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10 Marketing Trends for 2011

From geotargeting to mobile apps and social media, here's what you need to consider now.

Susan Gunelius | January 12, 2011

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As the global economy struggles to correct itself, and social-media marketing becomes a strategic imperative, small businesses will have exciting opportunities to expand in new directions this year.

The need for trust, value and brand transparency, among other [trends from last year](#), are just as important today. But the current shift to geotargeting, mobile marketing and online reputation management require that small businesses modify their plans to surpass competitors.

Here are 10 marketing trends that small businesses should incorporate now to be positioned for success from the start.

Building reliable brand advocates. The idea that you need tens of thousands of Twitter followers, blog subscribers, LinkedIn connections and Facebook friends to build your business via social media is dead. Quality connections with those who are loyal to the business and the brand are far more helpful to spread your message than large groups of connections who disappear after the first interaction.

Excelling in one area rather than being all things to all people. This will be a year for small businesses to focus on their unique niches and position themselves as the definitive source for information, products and services related to the specific places in the markets where they operate.

Creating quality content as a viable marketing tool. Social media marketing and content marketing go hand-in-hand, and this is the year businesses will create useful content that adds value to the online conversation and to people's lives. The Web is a cluttered place. Amazing content is essential to break through the noise.

Moving more marketing dollars to social media. Statistics show that large and small companies are shifting budget dollars to social media and other digital marketing initiatives and away from print and radio advertising. Consumers spend more time online than ever and to reach them and stay competitive, small businesses need to have a presence on the social Web.

Tracking brand reputations on the social Web in greater detail. Social media has given consumers a large platform to voice their opinions, and small-business owners are realizing the importance of actively monitoring their reputation on the Web. With dashboards and social media aggregators like [Hootsuite](#) and [Spredfast](#), it's easier than ever for small businesses to develop, nurture and track their stature online.

Increase in branded online experiences to meet diverse consumer needs. Simply having a Twitter account or Facebook page isn't enough this year. Small businesses must surround consumers with branded online destinations such as a blog, LinkedIn profile, YouTube channel, [Flickr](#) profile and so on. Consumers can then pick and choose how they want to interact with your brand. Of course, quality trumps quantity, so extending a brand across the social Web must be done strategically to maximize opportunities without compromising content and communications.



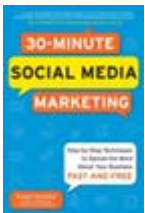
Pursuing mobile marketing. There is absolutely no doubt this is the year of [mobile marketing](#). While still in its infancy, it is the marketing imperative of the future. With mobile advertising, branded mobile apps and mobile marketing apps like [Foursquare](#), consumers will expect businesses to have a mobile presence in 2011.

Geotargeting and localized marketing will become a top priority. Local discount websites like [Groupon](#) and local review sites like [Yelp](#) make it easy for consumers to find deals and reviews about businesses in their neighborhoods and beyond. Creating targeted, local marketing campaigns using these popular tools will become the norm this year.

Accepting that silo marketing is ineffective. Offline, online and mobile marketing initiatives create an opportunity to lead consumers from one message to another by integrating those strategies. You can drive a significantly higher return on investment by cross-promoting branded online destinations, discounts, contests and events.

Co-marketing to boost returns and lower marketing costs. The economy is still struggling, which means small businesses can benefit from economies of scale by partnering with complementary businesses to [develop co-marketing programs](#) in 2011. Promotional partnerships not only lead to reduced costs but also can lead to increased exposure to new audiences.

This year, all businesses will be experimenting with a variety of online, localized and mobile marketing initiatives. Remember, even if you're not leveraging marketing trends and opportunities, your competitors are.



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