

# 50 Marketing Ideas for Your Small Business



## **Need some marketing inspiration?**

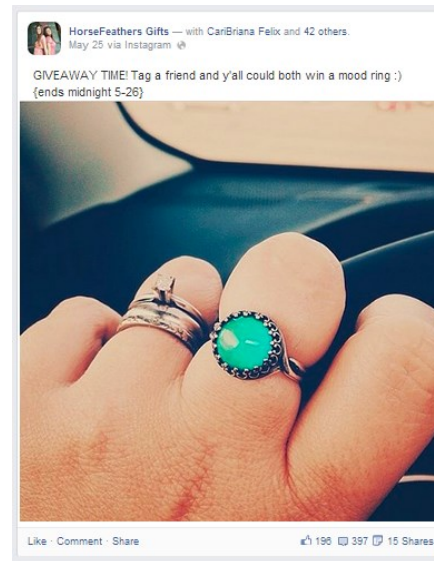
Here are 50 marketing ideas (in no particular order) you can use in your business today.

**Happy marketing!**

*Please note this e-book includes marketing examples from other companies. The PCC SBDC is not in anyway promoting their business.  
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(1) Host a giveaway contest on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest.

Engage and expand your fan base on social media via a giveaway. (Tip: Make sure you have official rules for the contest.) Here are two examples:



Screenshot from HorseFeathers



Screenshot from The Nail Artelier website

(2) Create a free e-book for download as an incentive for people to sign up for your newsletter or to follow you on a social media platform.

(3) Provide discounts or a special offer if customers Share or Tweet about your business.

(4) Write a handwritten letter to customers, as a thank you for their business or a referral.

(5) Include a small gift with your letter, like a local café gift card.

(6) Send a monthly newsletter packed with value.

Don't make it about you. Include information your customers will be interested in like helpful tips, trends, inspirational stories, events, or articles.

(7) Tell a story.

How did you start your business? What inspired you? How do you help your customers or clients? Create a video, write a blog post, draw a picture, whatever you'd like. A foolproof way to tell a good story is to follow Joseph Campbell's formula - The Hero's Journey. [Watch this great 4-minute video](#) on how you can tell a great story for your business.



(8) Celebrate an unusual holiday. For example:

- January 24<sup>th</sup> – Compliment Day
- February 6<sup>th</sup> – Thank a Mailman Day
- March 25<sup>th</sup> – Waffle Day
- April 7<sup>th</sup> – No Housework Day
- May 20<sup>th</sup> – Be a Millionaire Day
- June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Best Friends Day
- July 26<sup>th</sup> – All or Nothing Day
- August 15<sup>th</sup> – Relaxation Day
- September 16<sup>th</sup> – Felt Hat Day
- October 7<sup>th</sup> – World Smile Day
- November 20<sup>th</sup> – Beautiful Day
- December 18<sup>th</sup> – Bake Cookies Day

(9) Create your own holiday!

March 26<sup>th</sup> is Make Up Your Own Holiday Day or choose any day you'd like to celebrate something unique for your business. Make sure to use hashtags on social media so people can join in on your celebration.

(10) Have a party.

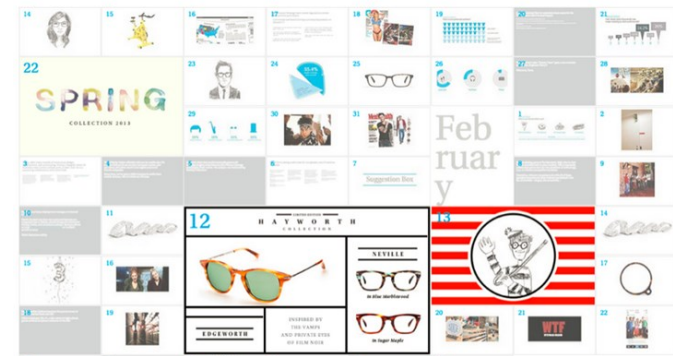
Celebrate your grand opening, anniversary, product or service launch, a customer appreciation day; the sky's the limit!

(11) Sponsor an event.

Sponsoring events is a great way to get in front of a specific audience or to enter new markets. For example, if you're an IT company you can sponsor IT related conferences or events. Typically events will have a wide range of sponsorship packages. Scope out events and conferences in your area or in new markets you want to get in to.

(12) Create a visual annual report.

The key here is to make it fun, interesting, and visual to increase the social virality of the report. If it's shared a lot it essentially becomes a powerful ad. For example, Warby Parkers' 2013 Annual Report. Warby Parker has taken down their 2013 Annual Report, but you can read this [Forbes' article](#) on it to glean some inspiration.



### (13) Create a vlog.

What's a vlog? A vlog is a blog, but with videos instead of words. Vlogs are typically short videos hosted on a video-sharing platform like YouTube. If you're not a writer, this could be a great substitution for getting your expertise out there without having battle writer's block. (Tip: After you publish your blog make sure you post it on your company's blog and social media sites.) Here are some helpful articles to get you started on your vlog:

- ["Why Your Business Should be Vlogging and How to Get Started"](#) from REELSEO
- ["10 Steps to Successful Video Blogging"](#) from Social Media Examiner

### (14) Create a hospitality station for your clients or customers.

Dedicate a space for your customers to feel at home. Set up an area with coffee, tea, snacks, magazines, Wi-Fi, a place to charge their phones, etc. One dentist office in Portland offers beer and wine if the patient's appointment is during happy hour.

### (15) Decorate your store or office.

Change out the window displays or décor of your office with the changing seasons or upcoming holiday. Not only will it provide an interesting space for your customers, but it can also create a productive environment for your team.

### (16) Partner up with a neighbor business to create a special offer.

### (17) Create limited-time offers.

(18) Use Slideshare to promote your business.

Slideshare is an online platform in which you can upload and share presentations. It is an excellent tool to show your expertise in your industry. More importantly, it improves your SEO and has a built in sharing platform to reach a wider audience. Here is a Slideshare presentation from Web Navigator Gal on [“10 Reasons You Should Use Slideshare to Market Your Business.”](#)



(19) Bundle products and/or services to clean out inventory or to boost sales.

(20) Make sure your website is responsive!

That means your website resizes to fit the screen of a cellphone or tablet.

(21) Be on local search.

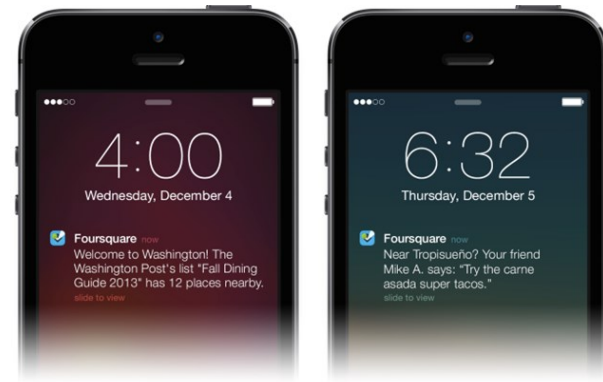
Claim your business listing on Google Maps, Yelp, Yahoo Maps, Bing Maps, and Foursquare.

(22) Make sure your website has basic search engine optimization.

This means you have keywords and metatags in place.

### (23) Consider geo-location push notifications.

If you have a physical store, you can send out promotional messages to people who are in a close proximity to your store. Push notifications are a little bit more complicated, but provide good conversion rates. Apple has its own service called [iBeacon](#), which requires a developer to set up. Foursquare also has a push notification feature that may be more accessible to set up. See Tech Crunch's [article](#) to learn more.



### (24) Do market research.

The library has a wealth of databases just waiting for you to use them. Find trending stats, growing demographics, even get addresses for direct mail campaigns. Ask a librarian for help.

### (25) Ask what your customers think about your business.

This may be terrifying, but do it. Send a survey or ask a few trusted customers what they think. Maybe they see an opportunity you don't.

### (26) Find a niche and go deep.

This might be even scarier. Casting the net wide might seem like the best way to generate sales, but you end up diluting your worth and working harder for less money. Still not convinced? Read how [Amy McAuley](#) found a narrow niche and now has a client waiting list.



(27) Be known for one thing, like a seasonal drink or a unique trinket.

(28) Invest in customer service training.

New customers are much more expensive to acquire than repeat customers. Keep your customers coming back with great customer service.

(29) Develop your brand.

This is definitely not a quick and dirty tip. It may take you years and a lot of evolutions to find your perfect brand. But don't let that overwhelm you. Stop and take the time to develop your brand. Your brand includes more than just your logo. It's the words and colors you use, the tone of your writing, your processes, your customer service, etc. Marie Forleo is an online business personality who doesn't hide her quirky personality, and in fact uses it as a core part of her brand. Check out her 5-minute video [“How To Create Your Brand & Find Your Voice.”](#)



(30) Always carry business cards!

(31) Get a table or booth at a tradeshow or event.

### (32) Have business “swag” to giveaway.

Think pens, mugs, flashdrives, [get creative!](#)

### (33) Start an email drip campaign.

An email drip campaign can also be referred to as marketing automation or an email autoresponder sequence. Essentially, it is a series of emails that get sent out when a person opts in to your newsletter or some other offer. Most email marketing software programs have this feature. Here’s an example:

You’re at an event and you want people to subscribe to your newsletter. When they subscribe to your newsletter:

- They receive an automatic welcome message from you.
- The next day they get an email describing your services.
- The following day they receive a special promotion.

For inspiration for more drip email campaigns, check out this [infographic](#).

### (34) Test out ideas!

Have you heard of A/B testing? It’s the experiment of testing two different ideas on the same campaign. For example, send the same email message with two different subject lines to two separate groups and find out which subject line generated the most opens. Check out Smashing Magazine’s [“The Ultimate Guide to A/B Testing”](#) to get you started on your first A/B test.

(35) Look for opportunities to share your story with the media.

Sign up to receive reporter's requests for stories on [HARO](#). Your business story might be what someone is looking for.

(36) Develop relationships with media.

Read Tim Ferris' [article](#) on crowdfunding to learn some interesting tips and tricks to leverage your network's connections with the media.

(37) Reach out to bloggers.

Blogs can be very influential. Find bloggers that align with your target market and reach out to them to see if they would review your product or service. There are also some online services that help match small businesses and bloggers like [Bloggers Required](#).

(38) Create a loyalty program.

Think buy 10 get 1 free. There are online services to digitize this like [Supportland](#) and [Perka](#).

(39) Create an ambassador program.

Sseko Designs makes unique sandals and employs women in Uganda. The company created an invite-only ambassador program called the Sseko Brave Collective, which includes a private Facebook group, monthly challenges, and a manifesto. See the community interaction on the Twitter [#ssekobrave](#) feed.

(40) Create an affiliate program.

Give a brand commission for bringing you new customers. PCC SBDC's Jackie B. Peterson uses an affiliate program for her own business.

(41) Be good at one social media tool.

There are a lot of social media platforms out there. Engage in one that makes the most sense for you. Here are just a few:

Social Media for Small Businesses						mtc masstechnology.com
As a small business you have a limited amount of resources. Don't spread yourself thin trying to make an appearance on all the social networks out there. Find your audience, match your brand and pick the best fit(s).						
<b>Facebook</b> A central hub for brand news, users can create a fan page to share pictures, status updates and events. Offers an easy way for brands to engage with users and comment on activity or updates.	<b>Twitter</b> A microblogging service, twitter lets users send 140-character updates. Great for news and customer questions – the fastest way to share and engage with consumers in real time	<b>Pinterest</b> A social bookmarking site where users collect and share photos of their favorite events, interests and hobbies. The third largest social networking site, Pinterest helps spread visual content quickly.	<b>LinkedIn</b> A professional network that lets users connect with top industry influencers. A great place to find likeminded professionals, discuss trends, search job boards and network.	<b>YouTube</b> The go-to site for video on the web. Dominated by user generated content, video clips, musical artists and micro-bloggers, youtube emphasizes "channels" for branded content.	<b>Instagram</b> A mobile photo sharing app which lets users share on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and Flickr. Recently introduced brand promoted posts.	

(42) Invest in paid advertising.

Paid advertising has changed a lot, but is still relevant. Search engine marketing, digital push ads, print ads, etc. are all viable options. Just be sure to track your efforts. (More on that later.)

(43) Offer something free.

Everyone loves free stuff, but for greater impact make sure it is relevant to your business and adds value to your customer.

(44) Support a cause.

If you are genuinely passionate about a cause, consider donating a portion of your revenue or profits to a cause for a limited time or as part of your business model. It could be a good way to find clients who are like-minded and people you want to do business with. However, if you decide to use donations solely as a tactic to benefit your business, people will see through it and it could do more harm than good.

(45) Host a meet-up.

(46) Be present at local events.

(47) Participate in buy local or Main Street campaigns.

(48) Join a networking group.

(49) Volunteer in your community.

(50) Surprise your clients!

Like promising 50 marketing ideas and giving 51...

⚡ BONUS ⚡

(51) Track your efforts!

All your marketing efforts will be in vain if you don't track it. How will you ever know what was successful if you don't keep an eye out on what's going on? Here are some things you can do to make sure you're spending your time and money in the right place:

- Install and use Google Analytics. Don't know anything about Google Analytics? Check out this [getting started guide](#) from SocialMedia Examiner.
- Use bit.ly. Let's say you're running an ad and driving people to visit your website. On the ad, use a bit.ly link so you can see how many people went to your website through that ad. Bit.ly has detailed information to [get you started](#).
- Check your email marketing stats. All email marketing software tracks open rates, click-through rates, unsubscribes, shares, and so much more! Look at the data. What subject lines get the most opens? What content gets the most shares?



## Ready for more?

Come to a free New Client Orientation to learn how the PCC Small Business Development Center can help you reach your business goals.

[www.bizcenter.org/PCC](http://www.bizcenter.org/PCC)

## 2014 Recipient of SBA's Region 10 SBDC in Excellence and Innovation

The Portland Community College Small Business Development Center has helped thousands of businesses over the past 30 years. We combine one-on-one advising with programs taught by business experts, giving our clients the resources they need to grow their businesses. In 2014 we worked with over 700 small business owners, trained over 1,500 clients in a wide range of courses, and celebrated many successes. We'd love to celebrate your success.

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The Oregon Small Business Development Centers are partially funded by the US Small Business Administration and the Oregon Business Development Department.

