Knowledge Leadership Report

Small Business Marketing in Champaign-Urbana

May 2013
About OTCR

OTCR is the premier student-run consulting group at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We are 50 of the best and brightest students at the University, and the only consulting group, run entirely by students.

Our mission is two-fold.

**For our clients** – we strive to make their businesses more efficient and productive. OTCR Consulting is a unique opportunity to let an energetic workforce with the resources of the University of Illinois tackle your toughest business problems.

**For our students** – we give our consultants a chance to apply their knowledge to real business problems. It is our hope that the skills our consultants gain in OTCR will help them on their way to becoming tomorrow's leaders.

Our main service lines are business strategy, technology strategy and technology implementation.

Since our founding in 2000, we have worked with companies ranging in size from local start-ups, to Fortune 100 firms.

OTCR’s Knowledge Leadership initiative is meant to tackle common problems dealt by businesses. These reports are intended to shed light on topics not often explored in literature or cases in which the business might not have accessible information. We welcome suggestions or comments about these or similar topics by our readers.
Small Business Marketing in Champaign-Urbana

May 2013

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Executive Summary

OTCR Consulting reached out to learn about the challenges facing small businesses in the Champaign-Urbana area, and to publish a report with current business-practices based recommendations. OTCR’s primary research reveals the biggest challenge faced by most businesses, regardless of industry, is a rather simple one: businesses need more customers who will buy more products or services. These businesses are interested in learning better ways to market themselves (Exhibit 1).

Figure 1. Most businesses surveyed are concerned about their marketing plan.

After in-depth primary research on small businesses in Champaign, OTCR identified three key marketing challenges faced:

1. Low awareness among consumers
2. Finding new customers/prospects
3. Reaching a targeted, niche market

Based on OTCR’s research and interviews with experts, OTCR recommends that in order to overcome these challenges, businesses need to develop specific goals. These goals should be twofold: first, they must be precise and clearly defined; second, they should reflect a time frame, either short-term or long-term. In the Case Study included in this report, we show how addressing marketing challenges, strategically, can help meet business goals. Effective marketing involves setting a concrete goal, identifying the current stage of marketing, and making a careful selection of marketing channels to achieve set goals.
Businesses often fail to address why they are utilizing a channel, or may not have a well-defined plan to accomplish those goals.

The final step of effective marketing is measuring the effectiveness of the chosen channel, looking beyond at sales. One thing common in OTCR’s primary research was that businesses do not advertise because they have not seen a Return On Marketing Investment (ROMI).

OTCR identified that most small businesses in Champaign-Urbana have small marketing budgets, and are not fully aware of the opportunities offered by social media. This report will brief the current and emerging technologies that most businesses can use to market themselves, focusing on social media.
Introduction

McKinsey & Company, Incorporated defines marketing’s primary goal to be reaching consumers at the moments, or touch points, that influence their purchasing behavior\(^1\). Marketing is to find places to communicate a firm’s value proposition. A value proposition is what the firm can offer a consumer, both tangibly and emotionally. The idea of a “touch point” is a little more complex. A touch point is a time and place where a consumer can interact with a brand. This could be via a newspaper ad, the company’s website, viewing a “Tweet” or being in the store. Any of these opportunities offer chances to show how a firm can help solve a consumer’s problem by means of its product or service.

Marketing has undergone two dramatic shifts since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The first to come was the Internet. Instead of consumers learning about a company through television and print ads, they went online to learn about products, view advertisements and ultimately purchase products. When everyone thought they had developed an understanding for this new paradigm of marketing, social media began to change the world. Instead of brands sending outbound messages to consumers via advertisements, consumers now have the opportunity to respond and play a role in the dialogue. Companies go beyond encouraging fans to “Tweet” or “Like” their ads and lure them by means of directly interacting with them in ways we, as a society, have never seen before.

As stated above, marketing is the route in which firms communicate what they offer to consumers; therefore, it is a poor choice to not engage in marketing. While many small businesses may have a limited budget, utilizing social media (free resources) can have a drastic impact on the brand awareness and revenues of a firm. Here are some statistics from the Boston Consulting Group\(^2\); Digital Marketing (Internet, social media, and mobile technologies) had an impact on:

1. 10% increase in brand perception among customers
2. 50-75% spending increases by current customers
3. 20-60% decrease in goods consumers returned to the retailer or manufacturer
4. 90% increase in resolved customer complaints
5. Up to 80% savings, depending on previous channels

OTCR believes that any size business can achieve similar goals through concentrated, targeted and specific marketing strategies. Creating a Facebook page that is updated once a day does not constitute a concentrated, targeted, and specific strategy. It takes


analysis and a focused pursuit of specific goals to see those kinds of returns. The Boston Consulting Group further expands about social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.):

1. 90% of executives could not articulate the business strategy of social media
2. Few companies have fully thought out what role social media will play relative to their own websites and any other online assets
3. Only 11% of companies have social media linked to clear business objectives

There is much value to gain in engaging in social media marketing, but it is not an easy road. Identifying the most efficient use of social media is the topic of contention of all industry leaders. OTCR contends that this does not need to be difficult and businesses can successfully and efficiently market themselves over social media utilizing a combination of clearly defined goals and simplistic strategies.

The majority of businesses OTCR surveyed in the Champaign–Urban area held two things in common. First, they had a marketing budget under $500. Second, they relied primarily on social media and word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM). With the advent and spread of social media, there are now numerous tools to enhance WOMM while still keeping costs under $500. In this report, OTCR has made an attempt to introduce three major social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest) and how they could be used to complement any firm’s existing marketing efforts.
Survey Results

OTCR Consulting designed a survey targeting small businesses that were not part of a chain or franchise. The survey was conducted in late-2012, collecting responses from businesses residing in Champaign-Urbana area. Of the 65 respondents across 14 industries, most were small business, with less than 6 employees (Exhibit 2).

![EXHIBIT 2 | Size of Businesses Surveyed](image)

Total Number of Businesses Surveyed: 65

Figure 2. The majority of businesses surveyed employ 1-6 employees.

Apart from several other categories, businesses were surveyed on marketing channels they commonly use, annual marketing budgets, website usage, and marketing challenges they face. Below is the summarized information collected from all respondents along with OTCR's analysis and recommendation.

A. Marketing Budgets of Small Businesses

One of the most commonly used methods of allocating marketing budgets is based on the annual sales of that business. Nationally, the average allocation usually ranges between 9-12% of the annual budget, while the smallest businesses may go as low as 2%. It is also common to allocate a flat dollar amount, or varying amounts matching the competitors. According to the 6th Annual Staples National Small Business Survey, small businesses have marketing budgets barely over $2,000. Ultimately, the budget should be set to achieve the desired marketing objectives, not the other way round.

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The primary survey conducted by OTCR showed that small businesses in Champaign-Urbana have a limited marketing budget and rely heavily on social media or word of mouth. Of the 51 businesses who disclosed their marketing budget, slightly more than half will set aside less than $2,000 annually. Of those, 58% will spend $0-$500 which translates to less than $50 a month towards marketing (Exhibit 3). 29% of total respondents invest more than $5,000 per year on marketing, and only eight invested $10,000 or more annually on marketing.

Out of these eight businesses, seven happen to be relatively old (one was at least 10 years old, six were at least 15 years old) and only one new business (less than five years old) invested more than $10,000. This business also happened to be the only large company (200+ employees) in the list of respondents. In contrast, only one business that was more than 15 years old had less than $500 annual marketing budget. In other words, among small companies, older businesses invest heavily in marketing compared to their younger competitors. The data suggests that either older business can afford higher marketing budgets, and/or they value the importance of marketing. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that while 40% of businesses in Champaign-Urbana are 16 years or older (most of which invest heavily in marketing), and a staggering 43% are new (less than five years old; invested little in marketing), only 17% were in the transition phase from young to old (6-15 years). This data suggests the majority of businesses face the challenge of survival past the first few years. One reason for this marketing-investment behavior dichotomy could be that new businesses have to incur heavy initial investment costs, thus interfering with their ability to spend on marketing. In contrast, older businesses pay only for their daily operations. One could
argue that older businesses have a relatively easier time funding their marketing initiatives and have come to value importance of marketing with their extended experience.

**B. How Small Businesses Use Marketing Channels**

With the advent of social media, businesses of all sizes are re-strategizing. Of the businesses surveyed in Champaign-Urbana area, word-of-mouth and social media were the two most commonly used channels, closely followed by traditional media (newspaper ad, radio, print ads, etc) and online advertising (separate from social media pages) (Exhibit 4). This is consistent with the national trend where more and more businesses are moving towards social media, while spending less on traditional channels of marketing.

![EXHIBIT 4 | Marketing Channels Employed by Firms](image)

**Figure 4. Most firms in the CU area rely on word of mouth marketing.**

The number of businesses who find using social media profitable has increased significantly in recent years\(^5\). Social media is only useful in most cases only when other marketing efforts are in place. In other words, social media complements alternate marketing tactics, but should not be used as the sole channel. Firms should employ several channels in parallel, including a website, blog, an SEO* (search engine optimization) strategy, social media, and lead nurturing\(^5\). The effects take time to surface, but results are evident over a period of few months to a year.


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C. Use of website

Companies hosting a website is now extremely common. Most businesses maintain an updated website for promotion of products/services, e-commerce, interactive marketing, and more. There are various services available that can help create business-quality websites for as low as $100/year (example: www.webs.com), or simpler websites for free (example: sites.google.com). Akin to social media, the lack of a web presence can do a lot of damage to any firm, especially if that firm wants to reach out to new customers or wants to keep up with the pace of competition – two top pain points on the list of marketing challenges (see below).

Out of the 65 businesses OTCR surveyed, 77% owned a website. Of those, 58% used their website for extensive promotional activities, while 80% used it for both promotion and e-commerce. The remaining 20% used it for certain promotional activities, or utilize a static (non-changing) website. The way in which a firm utilizes its website is based on the needs of the business. For example, many firms are not interested in online transactions, but still utilize their website to self-promote. 23% of businesses have no website at all and 38% of website owners do not update it regularly.

D. Marketing Challenges of Small Businesses

Out of 65 businesses OTCR surveyed, 58% cited finding new customers as their biggest challenge (Exhibit 5). Another 32% cited low awareness among their customers as their primary challenge, and 19% cited differentiating themselves from their competitors. Businesses are unequipped to handle everyday marketing challenges.

![Exhibit 5](https://example.com/exhibit5.png)

**Figure 5. While no firms in the CU area find retaining existing customers challenging, most feel that finding new clientele is their biggest hurdle.**

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All of these challenges, as suggested earlier, could be addressed by deploying a strategically planned marketing initiative, which would be a solution to both problems of reaching out to customers, while keeping ahead of the competition.

E. Conclusion

Marketing is a form of communication between the business and the customers. While there are several channels available to market yourself, utilizing one or two are generally not going to cut it. Both a web and social media presence are now considered critical. Additionally, as discussed earlier, social media marketing works best when employed with other forms of marketing. Though easy to setup social media pages, many business owners are not sure how to best make use of social media, mainly due to a lack of strategy. Marketing is a very particular and strategic practice; businesses can easily over-estimate their marketing expertise. We can see this trend in the real world too. OTCR’s survey showed that 95% of businesses make marketing decisions without any expert consultation. While bigger companies usually have dedicated marketing departments, smaller companies can outsource this work to independent contractors and specialty firms. An occasional consultation with marketing firms is advised for the businesses that cannot afford a dedicated or full-time marketing professional. Having a clear strategy to achieve specific goals is very important to realize the returns on marketing efforts. Multiple small projects could be accomplished within the annual marketing budgets of small firms. OTCR recommends small businesses develop a marketing plan with a well-defined strategy, clear goals, and an occasional consultation with professionals to jump-start their marketing initiatives.
Marketing Channels

Here we categorize marketing channels either as traditional, or non-traditional, based on the emergence of newer ways to reach out to customers. Most businesses are already aware of traditional marketing (print ads, billboards, newspaper, TV, radio, etc) options. In this section, we will introduce non-traditional channels, with a focus on social media.

A. Facebook

Facebook is the largest of the social media platforms and it has become one of the most used marketing channels. According to McKinsey & Company, Inc., if Facebook was a country, its population would be the third largest in the world, behind China and India. That’s the scope and power of this social media channel. Successful Facebook marketing requires investment, strategic goals and vision. To learn more about how to start or to create your own page, please visit: https://www.facebook.com/business/overview.

One of the primary goals of a corporate Facebook page is to connect with consumers and drive traffic to the company web site. Facebook is a critical component of marketing in the twenty-first century, especially for small businesses, because of its reach and networking potential.

Consumers expect to get something back when “Like’ing” a company’s Facebook page. Facebook users already see dozens of status updates, photos and other ads when viewing their newsfeed. Whatever a company posts must be both relevant and valuable. For example, many companies offer exclusive deals to Facebook fans such as 15% off certain products, or advertise seasonal specials. Facebook can also be used to alert fans of a promotion or new product offering, with the goal of increasing in-store traffic. Owing to its structure, one major drawback of Facebook is that it may not effectively increase awareness of a product or company among consumers. Also, unless given incentives, consumers are unlikely to “share” the posts of a company. These shortcomings could be addressed by Twitter, which operates in an environment where it is much more socially acceptable to share another person’s content.

B. Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging site. Users send out “tweets” which are short messages consisting of 140 characters or less. Users also use hash tags, which involves putting the “#” symbol in front of a word, or a phrase. It’s an attempt to make the phrase or word trend, which means other users will see it. As of June of 2013, Facebook has officially incorporated hashtags into its system as well.
For example, one really popular hash tag for a while was #firstworldproblems. Users would tweet about a particular problem they had, which may not have been such a problem compared to the rest of the world, and then include “#firstworldproblems.” It became famous. Brands such as Coca-Cola or Ford often try to get hash tags trending on a national level as a way to create buzz about a new product, event, or just momentum in general. Twitter simply cannot be ignored. Its impact is becoming astounding and most major firms are using it (Exhibit 6).

Small businesses now have the opportunity to compete on equal footing with these major brands. Twitter is free and everyone freely competes for followers and engagement. Do not miss this chance to take audiences away from these major competitors, without having to pay for mass marketing.

**Start:** By monitoring the conversations about your company. Are there any? Use the search function to find out. If there are no pre-existing conversations, you will have to start some

**Engage:** Start gathering followers and encourage them to Tweet at you; re-tweet them when they mention you or reply to them when they tweet @your company. 79% of corporate accounts do this.

A great way to use of Twitter is to promote events and drive consumers to your store, restaurant or business.

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**Figure 6. Over the past three years, more and more firms have utilized Twitter.**

Statistics via Burton Marselli, a leading public relations firm based in Chicago, IL.
C. Pinterest

In less than a year, Pinterest, an online scrapbooking site, has grown to 48 million users, more than five times its size one year ago. Pinterest is the latest and relatively fastest growing social media platform which allows its users to share images of interest by “pinning” them to their account. In November of 2012, this company introduced “business accounts” that allow companies to use their corporate name to leverage this new channel for marketing. This gives a great opportunity to businesses as Pinterest can direct potential customers to a company’s website. When a person likes an image on any website, they can re-pin it on their personal Pinterest account, thus leading to further exposure. Multiple businesses have reported Pinterest being a major source of the increase in recent web-traffic. Allrecipes.com’s Vice President of brand marketing reported that using Pinterest generated 6.5 times more referral traffic to Allrecipes.com than social-networking giant Facebook.

D. Conclusion

In the age of digital marketing channels, one cannot rely on a single channel. OTCR recommends businesses use Facebook for advertising, collecting feedback, and pushing promotions, but use Twitter when trying to increase awareness or expand to new consumers. At the same time, Pinterest should be used to attract new customers, create a buzz, and direct more web traffic to company’s website. Most of the non-traditional media are cheap or free to use, and it is highly recommended to take advantage of these popular and attractive platforms by keeping up to date with the current and developing technology.

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6 As Pinterest Grows, Startup Seeks $2.5 Billion Valuation. February 2013. Pui-Wing Tam and Spencer Ante. Wall Street Journal

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Web Analytics

Web analytics are the metrics behind web site visitors. Put simply, a firm can track the online behavior of those who visit their website, or use a search engine to look up one of a firm’s keywords. This includes information on everything from the number of aggregate and/or unique hits to more precise information about the geographic locations of visitors. All of this information can provide insight on which advertisement initiatives are effective, what visitors want to read about when it comes to your company, and how long they stayed interested while on your website. Web analytics has gone beyond just seeing if people are actually visiting your website. Completely free of charge, web analytics can tell you who is visiting your site, how they got there and what they do when they’re there. All of this information can be gathered from a simple tool from Google, aptly named Google Analytics.

OTCR has examined several different web analytics tools for clients and has always found Google to be the best. The implementation is simple and all else required is a Google.

Step One: Implementation

Visit http://www.google.com/analytics. If you do not have a Google Account, you will have to make one by going to https://www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount. Then, follow the instructions to register your website and actually insert the code that will be made available to you in the process. It is fairly simple process.

Step Two: Data Collection

As mentioned above, web analytics collects information that falls into three distinct categories:

1. Who’s visiting your site
2. How they got there
3. What they do on the site.

While working with a past client, OTCR identified 10 key metrics that fit into the second two categories. Depending on the type of business, some of these are more relevant than others, but OTCR feels these are the best to keep in mind to maximize information while remaining simple.

The table below reflects the ten most important metrics OTCR identified:
Definition of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Hits</td>
<td>The TOTAL number of times client's page was viewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Visitors</td>
<td>How many DIFFERENT people viewed the page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page views</td>
<td>Total NUMBER of pages viewed within site; repeated views of a single page are also counted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Time Spent on Site</td>
<td>On average, how LONG does a person stay on the site after viewing it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce Rate</td>
<td>Percentage of viewers that LEAVE the site after only viewing the page they arrived on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Visits</td>
<td>Percentage of total views that were from people who had NEVER been to the site before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning Visits</td>
<td>Percentage of total views that were from people who had been to the site BEFORE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search</td>
<td>Traffic that came from a SEARCH ENGINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral</td>
<td>Traffic that came from a viewer clicking a link on a DIFFERENT site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Traffic to site that came from a viewer DIRECTLY typing in the address or that they had bookmarked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Action</td>
<td>Marketing action initiated by our team that week; allows us to track which action led to which results in analytics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Web analytics uses specific vocabulary to define different metrics.

When it comes to understanding who is visiting your site, Google is able to display the information.

The key to proper usage of web analytics is customization. For many businesses in the Champaign-Urbana area, the location of web visitors may not be important. To best utilize web analytics, businesses must examine their own marketing goals and identify what they need to know most. Then, they can customize the Google Analytics Dashboard to ensure they see the data that matters most to their business. Utilizing the data generated, they should be able to design a more targeted marketing strategy to maximize their return on investment.
A. Determining Keywords

One of the most difficult things for any firm to accomplish, in order to be found easily by potential customers, is finding the optimal keywords, the words a customer will type for online search. Keywords are terms or phrases that a firm designates as ones that accurately describe themselves, their products, or their services. Search engines like Google utilize keywords, and will display search results to the end user based on the words or phrase used. A careful selection of keywords can, therefore, either make or break a firm’s Search Engine Optimization (SEO), the internet marketing process which represents how “search engine friendly” a firm’s website is.

Keywords are meant to be as specific as can be. A firm selling protective phone cases may think the keyword “case” would be an appropriate fit – a common misconception. These are appropriately named simple keywords. They are one or two words that ambiguously describe the business. Simple keywords are a very costly and ineffective way to market the firm, as it will pull up numerous results that even remotely will address that word. For example, searching Google for “case” will pull up laptop cases, law cases, and millions of other results based off the word “case”. Only a tiny percentage of the millions of search results will actually relate to phone cases.

The other negative aspect of utilizing simple keywords is they are overly demanded. Google AdWords, a premium advertising service offered by Google which charges based on keyword selection, lists many simple keywords at about $2-$3 per impression (an impression means any time a user is directed to a firm’s website via the search engine). Every time a firm’s page is listed in search results, that firm is charged based on the price of a specific keyword, even if their link is not clicked on. Not only do simple keywords ineffectively market a firm’s page (the website will most likely not rank in the top three slots, let alone the first page), they will drive up marketing costs.

To combat this, a firm’s goal is to find, what are known as, long tail keywords. Long tail keywords are phrases composed of five to ten words that when strung together, accurately and adequately represent the firm’s offering. These keywords (or key-phrases) have significantly lower costs per impression (the price associated with appearing on a single search result) as they are specified and less demanded, and will result in more efficient marketing. A more appropriate long tail keyword for our example protective phone case retailer would be “protective iPhone cases” or “durable Samsung phone cases”. The keywords filter out other websites that may be marketing toward the word “case” and improves a firm’s chance at effective marketing toward their targeted audience.
B. Google Keyword Tool

Google has a very powerful tool that allows any firm to analyze a simple or long tail keyword. This aptly named tool, the Google Keyword Tool, is free to use and provides in-depth analysis such as how many results are returned for any keyword, where in the world these keywords are primarily being searched, and what the price to use premium advertising services around those keywords would cost. The tool allows any firm to cross analyze keywords and develop a truly effective marketing strategy. For example, a guitar shop might want to research the keyword “Fender Strat” (a specific guitar). This tool would allow them to see what it would cost per impression.

As previously mentioned, Google AdWords allows any firm to cap off an exact budget. A firm looking to market themselves with a hand-picked list of keywords can set a dollar amount that they do not want to exceed (in costs) daily, weekly, monthly, or even yearly. This metric can be customized so far down to exactly how much a firm is willing to spend on each specific keyword. If the budget cap is reached in the designated time period, the firm will no longer be advertised (on the premium service) until the end of the cycle. Using this flexible option, even small businesses can venture out to test the effectiveness of their marketing initiatives with limited budget. With these metrics, a firm can reevaluate the effectiveness of their marketing budget and make changes on the fly. If a monthly budget cap for keyword A is being reached just two days into the month/cycle, the firm can determine if that keyword is too expensive, too ineffective, or if a larger budget should be allocated toward that word. There is no end to the utility these tools provide.

Do not be intimidated by the pay per impression model. A $30 monthly budget can still net huge traffic differences, if allocated properly (finding the right long tail keywords and investing in them). A well-planned strategy capped off at $30/mo. could net over 1000 new page views. The Google keyword tool lays out all the information necessary to find any firm’s niche keywords, but that being said, it is a numbers game and budgeting should not be undercut.
Case Study

The objective of this case study is to highlight how a real, medium-size business employed marketing strategy to achieve quantifiable and tangible success in promoting their business.

Coldwell Banker Commercial Devonshire Realty (here on addressed as “Devonshire Realty”) is a medium size company with 20-50 employees. It is the largest commercial real estate brokerage in downstate Illinois, providing property management services to dozens of communities throughout central Illinois. As part of their regular operations, the company uses marketing channels like traditional media (property signage, mailings, print media), and technology (internet, online commercials, email campaign, etc.) to reach out to new and existing customers. While sales were stable, last year management discussed ways to expand their business operations with two main motives: advance above competitors, and expand customer base. To meet this goal, they focused on improving their visibility among new customers, with the main objective of making themselves easy to find. Devonshire Realty hired a marketing company with a one-year contract for $2,000. Marketing goals were discussed and the marketing agency designed a strategy to accomplish said goals. One of the initial steps was to identify popular channels customers use to find a property management company, and to tap into the channel between the company and the customers. Upon identifying search engine (mostly Google) being one of the most commonly used media by the customers to find businesses in this industry, the marketing company created a design to move Devonshire Realty up the ranks in Google search results. This process is called Search Engine Optimization, or SEO. They executed three key steps:

1. Asked company’s current customers to post comments and reviews for Devonshire Realty on different online resources
2. Suggested Devonshire Realty to fill out complete information on sites like Google Plus, Google Place pages
3. Drive web-traffic actively to company website through third party sites (e.g. blog site, tumblr, twitter account)

All of these channels led to the company’s dramatically improved online presence, moving up to the front page of popular search engine. The company was found easily under “Google places” even when someone used generic keywords like ’commercial property management’. Devonshire Realty uses Google Analytics (described earlier in the report) to track traffic to their website. After the marketing initiatives, the firm improved their impression (impression is defined as how many times your name appears in the search engine in a given time period) by almost 2-fold, and action (action
is defined as when a customer actually clicks on the company-link on google search page) by more than 3-fold when compared to a same 3-month time period from a year ago (Exhibit 8). In other words, within one year, the company moved the number of customer site-hits from 188 to 603 recorded in a three-month period. The company expects these results will potentially lead to improved sale conversions, which the company will realize by the year-end.

![EXHIBIT 8 | Case Study Change in e-Metrics](image)

**Figure 8.** SEO can improve e-metrics at phenomenal rates.

Encouraged by this return, Devonshire Realty plans to continue initiatives by hiring a marketing firm to enter mobile integration platform, and also revamp current website with built-in SEO incorporated in a hidden script on the side. They envision this strategy will help in expanding their business, and also establish a brand image by presenting high quality websites and improved visibility on search engines.
Conclusion

With the ever-evolving marketing landscape, there are multiple options available to small businesses for effective marketing initiatives, while staying within their budget limits. To keep up with the competition, it is suggested stay current with new technology and leverage opportunities. Data supports that companies that invest in marketing strategically have better returns on their investments.

Through all of this talk of technology, firms should not neglect the Four P’s of marketing: price, product, promotion, and place. The Four P's are the overarching factors that should dictate any firm’s marketing strategy. Price, the first factor, refers to the price of the product or service itself. Firms should keep their price points in mind when determining their marketing channels and target market. Product, the second factor, refers to the product or service itself. When considering this factor, firms should also think about the product mix, or any associated products or service that could lead to extended sales. Depending on the product, one firm may market themselves by flooding the market with pictures and information. Other firms in other industries may prefer customers walk into their store to actually experience the product prior to purchase. The third factor, Promotion, forces firms to consider each and every method they currently utilize to communicate information to the public. Prior marketing efforts can shape the road for future ones as most marketing campaigns are long-term. Finally, the fourth factor, Place, refers to how consumers actually receive the product. This factor is constantly changing with the digital world and is far more predictable than in decades past. For the first time, we have the ability to deliver goods instantly (digitally), overnight, or over the course of a few days. Supply chains across industries world-wide are much more sophisticated than they have ever been.

Marketing is an often-neglected area due to relative inexperience and sometimes over-confidence of small business owners. OTCR recommends that businesses need to approach marketing strategically, and to utilize out-of-house services if no in-house expertise is available.
Glossary

*Analytics*: process of extracting value from Big Data through formal statistical analyses.

*Blog*: A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts on an idea, experience, or a product.

*Buzz*: product awareness is generated amongst the consumers, and is passed on to other consumers by word-of-mouth.

*Conversion rate*: the percentage of visitors who take a desired action.

*Customer acquisition cost*: the cost associated with acquiring a new customer.

*Exposure*: Consumers who have seen a media vehicle, whether or not they paid attention to it.

*Guerilla marketing*: unconventional marketing intended to get maximum results from minimal resources.

*Keyword*: a word used in performing a search.

*Keyword density*: keywords as a percentage of indexable text words.

*Keyword marketing*: putting your message in front of people who are searching using particular keywords and keyphrases.

*Lead nurturing*: a process, in which you convert website visitors into customers over a period of time.

*Marketing Metrics*: Measurements that help with the quantification of marketing performance, such as market share, advertising spend, and response rates elicited by advertising and direct marketing.

*ROMI (Return On Marketing Investment)*: returns collected because of a marketing initiative, divided by the money invested in the initiative.

*SEO (Search Engine Optimization)*: the process of choosing targeted keyword phrases related to a site, and ensuring that the site places well when those keyword phrases are part of a Web search.
Other OTCR Consulting Reports

OTCR Consulting has written other reports on similar topics. These have been listed below.

Alternative transaction technologies to augment cash registers
May 2013
Notes

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For more information about the organization and the active leadership team, please visit http://www.otcr.illinois.edu/