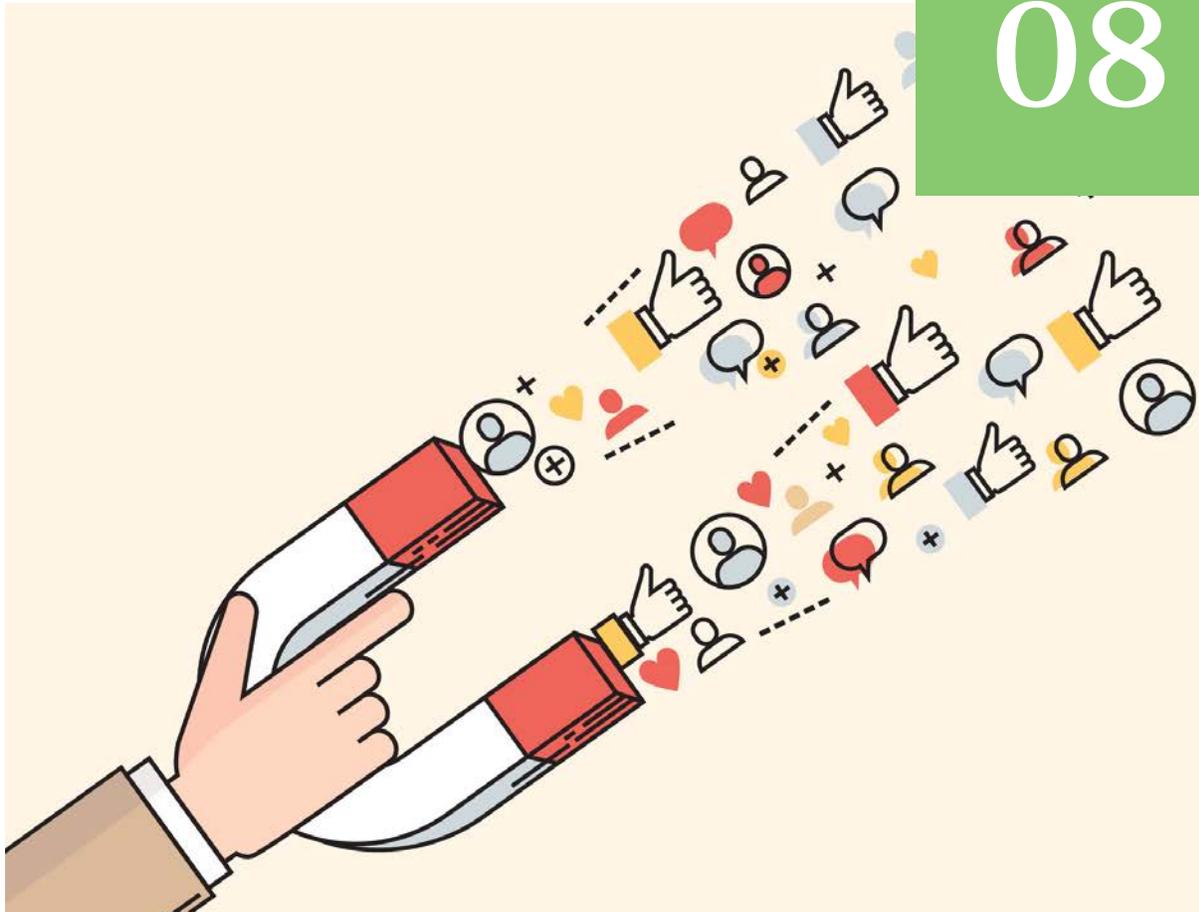


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GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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6 Tips for Managing People Who Are Smarter Than You

Lets start by defining what real time marketing is. Simply put, real-time marketing is based on current, 'on-the-fly' decision making, as opposed to traditional marketing strategies that are planned out long term and mostly in advance.

This strategy is based on current, up to minute assessments of events, trends and feedback. It requires branded responses that are both relevant and curated to your niche market.

Sound tricky? Admittedly non-conventional, real-time marketing has really hit its stride in the last few years, with the big companies all adopting the idea, to be executed alongside the more traditional methods.

This type of marketing tends to be event related or timing specific. Digital marketing experts suggest that small businesses looking to jump on the RTM bandwagon carefully curate

the event first, before tackling the marketing.

Still confused about RTM? The best example to offer lands us square in the Twitter universe: the hashtag (#). Known to everyone pre-Millennial as a grammatical symbol or something on our dial up landline phones, the hashtag has a hugely different reputation these days.

Using a hashtag creates a 'trend' that can be updated in real-time, passed on, and swiftly travel with little to no effort through the Internet universe.

RTM can be extremely difficult for small business to keep up with. Here we have created three tips to RTM success:

1. Know your audience. Know your plan, establish goals. Determine demographics, online trends and behaviors of your best customers. Repeat this process for each product or service you provide, you will see the different approaches more clearly.

2. Plan your creative attack. Once you have defined the audience, you have to establish what kind of event-specific strategy, or RTM strategy would most likely get them to convert to buyer, rather than browser. Saw that they clicked through via Facebook? Facebook message them a link to a coupon!
3. Determine which channels will be most effective, execute across multiple. Assessing past trends is a good way to determine what works best for who. A multi-channel strategy that is funneled into the right category can allow you to prepare the best real-time actions. Consider display advertising, social media, email blasts, notifications.

At this point in time it is our best advice to look to the experts- ask us how we can help with your real time marketing platform!



Are Employee Recognition Programs Bad for Your Business?

So, this may sound like a contradiction, as we have in the past touted the importance of these types of programs, and we are not taking that advice back. But it is important to examine both sides of the story, and to be aware of the dangerous pitfalls that come with initiating employee rewards.

In a nutshell, the concern here is much like the frustration we feel with Millennials in the work force- the idea that there are no 'losers', that everyone deserves a trophy, and that positive reinforcement is the only way to ensure proper self-awareness and development.

However, this harbors a sense of entitlement and disengagement from the importance of doing your best, trying your hardest, and feeling that sense of accomplishment that comes from healthy competition.

When awards are created, a sense of "all is equal" can cancel out any internal existing natural motivation, which is the motivation that has driven the strongest to survive, so to speak.

It may sound harsh to equate the Employee of the Month club to some sort of survivalist theory of evolution, but at its own level, this can be just as destructive as a hunter unable to hunt!

Let's take an example: a company decides to reward any and all employees who show up on time every day for a month. This is the best example, as it is the most basic- is showing up at work on time no longer an implied requirement?

When did we decide that we need to reward people for trying hard to do what is intrinsically PART of their job? What about all those people who show up on time every day already? What does this say about their work ethic? Does it not somehow take their dedication down a notch? These type of rewards can often backfire by encouraging, say, attendance, but causing a simultaneous lack in productivity.

Your incentive should always drive up productivity, profit, innovation, etc. Something tangible must result- perfect

attendance is moot when your employees are asleep on the job, so to speak.

It's a slippery slope- employee recognition is important. However, it needs to be selective, curated, unique, and relegated to those who go ABOVE and beyond of what is expected. Exceeding expectations, accomplishing a set goal or solving a difficult problem- these are reward-able tasks.

You take away the merit of these accomplishments when you imply that everyone is worthy of the same accolade, different day.

BLURB:

The difference between meritocracy and nepotism...

In light of the above article, the two terms beg differentiation. Meritocracy is what you should aim for- reward based on merit, compensation based on ability and accomplishment. Nepotism, the ugly cousin, is what you want to avoid. Favoritism, personal biased, and the implication that some achievements are better than other are all toxic forms of recognition.



How to Use Data to Improve Culture?

With shifts in technology essentially change the way we do business intrinsically, it is important for small business to realize that the access to data is changing the game.

Just because you aren't one of the big boys, with access to eons of consumer data, you can still utilize what you can to benefit your company culture.

Consider a platform vs pipeline method. As one expert describes, the old method (pipeline) was to push things through at rapid pace. The platform method encourages interaction. This is the basis of a culture that attracts consumers.

What we see happening most frequently in small business niches is that data is being cultivated, but not being appropriated. Collection is the start, application is where it gets tricky.

Alternatively, often data gets analyzed and it provides insight into what may be a less than ideal situation, and is therefore ignored in lieu of damaging egos or presenting harsh realities.

The best way to address these issues is to let get of traditional methodologies and culture. The most toxic when analyzing data: top-down hierarchy.

If you want the managers to make all the calls based on instinct, then don't even bother with data collection. The whole purpose to trust the data- to analyze and apply to the decision making process, which as a whole, is a much more holistic approach.

When looking at your data, remind your team that the goal is to be the best, not necessarily the first. Data collection is tedious enough, analysis and application are even rougher stuff, and most importantly, they can be very time consuming.

Apply the effort and spend the time; the end result will be more focused, streamlined, and actionable.

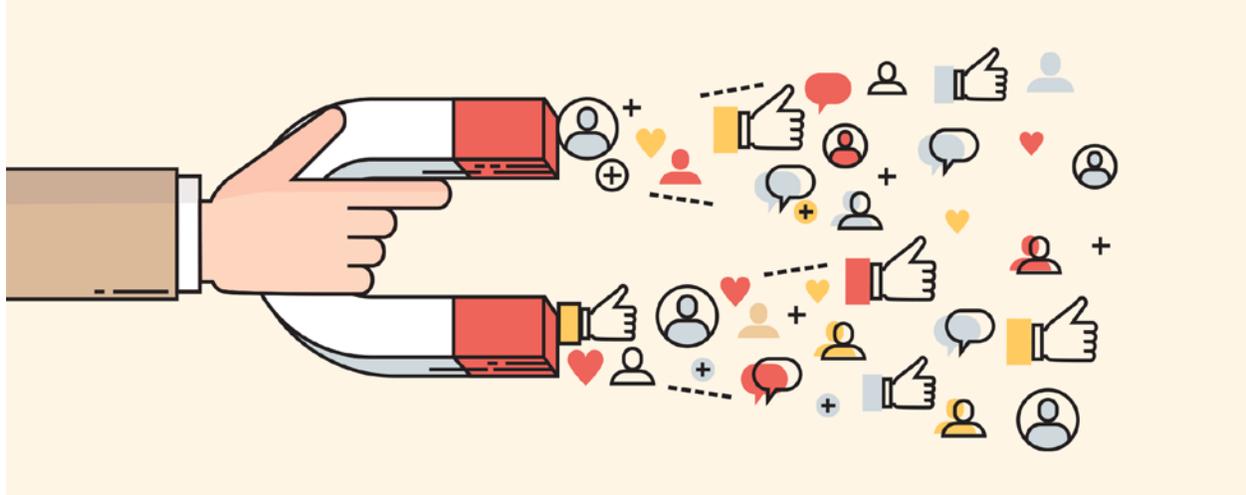
Trust innovation, encourage creativity and reward unique approaches. This data renaissance is 'new' in the sense that it is still malleable, make it work for you! Take

advantage of the fluid process and take risks.

Data should be providing you with not only who your customer is, but what is it that they want and how they want to get it. Take this opportunity to put together the best team for addressing each area. You have specialists, experts, and leaders among your team who will take on these tasks with gusto. Leave no stone (of data) unturned!

Once you are ready to step up your advertising or marketing game, you should feel more than confident that you have utilized every last morsel of data, because if you don't, you could be wasting hundreds, thousands, even millions on a campaign that will fall on deaf ears.

Your company culture should reflect your commitment to get your customers what they need. Data can help you do this, and more.



Step-By-Step Guide on How to Run An Effective Marketing Campaign

Let's clarify- with all the tongue-wagging regarding marketing best practices, what we mean to examine here is a campaign, as opposed to a strategy.

Need further clarification? Marketing strategy: one instance of how you intend to promote a product, service, upgrade, etc. Marketing campaign: the overall encompassed, multi-leveled roll out intending to positively promote your business itself, as made up of many services, products, upgrades, etc.

That being said, it is one methodology that every strategy is treated like a campaign itself, but here we find ourselves falling deeper down the rabbit hole than necessary for all intents and purposes of this article.

So what steps can be followed to ensure an effective campaign?

1. Start with inception- what's the idea? What is its goal? How does it portray your company's

message, vision, and culture?

2. Organize your thoughts. This step is tedious, no doubt, but will be the most overall influential over the success of the campaign. Deciding what resources will be necessary - who will do what, a timeline, etc. All of these steps will need to be separated into their own organizational flow charts to keep tabs on the many moving pieces at all times.
3. Stay laser focused on your audience. At every decision making juncture, your audience should be playing a part. You may find that your audience segments even further as you forage deeper into your campaign- that can be expected, build flexibility into your campaign.
4. Identify the influencers. Within your niche, there will always be those who 'control the content'. It can be bloggers, newspapers or specific magazines, news

agencies, consumer groups, etc. There are always key players who have the power to make or break you. Identify, befriend, and plug towards them specifically.

5. Build relationships with your identified influencers and get hell bent on engaging them and therefore your audience. This is the creative step - think outside of the box, take risks, and employ an all-hands-on-deck mentality to ensure this step goes smoothly.
6. Now, it's time to cultivate your list, tighten it up, push all your marketing efforts into the funnel that reaches that exact customer you envisioned when you dreamt up your campaign!

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