Salute to Small Business

Banking Relationships from a Small Business Perspective

It’s always a good time for small business owners to reassess their company’s financial health and their relationship with their bank. The American Bankers Association offers the following tips to help small business owners enhance their current banking relationship or choose the best bank for their needs.

Many small business owners have been wondering what it takes these days to get a bank loan. One way to influence your bank’s decision is to establish a personal relationship with your banker that shows him or her just how valuable your business is.

Banks value long-term, profitable business banking relationships. Bankers reward these firms by extending credit with the most favorable interest rates. These businesses and their bankers understand that developing a meaningful relationship is a two-way process—your banker has a role to play and so do you.

So how do you know if you have a meaningful and valued relationship with your bank? To find out, take the following “relationship test.” Respond to the seven statements below with “true” or “false.”

1) My firm has a bank relationship manager assigned to our account and we have contact (by phone or in person) at least once per quarter to update the bank on recent developments at our firm and within our industry.
2) Our bank relationship manager understands our industry, our position in the industry, our firm’s value proposition, where we are today and where we’d like to be in the future.
3) We provide our banker with updated financial information (historical and projected balance sheet, income statement, cash flow information to include projection assumptions and commentary on actual performance) regarding our progress toward achieving our goals on a timely basis.
4) Our senior management team meets annually with our relationship manager and his/her boss to discuss our firm’s financial performance and challenges and to understand the bank’s perception of our performance.
5) Our relationship manager proactively brings us ideas to help us achieve our goals.
6) We understand how the current economic crisis has affected our bank and our relationship with the bank (i.e., the availability of credit to our firm and the safety of our deposits).
7) Our firm makes sure that our banker is aware of all of our business with the bank (e.g., both business and personal) and that it makes money on our total banking relationship. In addition, our firm provides our banker with referrals to other profitable businesses.

If you were able to respond “true” to all seven of these statements, you have positioned your firm well with your banker.

If you answered “true” to five or six, you still have room for improvement in developing a meaningful dialogue with your banker and benefiting from his or her advice and counsel.

If you answered “true” to four or fewer, you have not positioned your firm well with your banker and are putting your firm at a competitive disadvantage in terms of:

- receiving the funds you need to grow and prosper;
- obtaining the best rates available for the financial products and services your business needs to operate; and
- receiving “ideas and advice” to help you achieve your desired business goals.

Your firm should seek a bank that rewards a relationship approach to doing business with them, and a banker who is able to give your firm the financial advice that it needs to survive and thrive in today’s ever changing economy. In return, your firm should reward this bank with your business and loyalty.

The American Bankers Association represents banks of all sizes and charters and is the voice for the nation’s $14 trillion banking industry and its two million employees. Learn more at aba.com.
Five Financial Spring Cleaning Tips for Small Businesses

By MARLA CLEMOW

Looking to Purchase, Refinance or Renovate Commercial Real Estate?

By ROBERT SCOTT

Generating Capital for Your New Business

By ANDREA SANDOR

It’s spring cleaning season and not just time to clean out your closets or mop the floors. It’s the right time of year to get your small business organized. From de-cluttering business expenses, to cleaning up plans, every business owner can benefit from a spring cleaning. Below are four tips that we’ve observed from small businesses that excel at spring cleaning and can help you stay on track this season:

1. De-clutter Your Business Expenses:
   As a small business owner, you’re likely responsible for filing your taxes on a quarterly basis. With the April 15 deadline in the rearview mirror, you’ve probably had a chance to review your business expenses. Now it’s time to think about next quarter and changes you can make today to better prepare. If you don’t already do this, keep your business and personal expenses separate. Business checking and credit accounts that are separate from personal accounts can help you maintain accurate and complete records of all business-related income and expenses. Without having to take the time to break down business income and expenses separately from personal accounts, you may have separate statements and records to keep. Keeping business and personal accounts separate can help you maintain accurate and complete records of all business-related income and expenses – have separate statements and records to keep. Keeping business and personal accounts separate can help you maintain accurate and complete records of all business-related income and expenses.

2. Dust off your Business Plan:
   Every business owner needs a business plan. As a business owner, you’re likely responsible for filing your taxes on a quarterly basis. With the April 15 deadline in the rearview mirror, you’ve probably had a chance to review your business expenses. Now it’s time to think about next quarter and changes you can make today to better prepare. If you don’t already do this, keep your business and personal expenses separate. Business checking and credit accounts that are separate from personal accounts can help you maintain accurate and complete records of all business-related income and expenses. Without having to take the time to break down business income and expenses separately from personal accounts, you may have separate statements and records to keep. Keeping business and personal accounts separate can help you maintain accurate and complete records of all business-related income and expenses.

3. Spruce up your Transition Plan:
   As a small business owner, you’re probably not thinking about selling your business or retiring, but it’s never too early to start planning for the future. When it comes to the purchase, refinancing or sale of your commercial real estate, borrowers owe it to themselves to look at all of the possibilities, including the Small Business Administration’s 7(a) Loan Program. While not widely known or understood outside the lending industry, the SBA 7(a) Loan Program offers borrowers up to 90 percent financing for the purchase of owner/user commercial real estate that is fully amortized with no balloon payments. For the purpose of the loan program, owner/user is defined as a minimum of 51% of total occupancy. With a maximum loan amount of $5,000,000 and terms as 25 years for commercial real estate acquisition, construction or refinance, the 7(a) Program could serve as a real solution to many borrowers. Due to the inherent nature of SBA financing, in some instances qualifying for an SBA loan may actually be easier than qualifying for other, more traditional forms of financing. SBA programs generally allow for a higher loan to value ratio, longer amortization periods and may even consider the personal income of the business and not just historical cash flows when making a credit decision. These factors can be extremely helpful, particularly to a rapidly growing company. SBA 7(a) loans can be used by qualifying borrowers to purchase, refinance or renovate real estate, additionally these loans can also be used for acquiring fixed assets, such as heavy machinery or other equipment, restructuring current debt, working capital and in some cases can even be used to fund the acquisition of a new business. It is important to understand that the SBA does not make loans directly to small businesses. Rather, the SBA sets the guidelines for these loans, which are then made by the SBA’s lending partners. Because the SBA guarantees the lender that a portion of the loan will be repaid, it significantly lessens the risk to the lending partners. So when a business applies for an SBA loan, it is actually applying for a commercial loan that is structured according to SBA requirements with an SBA guaranty. SBA loan guaranty requirements and practices can change and the Government alters its fiscal policy and priorities to meet current economic conditions. Therefore, you can’t rely on past policy when seeking assistance in today’s market, which makes it all the more important that you work with a lender that will help guide you through the process and identify what type of program may best fit the needs of your company.

4. Reduce your Cash Flow Burden:
   To run a successful small business, it’s essential that you maintain healthy cash flow. A best practice is to track your cash flow on a monthly basis. This can help you improve cash flow projections and better plan for recurring expenses and business expansions. Nearly every small business will face a time when it needs more cash than it has on hand. During spring cleaning, you may want to consider if a business line of credit would help bridge any gaps your business encounters in cash flow. For instance, when taxes are due, you may want to use a line of credit to help keep your cash flow constant and cover ongoing expenses, while paying down your tax debts.

Refunding business plans and reviewing your finances can not only enhance your bottom line, but can also have a great impact on your productivity and future success.

Marla Clemow is Region President for Wells Fargo’s Los Angeles Metro Region. She can be reached at marla.clemow@wellsfargo.com. For more information about Wells Fargo for Small Business, visit WellsFargoWorks.com.

Whichever path you choose, it’s a good idea to take a look at your transition plans while you’re refreshing your business plan.

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How Small Businesses Can Effectively Navigate through Obstacles

A s the economy recovers from the Great Recession, many businesses are still dealing with some turbulence in the market. There has been a slight increase in hiring but wages and productivity growth remain stagnant. In addition, the Fed has signaled it will raise rates but it is uncertain as to when that will happen. When you add in the economic uncertainty overseas most companies are remaining cautious. This caution creates slower expansion, limited hiring and lower demand for new equipment. Business owners will take risks but only if they know what the risks are and in this uncertain economy it is difficult to assess those risks.

In the California economy there is some promise as the technology sector continues to thrive. In the upcoming year, Southern California’s Silicon Beach expansion - the area between Santa Monica and El Segundo - is just one example of growth in the technology sector in this region. This is something that is likely to spread given California’s rich technology sub-culture, the availability of venture capital and the large universities in the region that will grow the best and brightest in this field.

Regardless of industry, there are two big obstacles facing Southern California’s businesses. The first is finding good talent. Having the right team in place is crucial for a company that is trying to generate a consistent product and grow. The second is regulation and tax costs in California.

This has led to many companies being unable to expand in Southern California.

In order to navigate through these obstacles, businesses should choose banks that understand their business and are able to advise the company and structure banking products to fit their needs. A good banking relationship ensures that the business will have a reliable source of credit and the right treasury management tools in place to best manage the company’s finances. Any company that wants to grow successfully needs consistent support from their bank.

Community Bank provides that support by creating one-on-one personal relationships with our clients. Our customers know that their banker who becomes a trusted advisor offering banking solutions to fit each client’s needs. In addition to having a banker readily available to assist them, our clients also have access to the Executive Management team.

Charlie and Howard Cook built Community Bank on these values that still define the Bank today. After World War II Charlie was frustrated with dealing with large banks so he decided to open his own bank. From its inception the Bank focused on middle-market companies and providing excellent customer service. As the Southern California economy grew, the need for more sophisticated financial tools grew. Today, Community Bank provides virtually every financial service needed by business in Southern California.

It is important that businesses get the right financing to help the business succeed. Small- to medium-sized businesses can take advantage of the Small Business Administration (SBA) programs through Community Bank. In fact, Community Bank consistently lends $100,000,000 in SBA loans each year throughout Southern California. The benefit of SBA loans is that they typically offer a much lower down-payment for commercial real estate purchase, debt refinancing, equipment financing and business acquisition than a traditional loan.

The SBA has recently implemented a few programs to make financing more affordable and easier to obtain - especially for U.S. Military Veterans and businesses that are involved in export activities. For Veterans all SBA fees are cut in half. Any loan under $150,000 has zero guaranty fees. For businesses that export, the SBA increased their guarantee which gives a lender a little more latitude. These changes have helped business owners throughout LA County overcome the objections most lenders have had in the past.

Information for this article was provided by Community Bank.

For more information, visit www.bank.com or call (800) 788-9999.

Startups and Coworking Space: the Perfect Match

Starting a business is a great risk yet many business owners are willing to start out on their own. With many startups operating out of a Coworking space, Pasadena has the raw materials to start up a new company. BlankSpaces is expected to open a fourth space in Pasadena. BlankSpaces is expected to have flexible plans for a variety of sizes for any work style. It is anticipated that BlankSpaces will open their Pasadena location by the end of the year. Not only is the Pasadena location close to community comforts such as Urti Cafe and The Avenue, but it is also in close proximity to Caltech in order to serve as a magnet for the area’s deep academic/tech talent.

At any stage of a business, the City of Pasadena Economic Development staff is always available to assist. From Coworking spaces to traditional office space, the City staff can help you find the perfect location. In Pasadena, the team is open for business and here to help! Check out the website for more information or give them a call. They are waiting to hear from you.

For more information, contact the City of Pasadena’s Business Concierge Team: Ruth Marthies-Banen (rmarthiesbanen@cityofpasade- na.net), Robert Montano (rmontano@cityofpasadena.net) or visit www.cityofpasadena.net/businesses.

Become a Great Boss at Any Size Company

Bearing in mind the importance of good leadership to business, consider the following features, skills, strategies and attributes:

1. Be inclusive. With a smaller operation, it’s essential that everyone feels like an equal and involved part of the team. A good employer is certain to treat each employee fairly, not only in terms of salary and other forms of compensation, but also in how that employee is involved in the daily function of the business. Encourage feedback and create a culture so employees feel genuinely engaged. You need to create an environment of integrity, trust and respect to make absolutely certain that everyone is treated fairly, regardless of the differences they may have in background, experience and interests.

2. Mission, not just money. Very few businesses operate out of sheer altruism, but that’s not to say that turning a profit is the primary philosophy. A coach sees things very differently than the players. An effective boss establishes a genuine business mission. How that takes shape depends both on the business and on the Executive boss that wants to set. For instance, a restaurant owner may push speedy lunchtime service as a way of serving the time-strapped business community. By contrast, a medical supply outfit may emphasize how its products improve customers’ health. Not only can a clear mission serve to motivate employees, it can also instill a sense of importance in their jobs.

3. Nothing to fear but fear itself. Many of us have had bosses who would be right at home with a guillotine next to their desk calculators. Make one mistake on the job and feel free to slip you niggling right in between the blades. Coincidentally, an effective boss encourages his or her employees not to be gun shy about an occasional snafu along the road toward better job performance.

4. Don’t just lead — coach. It’s common for a sports team to be managed by a coach out-coached another in a particular game. The same dynamic holds true for business, in which you view your position both as a leader and a coach who teaches, encourages and, if need be, corrects employees. Each coach sees things very differently than the players. It’s important to use that different perspective to educate and encourage. But it’s also important, like a good coach, to lead your team by example. For instance, while you should point out mistakes by your employees, be sure to admit when you yourself make a mistake.

5. It’s their careers, too. Don’t forget that the people who work for you are looking to you to help them navigate and advance their careers. As I said, it’s all about money. But it is all about making your employees see how to improve and create meaningful careers for themselves. If an employee has a goal of becoming a manager or running his or her own business someday, nurture that goal early. Tell them the traits they need to work on to achieve their ultimate plans.

6. Make, not necessarily born. One final aspect of being a good boss is recognizing that much of what goes into being an effective leader is, in fact, learned behavior. Of course, there are always been and will be bosses who seem to have a flawless touch in leading and motivating. But for every natural, there are just as many top-flight bosses who got that way by attending management classes and seminars, leading books on effective leadership and just as important, understanding that a good employer naturally attracts first-rate employees.

Information provided by the Small Business Association.

SALUTE TO SMALL BUSINESS
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**V**

VEDC is a leading non-profit small business lender that is changing the way small business lending gets done by making it more available and impactful. From their headquarters in the Greater Los Angeles area, VEDC has supported small businesses for owners for 38 years with the goal of creating and sustaining jobs and businesses in underserved communities by providing high-quality small business development services. They provide loans and micro-financing options to small businesses, particularly those owned by women and minorities, that don’t qualify for traditional bank financing. VEDC believes that the major barrier for today’s small business is access to capital. Without adequate financing, many small businesses are prevented from thriving. That is why VEDC focuses its efforts on lending and guiding small businesses to achieve growth and sustainability. Their interest is to get loan funds in the hands of minority and low-income borrowers so that businesses can be created, expanded, and expanded.

In fact, VEDC has been instrumental in helping to create economic opportunities for low-income and other underserved areas for those who want to improve their financial standards and build stronger communities. The organization has helped create and retain over 25,000 jobs and open more than 1,700 new businesses. Historically, 75 percent of VEDC’s clients are located in low- to moderate-income areas and 65 percent have been minority and/or female entrepreneurs.

Taking access to capital one step further, VEDC has formed the National Microfinance Fund to expand its small business loan portfolio to include lending to other micro-lenders across the country. VEDC seeks to continually increase access to microloan capital and intends to meet this growing need by acting as a national intermediary lender.

This new program will not only support the efforts of microloan organizations in markets VEDC currently serves, but to also improve the economic impact of non-profit, mission driven lenders across the county. These new found collaborations will greatly support a large number of new and existing entrepreneurs across diverse industries in achieving business growth through access to capital and financing. It has been proven that a combination of technical assistance, access to capital, and partnerships with local workforce and business assistance agencies are critical to entrepreneurs in success which is why VEDC offers training and financial services. The success of small businesses and the creation of jobs is of critical importance in developing healthy and sustainable communities. VEDC has consistently provided services to small and medium sized business owners, entrepreneurs and members of the communities it serves. The organization operates a Small Business Administration (SBA) Women’s Business Center, San Fernando Valley Small Business Development Corporation, Pacoima Development Federal Credit Union, and two Los Angeles Business Source Centers. The combination of these successful programs that anticipate the needs of growing businesses in the ever-changing economy has created a focused vision of economic opportunity, effective organization of resources, and the fostering of job creation.

VEDC offers a core of business workshops and each year over 5,000 small businesses access these services. The renowned Entrepreneur Training Program is an intensive 8 week business training program for start-up and existing businesses. Alumni from this program have proven to have a higher success rate for business retention than the national average. VEDC has assisted more than 95,000 businesses and graduated 2,907 individuals from the Entrepreneur Training Program.

The VEDC Business Services Division offers entrepreneurs the tools they need to succeed in business with the access to consulting and training to business owners and VEDC loan clients as part of an ongoing strategy not only to help people start a business but to assist them with capacity building and growth strategies. In support of small business, VEDC offers a wide range of services to entrepreneurs in the Los Angeles area including:

**Business Loan Programs**
- Microloan Programs in amounts ranging from $1,000 to $50,000
- Small Business Loan Programs in amounts ranging from $50,000 to $500,000
- SBA 7(a), including Community Advantage, in amounts up to $2,000,000
- SBA 504 Commercial Real Estate Loan Program

**Business Services and Training Programs**
- SBA Sponsored Women’s Business Center in Van Nuys, CA
- Two City of Los Angeles Business Source Centers – Pacoima and Reseda
- Microenterprise and Entrepreneurial Training Programs
- Travelers Small Business Risk Education Program

Each year, VEDC services more than 5,000 small businesses with financing, training, and direct business assistance. As a result, VEDC has been instrumental in helping to create economic opportunities for those who want to improve their financial standards and build stronger communities.

**To learn more visit www.vedc.org or call (818) 907-9977.**

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**Grow Your Business Fiscally and Physically**

**By Tom Jones**

**How do I grow my business?** Now that you have all these services, how do you get more of them? If every business owner wants answered, preferably with ways that don’t cost them a lot of money. The response is simple. There are really only three ways to grow any business. First, you go out and find new customers. Second, you increase the unit of sale. Finally, you increase the frequency of purchase. These are the only three ways I know of to grow any business. Let’s take a closer look at what each one really means.

Most people believe that in order to grow a business, you have to prospect, cold call, advertise, do direct mail, or use the Internet to find new customers. While finding new customers may be one way of growing your business, it’s also the most expensive and most risky way to go.

There is no guarantee that the thousands of dollars you just spent placing an ad in a national magazine is going to bring you new business, or that the 100 free business cards you just sent out will generate a profitable response. Yet, if you look around, most businesses spend the majority of their time and resources in this one area alone.

A better way is to focus more of your attention on the other two ways of growing your business. Although at first glance, these two might seem surprisingly different, they are, in fact, very different.

The first is to increase the unit of sale. What this means is that you want to make your current or new customers purchase more from you at each and every sale. In other words, if your typical customer buys an average of $100 worth of goods or services from you each purchase, your goal is to try and move that number up as much as possible.

You might try adding complimentary items to your product mix. An example that immediately comes to mind is a photo store I once worked with. To increase the unit of sale, instead of having the customers come in for film or processing, I suggested he start offering photo albums, frames, and batteries. So when a customer came in to pick up their finished photos, they could also buy a nice frame or photo album, while they were thinking about it. This also saved them from having to go to another merchant for these items.

This increased the unit of purchase for the store owner, and inevitably increased his bottom line. Think about it; he had no additional advertising expenditures, he took very little risk, and he still managed to achieve his goal of growing his business.

The second way to grow your business is by increasing the frequency of sale. In other words, if your typical customer buys from you once a month, for example, you could offer them a reason to buy twice a month.

An example that comes to mind is a client I worked with just last year. In this case we also had them offer an extended product line, in order to reach the same number of times a customer would purchase from them. This was a business services company that offered a wide range of services for the small office/home office professional. We looked at what people were buying and how it was being used. We decided to poll their customers directly and ask them what was missing from their service. We got a lot of good answers. They needed most were simple office supplies. For just a few hundred dollars, the owner of the business was able to bring in a full range of office supplies including paper, computer ribbons, cables, staples, ink, etc. These were the types of things these people frequently ran out of and by offering them in this location, they saved a long trip down to the office super-center.

It’s always a good idea to talk to your customers on a regular basis. Find out what they really like about your business, but even more importantly, find out what they don’t like and change it. You may find that if you were just to offer them the product(s) they needed either before or after purchasing your products, you could increase your sales exponentially.

There are two methods we work to grow any business because they have very little risk associated with them and can very easily have the same growth effect as finding new customers, but without the inherent risk associated with cold prospecting.

Another key advantage to using these two methods is that your customers already know you and trust you. They’ve done business with you in the past and they have some positive references about your company. In a cold prospecting situation, you are trying not only to sell a product or service, but you are trying to sell your prospect on your company’s integrity for which they have no references.

A great question I often ask of my clients is how do they get most of their new business? Inevitably they’ll tell me that most of their business comes from referrals. So, my next logical question is, how much time and effort do you place into developing referrals? I’m always amazed to find out that although they realize that referrals are a major part of their business, they dedicate few, if any, resources to this powerful means of generating new business!

If referrals are a major part of your growth strategy, you’ve got to spend time developing programs that increase the number and frequency of referred clients to your business. An easy way to do this is to offer your existing clients a premium or discount of some sort for each new customer they bring you. What you are actually doing is turning your satisfied customers into a powerful, persuasive sales force and paying them only when they produce a result or in other words, buying your prospect.

Growing your business doesn’t have to be expensive, risky, or even time-consuming. Unless you have a time-tested way to advertise that produces reliable results, try these other ways I’ve mentioned first. You might be surprised to find that they work as good or better than cold prospecting at a fraction of the cost and with dramatically reduced risk!

Tom Jones is an independent business management consultant and freelance writer.
“The tools in the Business Plan Center are golden for anyone who’s looking to grow their business.”

Carolyn Miye
Oodles 4 Kids, est. 2012
Portland, Oregon

Our complimentary Business Plan Tool can help you focus on the things that will make your business thrive.

Like most small business owners, Carolyn Miye was so busy running her business that she found it hard to organize ideas for her company’s future into a business plan. Using the Business Plan Tool from Wells Fargo, she gained valuable insight to help her focus on what to do next. It’s just one of the complimentary resources in the new Business Plan Center. To learn more, visit WellsFargoWorks.com.
What Kinds of Insurance to Consider for Your Business

By MIKE TOTTMAN

Some small-business owners look at insurance as if it were a tax. It may be necessary, but if they can avoid it or keep it to a minimum, all the better. This view is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Insurance can give you advantages, as well as providing in the case of catastrophe. There are several kinds of insurance to consider for your business.

Four kinds of insurance are essential: fire insurance, liability insurance, automobile insurance, and workmen’s compensation insurance. In many businesses, crime insurance may be essential as well. Fire insurance can be embellished with additional protection against explosion, vandalism, malicious mischief, smoke, etc. at a minimal additional cost. A comprehensive all-risk contract may be the best buy for the broadest protection for the money.

Liability insurance is the shield for the business owner against lawsuits by customers who may slip and fall, or injure themselves with your product. A liability coverage of $1 million is not excessive. Remember, you may be legally liable even when you exercise reasonable care - in some cases even if the injury is sustained by a trespasser! Be certain whether or not property is covered by your liability insurance as if it were a tax. It may be necessary, but if they can avoid it or keep it to a minimum, all the better.

Business Interruption Insurance is necessary when your company may lose income for some time when you are unable to operate your business. The bills don’t stop when you do!

Errors and Omissions Insurance is essential if you fail to do something that “a normal prudent person” would do, that may not be enough. E&O insurance covers you if you fail to do something an “expert” would do. For instance, a prudent person wouldn’t stack 50-gallon drums full of acid without some safeguards against falling. An expert should have known that they should be marked in a particular way before shipping. If an injury occurs in the first case, liability insurance is enough. In the second, E&O would be necessary, because of your “malpractice” in not properly marking the containers. In this case, the claim may not even be an injury, but it could be a fine imposed for the marking failure.

Automobile insurance is of course required by law. Inquire into fleet policies if you have five or more vehicles used for business.

Workmen’s Compensation is also a legal requirement, rates range from 0.1 percent of payroll for “safe” occupations to 25 percent or more for hazardous ones. The workers’ comp coverage premiums can be reduced if your accident rates are below average, and using safety and loss-prevention measures.

Other coverages you should consider include:

- Business Interruption Insurance: Covers fixed expenses that would continue should you be closed down by fire or other reason. For instance, if the City decides to tear up the road in front of your store, so that your customers cannot come in! A more common example is if you injure yourself so that for a short period of time you are unable to operate your business. The bills don’t stop when you do!

- Disability Insurance: Covers you if you cannot work on a permanent or long-term basis. While you were a wage slave, your workers’ compensation insurance covered you as required by the state. However, self-employed people are generally not covered by workers’ comp. You need to insure yourself instead.

- Crime Insurance: Can be valuable if you are burglarized or robbed. It may cover white-collar crime as well, depending on how the policy is written. There are federal crime insurance plans to help in high-crime areas where private crime insurance would be impossible or too expensive to get.

- Glass Insurance: Covers broken windows, signs, etc. For stores with a lot of glass windows, this can be more than pay for itself the first time you have to replace one of those large show windows.

- Disability Insurance: You can purchase coverage for injuries your employees sustain off the job as well as on. This replaces the loss of income while they are recovering.

- Retirement Income: You can get an income tax deduction for funds used for retirement insurance plans under the Employees Retirement Income Security Act.

- Key-Man Insurance: Your key employees can be insured with life and disability insurance made payable to your company.

It definitely pays to shop around for your insurance needs. Different companies may have very different rates for the same coverage - in fact different offices of the same company may offer differing rates, as most are independently owned and operated.

While shopping, check about including many of the coverages under one “umbrella policy.” If the company is ensuring your home and your car and your business policies, you can often get a combination deal that will save you money over the premiums of all the policies billed separately.

Mike Tottman is a writer and retired independent Broker.
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Five Small Business Social Media Tips to Attract Customers

B

usiness Owners, Entrepreneurs and Small Business Service Providers are growing their sales with social
media. Key benefits of social media include attracting and engaging with
more customers on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, oGoing,
blogs and more.

“Social Media provides businesses an unprecedented direct communication
with customers! Using social media, a business directly informs their clients
about what’s going on, promotes new offers and services, and provides cus-
tomer service; the clients freely express with the company’s experiences, ask
questions and provide direct feedback in a public setting. This level of intimacy
and engagement hasn’t been achieved before,” said Sanjay Dalal, founder &
CEO, oGoing.

oGoing is the nation’s fastest growing small business social media marketing
network. Thousands of Business Owners, Entrepreneurs and Small Business Service
Providers are using oGoing to generate warm leads, attract new customers, pro-
mote products and services, share deals, and engage with clients directly.

oGoing presents 5 social media tips and best practices for a business to attract
more customers using social media mar-
ket:

1. Know the customers
Take time to know your customers through social networks. Stand in their
shoes. Learn more about their business. Ask the question: “What are their
needs?” Find them, and Search their
social media updates. Learn more about the customer’s customers. The more
knowledgeable one becomes about the customer’s business, the more products
and services the business can ultimately offer to them.

2. Connect with customers
After determining who the customers are, a business must take the logical
next step: Connect or Follow them! Once con-
nected, most social media networks share
a live news feed of the following user’s
updates. Thus, when a business is logged
in, they see latest news stories about their
customers. Reading what’s going on pro-
vides greater understanding of the cus-
tomers’ current situation, needs and
events.

3. Engage with customers
Reading the customers’ updates and
 gaining further knowledge about them
are important first steps. Next step is to
begin engaging with the customers. The
best way: Reply to their updates and Ask
questions. When a business responds to
what their customers are saying, and
begins a conversation, that’s when
engagement begins. Social media is all
about “live” conversations. Besides reply-
ing publicly, a business can also ask
direct questions to solicit a response,
reply privately or send a direct message
for further intimacy.

4. Promote customers
Often times, owners and marketers
forget that social media marketing is not
so much about promoting their own
business; rather, it’s more about promot-
ing their customers. This simple fact
changes how well engaged the customers
are. When the company takes on the
onus of promoting their customers, the
returns are tangible and immediate.

5. Ask for referrals from customers
After establishing a solid relationship
with customers and prospects on social
media, a business can begin to transform
this engagement into leads. Social media
cannot be an off and on affair. It has be
an always on campaign. Hence, a busi-
ness must frequently login to social
media networks and engage with their
clients on a daily basis. When the time’s
right, ask the customers for new referrals
and share with them new offers.

oGoing provides a powerful social media
marketing network for small business that
increases website traffic, improves SEO rank-
generation, generates warm leads and attracts new
customers.

UPS Offers Ten Tips for Small
Business Success

It’s hard to believe now, but UPS started
out as a small business more than a centu-
ry ago. Today, as the world’s largest pack-
age delivery company, the shipping organi-
zation understand how important it is to win
contracts with companies, and knows that
the bottom line counts.

Here are 10 tips offered up by UPS for
small businesses to consider for success:

1. Get certified as a minority- or woman-
owned business and get involved in local
organizations.

2. Look for customers who are commit-
ted to supplier diversity.

3. Know how to sell your company by
pitching what you alone can bring to the table.

4. Conduct advance planning and
research about the company.

5. Understand what makes the company
kick.

6. If your product or service is not a good fit for a company, know when to cut your
losses and focus energy elsewhere.

7. Pick the right point-of-entry by contact-
ing the appropriate buyer.

8. Be able to answer this question: “If
I buy your product or service, how will it
take your company gain a competitive
advantage?”

9. Seek mentor relationships to bolster
weak areas.

10. Practice the three P’s: patience, per-
sistence, and perseverance.

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When is Your Move-in Date?

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• Reasonable prices for lease or purchase
• Large and talented labor supply
• Excellent schools
• Attractive homes in all price ranges
• A welcome attitude from the City

A pro-business city featuring:

• 5,000,000 square feet of retail space
• 8,000,000 square feet of industrial space
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Simi Valley, CA 93063
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