as contact information in your description.

**Connect with LinkedIn’s Recommended Connections** Every day LinkedIn recommends connections for you. This is the closest you will get to free customer acquisition. You should connect with approximately new contacts that LinkedIn recommends. These are typically contacts of mutual connections. Connecting with these contacts can add hundreds of new contacts to your potential customer base.

**Add rich media content**. LinkedIn is more than just a resume. It is a visual presentation of your professional life and your company. By using LinkedIn’s Professional Portfolio you can showcase your professional profile with more than just your work and education background. You can add attention-grabbing graphics and visual content. This rich media can help you standout from the crowd and most importantly get remembered and increase your opportunities for sales.

BENEFITS:

• Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty

* Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition
* Sharing relevant links, blog posts, and engaging content that drives traffic
* Meet, greet and engage with influencers
* Publicize events and increase attendance
* Chronicle company culture

• Build relationships with influencers

• Connect and correspond with customers and employees

• Reputation management

* Potential of virality through connections and followers

**Twitter** 

**Using Twitter To Turn Browsers Into Buyers**

While many people feel Facebook is a place to connect with people you know, Twitter is a great tool to connect with people you don’t, especially influencers. With more than 288 million active users and **500 million Tweets** sent per day, Twitter is definitely a marketing tool you shouldn’t overlook.

To make your Twitter account shine though, here are some best practices to always keep in mind:

* **Usernames.** You get 15 characters to create a username when you join Twitter. Pick one out that is similar to your blog or website. If the name you are looking for is not available, create one that is similar to your business or industry.
* **Fill Out Your Profile – The Whole Profile.** You would be surprised how many users leave this valuable area blank, especially businesses.

https://lh6.googleusercontent.com/M3ZtkODoqsgjHhcgqK5rC58Yx8pECVZPH12P-_3H0QKheX2SYZitkkR4t-t1mpvRiMwXKUcQZ4EO8U0OE6WOBDaso4v5UwjA5RgFcki8xhZm9jF7rE0QEb8k5bqbHv79oY7jCvz6XSvhEecD

Create a short bio using keywords related to your business and always include a photo of your business, as everyone knows “a photo tells a thousand words.” In addition, Twitter provides a spot to put your location and website. Don’t leave those out.

* **Learn The Language.** You get limited characters per Tweet so abbreviations are important and effective on Twitter. The (@) sign is always used before you mention another users name. This will notify them that you are mentioning them in your Tweet and can become a great way to connect. Hashtags (#) or #Keywords are also an extremely important part of Twitter as they enable others that are interested in the topics you are talking about to find, read and respond to your Tweets.
* **Ask to Retweet.** It may sound simple, but according to BufferSocial if you ask for your tweet to be retweeted, statistics show your tweet has a 12x higher chance of being retweeted if you had not ask––and 23x higher chance if you spell out “retweet”. Now that’s a powerful tactic. “Ask and you shall receive” and watch how many more retweets you get!
* **Character Limit.** While Twitter allows you to provide more characters now per tweet, it is still a good idea to post between 110 and 120 if possible. This way others can retweet or comment on your tweet and have enough room so your tweet doesn’t get cut off.  Keep in mind tweets with less than 100 characters get 17% more engagement. Twitter is a very powerful tool that has been used all over the world in a variety of different ways. It can help you grow your business globally!

Benefits:

• Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty

• Lead generation or customer retention and acquisition

* Showcase products, customers, relevant celebrities, loyalists
* Chronicle company culture

• Share a mix of relevant links, blog posts, and engaging content that drives traffic

• Build relationships with influencers

• Create relevant lists

• Listen and respond to customers and employee relevant conversations

• Reputation management

* Publicize events
* Driving traffic and potential leads to website, blog, and other content
* Potential of virality through followers



**#8 Pinterest - Tips To Turn Pins into Profits**

While Facebook and Twitter are probably the first social networks that come to your mind when the word social media is used, don’t overlook the power of Pinterest.

Pinterest’s photo sharing social network is a lot more than just pictures of home interior designs and cooking recipes. It is a social network of 70 million people (80% of whom are women) who are looking for ideas on a variety of interests and are willing to spend money.

So how exactly can your business become profitable using Pinterest? Here are some great tips:

* **Build your Subscriber List.** While you can pin images from the web using the Pinterest button on your web browser, you can also pin an image of where people can go to sign up for your subscriber list. Simply take a screenshot of your subscriber button on your web and upload it to one of your boards on Pinterest. Then link it to the page where they can subscribe!
* **Pin Products of the week/day.** Turn Pinterest into an e-commerce website that links back to your website for leads and purchases.
* **Create Pins Of Tutorial Videos.** People buy products and services they trust. Videos create trust. They show solutions from real people. Why not create a board with brief videos explaining your solutions for your customers. Then have the video link back where there is a call to action.
* **Share Tips.** People use social media to get advice on a variety of different topics. They may not have a need for your product or service at that moment but if they continue to see your valuable content, they will then recognize you as an expert and know where to turn to when they are ready to take action.

Benefits:

• Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty

• Lead generation, customer retention and acquisition

• Sharing imagery creates excitement and fun

* Visual asset engagement
* Showcase products, customers, relevant celebrities, loyalists
* Share snapshots of company culture
* Publicize events
* Driving traffic and potential leads to website, blog, and other content
* Sharing imagery assets creates excitement and fun
* Potential of virality

**eMail Marketing**

According to a recent DMA study 75.8% of marketers said they are using more email than three years ago. A report from Forrester Research indicated email marketing is projected to significantly increase from $1.3 billion in 2010 to $2 billion in 2014.

Email Newsletters drive sales! That’s a fact. If you don’t have one, you need one. Email marketing is low cost and simple to implement.

**• ROI**

Newsletters have one of the highest ROIs. For every $1 spent on email marketing, you typically get a return of $45 or more.

**• Connect with customers**

Email newsletters help you to connect with your customers and people buy from people they trust. A newsletter is a great way to communicate and establish trust, loyalty, and build connections.

**• Quality versus Quantity**

Your email marketing success is directly correlated to the quality of your email list. Keep in mind your attrition rate of emails is about 25% per year, so you will need to be proactively collecting emails in order to keep you list current and growing.

**• Growing your List**

Building your email list should be an ongoing effort. Be sure to ask current customers for current emails. Capturing emails on your website is critical through opt-in subscription boxes and incentives like free downloads or exclusive deals. Building strategic alliances with the right partners is yet another effective way to grow your existing email database.

**• Build Social Following**

Newsletters can help you create a stronger social following online.

**• Web traffic**

Email newsletters can drive valuable online traffic to your website.

**#10- Instragram** 

**Brand Yourself and Your Business using these Instagram Best Practices**

Instagram is thriving! With over 300 million users, this photo and short video sharing social network phenomenon is only going to get bigger and bigger.

For a business, especially one with visual content this could be the “golden key” for getting in front of the right audience quickly.

As with any social platform, there are some best practices you should always following when posting to Instagram:

**Keep a lifestyle focus.** Instagram is essentially utilized through its mobile application on smart phones and tablets. Don’t just load it up with images of your services/products. Also take and upload photos of items and places that your target market would be interested in and find engaging.

* **Quality is more important than quantity.** Since people remember photos a lot better then words, good photos are more important then the number of photos you post. The most effective time to post is during regular business hours as people are always taking breaks and looking at the mobile devices.
* **Follow back!** Just like with other social networks, a good best practice is to follow back the people that are following you. They are less likely to unfollow you and provide the potential of creating strategic, long-term relationships.
* **Use the right filters.** Instagram allows your photos to include filter overlays to change and enhance the color of your photo. Certain filters though garner more attention than others. No-filter at all is very popular as it gives the photo that “all-natural look.” Lo-Fi is another that many big brands utilize.
* **Use hashtags.** Unlike other social networks where to many hashtags look spammy, Instagram users find them more acceptable. Images and videos that include hashtags tend to get more likes than images that do not. Always use the ones that are specified at specific events as well as others that make sense with your post. An effective best practice is to get into the habit of hashtaging your business on your social channels. Instagram is a great tool for your business. Just make sure to utilize it correctly to get the most value out of it!  #InstagramYourWaytoVisibility

**Benefits:**

* Brand recognition, engagement, loyalty
* Visual asset engagement
* Showcase products, customers, relevant celebrities, loyalists
* Share snapshots of company culture
* Publicize events
* Driving traffic and potential leads to website, blog, and other content
* Sharing imagery creates excitement and fun
* Potential of virality

**© 2015 Omm Media All Rights Reserved**

**www.ommmedia.com**