

Small Business Holiday Wish List: 11 Marketing Tools and Services

By Jennifer L. Schiff | Published on: 06-Dec-11

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These 11 inexpensive yet highly effective [marketing tools](#) are the perfect way for your small business to ring in the New Year – and ring up increase s

An SEO Strategy

"Every business should have a [search engine optimization](#) (SEO) strategy in place to complement their social media efforts in 2012," said JoAnna De founder of [tSunela](#). "SEO is the number one way to drive traffic to your website, introduce customers to your product or service and start a dialogue w audiences."

A Video Camera (with a good light sensor and microphone)

"We started filming videos to promote our business, and in three months received more than 100,000 views on YouTube," said Mike Essex, online ma manager at [Koozai](#), a U.K. digital marketing agency. "This helped build company awareness and was one of the best tech purchases we made all ye

A YouTube Channel (dedicated just to your business)

"YouTube is the world's second largest search engine – lots of people search for solutions to their problems there," pointed out Bettina Hein, the foun of [Pixability](#). And it costs nothing to upload videos. More importantly, "[YouTube videos](#) have massive impact on your SEO – links from your YouTube traffic to your website." Just remember to "leave the cute animal videos to your personal channel," she cautioned.

A Mobile Website

"Your customers all have [cell phones](#); do you have a [mobile website](#) ready for them to use?" asked Susan O'Neil, founder, [@Website Publicity](#). "A m should be on every small business's holiday wish list, especially since it is now [free](#) and easy, thanks to [Google](#)."

A Business Facebook Page

More than 800 million people use Facebook – and chances are at least a few hundred (or thousand) of those people are your customers, or could be. [Facebook page for your business](#) – which is free and where you can inform your fans about [promotions](#), new items and sales – should be a top priorit

An added bonus to having a Facebook business page: when someone "Likes" or comments on one of your posts, your information will post to their F for their Facebook friends to see, which allows your business to be seen by a larger network of potential customers.

A Google Places Page

For businesses with a physical location and a local clientele, a [Google Places page](#) is a must-have, said Kentaro Roy, the founder of [Kentaro Web C](#). "When you query Google for a bakery, the bakeries near you will appear in the A through G results (the seven-pack)," he explained.

"How can you get a higher ranking in the seven-pack? Make sure your Google Places profile is complete – get as many reviews as you can, and get listed on local business directories."

Just don't offer customers coupons or gifts in exchange for a review. Google will find out and remove your listing. (To see how your business is current Google and on other major search engines, go to [www.getlisted.org](#).)

A LinkedIn Profile & Company Page (especially for B2B businesses)

"With more than 135 million business profiles, you can't lose," said Dave Hatter, president and founder, [Libertas Technologies, LLC](#). "My network of 3 LinkedIn connections is incredibly powerful for my business."

A Wiki for Online Collaboration

"Rather than send lots of emails or suffer through a document management system, a wiki provides easy collaboration for a distributed [workforce](#)," ex Robert Pease of [Iconic Adventures](#). While there are many wiki [tools](#) out there, Pease and his company like [PBworks](#). "The best part about it is that y (and get huge value) at the free level. It's also super easy to use, share, compose and manage."

A Business Blog

A business blog connected to your website "helps build search engine optimization," and it provides a way for you to easily interact with your custom while giving you control over the content and design, said Ellen Thompson, founder and CEO of [4 Walls, Inc.](#) "It's the gift that keeps giving."

A Free App

"There has never been so much opportunity for small business in the app world," said Scott Hirsch, founder of [AppsBar](#). "Apple has seen 18 billion apps downloaded – with 1 billion downloads each month – and SMBs are finding that apps are a new way to engage with customers and to find new ones."

The problem: a professional-level app can take 6 months and \$10,000 to build. However, services such as [AppsBar.com](#), let any small business [build an Android or iTunes app](#), for free. "The tool lets businesses upload order forms, build and distribute their own coupons, offer GPS functions, calendar and more."

Online Scheduling Software

"Cloud-based scheduling software allows small [business owners](#) and their staff to save a significant amount of money, time and resources by giving capability to book their own appointments and reservations online, 24 hours a day, without having to phone or email them in," explained Eric Richard, relations specialist, [Appointment-Plus](#).

"Some online scheduling systems also include such functionality as automated email and text message reminders, which can reduce the no-show rate than 50 percent; online customer payment options and processing; record-keeping and reporting capabilities; and emarketing options," he added.

And according to Jerry Nettuno, the founder and CEO of online scheduling service [Schedulicity](#), by using cloud-based scheduling, "businesses can attract clients, increase bookings, decrease cancellations and concentrate on providing the best possible service during business hours,"

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