

Your small business and online marketing: is it for you?

It's a natural topic of conversation when you're involved with small business, whether you're the owner, an employee or you're working with owners as clients. Since the turn of the century you will have heard people **dismissing, discounting and discrediting** online marketing for their enterprises.

Fast forward to today and the vast majority of small business owners will have at least given in to having a website. The usefulness of this site can sometimes be questionable. Has it been through a search engine optimisation process? Is it linked to a purposeful social media campaign? Can customers purchase products on it using an e-commerce platform? One can easily predict the answer to these questions.

The underlying problem may be linked to a **steadfast sense of traditionalism**. People are, by nature, scared of change. The business world is and has been changing and changing rapidly. It is commonplace for new initiatives and strategies to be rubbished as a passing fancy or useless trend. The benefits are clear to the professionals but are they clear to the end user? Why are small business owners hard to persuade? Can a traditionalist thrive or even survive without embracing the online world?

I don't need it because...

Not everyone understands the benefits, necessity or even value of online marketing, so now I'll explore why these business owners think this way. When approaching these questions, one must understand that **every business is unique** and therefore run by unique individuals. They will have a differing set of aims, ideas and understandings. Some concerns will be perfectly understandable, but others can be removed through statistical reassurance:

- **I already have enough customers.** Straight forward and difficult to persuade differently. If the business owner is happy with their customer roll and don't want to increase their business growth then good for them! They just need to make sure that those customers are definitely lifelong purchasers.
- **My customers don't purchase online.** Networking in the physical world is still alive and well. Many business owners see this as their main, if not only, source of custom. Naturally this will lead to a one-sided thought process. Offline business owners will attract offline customers, online customers can't find them! [5 billion daily Google searches](#) suggests that there are at least some users keen to get to know those offline businesses.
- **I've tried online marketing, it doesn't work.** Lots of business owners have dabbled in online marketing and lots have been unsuccessful. This isn't cause to believe that marketing in this way is broken. The likely scenario here is that the campaign was poorly implemented or the conception wasn't right. The best approach is to **adapt and improve** rather than concede and fail. With the right relationships and advice success can be achieved.

- **This is a passing trend.** Like all modern industries the online marketing sphere is full of buzzwords and new initiatives. It is easy to get inundated and then dismissive. Social media has forever been seen as a *flash in the pan* style of marketing, as have the many faces of SEO. Now that these approaches are into their teens, traditionalists are starting to take note, there's no guarantee they'll be around forever, but they're likely to adapt to survive.
- **It's not cost effective.** Online marketing can feel like it is quickly burning a hole in your pocket. This is where you have to remember you're after a positive return on your investment. When implemented correctly you'll likely see the financial benefits.
- **I can't understand it.** Learning is the way forward. Nobody understands the inner workings of marketing instantly. There are endless resources online if you want to discover it for yourself. If you don't, invest in a professional who can complete the whole service without it ever weighing on your mind.

Why should I bother?

Obviously, there are benefits of online marketing. Let's explore the reasons why it is not only important but essential to a small business.

Essential reason 1: Your customer expects it.

The vast majority of the western world uses the Internet. It is now instinctive to reach for our phones when we need to find out information. Imagine a customer hears about your business, the first thing that they will do is search for it online. If they don't find you your **credibility is immediately damaged**. Why should they invest in your business if you haven't even invested in a website? Customers demand immediate information, if you don't provide it then you've likely lost them.

Essential reason 2: Your competitors are using it.

Your small business might not be using online marketing for any of the reasons above. You can kid yourself that you're doing the right thing, but you can be sure that some of your competitors are taking your place. They'll be the ones found through searches, the brand people search for information and the company people hear and talk about. If you're serious about **beating the competition** you need to be equipped with the right arsenal.

Essential reason 3: The world is changing.

Intel founder George Moore [provided a theorem](#) that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit has doubled every year and will continue to do so ad infinitum. This has direct correlation to the amount of technology available, the ease of access and the **integration into everyday life**. The Internet and all that it encompasses will continue to grow. You may believe online marketing isn't right for your business today, but what about tomorrow's world?

Invest in your business' future.

Online marketing won't be a magic wand for every type of business. Yet I implore you to consider the arguments I've put forward, because if you don't you're only setting yourself up for a fall. Success may well be flowing for you right now, in spite of having no online presence, but this is no guarantee of

continued profitability. Take yourself out of the comfort zone, **push yourself to adapt** and you'll reap the benefits in the future.