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Stand for the Small: How to Effectively Brand and Market Your Small Business on Social Media

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*Stand for the small the small bour small business on social media

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 WHO AM I?

 DEFINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

 MAKE A MOOD BOARD

 WRITE A MISSION STATEMENT

 BUSINESS BRANDING CHECKLIST

executive summary

This document is a resource intended for female entreprenuers who own or are looking to launch their own small business. The focus of this resource is to help business owners understand and apply strong social media marketing tactics to their small businesses. The document draws on passions, mission, and brand identity to help the user visualize the long term vision of their company's image. This is achieved by providing research and information on social media marketing in the following categories: target audience, gaining customers, brand goals, mission, visuals, voice, platforms, hashtags, analytics, and a pep talk.

The final element of this resource is the workbook. Each section of the resource has a corresponding activity in the workbook, specially designed to align with the chapter's content. The worksheets are designed to help the user work through the content and apply it to their own small business and have a tangible copy of the progress they have made. By following and executing the strategies in this resource, my hope is that there would be significant growth in social media presence, brand identity, and purpose within the company.

This resource is a result of Erika Glover's Honors Project in tandem with the HNRS 4990 course taken to complete her graduation with honors at Bowling Green State University.

introduction

Hello there! Most likely if you have stumbled upon this manual, you are either a) looking to start a small business, b) knee deep in DIY google searches, or c) at a plateau in your business and are looking to get some pep back in your step! Maybe you're none of these, but whichever way, I am thrilled you are here.

To begin, I will give you a little background about myself. My name is Erika Glover. At the time I am writing this, I am a third year at Bowling Green State University studying Public Relations and Marketing. If I had done things right, I would probably be somewhere in the world of Graphic Design or Entrepreneurship, but here we are and we will make the most of it. I am absolutely always found with an iced coffee— preferably lavender vanilla. I would describe my style as modern bohemian, with just one too many plants and a few too many throw pillows. My friends make fun of me because I own way too many white, beige, and cream sweaters, but I like what I like. While, trust me, that information is important, here is what you really need to know.

In February of 2019, in the dull of the winter, I found myself rather unmotivated and seemingly out of ideas of things to do in northern Ohio. One of the hobbies I had picked up was thrifting. I'm a big fan of all things cozy, which lead me to my excessive number of thrifted sweatshirts and sweaters laying around my dorm room that I shared with my roommate. One afternoon I decided to stitch some words with a needle and thread into a huge over-sized navy blue sweatshirt. Later that day, feeling proud of myself, I propped my phone up on a tissue box on my windowsill and took a few self-timer photos. After a few edits, I threw them on my Instagram and then the requests started flooding in of classmates, old friends, and total strangers that wanted their own!

And so began what I now know and love as Word Strings Co. Since that day in the middle of the winter, Word Strings has gained a website, a brand, a large social media following, and orders being shipped across the country every day. This small business that started out of my dorm room began to grow to new heights, so much so that thrifting was no longer sustainable, and we had to move to a wholesaler. We have since released beanies, t-shirts, and ballcaps, with so much more on the way.

All of this being said, I used to feel so insecure about this endeavor of mine, but because of all the google searches, the asking, the mentoring, and the endless flops that resulted in standing right back up, I feel like I might have some information to share with you. Like I said earlier, wherever you are in your small business, I'm happy you're here. Let's get this party started.

the biz*

target audience

According to Investopedia, a target audience refers to a group of potential customers to whom a company wants to sell its products and services. This group also includes specific customers to whom a company directs its marketing efforts.

One of the biggest mistakes that small businesses make is trying to appeal to everyone. There are hundreds of thousands of companies that exist in the world, but no two are identical. Think about the game of darts. In order to score, you have to aim.

The same goes for target audiences and markets. You don't have to, nor need to, or even want to sell to everyone. In order to score, you have to aim. You have to narrow down and decide who your target audience is. And then throw your dart, cater to them, reach out to them and meet them where their wallet is.

There are a few ways that target audiences can be narrowed down and specified. Here are a few categories I will cover:

- Age

- Lifestyle/Life stage

- Gender

- Hobbies

- Location

- Profession

An easy and effective way to start this process is to visualize. When you close your eyes and think about who is wearing your product, using your product, eating your product, who do you see? What do they look like? Where are they?

For my company, Word Strings, I see a group of friends walking down the street of their college town, with coffee in their hands, laughing, enjoying each-others company, each of them wearing Word Strings apparel.

Now that you have that visual, lets break it down. So right off the bat, you can gather the age demographic or gender of your target audience by recognizing what group of people you believe would benefit the most from your product. Word Strings is apparel for all, so I see my target audience as teens through mature adults who are looking to sport their favorite words.

Following those two, Location and Lifestyle come into play. Location is especially important when considering things such as services and products that serve a specific use. For example, you are a children's sunblock company. For you, your target for these categories is someone who lives in a region with a lot of sun, but also the lifestyle portion, because your customer is most likely a parent.

Does this make sense? Hopefully. I'm going to give you something to try it out now.

gaining customers

Now that you have your idea of your target audience, or your ideal customer, perhaps. Let's get them to buy your product. This can be done in a few ways. Depending on whether you are a beginner business, that is just now growing its roots, or an established business that seems to be plateauing in their sales, this might look a bit different. I'm going to lay it out for you, try to adjust it based on where your biz is.

You are starting from ground zero here! Now that we have clarified who your target audience is, let's get them to start buying what you're selling!

It's important that we meet the consumer where they are, we don't make them reach for it. A good way to do this is to introduce your business to your customers where they're already looking. This can look like social media ads, promoted posts, social media collaborations, giveaways, or straight up following them around till they notice you. Just kidding about the following around, but I wasn't joking about following them! Click the button! They're likely to view your profile when they see it in their notifications.

Let me break it down though.

Digital Advertisements are always an option. Many times, third-party ad providers have targeted algorithms they will set up to show you where your ads will be most beneficial.

Promoted posts are a great way to make advertisements seem effortless, especially if your business has a strong social media presence. On Instagram, every 5th post is sponsored, on stories and timeline posts.

Social Media Collaborations are a fantastic option if you have a product that has a specific target audience. This gives you the opportunity to tag team off of another small business or influencer that has a following similar to that of your product. If you give the influencer a sample product to try and post about, their followers get that exposure to your product.

Giveaways work well when your company partners with another, adding to the pot of what will be the coveted prize of the giveaway. In this situation, individuals in your existing followers and audience are motivated to share your product with their network, growing the exposure naturally.

And following, well I already got into that.

Hopefully this breaks down a few good ways for you to grow your customer pool, because now it's your turn.

the brand

brand goals

Branding is arguably the most important thing that a company can invest in. from a marketing perspective, it makes the company and all of their assets recognizable without even using their name.

I'm going to name a few companies with very strong branding, and I want you to try to think of some of their recognizable elements.

Let start with Apple. What do you immediately envision when you think of their brand? I imagine the stores. White. Minimal. Yet at the same time they are able to effectively use a rainbow of colors. Apple has a consistent font. They have a consistent grey color, but other than that, their brand is known for their products, their branding, their intentionality.

The next is different than Apple. Just about everything about their brand is unmistakable. They have icons, colors, fonts, a slogan, and repetition in commercials. This company is Coca-Cola. The company name has been written in a very consistent script since 1887. While it has been tweaked a few times here or there since then, the changes have translated throughout the growth of the company.

Finally, let's talk about Nike. Nike's branding is even a little different from the ones before it, focuses on the way it makes you feel, beyond the swoosh and the block lettering, what is iconic and recognizable about their branding is the emotion of them. Nike is made to empower and help you compete, train, accomplish, and their branding reflects that.

Back to you. We are going to focus on a few key elements of what you want to make your branding recognizable. This boils down to a few things: mission, visuals, and voice. Let's get started!

mission

The mission of your company is what turns a shoe company into so much more than just a shoe company. Take TOMS for example. TOMS sells shoes—Lots of different kinds of shoes. Many of these are available in similar styles from places like Target or Kohls, so why would people buy from TOMS instead? Because of their mission. TOMS donates a pair of shoes to a person who needs them with every purchase their consumers make. It makes you feel good about buying from TOMS, right?

This is their mission. To be more than a shoes company. Your mission can be simple, for example, to dress young women in clothes that give them confidence. But it can also be bigger, say, to clean the ocean, one reusable market bag at a time. Sometimes the giving or the mission is tied to a non-profit, but other times it is just what drives your company to success. Think of it like this: "why does my company exist?" and then follow it up with "what makes my company different?" and finally, "who do I serve?" Put those three together an I think you'll be on to something.

You'll do more with this when you are filling out the worksheet, but the best way to narrow down your mission of your company is by writing a mission statement that engulfs it. There are a few parts to doing that: What you do, who you do it for, how you do it, and why you do.

When you're working through that in your head, it is incredibly important to focus on your why. When you're writing your why, don't think about what you think people want to hear, think about what you want to say. Purpose drives passion and passion drives productivity. Remember that.

Your purpose, your why, your mission is the most important element to making sure your brand is recognizable and distinguished from other brands.



Now that we aren't on the surface anymore, there is a lot that can be said about the way your company speaks. No matter what stage of owning a business you are in, you probably feel a weird sort of pressure to sound professional.

I know when I started Word strings, I struggled with the idea of what language I wanted to use when referring the brand. In a caption, did I want to say "I" since I am a one-man band, did I want to say "we" in reference to the company and myself? Or did I want to always say something along the lines of "Word Strings is so...?" It took a while to find consistency.

We already talked about designing "customer personas" for our target audiences based on the people who buy from us and who we wish to add to that circle. While, yes, these images matter a lot, it is equally important to map out a brand personality that can help you guide your marketing efforts.

Every company, as we discussed, is unique and was created to serve a purpose someone who is passionate about their product or service. Similar to the questions and visions we asked ourselves about our target audiences, I encourage you to envision your brand. Ask yourself these questions:

What personality traits does your brand possess?
What's your relationship to the customer (example: coach, teacher, mother, etc.)?

Just like with tone, you can change up the language you use depending on the situation, such as if you are excited for a big sale or you are doing a story takeover, but consistency is key in branding, and you want your voice to reflect that as well. A few general marketing tips are to use words that easily understandable for about a 6th-8th grade reading level. So, keeping that in mind, when you go to pick the language you are going to use consistently, make sure it isn't too fancy for your business. How you wish to be perceived should ultimately relate to the types of language you choose to use.

Once you have the basics of your voice all figured out, working to use that voice over all your platforms is important. Developing a relationship between your brand and your customers is just like building a friendship or professional connection, treat it like that in your captions, copywriting, email promotions and all other company writing.

Don't worry, we will practice!



The visuals are what tie every little thing together. Visuals equate to a few things: Photos, Graphics, Fonts, and colors.

Social media photos should be quality, clear photos that feature your product or service at work. Now here's the kicker. There's a difference between your Aunt Carm's Facebook selfie and BRYANT's latest celebrity photoshoot, right? One of them shows a powdered face, and the other creates a personality.

Photos tell a story; you know the saying— a picture is worth a thousand words. It's true and it means the world on your website and social media. And just like you edit a story before sending it to be published, you should edit your photos.

When editing photos, it is important to define a preset. I recommend Adobe Lightroom presets, they are user friendly and allow you to edit the photo dynamically, not just slap a filter on it. Just like with brand colors and fonts, images that are edited consistently creates recognition, even when your name isn't on.

On to branding. Having a professional logo and font set makes your business look more like, well, a business. Regularity of fonts and colors across a brand helps customers to become familiar with your products and allows you as the owner to market those colors with emotion.

To choose fonts and colors, we want to go back to the voice we found for your business. Was the goal to create an energetic business? Was it to inform in a professional manner? Does your product have a specific target audience or theme where a decorative font might be in order?

Many brands start with something made on digital app but investing in the branding of your business is a great place to start.

Many businesses have a style guide. A style guide consists of the logo, slogan, fonts, about five HTML color codes, illustrations, and presets of the company's official branding. This might include the fact that your branding incorporates hand-drawn arches and organic shapes, and those would be included. It shows a title font, a subheading font, and a body text font. Usually this is a slab serif or a bold sans serif, a script, and a sans serif or serif font for paragraphs.

By communicating these elements consistently over the social media and website of your business potential customers will begin to see your business as a cohesive company, rather than a 20-something using Canva Templates.

Let's start painting the picture of your brand.

* the behind the scenes

platforms

At this point, we have worked through your company's who, what, where, and why. We just need two more. For starters, the "when" is now. You are taking this step to up level your business, so time starts now. But as for "how," we're about to dive into that.

Social Media, in the last 10 years, has completely reshaped the world of advertisement, entrepreneurship, and e-commerce businesses. Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook have given everyone a fair chance in launching and pursuing the side-hustle turned full time job lifestyle.

Not all platforms function the same, and each can benefit your business in a different way. Here is a breakdown of a few platforms and their purposes.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram began as a photo sharing platform for photographers and has turned into one of the world's leading social media site with over one billion users today, according to their website. On it, you can have two kinds of profiles, a personal account or a business account. When using a business account, you are able to access all sorts of analytics, information and stats about your followers, engagement, and reach.

Instagram has a feature where you are able to link your Shopify or Squarespace store to your feed, tag your photos with the products, and allow customers to shop right through the app. Even if you don't utilize this feature, Instagram is a visual site, which makes it beneficial for showcasing video and photo content of your products or services, while making content shareable and interactive.

One of the most beneficial elements of using Instagram as part of your social media marketing strategy is that social media is free. By creating content customers want to engage with, share, or tell their friends about, your business will continue to grow organically—refer back to the gaining customers section if you need to jog your memory.

TWITTER

Twitter is next on the list. Twitter is not a visual platform, and while it does have the capability to share visual content, its primary form is dialogue. Twitter thrives off of discussion. Replies, retweets, and trending stories are the main elements of the platform. "Posts" on twitter are limited in characters, making them good for announcements, headlines, and short statements, but not for advertisements. Additionally, there isn't a great way to find things you tweeted a while ago, as your profile is sorted chronologically.

Businesses should have twitters, but mostly for outreach and user engagement. Tweet about sales, promotions, or special events. If your business does have a twitter, it is important to check up on the platform regularly in order to make sure you haven't missed any messages from customers.

FACEBOOK

Facebook is the original site for most businesses. Facebook is still an essential, especially because Facebook and google work so closely when it comes to SEO and generating information from your business such as contact info, store hours, or URLs. In order to have a business account on Instagram, you must have a Facebook Business page to link it to. Those are free to make!

Facebook for businesses is much different than Facebook for your relatives. For your business, Facebook is a great asset because it allows customers to leave reviews, find contact information, access photos, see what other people have to say about your business, and also reach out to you, all in one place.

TIKTOK

When I started my business, TikTok didn't exist like it does now, in May of 2020. We will see if it still does when you are reading this. Right now, TikTok is the fastest growing social app available. TikTok allows users to upload videos up to 60 seconds in length. Its algorithm is based off of how other users react with it. There are sounds that are trending, hashtags, and video trends.

TikTok is a great app to use if you are trying to reach younger audiences, but also grow your market. Videos are known to go "viral" and receive hundreds of thousands of views overnight. Be consistent, keep trying, and try to be original— TikTok is for anyone!

When it comes to social media, being consistent is the most important thing, so starting off with putting your time and energy into one platform is a good idea!

how to use hashtags

Most likely, unless you live under a rock, you've heard of a hashtag in some capacity. Whether this is a #SWAG sign at justice or pressing the pound key after trying to get through on hold, a hashtag is a hashtag, but did you know it can dramatically change your engagement rates on Instagram?

Well, if you didn't, now you do.

Using a hashtag is basically like categorizing your photo. There are millions of hashtags on Instagram covering every possible topic you can think of.

If there's one thing the algorithm can't change it's how and why hashtags are used. That's why it's now, more than ever, important to focus on hashtags and use them correctly in order to grow your account and reach your goal whether that's to grow your business or sell products.

There are a few ground rules to Instagram hashtags:

- Never use more than 30
- Switch them up!
- Make sure they are relevant
- Use less popular hashtags

Let me explain. The Instagram algorithm favors posts with 30 or less hashtags per post. That being said, use all 30 and don't be afraid to comment them after posting! As for what to comment, choose relatable tags to the photo. For example, #selfie would be a bad idea on a photo of your lunch. Choose specific hashtags that describe your photo. Try hashtagging the location you are, the event you're at, or the what you would search to try to find the image.

After you've gotten the hang of them, switching hashtags up is a good idea. Try creating three or so groups of 10 initial tags, including things like #shopsmallohio or #supportohiosmallbusinesses, and then leave the next 20 up to the photo itself. Rotate the three initial groups of hashtags to make your life easier!

Finally, by using less popular hashtags, you are increasing your chances of showing up in someone's feed who is navigating through that hashtag. If you use #instastyle that has 1.6 billion photos the likelihood of your photo generating top hits is not very high, whereas if you used #thriftflipsohio that has 50,000 photos, you will generate more hits and more engagement.

If you use hashtags correctly, they can help grow your business exponentially. Happy Tagging!

how to use analytics

Analytics are the report cards of social media. They can either crush your dreams or give you a nice pat on the back.

I'm going to teach you how to use them so that you feel like you're getting desert each time you show them to your parents.

When learning how to measure your Instagram analytics you need to keep a few things in mind, such as likes, comments, hashtags, and the Insights tab. After you learn how to navigate your Instagram account's analytics growing and marketing to your ideal client will be so much easier.

That's the kicker, none of these Instagram metrics even matter if you're not reaching the people who need to see your brand. Remember what we talked about in the target audience chapter— make sure you are sticking to a target customer or buyer persona in mind and now you can reach out to them.

Was your ideal client a male or female? What age ranges were you trying to reach? Take a close check your analytics and see— are they your ideal customer?

If not, start fresh with your strategy. The best way to see if you're reaching the right audience is to take a peek at the insights tab. You will be able to tell which posts have the most likes and how many "impressions" you have, and at what time of the day.

Your engagement rates are broken down into where your impressions are coming from. You will be able to see whether they are coming from hashtags, home, mentions, explore, or other. It's a great resource to see if your hashtags are working or if you are showing up on the explore page.

conclusion

conclusion

I'd like to think the goal of all this is for someone stumble upon your business on Instagram, become captivated by your strong branding and encouraged by your mission, follow you and then become a forever customer, thinking to themselves after every interaction, "wow, I want more of this in my life!"

That's the dream, right? Let's make it a reality.

You have poured so much into this business of yours and I know that you are just so ready to see it thrive. So, let's do it! Let's create this dream of yours.

Remember you build a credible brand by staying true to who you are, do not adapt to the energy in the room, influence it and last but not least, people do not buy goods and services, they buy magic and experiences. Sell your products like they change lives and they will do just that.



who am i?

describe your passions

describe your talents

what is your inspiration?

define your target audience

close your eyes. think about who is wearing your product, using your product, eating your product, who do you see? what do they look like? where are they?

draw Sthem

age:

gender:

location:

lifestyle:

hobby:

profession:

make a mood board

to make a vision board, go on Pinterest, find old magazines, post cards, or wrapping paper and cut out everything that inspires your brand.

they can be elements of whole photos, letters out of words, or whole spreads. find what feeds your creativity and put it all on a page.

a few things to watch for:

- fonts
- colors
- patterns

this is your vision board.

write a mission statement

why d	loes m	y company	exist?

what makes my company different?

who does my company serve?

what pushed me to start this business?

incorporate your answers to those questions and formulate your mission statement

business branding checklist

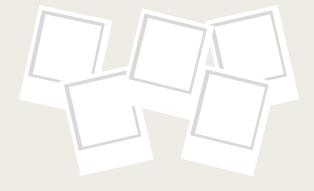
company name:

social media handle(s):

website URL:

brand colors





mission statement

graphic elements