The Local Business’s Guide to Marketing
How to Stand Out & Stand Apart From the Competition

Podium
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Introduction

In 2021, over 5.4 million Americans filed to start a company—a record high. With so many people jumping into the world of entrepreneurship, competition among local businesses has never been fiercer.

So, how can your small business stand out? There are a lot of ways to answer that question. But we’ve found one piece of wisdom that holds true: A great customer experience wins every time. Today’s customers want convenience, speed, and personalized buying journeys. To meet these expectations, you need a local marketing plan that focuses on all the above.

Even the most seasoned marketers will tell you that marketing is like a language of its own, and there is always more to learn. If you own a small business, you know that time is a precious commodity, and you probably don’t have any to waste. That’s why we compiled all of the information you need to get started on a local marketing plan that will help increase customer loyalty, reach new customers, and come out ahead of your competitors.

About This Guide

In this guide, we’ll discuss the difference between traditional and local marketing tactics, dive into local marketing strategies to help you grow your business, and teach you how to create a customer experience that keeps people coming back for more.
The Local Business Difference

There are a lot of ways that local businesses differentiate themselves—many of which can be bucketed into three categories:

01 Reputation

Happy customers with a mic will do more for you than any marketing material. In the past, reputation was all about word of mouth. If people were saying good things about you, the word would get around and more customers would flock to your store.

The concept of word of mouth exists in the digital world as well—customer reviews are the modern-day word of mouth. If satisfied customers are leaving 5-star reviews about your business, you’ll have a huge advantage in your local market.

02 Experience

A good customer experience is invaluable—it’s the difference between one-time buyers and lifetime customers. You can improve customer experience by understanding the needs of your customers, making changes based on customer feedback, and making it easy and convenient for your customer to communicate with your business. The good news is that satisfaction with local businesses has increased in recent years. According to our most recent report, 7 in 10 consumers frequent a local business once a week or more, and would rate them on average 4 out of 5 stars.

03 Expertise

Reputation and customer experience both play a role in positioning your business as an expert in the industry. But there are other factors to keep in mind as well. From a digital marketing perspective, consistently showing up online and publishing relevant information on your blog or website can give you more credibility.
Introduction

Top Marketing Challenges Facing Local Businesses

Lack of resources, finding and retaining customers, maintaining an online presence, and lack of time are just a few of the roadblocks you might run into as you dive into the world of local marketing.

The pandemic permanently changed customer expectations. The standard—and point of comparison—for most consumers has been set by apps and businesses like Uber and Amazon. In order to meet consumer expectations, local businesses need to aim for this level of convenience without losing local presence and feel. Since the pandemic started, more than 40% of local businesses reported spending more on their digital presence than ever before.

Putting together a local marketing plan that prioritizes your online experience seems daunting, but is now business-critical. Modern customers demand it.
State of Local Business

43% of consumers actively seek out businesses that minimize personal contact. They also expect more convenience—in everything from communication to payments—from the businesses they choose to interact with.

That said, reputation is everything for local businesses—a good reputation is what gets people in the door and on your website. Local marketing will put your business on the path to a stellar reputation that people can’t help but rave about.

An effective local marketing plan uses data to drive decisions and strategy. According to our research, word of mouth has been and continues to be the most effective marketing tool for local businesses. Since we know that reviews are the digital equivalent to word of mouth, gathering reviews is a good place to start. Other highly effective local marketing tactics include:

- Search engine optimization
- Digital advertising (paid)
- Social media marketing
- Text message marketing
- Email marketing
What is Local Marketing?

Marketing is the process of attracting customers to your business and enticing them to buy from you. It sounds straightforward—and a lot of marketing concepts are—but there is a lot of hard work that goes into building a local marketing plan.

You can break marketing down into two main categories: traditional marketing and digital marketing.

A traditional marketing strategy relies on media like magazines, radio, and newspapers while digital marketing relies on digital media such as social ads, email, and text/SMS. While both traditional and digital marketing tactics can help you reach your target customers, focusing solely on traditional marketing strategies isn’t enough.

Let’s dig into more of the difference between both, how to use local marketing in your customer journey, and best practices for improving that journey over time.
Marketing Terms You Need to Know

Rome wasn’t built in a day, and your marketing plan probably won’t be either. Let’s start with the basics. Marketing is like its own language—here are some terms you need to know:

**A/B test**: Also known as split testing. Compare two versions of content to see which version performs better.

**Analytics**: Data used to evaluate the effectiveness of your marketing plan.

**Bounce rate**: The percentage of visitors that leave a website after only viewing one page. A low bounce rate indicates that visitors find your content relevant and useful.

**Conversion**: What happens when a visitor on your website completes a desired goal. That goal is completely up to you—it can be anything from signing up for a newsletter to purchasing a product.

**Conversion rate**: Calculated by dividing the total number of conversions by the total number of visitors to your website.

**Customer journey**: Refers to all of the touchpoints a customer has with your brand. This starts the moment a customer starts searching for a product or service and continues even after a customer makes a purchase.

**Engagement rate**: The total number of interactions (likes, shares, comments) with a post or piece of content divided by the number of people who saw it.

**Funnel**: Similar to a customer journey. A funnel or a marketing funnel describes how a potential customer becomes a customer.

**Impressions**: The number of times your content is displayed on a screen.

**Lead**: A person or organization who shows interest in a brand’s products or services. Basically, a potential customer.
What is Local Marketing?

**Opt-in:** A form of permission given to a brand by a customer, allowing the brand to send them emails, texts, or follow-up communication after a purchase.

**Persona:** A fictional representation of your ideal customer. Creating a person can help you better understand your target audience.

**Prospect:** A lead who has been moved into the sales process.

**Search engine marketing (SEM):** Uses paid marketing tactics to appear in search engine results.

**Search engine optimization (SEO):** Uses organic marketing optimization methods to appear in search engine results.

**Search engine results page (SERP):** The page of results a search engine shows when you search for something online.

**Visitor:** Someone who visits your website.

**Value proposition:** The unique value you bring to your customers.
Traditional Marketing vs. Digital Marketing—What’s the Difference?

Traditional marketing tactics like radio ads, TV commercials, and direct mailers definitely have a time and place, but if you really want to stand out in your local market, having a strong digital marketing plan is crucial.

While digital content can reach people on a national or international level, there is a lot you can do to target solely people within a specific geographic radius. Furthermore, digital marketing campaigns can give you a ton of data about who is engaging with your content, as well as when, how, and where they’re engaging with it.

By implementing a digital marketing plan, brick-and-mortar businesses can reach more consumers within a specific radius of their physical location, establish trust within their communities, and ultimately increase foot traffic to their physical locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Marketing</th>
<th>Digital Marketing</th>
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<tr>
<td>Radio ads, TV commercials, print ads, direct mailers, brochures, cold-calling</td>
<td>Social media/social ads, SEO, email, text/SMS, digital ads, paid search, email newsletters, content, podcast ads, pandora/Spotify ads, etc.</td>
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Understanding Your Customer Journey

When marketing, you likely have two goals you want to accomplish:

1. Acquire new customers
2. Score repeat purchases from existing customers

Both of these goals are important, but you may prioritize one over the other depending on the stage of growth your business is in. Knowing which type of marketing you want to prioritize and why will help you determine which channels you should focus on and what tactics you should implement.

Each of these types of marketing has unique nuances, so you need to familiarize yourself with your customer’s purchase journey.

A customer journey is a map of all of the touchpoints a customer has with your brand. This includes all of the stages a customer goes through—from the moment they start searching for a product or service to the moment they purchase something from your brand—and it even encompasses what customers do after purchasing.
Marketing to New Customers

When marketing to acquire new customers, you’ll focus on everything a customer does from the moment they begin searching to the moment they make a purchase.

We’ll dive deeper into each of these customer journey stages later, but here is a quick overview:

01 Google search
A customer journey often begins with a search query on an engine—and 92% of searches start on Google. If customers can’t find you during their initial Google searches, they might not find you at all.

02 Online research
Simply showing up on a search results page won’t win you a customer. Your online presence will be a huge deciding factor for people who are considering doing business with you. The more consistently you show up online, the more likely a potential customer is to engage with your brand and ultimately purchase your product or service.

03 First contact
Once people find you, they might have questions about your pricing, hours, products, etc. Using webchat, live chat, and text messaging can greatly increase the ease with which your potential customers communicate with you, which establishes trust and makes them more likely to buy from you.
04 **Sets an appointment**

This might not be applicable for every business, but if your business requires customers or patients to set an appointment, removing friction from that process will give you a competitive edge. If someone has to jump through hoops to schedule time with you, they might move on to other options.

05 **Makes a purchase**

Finally, the hard work pays off and a potential buyer turns into a customer. Hopefully, this is the first of many purchases from that buyer. To make that happen, you’ll need to shift your marketing approach and start thinking about how to pull off a repeat purchase. That’s right—it’s time to start thinking about marketing to existing customers.
Marketing to Existing Customers

Marketing to existing customers should begin the moment a customer makes their first-time purchase from your brand. It’s all about engagement—don’t let them forget you exist.

So, how do you keep customers engaged after they’ve purchased from you?

You can start by encouraging happy customers to leave reviews. Not only will this keep your current customers engaged, but it will also help you stand out to other customers who are still in the research phase of the customer journey—it’s a win-win for your brand.

When marketing to existing customers, place an emphasis on education. You’ve already convinced these people to buy from you. Now, convince them of the value you can continue providing them. Teach them how your brand can make their lives better and why your products or services are better than anything else on the market.

The goal with existing customers is to stay top-of-mind. Follow up with customers after they purchase from you—emails and text messages are great ways to stay connected. Get them to sign up for your newsletter, opt-in for text messages, and follow you on social media. Consider sending them special promotions or alerts about new products to keep them excited and engaged.

And remember—throughout the re-marketing process, focus on individual relationships with your customers. This is how you build a loyal customer base.
Now that you know the basics, it’s time to put that newfound knowledge to use. Don’t worry; we wouldn’t just dump all of that information on you without telling you how to start implementing it in your own business. Here are some steps you can take to start building your marketing plan:
Decide Who Will Own Marketing at Your Business

First things first, you need to get clear on what your goals are and who will help you achieve them. Ask yourself:

- Will you have someone in-house take care of marketing or will you outsource the work?
- What marketing-related goals do you want to accomplish?
- What’s the timeline for hitting those goals?
- How will you determine whether or not you’re on track to meet those goals?
Create a Marketing Plan

You might want to get out a notebook or open a blank document for this section. We’re going to walk you through how to put together a marketing plan.

Getting Clear on Your Ideal Customer

If you want your marketing to be successful, it’s important to know who you’re trying to reach. Basically, you want to get really clear on all the essential information you can refer to when developing content messaging, campaigns, etc. Understanding who you are trying to target will help you create marketing campaigns that convert.

Remember that pen and paper we told you to have handy? Get those out now, and fill in the following information to create your ideal customer profile:

Demographics: Demographic information tells you WHO your customer is. Demographic information includes things, like age, income, education level, and marital status.

Psychographics: Psychographic information tells you WHY your customer buys. Psychographic information includes things, like values, lifestyle, hobbies, morals/beliefs, and goals.

If there are any blank spots in your ideal customer profile, surveys can be your best friend. Sending a survey is a quick way to gather a LOT of customer data—especially if you use a tool that allows you to send a survey to multiple customers at the same time.
Customer Pain Points: A pain point is a problem someone would be willing to pay money to solve. A successful business solves pain points for its customers. Pain points could be related to finances, productivity, and processes.

Ask yourself why your customers choose to do business with you. Maybe your target customer is a working professional who doesn’t have time to deep clean their home, so they come to you for monthly cleaning services. Or maybe they live in a cold, snowy climate and commute to work every day, so they come to you for snow tires that will help them drive safely.

Once you know why your customers need you, you can target new prospects more effectively.

Channel Preference: Finally, think about where your customers spend time—both in person and in the digital world. You could run the best marketing campaign in the world, but if your ideal customers don’t see them, they won’t buy from you. Once you figure out where your customers spend time, you can meet them in those spaces and try to capture their attention.
Brand Messaging

Once you know who your target audience is, you’re ready to start determining your differentiators. What makes YOU a better option than your competitors?

To do this, you need a core message they can identify with. Your core message should speak directly to your ideal customer. If you’re not sure what your core message is, start by determining your value proposition and the niche your business falls under. A niche is a specialized segment of the market for a particular kind of product or service. Knowing your niche gives you a solid foundation upon which to build your core message.

Determine your niche by answering these questions:

Which market/industry are you in?

For example: Retail, Home Services, Healthcare, Automotive.

What market segment (a subset of your industry) are you in?

For example: Furniture/mattress, Appliances, clothing/apparel; HVAC, Window coverings, Cleaning services, construction; Dental, Mental Health, Orthodontics, Hospital, private practice.

What do you specialize in within that market segment?

Your specialization is your niche.

Industry = healthcare
Market segment = dental
Niche = pediatric
Brand Purpose

Your brand’s purpose is the “why” behind your brand, and it should be evident in every product or service you offer and in the way you do business with your customers.

Ask yourself why you do what you do, and what value you provide to your customers. Your brand’s purpose lies somewhere within the answers to these questions.

If you’ve made it to this point in the guide, you’ve either identified your target audience and gotten clear on your core message, or, at the very least, you’re equipped with the tools to do so. Your audience combined with your core message is the north star of your marketing plan. Let that north star drive all of your marketing-related decisions.

And remember: there is no one-size-fits-all marketing plan. Don’t be afraid to try new tactics—just make sure your decisions are data-driven and tie back to your core message. As you experiment with strategies, you’ll figure out what resonates with your customers and helps your business grow.
Putting Your Local Marketing Strategy to Work

You’ve mapped out your customer journey and built a local marketing plan you can be proud of. Now it’s time to turn all that work into action. In this last and final chapter, we’ll walk through how to take what you’ve learned and apply it across each stage of your customer journey:
Journey Stage 1: Inquire

Think about the last time you wanted to find a new place to eat. Your stomach was rumbling and you were approaching dangerously high levels of hanger, but you didn’t know what your nearby options were. You probably turned immediately to Google for some help and searched something along the lines of:

“Restaurants near me”

Overwhelming excitement flooded your body as you began to read through reviews and browse drool-worthy photos from nearby restaurants. Your heart jumped for joy as you found the perfect diner, a mere seven miles away. You silently thanked the reviewer who raved about the diner’s delicious hashbrowns—your favorite food—and must-try flapjacks. Your afternoon was saved.

Yeah, we’ve all been there. The data doesn’t lie—a lot of people are searching for local businesses online.

An astounding 97% of people learn more about local companies online than anywhere else. Furthermore, 46% of all Google searches are looking for local information, and 78% of location-based mobile searches result in an offline purchase.

Since many of us go online when looking for local businesses, there’s no question: It pays to be first. Today, if your business doesn’t show up in search engine results, people might not find you at all.
So, how can you ensure the right people find you? Knowing the words and phrases people use when they’re searching for a business like yours is a good place to start. This will help you build a website with those words in mind so you start showing up in your target customers’ searches. Some common local search phrases are:

- “_____ business near me”
- “_____ business in ______ city”
- “Best _____ business in _____ city”

But knowing what your target customers are searching for isn’t enough. Just because someone finds you, doesn’t mean they’ll decide you’re the business for them. They’ll turn to reviews and other online content before making a final decision.

Implementing an SEO (or “search engine optimization”) plan, setting up a Google Business Profile, and staying active on social media are all things you can do to stand out online.
Search Engine Optimization: How to Become a Top Search Result

Showing up in the top search engine results requires consistent effort. If you want to be one of the few businesses that show up on the first page, you need to optimize your website.

From user-facing content to backend code, there are various ways you can optimize a website. It's all about understanding what Google (and other search engines) prioritize, and then tailoring your website to meet those standards.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. A good SEO strategist stays up-to-date with current best practices—they’re always evolving—and makes adjustments accordingly.

Create an SEO Plan

If you’re ready to start building a local SEO plan, be sure to check out Podium’s Local SEO Marketing guide.

Learn More →
Google Business Profile: Set Up Your Business Page

Your Google Business Profile is key for making sure people have the most recent information about your business. As such, it’s important to include things like your website link, address, phone number, business hours, and other contact information is up-to-date.

One of the easiest ways to stand out among other Google Business Profiles is by using high-quality images in yours. In fact, businesses that use images in their listings receive 35% more clicks to their website than those that do not.

Once you have all the right information about your business, you can dig deeper into building your reviews. Online reviews can make or break someone’s decision to purchase from a business. According to our research, reviews influence 88% of consumers in discovering a local business.

Equally important to the number of reviews you have is your star rating. In 2021, we found that 3.3 is the minimum star rating of a business that consumers would consider engaging with. Furthermore, only 48% of consumers say they would consider using a business with fewer than 4 stars.

If you want to build trust and push consumers through every stage of the buyer’s journey, a 4-star rating should be your goal.
Google Business Profile: Set Up Your Business Page

Social media hasn’t just radically changed the way customers engage with businesses—but how people find businesses as well. If you’re not active on social media, it’s time to change that.

Here are some steps you can take to get started:

**Facebook**
1. Set up a Facebook business page.
2. Start gathering reviews on your business page.
3. Use Facebook Messenger to connect with potential customers and answer any questions they might have while they browse your page.

**Instagram**
1. Set up an Instagram business account.
2. Use Instagram Messenger/DMs to engage with followers and potential customers.
Journey Stage 2: Research

81% of shoppers research online before buying in-store. So, what are they looking for? Many factors can influence a shopper’s decision to buy (or not buy) from a business. Let’s break them down into three main categories: Reviews, websites, and ease of doing business.

Share Reviews

Reviews matter. In fact, 98% of people say they ‘occasionally’ read online reviews for local businesses, and 77% of consumers say they ‘always’ or ‘regularly’ read online reviews when browsing for local businesses. Maybe you have one or two awesome reviews already, and you haven’t noticed much of an impact. What’s the secret sauce? How do you get reviews to work for you? Here are some factors to consider:

Quantity of reviews
How many reviews do you have? How many reviews do your competitors have? Businesses with lots of positive reviews are more likely to win buyers’ trust.

Recency of reviews
John Doe left you an enthusiastic 5-star review—that’s great. But if he left that review in 2010, people probably don’t care about it anymore. In fact, 83% of consumers agree or somewhat agree that reviews must be recent and relevant in order to care about them.

Star rating
As mentioned earlier in this guide, only 48% of consumers would consider using a business with fewer than 4 stars. Anything less than 4-stars is costing you customers.
Invest in Your Website

Your [website](#) acts as your company’s digital storefront. You want to ensure it provides the kinds of convenient, personalized experience your customers expect. Here’s a few important areas to consider when building out your website:

**Create an easy and convenient way to contact you.**
Webchats, contact forms, and appointment buttons are all ways you can facilitate better customer communication on your website.

**Provide answers to common questions.**
Consider including a chatbot with pre-programmed responses to common questions somewhere on your website. You can even add a [webchat](#) feature that allows customers to text you—this is a fantastic way for customers to find answers to their questions AND a way for you to gather leads.

**Provide educational content about your products, services, and industry.**
A blog, videos, or eBooks are all great resources you can provide for your website visitors.

**Show social proof.**
Customer testimonials and case studies demonstrate the impact you’ve had on customers.

**Show third-party validation.**
Offer additional proof that you’re the best at what you do. This could include relevant awards or ratings.

**Add opt-in signups.**
Encourage your website visitors to sign up to receive text messages or emails (or both) from your business.
Focus on the Ease of Doing Business

According to Podium’s 2022 State of Local Business research, ease of doing business is the top reason a customer will buy from your business. Consumers said the following about the ease of doing business:

- 53% said it’s a top reason they choose to work with a local business.
- 57% said it’s a top reason they refer friends and family.
- 60% said it’s a top reason they repeat their business.

But, how do consumers decide whether your business will be easy to do business with if they’ve never purchased from you before? It all ties back to the two sections above. First, they’ll look at what your customers are saying in reviews.

Your website can also give evidence of how easy it is to do business with you. A fast, responsive, well-designed website lets users know that you value customer experience. By giving your website visitors fast and easy access to the information they’re looking for, you increase the likelihood that they’ll turn into customers.
Customers generally reach out to multiple businesses during their search for a product or service. And we’ll let you in on a little secret: the first business to respond usually ends up winning the customer.

The first time someone visits your website is kind of like a first date—and we all know that first impressions can make or break everything. If you show up late and only talk about yourself, chances are, there won’t be a second date. But if you show up on time, use proper etiquette, and show interest in the other person, you might just find yourself on the way to a relationship.

Obviously, websites are not people, but website etiquette is a real thing. Let’s talk about some best practices that will increase your chances of scoring a “second date” after someone visits your site for the first time.
Level Up Your Website Design

The design of your website sets the tone for your conversations with visitors. A poorly designed website may make people doubt that your content is trustworthy. Here are some tips to get you on the right track:

**Keep it simple.**
Unnecessary design elements can be distracting and make it difficult for visitors to find what they’re looking for.

**Focus on user experience.**
Nearly 60% of the time, users can’t find what they’re looking for on a website. Make it easy for visitors to get the information they need when they come to your site.

**Consistency is key.**
While you don’t need to use the exact same layout for every page of your site, you want the overall look and feel of your pages to be consistent. You want to always ensure it is easy for people to get in touch with you and that your communication channels are well-staffed to consistently respond.

Add More Conversion Points

The conversion methods you use on your site should be non-intrusive and offer value to visitors. Try implementing:

**Webchat:**
Modern marketing is conversational and most people prefer it that way. In fact, 82% want an immediate response when they have a question. Installing a chat option is an easy way to fill that need.

**Contact forms:**
Forms are a great way to gather information from your website visitors. Just make sure any forms are short and easy to find.
Promotions:
Test different promotions on your homepage to see what resonates most with your audience. You can even customize your offers by tracking repeat visitors and offering them personalized promotions based on their browsing history.

Checkout pages: Reduce abandonment at checkout by minimizing extra costs. Surprise costs like shipping, taxes, and other fees, can cause visitors to back out of a purchase.

Power Ford

After adding webchat to their website, Power Ford was able to instantly speak with clients reaching out on their website.

“We are using Podium Webchat and it’s absolutely phenomenal. Plus, we’re able to get a little PII, or Personal Identification Information, and that’s a huge benefit for us with Podium and transferring web conversations to text messages.”

Read their story →
Create Compelling Content

Creating content may seem daunting, but it can help you build more authority among your customers. Some popular forms of content you should consider using:

**Showcase customers:**
Including case studies, testimonials, and reviews on your website is a great way to build trust and show the value your business provides.

**Blog posts:** If you don’t already have a blog, start one. Blog posts are a fantastic way to educate your website visitors about your expertise, products and services.

**Video:** It can be paralyzing to think about adding video to your site without a professional videography team, but remember: usually something is better than nothing. Customers want authentic, relatable content—and video is proving to be just that. Compared to print and direct mail combined, video is 600% more effective.

Resources for Building a Website on a Budget

None of the above information matters, though, if you don’t have a website yet. The good news is that there are tons of tools out there that make building a website easy and affordable—even for people who have little to no experience with web development.

Here are some tools we recommend checking out if you find yourself in need of a website:

1. Wix
2. Squarespace
3. Shopify
4. WordPress
Journey Stage 4: Purchase

You might get to this stage and ask: What does a sale have to do with marketing? For buyers, the experience they have when purchasing a product/service is the most memorable. Marketing can work to help make this customer experience as seamless as possible.

The same way surprise costs and fees can deter shoppers, a complex, lengthy payment process can make people rethink a purchase at the last minute. Working with business leaders, marketing can offer insight into how to reduce friction both in-person and online during this part of the customer journey.

Things That Add Friction to Payment

**Time.** Things like long processing time and handwritten invoices make payment take longer than necessary.

**Taking payment over the phone.** Aside from the fact that this isn’t a very secure way to collect payments, there is also the possibility of dropped calls, which could cause customers to decide not to buy.

**Paper bills.** Paying through the mail is outdated and unnecessary in most cases.
Contactless not available. The pandemic changed the way people think about transactions. Many consumers prefer—and expect—contactless payment options.

Bad online payment portals. Online payment portals with a bad user experience or that require receiving a paper bill first before paying can be a huge deterrent for potential customers.

Not accepting a wide range of payment options. Giving your customers various options to complete a payment (mobile wallets, a variety of cards, cash, etc.) makes purchasing easy and convenient.

How to Remove Friction from the Payment Process

Want to be your sales team’s best friend? Ditch time-consuming payment processes like taking payment over the phone or sending paper bills in the mail. Instead, speed up the process by texting a secure payment link that allows your customers to pay immediately.

Consider using touch-free payment options like card readers, tap to pay solutions, Apple/Google pay, etc. You can also give mobile card readers to employees who work in the field rather than out of a physical location. Using touch-free payment adds an element of safety because there is no hand-to-hand exchange and customers aren’t required to input a pin number.
**Guyou Construction**

To simplify their buying process Guyou Construction is making it easier than ever for customers to pay for services. Within the first year improving their payment process with Podium, the business have generated over $500k in sales.

“We can say, ‘Well, we can do this at the time of service, or you can pay upfront.’ And sometimes that’s where that comes into play because they prefer to pay on the spot, ‘Oh, I don’t mind paying right now.’ So we send them a link through Podium where they complete their purchase.”

[Read their story →](#)

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**The Point of Sale is a Marketing Opportunity**

Another important thing to keep in mind during this stage is that the point of sale can be a marketing opportunity. When someone makes a purchase, consider:

- Asking them to leave a review for your business.
- Encouraging them to leave feedback about the product or service they purchased.
- Inviting them to opt-in to receive texts or emails from your business.

Remember, your strategy for keeping customers engaged after a purchase should begin the moment they make a purchase. The goal is lifelong customers, not one-time purchasers, and that long-term relationship begins now.
Delivery is often a pain point in the mattress industry. See how Mattress Firm streamlined the entire customer journey, including notoriously annoying delivery windows, with automated trigger emails:

“When a delivery is more than 48 hours away, Podium triggers a message flow and sends a series of messages reminding the customer of the delivery date and asking for a confirmation of information. Customers can quickly confirm the appointment and update any information that’s out-of-date. And if the customer has a time conflict, Mattress Firm can quickly reschedule.”

Read their story ➔
Journey Stage 5: Advocacy

Customers have traditionally relied on their friends and families for recommendations on everything from which restaurants to visit, to where to buy a car, or which doctor to see.

Reviews are the digital equivalent of word-of-mouth. If you don’t have them, you’re losing potential customers and stifling your growth.

Unfortunately, the vast majority of consumers leave a business review once a quarter or less. And a fifth say they’ve never written a review at all.

Reviews are the best advertising your business has. But, how do you get more of them if people are so unlikely to leave them? Businesses need to rethink how they ask for reviews and make it easier for their customers.

There are a lot of different ways you can collect reviews. Below, we share six of our favorites.
Experiment with Outreach

Experiment with different review collecting methods to see what works best for your business. Here are some different methods you should try:

- Text
- Verbal Ask
- In-person QR Codes
- Text Invitation

Depending on who your customers are and what industry you’re in, certain methods may be more convenient for everyone involved.

Give Customers Context

When asking customers for reviews, your employees should let customers know:

- When they will receive the review invite.
- How they will receive it (text, email, etc.)
- Why it’s important for them to respond.
- Content that might be beneficial to include for other customers to find you, like specifics on the services they purchased.

Acme Team

Hi Jerome,

Thank you again for visiting Acme Automotive for your service needs. You indicated that you had a positive experience with our team. If you’re willing, we’d love to share your experience with others. If you wouldn’t mind taking 2-5 minutes to share your time with Acme, you’ll help many others get the same 5-Star service as you.
Make Review Gathering Part of Your Processes

Businesses that have the most successful online review programs have built the “ask” into multiple steps of the sales process. If asking for reviews doesn’t feel natural at first, it can be helpful to provide your employees with scripts or templates to follow. Here is a template you can use when asking customers for reviews:

Thank you so much for your business. Customer feedback is very important to us. Would it be alright if I sent you a text message right now with a link that makes it easy to leave a review? We would really appreciate it.

You’ll be amazed at how much more easily reviews will come in when asking for them is built into your employees’ daily routine.
From adding review requests at key customer touchpoints to using text messaging gather reviews – see how TAB Bank gathered over 400 reviews in three months.

Read their story →

Don’t Wait. Follow Up.

Waiting too long between the moment a purchase is made and the moment you ask for a review decreases the likelihood that customers will follow through. You want to ask while you’re still fresh in their minds.

Even if you ask for a review right away, people might forget. Ask for a review verbally and follow up by sending a text link—this increases the likelihood of them completing the review.

Focus on One Platform First

There are so many review platforms out there—trying to gather reviews on multiple platforms at once can be overwhelming. We recommend focusing on Google reviews first, then you can shift your focus to Facebook or other review sites.
Journey Stage 6: Repeat Business

Staying engaged with customers after a purchase is mutually beneficial for you and your customers.

If you don’t make an effort to stay in touch with people who purchase from you, they might forget about you—even if they love your products or services. Engaging with customers consistently ensures that your company stays fresh in their minds. This will help you turn first-time buyers into repeat purchasers, and repeat purchasers into lifelong customers.

Today’s consumers want to support companies whose missions, products, and services align with their own values. Think of your customers as a community. These people want, need, and love what you have to offer them. If you want to grow your community, you need to make an effort to cultivate those connections and strengthen those relationships.
## Return Customers vs. New Customers

While growing your audience and reaching new people is a good goal, selling to return customers is often far more cost-efficient than selling to new prospects. Depending on your industry, acquiring a new customer is anywhere from five to 25 times more expensive than retaining an existing one.

| Businesses have a **60 to 70%** chance of selling to an existing customer. | The probability of selling to a new prospect is only **5% to 20%**. |

On top of that, compared to new customers, existing customers are **50% more likely** to try out your new products and spend an average of 31% more than first-time customers.
How to Keep Customers Engaged

Keeping customers engaged isn’t just a way for your business to make more money—brand engagement after a purchase is something that today’s consumers want (and expect). Common marketing methods to keep customer relationships strong after a purchase include:

- **Text/SMS marketing:** 89% of customers say they prefer to communicate with businesses via SMS text over all other channels.

- **Email marketing:** Email is an industry standard for engagement, but can be even more impactful when coupled with your SMS marketing strategy.

- **Social media marketing:** With 72% of all U.S. adults using at least one social media network, odds are, social media is a great place to connect with your customers. But be sure you’re monitoring and responsive to messages through these platforms!

Here are a few different types of post-purchase engagement customers will expect:

- Ask for—and implement—customer feedback.
- Follow up after appointments. This can be a great time to encourage customers to leave a review.
- Share exclusive promotions for current customers.
- Send personalized messages to celebrate birthdays and milestones.
- Provide ongoing education about your industry/products/services. Now is the time to position your business as the best one in the industry.
Final Thoughts

Mom-and-pop and small businesses continue to hold a special place in a local community’s heart. In order to compete with changes in consumer expectations — and big-box competitors — local businesses need to find new ways to connect with customers.

By focusing on ways to simplify the customer journey, marketers are meeting the demands of modern customers. In this guide, we walked through how to improve your marketing channels to increase visibility and revenue for your business. So, what’s next?

Here are some additional resources where you can find best practices on local marketing:

- [VIDEO] ShopTalk: Local Business Tips & Tricks
- [BOOK] 8 Experts Share Their Secrets on Omni-Channel Marketing
- [BOOK] SMS Marketing 101
About Podium

Podium is a marketing and communications platform for local businesses across industries including retail, home services, automotive, healthcare, and more. Powered by text messaging, Podium helps your business increase leads and revenue, communicate more effectively with customers, and get more done in less time.

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