

### **Social Media: Where Are Your Customers**

Businesses have to compete for attention, compete for sales, and even compete for online reviews. The term “survival of the fittest” not only applies to the animal kingdom but the world of business, as well. In today's competitive business climate, every business must take the time to get to know its customers, who they are, and where they like to “hang out” online. This is an essential part of business survival; however, for most small business owners, this is a task that may be easier said than done.

A business must be able to distinguish between various audiences, find the ones that truly support the business, and avoid those that are likely to be a waste of time and money. This will maximize marketing dollars and ensure that small business and SME owners are targeting only those individuals who are truly interested in what the business has to offer.

#### **Develop a Clear and Concise Focus**

The first step in determining where a business' customers are is to determine who they are. In the past, a business owner might have taken a general approach and assumed all customers came equally from all demographics. Taking such a broad approach is no longer practical to support both old and new business. The marketplace of "today" is very differentiated. When marketing to customers and prospects, a business has to consider a number of factors including:

- Age and gender
- Lifestyle
- Technological sophistication

Trying to serve all market segments without differentiation and specialization can be a clear and unobstructed path to failure. A business must take time to identify its target audience...a clear focus of the customers it serves and understand how the products and services offered can provide benefits and satisfy customer needs. This information not only provides a well-defined objective, but also keeps the targeted audience at a manageable level.

#### **Finding Customers on Social Media**

Once a business understands its customer base (or segmented bases), it can then determine on which social media sites customers can be found. When engaging customers on social media, there has been a shift in the past few years from the “why” to the “how and where.” A huge component in answering these questions effectively is to understand which social media sites a business' customers routinely frequent and why they frequent those particular sites. Businesses need to follow their customers to social media sites rather than take the lead, as there is no benefit being the first to a social platform when there are no customers or prospects to take advantage of what the business has to offer in the way of information or specials.

For social media to be beneficial, a business must find its target audience and engage visitors. The more a business engages with customers, the more action there will be in the way of sales, phone calls, visits, or referrals.

#### **How Simple It Is to Ask**

One of the best ways to determine the social platforms that customers use on a regular basis is to ask...simple, yet effective. Finding where customers spend their social hours allows a business to develop a presence, which can then be used for engagement and influence.

Small or SME businesses should develop a strategy to find what social media sites their customers frequent and then target those sites. Understanding customer behavior and engaging customers and prospects is a key component in growing a long-term sustainable business.