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DECEMBER 2018

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BUSINESS MARKETING

NEXT EVENT

Thursday 6th December 2018

5:00PM

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Providing legal services to people and businesses in South East Wales since the early 1800's giving us in-depth local knowledge and a distinct advantage when dealing with local legal matters.

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Notes from our chairman

It's amazing to think that we're approaching the end of another great year for our business club and that it's time for us to start thinking about renewing our subscriptions for next year.

This issue's theme is marketing and every business whether brand new or well established should realise the importance of creating a brand or image and have a plan on how to promote itself to existing and potential customers.

One way to do this is to take an active part in the local community - whether it's through sponsorship, volunteering or by being involved in clubs, community events or business clubs like ours.

Dates for your diary

2019 TBV Quarterly events will be announced soon!



All of our quarterly events are held at Greenmeadow Golf and Country Club, Cwmbran

Our next event



Sponsored by Everett Tomlin Lloyd & Pratt, our Christmas meeting promises to be a memorable evening featuring one of Wales' most popular broadcasters, the fantastic Roy Noble. Held at our established venue, Greenmeadow Golf Club, the evening will also feature our ever-popular facilitated networking to ensure you have the chance to make new contacts as well as being entertained!

At our last event it was good to hear so many members and guests around the tables saying how they had worked with other club members and used their services. It takes time to develop a potential working relationship but it's a very cost effective way of developing a network of people who are willing to use or recommend your business.

With that in mind I look forward to seeing you all at our Christmas event, sponsored by Everett Tomlin Lloyd and Pratt solicitors, where together with the chance to make new connections and promote your business during networking, we will be royally entertained by Roy Noble.

We have a packed agenda of events for next year and if any business is interested in sponsoring any of them then please let us know.



Ashley Harkus

Chairman, Torfaen Business Voice

Not a member? Why not join and come along?

Call 01633 648644

Email: info@southwalesbusiness.co.uk

Click on the following link:

<http://bit.ly/TBV-business-club>

Members are entitled to 2 free places at this event, so make sure you bring along a colleague, client or business contact so that we can provide each other with valuable connections for our businesses.

Members of Torfaen Business Voice can also bring along a Pop Up banner – please indicate if you are bringing yours on the electronic booking form.

To book, please use the following link:

<http://bit.ly/tbv-nov2018>

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Writing For Your Business / Digital Arena

How important is writing for your business/digital arena in the 21st century? All businesses, regardless of size, are aware of the need to create a brand identity, vibrant visuals and a social media presence that will attract customers in an increasingly competitive market. However, the text that accompanies all of these is one aspect that is often overlooked.

Communication in the digital space is fast. With so much information overwhelming consumers, how can you make your business writing stand out?

Writing for a Website

Your business website is fundamental to your online presence. The text on each page needs to be clear because your visitors want to find the information quickly. Aim for a minimum of 300 words on each page.

Keywords are essential to be recognised in the right online searches. Include the keywords in the first sentence and the most important information in the first paragraph. Keep in mind that your customers could be using a mobile device so ask yourself what the text will look like on a mobile phone. The paragraphs should be short and broken up with subheadings.

Internet search engines are becoming increasingly intelligent. They know what their users want and how to deliver the relevant results. A website that has not been updated for a few years may still be applicable to your business but it is unlikely to score highly with the latest algorithms. This means that your website could be falling below others that are constantly updating their written content.

This is where business blogs are crucial. Blogs allow you to keep your website updated regularly without having to constantly change the information on your core pages (Home, About etc.). 300 words is considered to be the minimum length to satisfy the fresh content requirements. However, there is no definitive rule.

You could write a blog post about your latest product launch or to provide reasons why your customers need the services you provide. Think about the questions your customers are likely to ask and this will provide you with the content ideas and keywords. Your keyword should appear in the first sentence in the same way as on your other internet pages.

You can also use your blog as a hook. For example, as a writer it is likely that a percentage of my website visitors are also interested in writing related content.



Therefore, I post topics such as author interviews. Even though this is not directly selling, it draws people in. After visiting my blog, they will probably click on my other pages and read about my business. From this, they could potentially place an order.

Writing for Social Media

Share your blog posts on social media platforms. Other users could also share your posts and then you have promoted your business to potential new customers, all without the use of paid advertising.

The text for a social media post needs to have impact. There are thousands of social media messages uploaded every second so to help yours stand out, research the different sites and the best times to post for maximum engagement.

Keep the text short and only post about one topic at a time. Add hashtags to allow your post to reach a wider audience. Two hashtags on a post is considered to be ideal although some sites will allow more. You should incorporate them into the sentence so they feel like they belong there rather than forced in.

Writing for Printed Materials

The traditional printed methods, such as press releases and leaflets, still have their place in the business arena. The difference with this type of writing is that there is likely to be a strict space requirement and the audience will be limited to the distribution area. This provides an opportunity to direct your message to specific groups of people so focus on the aspect of your business that is relevant to them.

The most important part of any business writing is accuracy. Double-check your facts, grammar and spelling because this demonstrates your attention to detail. Write a first draft, leave it and revisit it later with fresh eyes so you can spot any mistakes.

Writing for the business/digital arena does not have to be daunting but the words you use and the messages you convey can have a significant impact on the success of your marketing strategy.

How to create a Practical Marketing Plan

Marketing needn't be something that worries small business owners. With a clear, simple and well thought-out plan, SMEs can market themselves effectively, even in crowded markets which include big-budget competitors. The trick lies in putting the right foundations in place and in executing your strategy.

Research and get the fundamentals in place

Carry out market research into your target market and typical customers, your competitors and the market in which you operate. Think also about external factors that may have an effect on your business. Assess your product range and consider whether each product represents a profitable line of business for you.

By understanding which products are the most profitable for you, you can design your marketing strategy to focus on those with the greatest margin. As part of this document, create a positioning statement that defines where you are now, what your goals are, and how you plan to achieve them. Decide how much you're going to spend on marketing and what you're going to do, e.g. events, PR, print or digital marketing.

Set realistic goals

Measure your marketing activity to show which tactics were worthwhile and which were not. Consider your measures of success; some activities such as PR are harder to measure because they are more about brand building. E-marketing on the other hand tends to be easy to measure because the call to action is typically an immediate and online sign-up or purchase.

Plan the detail

Focus on the channels that work for you and don't waste time with those which are marginal. For example, rather than trying to set up multiple social media accounts across different platforms, invest in two that work for your business and devote time, skills and energy into developing them. Invest in your website and ensure that it is optimised for the best possible customer journey. Choose print media that's going to work for you, not endless stacks of leaflets.

The trick with effective marketing is to plan, review and refine your approach. Keep at it, refine, commit to continuous improvement and evolve. The results are there to be had.

Podcasts - What's All The Fuss About?!



Podcasts. You can't turn around for hearing about them. It's the word of the moment, on everyone's lips (and in their ears!).

Already 1 in 10 adults in the UK listens to podcasts each week. Listenership keeps building, and those listeners (and potential customers) are loyal and eager to learn.

To take things back to basics, a podcast is a series of digital audio files downloadable onto your phone, tablet or laptop. To put it another way, it's a form of radio show which needs no radio station, nor radio set to listen to it. Anyone can record them and publish them. Listeners can search for a topic they want to hear more about, download a podcast on that topic and listen to it. Wherever they want. Whenever they want. For free.

Up to now, podcasts have been the domain of media companies and individuals with a story to tell. But with the help of experienced audio production companies, more and more businesses, large and small, are getting in on the act.

There are three types of branded podcasts, as they're known. The first type shows off your area of expertise. So, for example, Tinder has its own dating show and Mumsnet shares baby stories with new parents. The second type is where content aligns to your company's values. Starbucks has a podcast highlighting ordinary people making a difference in their communities. Meanwhile, eBay provides inspiration for people starting up their own business. The final type of branded podcast is perhaps the most philanthropic – where you lend your name and your money to the creativity of others. The best example of this is audio drama provider, The General Electric Theater – a throwback to the US company's role as a TV drama sponsor in the 1950s.

The beauty of podcasts is that anyone can start one, and with very little money. At its most basic level, you'll need a hosting site like Spreaker (other sites available), your mobile phone with its headphones, and a free piece of editing software, like Audacity. As with anything, you can expand your kit with additional items, like microphones and recorders to suit your circumstances. We've put a small blog together to get you started. The key is making sure you plan your content well in advance, have a store of content ready to release and that you put in a robust marketing campaign to back it up. This is why it should be part of your existing Marketing and Comms strategy. One word of caution. Try hard to avoid making this a sales tool. Podcast listeners love a good story, so make yours interesting every time.

Social Media Do's and Don'ts from Superfast Business Wales

Love it or hate it, social media is here to stay. Get a head start with our social media top tips.

Go where your customers are

Opening up good communication channels with your customers is key. Find out what social media platforms they are using, sign up and create your online presence to actively engage with your customers.

Measure results against objectives

Once you're on social media, don't rest on your laurels, do your homework and find out if it's actually working in terms of your business goals – doing this will also help you work out what you could be doing better.

Get more followers

Using social media links on your website and emails is an easy way of pointing people towards your Facebook page, Twitter account, etc., increasing your followers.

Keep an eye on changes in the social world

The world of social media is constantly developing, and there are more and more platforms popping up all the time. Keep up to date with the latest social media news and stay one step ahead.

Accept criticism and respond positively

Sometimes customers will use social media as a gateway to publically complain. The golden rules are don't get defensive or dragged into an online argument – respond promptly, thank them for bringing it to your attention, and be positive but above all don't ignore it or delete it. Ask your customers for feedback and act on it so they can see that you are listening.

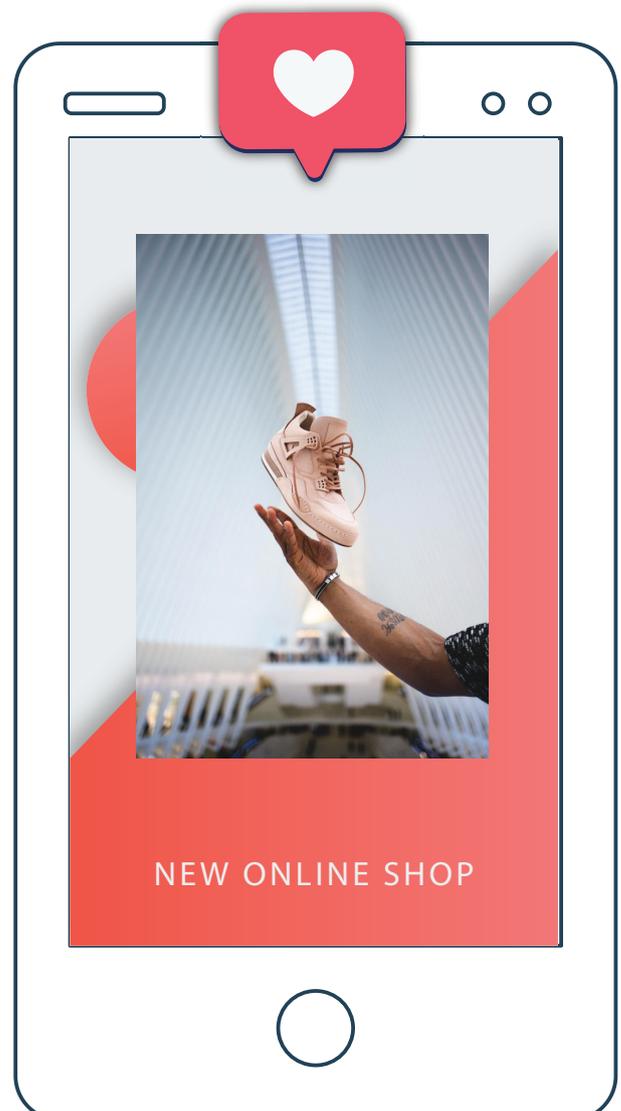
Be consistent, and don't lie

Be consistent in the messages you are posting on social media and always provide honest, accurate information to avoid negative repercussions – or inevitably it will come back to bite you at some point!

Next steps – book onto a free Sell more with Social Media workshop and find out how you can use social media to sell your products and services and boost your business – Register your interest on a Superfast Business Wales workshop near you

Superfast Business Wales is a fully-funded Welsh Government and European Regional Development Fund-backed scheme offering free 1-1 digital business advice and workshops.

To find out more visit the website or search online: Superfast Business Wales



5 Festive Marketing Tips

No matter what your personal feelings about this time of year, Christmas presents both challenge and opportunity for small businesses.

It's the perfect time of year to relax a little and share some festive cheer with your customers, new and existing. Here are our top 5 tips for brightening up your festive marketing efforts.



Stop promoting

Yes of course you want to sell your product or service. But at this time of year it's not a bad idea to spread some festive cheer with a message of season's greetings. Or promote some holiday specials. After all, Christmas comes but once a year.

Invite good cheer

Invite your fans to interact with you on your business social media of choice. You could run a competition or offer special discount codes to the first person who likes your status or anyone who visits your business and tags you in a post.

Send a card

Yes, people still do that. Surprise your loyal customers and send them a Christmas card and maybe a small token gift, like a calendar or even just a candy cane!

Host a holiday event

Why not invite some of your most loyal customers to a small gathering to celebrate the season. It doesn't have to be a big event, and it will be a good opportunity to get to know the people who support your business and perhaps even make some new contacts.



Customize your email template

Changing your standard email header to a more festive one can cheer things up in someone's mailbox and who know, it might even inspire a purchase.

None of these need cost you much more than a little extra attention to detail but they might just make an impression and help you stand out in the general chaos of this time of the year

Not a member? Why not join now for 2019!

Membership now available – 14 months
(5 meetings for a one off fee!)

Membership is affordable with just a one off payment of:

- £60 for the year for a business under one year old.
- £84 for a business with fewer than 4 employees.
- £102 for 5+ employees.

There are no hidden charges and membership gives you two free places per meeting.

Call 01633 648644

Email: info@southwalesbusiness.co.uk



Click on the following link
<http://bit.ly/tbv-membership-join>

Making your website work for your business

Making the most of the digital marketing opportunities flowing from your website doesn't need to be difficult. Here are ten top tips from an industry insider.

Commitment

Digital marketing is a part of business and requires dedication, commitment and attention. If you are unable to maintain a regular news feed/blog or Facebook page, even though you may be missing an opportunity, it doesn't look great if you start something and then don't have time to commit to it.

The good news is, if you do dedicate the time, most of the marketing tools are free! There are also hundreds of free online video tutorials to watch if you need extra training.



Strategy

It is important to jot down a marketing plan for your business website. It will focus the mind, allow you to allocate a specific time to marketing and enable you to record any expenses. It will also allow you to analyse and compare the successes/failures of your marketing efforts against the original plan, allowing you to make changes in the future.

Website Traffic & Social Media

Traffic to your website can be generated through direct or indirect marketing. For example, direct marketing could be from someone who has received an email newsletter or someone who already knows your business name. Indirect marketing could be from someone who found you in the organic search results, paid advertising, social media or videos.

Indirect marketing is known as off-page factors (external influences). They play a huge role in helping you promote your business and most of the tools available are free to use. Social media platforms are an example of an external influence and everything uploaded should link back to your website to continuously drive traffic to your website.

It is also important to mention that social media should not be a replacement for a website. For the simple reason that a website is the one thing you own, influence and control.

If a company solely relies on social media for all their business generation, what happens if the social media applications update their software and change their algorithms? It is too risky to leave a business exposed with the evolving social media software which you cannot control.

Google Maps

It's free for businesses to register a company with Google to appear on a Google map. Google Maps also appear on the first page of Google. You can upload photos, images and more to your Google Maps profile (now known as Google My Business). This is a must for all businesses with a link back to your website!

Reviews

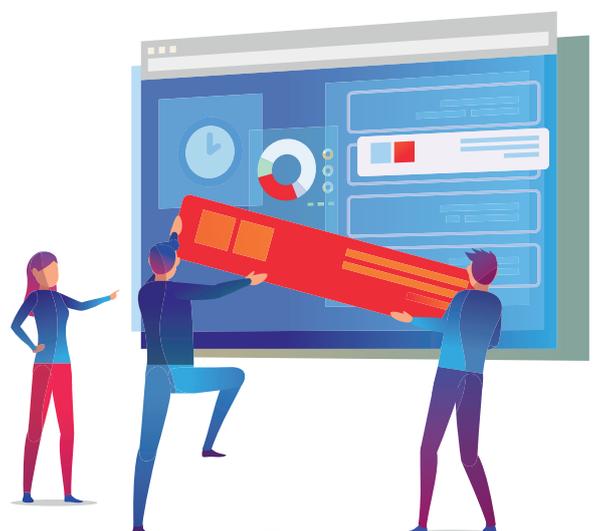
Online reviews are major influencers which can help promote your website and business. There are several review tools available (e.g. Google, Facebook) and they can all be displayed through your website.

Keep Your Audience Interested

Once you have a visitor on your website it is important to keep them interested. The average visitor has a 7 second patience threshold before they close the page and go elsewhere. In our experience, there are 4 main reasons why this happens:

1. Poor design (navigation & layout)
2. Poor performance (slow & technical problems)
3. Irrelevant information (written content & images)
4. Mobile unfriendly (websites which do not adapt to the screen size)

All of these on-page factors are easy to correct and it is really inexcusable to lose the customer at this stage.



Website Optimisation

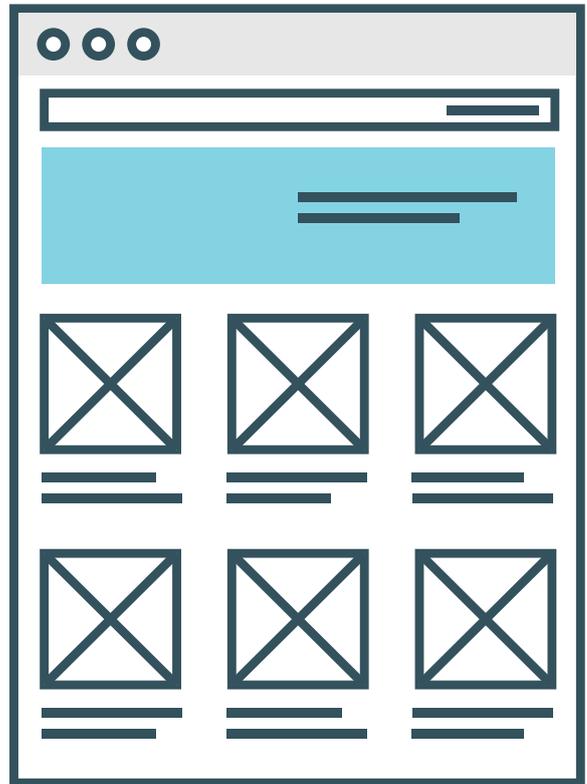
It is important to remember the role of a search engine is to simply connect a person who is looking for something with a website which contains that information, product or service. The information added to the page must be consistent with the search and the layout of the page must follow the best-practices laid out by the search engines. There are also several free tools for you to tell the search engines to come and find you (e.g. Google Search Console).

Email Marketing

The majority of people check their email regularly throughout the day. They also normally only have one business and one private email address. For this reason, direct email marketing is still very important as it is likely to reach them direct.

On the 25th May 2018 the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force. All businesses were forced to ask their existing subscribers if they would like to continue to remain on the email list. Many lists disappeared overnight which we believe was a great thing. Businesses are now left with a list of subscribers who actually want to hear from them.

To help your business run professional email marketing campaigns there are free tools available online (e.g. Mailchimp). These tools also include online forms which can be added to your website for new visitors to subscribe to your newsletter.



Blogs / Latest News / Journal

A blog is a place where you can share interesting, relevant and informative content about your business. It's a place where you can invite people to meet your team, your place of work and your daily work life. Technically, every time you create a new blog post, it creates a new page on your website. Without realising, you are growing your website organically. This is also beneficial in the eyes of the search engines as they can see it is an active website.

If your website is built using a friendly content management system like WordPress, you can add this content on your phone, tablet or computer. You can also schedule information to appear on certain dates/times in the future.

Press Releases

Write a press release, send it to the local newspaper and if they published it will go on their digital newspaper. You may also have a link back to your website. This association with an established website will also improve your website ranking.



We would like to thank our contributors:



New members

Rachael Bird Freelance Writer
www.rachaelbird.com

Cymraeg Byd Busnes
www.gov.wales/cymraeg