

Looking to get ahead of your competitors? Brand strategies through social media will give you the advantage over those unwilling to use experienced professionals or companies to grow their business and market share.

MARKHAM, ON — Survey results released on Monday by the Small Business Services division of American Express Canada reveal that although the vast majority of small business owners recognize the importance of branding to their success they aren't likely to seek the expertise of branding professionals.

A sample of 529 Canadian small business owners (companies between two and 100 people) were surveyed in the second half of May. Among this sample, 36% of respondents admit they are interested in expanding their brand but don't know where to start.

According to the survey 84% recognize the importance of their brand to the company's overall success, yet 86% of small business owners choose not to use outside experts, with 29% handling the development of their business' brand internally.

"It is surprising to see that the majority of small business owners aren't investing in the necessary third-party resources to help them develop and refine their brand," says Athena Varmazis, vice president and general manager, Small Business Services, American Express Canada, in a release. "Branding plays a significant role in the overall success of their business and shouldn't be taken lightly by business owners."

There appears to be a gap in the market. In a challenging economy, small business owners understand how differentiating their brand can lead to greater success, yet very few business owners appear to value branding specialists or even know they exist.

— Design Edge Canada Staff

Creating a Brand Strategy.

In order to understand your business, your audience (consumer) and your employees need to understand who you are, what you stand for and what sets you apart from the competition. Building a brand strategy is as important internally as it is externally. Employees are all brand managers and should emulate the same 'voice of the company' and share the same brand values in order to build a strong brand with a consistent message.

Case Studies.

This is one of the most essential marketing tools and can be applied across multiple avenues to establish yourself as a brand that is well respected. If you have managed to garnish any word of mouth advertising you have a case study already. But have you done anything with it? Let the world know how great your business is.

Social Media and your Business. What is it?

- Social media is about conversations, community, connecting with personalities and building relationships. It is not just a broadcast channel or a sales and marketing tool.
- Authenticity, honesty and open dialogue are key.
- Social media not only allows you to hear what people say about you, but enables you to respond. Listen first, speak second.
- Be compelling, useful, relevant, engaging. Don't be afraid to try new things, but think through your efforts before kicking them off.

What is Facebook?

Facebook is an online social networking service, whose name stems from the colloquial name for the book, given to students at the start of the academic year by some university administrations in the United States to help students get to know each other.

Users must register before using the site, after which they may create a personal profile, add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by workplace, school or college, or other characteristics, and categorize their friends into lists such as "People From Work" or "Close Friends". As of September 2012, Facebook has over one billion active users.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is an online social networking service and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets".

Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey and by July, the social networking site was launched. The service rapidly gained worldwide popularity, with over 500 million registered users as of 2012, generating over 340 million tweets daily and handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day. Since its launch, Twitter has become one of the ten most visited websites on the Internet, and has been described as "the SMS of the Internet." Unregistered users can read tweets, while registered users can post tweets through the website interface, SMS, or a range of apps for mobile devices.

What is Google + and Google Places

Create circles of associations to target your membership. Google+ is a free networking opportunity that is fast becoming one of the most active social platforms available. Use this to build friendships and include a Google Places listing on your website. Gather reviews on the Google Places page to help bring more traffic to your services.

What is Pinterest?

Pinterest is a pinboard-style photo-sharing website that allows users to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, and hobbies. Users can browse other pinboards for images, 're-pin' images to their own pinboards, or 'like' photos.

It allows users to save images and categorize them on different boards. They can follow other users' boards if they have similar tastes. Popular categories are travel, cars, food, film, humor, home design, sports, fashion, and art.

Why Blog?

One in three online Americans now read blogs at least once a month, while 18% comment on them. Blog readers as a group grew by nearly 50% over this past year." - *Forrester Research* – Imagine now bringing in a third more users to your website by having a blog of your own.

Company blogs are an excellent resource for educating and informing customers, especially when it comes to the features and benefits of new products. Blue Giant's blog also includes partnership announcements, trade show appearances, and technical information.

Detailed and informative posts position your company as an expert in your field. Relevant content gives people a reason to keep coming back to your site. Well-maintained company blogs nudge customers to a conversion point of trusting and believing enough to buy.

How can You Leverage Youtube?

Create a free channel for all your videos, allowing potential clients to view successful jobs or product overviews. Consider creating videos of product in application. Youtube videos can also be embedded into you website. Video has become one of the most accessed files for information on the internet and including some of your own, created in such a way as to make it unique and engaging the potential to go viral is always a possibility.

Social Media Deliverables

The following social media management services will be provided directly in support of your business:

Initialization/Set-Up

- Create new Timeline Image collages bi-monthly to keep page fresh and fun
 - Design and create custom Facebook tabs as needed on each Facebook page. Content should mimic website for brand consistency
 - Link various Social Media pages together for ease of communication across multiple Social Media outlets, i.e., Twitter/YouTube/Trip Advisor/Yelp as tabs on the Facebook page itself
 - Claim page on other outlets as deemed important, i.e., Google Places, Foursquare etc.
- Monthly Monitoring
- Post content on Facebook/Twitter pages bi-weekly.
 - Create and manage various contests and promotions as needed.

- Continually update page tabs and photo albums on each page as needed.
- Weekly email updates/strategy of upcoming post content and FB insights from week to week.
- Bi-Weekly or monthly phone meetings to discuss strategy, direction and ideas relevant for the daily postings. Constant email communication with point person to assist in the daily posting and capturing of images for the page.
- Ongoing search for new fans each week and exposure of each property on other pages via tagging, liking, and posting on related pages.
- Community outreach; 'like' 10-20 new businesses per week to continually extend our reach and share local news content from other pages to extend reach.

FEE STRUCTURE

One-time initiation of \$400 CAD paid upon contract execution

OPTION One: Monthly monitoring fee of \$800 CAD to manage all identified and agree to multiple social media channels or

OPTION Two: Monthly monitoring fee of \$500 CAD for Facebook only

TERM

- Month to Month
- Terminable by either party with a Thirty (30) day notice

[For more marketing services visit us here.](#)