



Marketing Resources for Your Small Business

KEEP IT LOCAL: BUSINESS SPOTLIGHTS

Vermilion Economic Development Alliance's Keep It Local Business Spotlights feature in-depth narratives about your business produced by professional staff and financially boosted on Facebook. Participants may also be featured on our website and Instagram account (@vermilionparish).

Submit your spotlight online:

www.developvermilion.org/keepitlocal

MADE IN VERMILION: DATABASE & SPOTLIGHTS

VEDA's vision includes a Vermilion Parish that embraces its rural and cultural identities and creates opportunities where both are preserved and celebrated. With that in mind we've launched this new initiative. This effort aims to bring awareness and profitability to those Vermilion-based businesses creating something and bringing wealth into our parish. We will feature your business on our social media & website.

Submit your business online:

www.developvermilion.org/madeinvermilion/

MEDIA RELATIONS: PRESS RELEASES & NETWORKING

Create a press kit with a high-res version of your logo, history, bios, and relevant milestones to have on hand for media opportunities. Share your newsworthy info through media releases. VEDA maintains a great relationship with our local news outlets and is happy to assist you in writing/sharing your story.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT: CERTIFICATIONS & BID MATCHING

Local, state and federal governments are interested in contracting with small businesses for goods and services. Louisiana's Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) advises and trains you on how to find, obtain, and properly fulfill local, state, and federal government contracts and purchasing opportunities. They also assist with securing certifications that set you apart like Veteran, Minority, & Women-Owned designations.

ptac.louisiana.edu

ECONOMIC GARDENING: RESEARCH & EXPAND MARKETS

This Louisiana Economic Development initiative provides small businesses with accelerated technical assistance and research. An experienced team will provide customized services, including:

- Review of core strategies, including threats & opportunities, business strategy & niche markets
- Business development opportunities through market research and qualified sales leads.
- Improved internet presence by increasing your company's visibility and credibility within the market, and advice on how to best use technology to connect with customers.

Learn more about the program & apply:

www.opportunitylouisiana.com/small-business/special-programs-for-small-business/economic-gardening-initiative

ONLINE LISTINGS: CLAIM & CORRECT

Are your search and local business listings accurately representing your business? To find out, you must first claim your local business listings through local directories. Once you have, keep that info updated!

- **Google My Business** - Search for your business on Google. A Google+ page will populate or Google Maps will pinpoint your location within search results. Select the "Is this your business?" link, and go through the verification process to take ownership. If your business doesn't appear, it may have been indexed incorrectly or not at all. Navigate to Google My Business and sign up for an account.
- **Bing Places** - Search for your business using Bing. If it is unclaimed, click on the "Do you own this business?" link to claim your business. If your business does not populate, head over to Bing Places and click on the "get started" call-to-action for a simple verification walk-through.
- **Yahoo Local** - You can claim your listing by searching for your business and selecting the "Verify your listing" link. In order to create a listing, you need to create a Yahoo! account and fill in your business information.

"FREE"

Although these services don't have a financial cost, we acknowledge that many of these resources require considerable energy on your part. Your time is valuable, so please ask for assistance if you need it!

Whether you communicate with them over the phone or in person, an email address should always be captured from your clients. Integrate an email sign up option on your website and begin building a database of customer data. Start using those email addresses by setting up a free email account with a service like Constant Contact or Mailchimp. Use the platform's built in templates, design tools, and advice to build your emails. Avoid being overly promotional and always offer something genuinely useful to the recipients. Keep the communications regular but never flood their inbox with email after email. Avoid sending emails from your personal or work email account - you can easily be flagged as spam and never get your message out!

**LOYALTY PROGRAMS:
BUILDING BRAND AMBASSADORS**

Loyalty programs encourage customers to spend more with your company. They help retain your happiest customers, who make the best word-of-mouth evangelists to your brand.

- **Keep your program simple** - Programs that require too much fine-print will be difficult to manage and leave customers feeling less than enthusiastic. An easy-to-understand points-based or punch card loyalty system that offers relevant rewards based on historic activity make things easy.
- **Make the reason for joining obvious** - Good programs give customers tangible reasons to sign on. Customers should know exactly what special access, discount or free item their loyalty will win. They won't shy from a pay-to-play program if they know the great value they'll get from a small additional fee. This can be free shipping on all orders for a year or exclusive product offers.
- **Review your return** - Businesses sometimes treat loyalty programs as the silver bullet and don't measure their success. Tracking stats including frequency of purchase and lifetime spend will give you a better idea of a loyalty program's worth. Consider trying out a system with a few of your regular patrons before rolling it out to everyone.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:
PLAN, EXECUTE, MONITOR**

Quick Tip

Network with like-minded businesses; share advice & successes.

In the beginning social media was the great equalizer. It gave small businesses the same opportunities as larger ones. Good content plus good reach meant good results. Now that these platforms have figured out how to monetize your success, it's a lot tougher to make a splash without a healthy budget. Explore all the platforms, but Facebook, YouTube & Instagram are still the top three, unless you have a niche product or service. Spend money on your activity - whether it's a well-placed ad or a boosted post, social media spends can make a big difference. Here are some no-cost actions you should take to make your dollars stretch. Establish your audience, then:

- **Set & adjust goals** - Your favorite brands haven't earned their place by posting willy nilly. They undoubtedly have a strategy and goals. Not only does this keep you on track, but the advertising element of the biggest and best (Facebook) allows you to adjust your goals right inside the application. They can help you figure out the time and method of advertising based on what you want to see.
- **Create a content calendar** - Content calendars are typically designed month-by-month and can include one or more social media platforms. The idea is to pre-plan your posts (or schedule them if you choose to) to take advantage of timely situations. Plan to include holidays, promotions, product reviews, how-to content, or explainer posts based on tried-and-true peak times or to combat slow times. There are some free scheduling tools on the market, or you can use Facebook's built-in scheduler for Facebook & Instagram if you have the two accounts linked.
- **Know what you're "About"** - Your "About" tab on Facebook and bio in Instagram should be fully completed. This is an easy way to provide your customers with information on how to interact with you. If you have a particular thing you typically highlight - a product or service - mention it. Consider a catchy tagline or super short elevator pitch. Facebook has a ton of tabs you can also fill in, including a service listing. Complete the ones relevant to you.
- **Like and share** - Find complementary businesses, local organizations, and industry leaders. You don't have to come up with everything yourself, share good content to show your followers that you're worth following.