

LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Business Owners

July 2025

**Top
Security
Issues
For Small
Business
Websites**

**HOW TO ANALYZE WHAT
YOUR COMPETITORS ARE
DOING BETTER THAN YOUR
SMALL BUSINESS**

**SIX AREAS WHERE
A SMALL BUSINESS
SHOULD OUTSOURCE**

**THE NEWEST
SMALL
BUSINESS
MARKETING
TRENDS**

**NEW AND
PENDING
LAWS
THAT CAN
IMPACT
SMALL
BUSINESSES**

Infographic:
Why Email
Marketing Still
Rules in 2025

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Welcome to the July Issue!

As we hit the heart of summer, it's a great time to reflect, reset, and retool your business for success. This month's issue dives into the trends, tools, and topics every small business owner should have on their radar right now.

Inside, you'll find:

- **New and Pending Laws** – Stay informed about legislation that could impact your operations.
- **The Newest Marketing Trends** – What's working right now in the world of small business promotion.
- **Analyzing Your Competition** – Learn how to spot what your competitors are doing better—and how to respond.
- **Top Website Security Issues** – Know the risks and protect your business online.
- **Six Areas to Outsource** – Where handing things off can actually help you grow.

Whether you're planning ahead or making improvements mid-year, this issue is designed to help you move forward with confidence and clarity. Thanks for reading—and as always, feel free to share with fellow business owners in your circle!

Raj Deshpande
CEO
CroydonGate

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A Little About Us

Local Business Marketing Magazine is proudly provided by CroydonGate.



CroydonGate was started with one goal in mind. We wanted to use the scientific approach to Online Marketing and use our expertise to help our clients achieve their goals – whether it was to increase sales & customers, branding, website design, Social Media Marketing or Mobile marketing. We wanted to give our clients the ability to leverage the same cutting edge marketing platforms that the Fortune 500 organizations use, at affordable rates.

We are a one-stop-shop for all Online Marketing needs. Our Google Certified AdWords and Analytics Experts, Social Media Marketing Gurus and expert Web designers provide the professional service to our clients which results in consistently higher ROI for our client's Online Marketing Investment.

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We use a scientific approach to the Online Marketing and we use Google Analytics, Multivariate A/B Testing, Sale/Search Funnel reports and other industry leading tools to understand the customer dynamics and we accurately optimize the Online Marketing parameters so that the marketing campaign works at a maximum efficiency level and increases our client's profit while reducing the conversion costs.

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

July

National Grilling Month

National Ice Cream Month

National Picnic Month

National Blueberry Month

July 4 - Independence Day (U.S.)

1st - American Zoo Day

1st - Postal Worker Day

1st - International Joke Day

6th - Fried Chicken Day

7th - World Chocolate Day

7th - Global Forgiveness Day

8th - Blueberry Day

10th - Pina Colada Day

10th - Kitten Day

11th - 7-Eleven Day

11th - French Fry Day

11th - Mojito Day

12th - Pecan Pie Day

14th - Mac and Cheese Day

15th - Pet Fire Safety Day

16th - Hot Dog Day

17th - Lottery Day

17th - Emoji Day

18th - World Listening Day

19th - Daiquiri Day

20th - Ice Cream Day

21st - Junk Food Day

22nd - Mango Day

24th - Tequila Day

25th - Hire a Veteran Day

26th - Disability Independence Day

27th - Scotch Day

28th - Milk Chocolate Day

29th - Chicken Wing Day

30th - Cheesecake Day

31st - Avocado Day

August

Black Business Month

Eye Exam Month

Immunization Awareness Month

Traffic Awareness Month

Sandwich Month

1st - World Lung Cancer Day

1st - Spider-Man Day

1st - International Beer Day

2nd - Ice Cream Sandwich Day

2nd - Play Outside Day

3rd - Watermelon Day

4th - Chocolate Chip Cookie Day

4th - International Friendship Day

5th - Oyster Day

8th - International Cat Day

9th - Book Lovers Day

9th - International Day of Indigenous People

10th - S'mores Day

10th - Spoil Your Dog Day

11th - National Son and Daughter Day

12th - International Youth Day

13th - International Lefthander's Day

13th - Filet Mignon Day

14th - Financial Awareness Day

15th - Relaxation Day

16th - Rum Day

17th - Nonprofit Day

18th - Couple's Day

19th - Potato Day

19th - World Photo Day

20th - Radio Day

20th - Lemonade Day

20th - Bacon Lovers Day

21st - Senior Citizen's Day

22nd - Eat a Peach Day

24th - Waffle Day

26th - Dog Day

26th - Women's Equality Day

28th - Red Wine Day

30th - Beach Day

31st - Eat Outside Day



New and Pending Laws That Can Impact Small Businesses

Running a small business is already a high-stakes juggling act. Between managing staff, keeping customers happy, staying on top of inventory, and trying to maintain a profit, there's hardly a spare minute to track what's going on in the legal world. But here's the thing—what you don't know about new and pending laws can hurt you. And in 2025, there are more than a few regulatory curveballs headed toward small business owners.

Whether you're a local retailer, a service provider, or an online brand, understanding how these laws can impact your business is not just helpful—it's essential. The legal landscape is shifting in ways that affect how we hire, pay, market, and protect customer data. Some of these regulations are already rolling out, while others are in the pipeline and gaining traction. Either way, now's the time to get familiar.

1. Federal Minimum Wage Hike Discussions Are Heating Up

One of the most closely watched issues for small businesses is the push to raise the federal minimum wage. While the national minimum wage has been stagnant at \$7.25 since 2009, several states have implemented their own increases, and more are poised to follow.

Bills proposing a \$15 federal minimum wage have been reintroduced in Congress. While not yet law, the momentum is building. If passed, businesses will need to adjust not only their payrolls but potentially their pricing models and staffing strategies. Waiting until it's official might leave you scrambling.



2. Pay Transparency Laws Are Gaining Steam

The movement toward pay equity isn't slowing down—and it's transforming the way small businesses post job openings. States like California, Colorado, and New York have already implemented laws requiring employers to include salary ranges in job listings. Pending legislation in other states suggests this trend is likely to expand nationally.

Why does it matter? If you're recruiting in one of these states—or from a remote talent pool—you may be legally required to disclose compensation. Failure to comply could result in fines, reputational damage, and limited access to talent.

3. Data Privacy and Cybersecurity Compliance Is Expanding

Data privacy isn't just a big business issue anymore. With consumers increasingly aware of how their personal data is collected and stored, lawmakers are responding with stricter regulations. The California Privacy Rights Act (CPRA), which went into effect in 2023, has inspired similar laws in states like Virginia, Connecticut, and Utah.

More states are drafting data privacy laws that will impact even the smallest companies, especially if you collect customer emails,

track user behavior, or store sensitive personal information. Investing in secure systems, transparent privacy policies, and compliant data practices is no longer optional—it's table stakes.

4. Gig Economy Worker Reclassification Is on the Radar

The Department of Labor has proposed new rules that would make it harder for businesses to classify workers as independent contractors. This is especially significant for small businesses that rely on freelancers, consultants, or gig workers.

The proposed rule would use a "totality-of-the-circumstances" test to determine worker classification, focusing on economic dependence and control. If passed, businesses could be required to offer benefits, pay unemployment taxes, and comply with minimum wage laws for more of their workforce.

5. New Tax Reporting Requirements Are in Effect

Let's talk about Form 1099-K. As of 2024, the IRS lowered the reporting threshold for third-party payment platforms (like PayPal, Venmo, Square) from \$20,000 and 200 transactions to just \$600 total in annual income. While there's been pushback, the law is moving forward, and small business owners must be prepared.

This means more transactions will be reported to the IRS—whether or not you previously considered them taxable income. It's crucial to keep clean records, report income accurately, and consult with a tax professional to avoid surprises.

6. Employee Leave Laws Are Expanding

States are increasingly mandating paid family and medical leave, with programs already active in states like Washington, Massachusetts, and Oregon. These laws require employers to offer time off (often paid through a state-run fund) for events like childbirth, serious illness, or caregiving.

New pending legislation at the federal level could create a national framework for paid leave. Small businesses should be prepared for both the cost of participation and the operational impact of managing extended absences.

7. Environmental Regulations May Impact Packaging and Supply Chains

Sustainability isn't just a buzzword—it's becoming a regulatory requirement. States like California and New Jersey have introduced laws limiting the use of single-use plastics, while others are cracking down on emissions and requiring transparency in

supply chain sourcing.

Pending federal proposals, such as the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act, could impose new packaging standards and reporting responsibilities on businesses of all sizes. If your business relies on packaging, shipping, or manufacturing, it's time to assess your environmental footprint and start making adjustments.



8. Artificial Intelligence Use Is Under Scrutiny

If you've started using AI for hiring, marketing, or customer service—great. But new regulations may soon affect how you use that technology. Proposed laws in states like Illinois and New York aim to regulate the use of AI in employment decisions, requiring transparency, human oversight, and anti-bias measures.

In 2025, small businesses embracing AI will need to ensure that their tools meet emerging ethical and legal standards. Ignorance won't be an excuse if a candidate claims your hiring algorithm was discriminatory.

9. Accessibility Laws Are Being Strengthened

Website accessibility lawsuits have been steadily increasing, with more than 4,000 cases filed annually under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Now, the DOJ is pushing for clear federal website accessibility standards, which could be finalized in the next year or two.

If your website isn't accessible to users with disabilities—think screen reader compatibility, keyboard navigation, and alt text—you could be at risk. Making your digital presence inclusive now could save you from legal trouble later and broaden your customer base.

10. Remote Work Tax and Labor Laws Are Catching Up

As remote and hybrid work models persist, states are re-evaluating how they tax remote workers and apply labor laws. If you employ remote staff in other states, you may be subject to that state's tax requirements, labor laws, and registration rules.

Pending legislation aims to streamline and clarify these obligations, but in the meantime, it's essential to stay informed and compliant. Hiring across state lines isn't just a talent strategy—it's a legal responsibility.

11. Anti-Monopoly and Competition Laws Are Changing the Landscape

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Department of Justice have introduced stricter antitrust guidelines aimed at leveling the playing field for smaller businesses. These changes could influence everything from supplier contracts to digital ad space monopolies.

While this might seem like a big-business issue, it's a chance for small businesses to advocate for fairer marketplaces—especially in industries dominated by a few large players. It's one to watch closely.

12. Health Care Mandates May Impact Small Employers

Although small businesses under 50 employees are generally exempt from the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate, several states are crafting their own requirements around employer-provided coverage or subsidies. Additionally, changes to health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs) could affect how businesses offer support.

Pending federal proposals may further expand tax credits or impose mandates, depending on the political climate. Staying updated on these laws helps you prepare for cost changes and better support

your employees.

13. Social Media and Marketing Compliance Is Tightening

Small business marketing is also under a regulatory microscope. The FTC is cracking down on deceptive practices—including fake reviews, undisclosed influencer partnerships, and misleading claims. With new guidance released in 2024, violations could result in stiff penalties, even for small shops.

If you're promoting products or services on social media, now's the time to ensure all your marketing aligns with the latest disclosure rules. Clear is better than clever when it comes to compliance.

14. Commercial Lease and Eviction Protections Are Changing

The pandemic led to temporary protections for commercial tenants, but in 2025, some cities are moving to make those protections permanent or easier to re-activate in times of crisis. This includes extended notice periods and mediation requirements before evictions.

For small business owners leasing space, understanding your rights and responsibilities is crucial. Local ordinances can differ dramatically, and staying proactive can help you avoid costly legal disputes.

15. Corporate Transparency Requirements Are Expanding

Under the Corporate Transparency Act (CTA), which came into effect in 2024, many small businesses are now required to report beneficial ownership information to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN). The goal? Combat money laundering and shell companies.

But compliance isn't optional. Failure to file can result in daily fines and criminal penalties. If your business has fewer than 20 employees and under \$5 million in revenue, chances are this law applies to you.

Stay Informed, Stay Compliant, Stay Ahead

Change is a constant in business—and the legal environment is no exception. For small business owners, keeping up with new and pending laws can feel overwhelming. But knowledge is power. By staying ahead of these shifts, you protect your business, your people, and your future.

Now is the time to assess your current practices, seek legal guidance where needed, and build flexibility into your operations. The small businesses that thrive in 2025 will be the ones that not only innovate—but also navigate the rules with intention and care.



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The Newest Small Business Marketing Trends

Marketing isn't what it used to be—and that's a good thing. If we've learned anything over the past few years, it's that agility and creativity are non-negotiable for small businesses trying to keep up, stand out, and grow. Gone are the days when a simple website and a few Facebook posts could cut through the noise. Today's small business marketing landscape is a dynamic mix of digital tools, content strategies,

social storytelling, and data-backed decision making.

So, what's hot right now? What should small businesses be leaning into to stay relevant and profitable? Whether you're a solo entrepreneur or running a fast-growing local brand, these marketing trends are shaping how businesses connect with customers in 2025 and beyond.

Let's dive in.

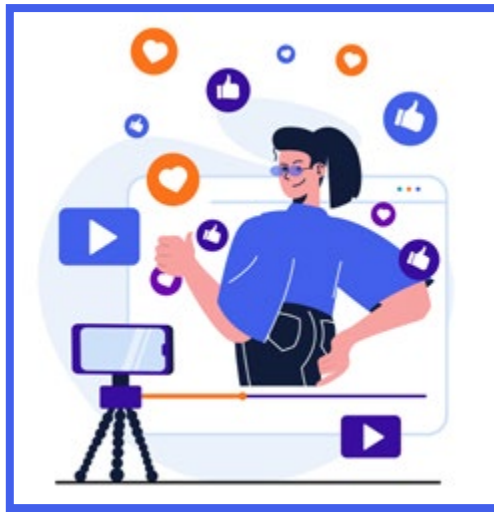
1. Conversational Marketing Is Taking Center Stage

No one wants to feel like they're just another number in a sales funnel. Today's customers want real conversations, not canned responses. Tools like live chat, chatbots powered by AI, and social DMs are becoming powerful tools for small businesses to answer questions in real-time, offer product guidance, and build trust.

Why does this matter? According to a 2024 HubSpot study, 82% of consumers expect an immediate response from brands on marketing or sales questions. If you're not ready to chat, your competitors likely are.

2. Short-Form Video Continues to Dominate

TikTok started it. Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts doubled down on it. And now, short-form video is the go-to format for attention-grabbing content. Whether you're showcasing a behind-the-scenes peek at your bakery, offering a 60-second how-to, or hopping on a viral trend, quick videos are helping small businesses humanize their brand and drive engagement.



Bonus? You don't need a huge budget or a production team—just a smartphone, some creativity, and a bit of consistency.

3. Personalization Is the New Standard

Generic mass emails and one-size-fits-all marketing blasts are getting ignored. Personalized marketing—whether through email segmentation, tailored product recommendations, or dynamic website content—is proving far more effective.

Customers want to feel seen. In fact, 76% of consumers are more likely to purchase from brands that personalize communications (McKinsey, 2024). If you're not using customer data to shape your messaging, you're leaving money on the table.

4. Local SEO Is Evolving

For small businesses with a physical location or a local service area, local SEO isn't

optional—it's essential. But ranking locally is no longer just about having your name, address, and phone number on your site. Google Business Profile optimization, reviews, map listings, and localized content are all part of the equation.

And voice search? It's growing. More users are asking their phones for "best coffee shop near me" or "local plumber open now." Optimizing for these voice-style queries is a subtle but critical trend.

5. User-Generated Content (UGC) Builds Credibility

Today's consumers trust other consumers more than they trust brands. That's why UGC—photos, reviews, testimonials, and videos created by your customers—is pure gold. It's authentic, relatable, and incredibly persuasive.

Small businesses are encouraging UGC through hashtags, giveaways, and repost incentives. The result? Real-world content that builds credibility without sounding like a sales pitch.

6. Email Marketing Is Smarter, Not Louder

Yes, email marketing is still alive and well—but the rules have changed. It's not about

blasting your entire list twice a week. It's about smart automation, segmentation, and adding genuine value.

Drip campaigns, abandoned cart reminders, personalized discounts, and behavior-triggered emails are becoming standard—even for small teams. The best part? Email marketing still boasts an ROI of \$36 for every \$1 spent (Litmus, 2024).

7. Community-Based Marketing Is on the Rise

People want to feel like they belong to something. That's why community marketing—building an engaged audience around your brand—is gaining traction. Whether it's through Facebook Groups, private Slack channels, or niche forums, small businesses are turning customers into loyal brand advocates.

Community-driven brands get more referrals, stronger word-of-mouth, and a deeper emotional connection with their audience. It's less about selling, and more about creating space for customers to connect, share, and grow together.

8. Social Proof Is Powering More Decisions

Let's face it: people don't want to be the first to try

something. They want to know that others have been there, loved it, and would do it again. That's why social proof—like reviews, ratings, client logos, and case studies—is one of the most persuasive tools you can use.

Small businesses are highlighting social proof across homepages, product pages, social content, and even in-store displays. It adds instant trust—and often shortens the sales cycle.

9. Voice and Visual Search Are Gaining Ground

Search is no longer just about typing in a Google bar. With smart speakers and phone assistants everywhere, voice search is surging. At the same time, platforms like Google Lens are making visual search (think: snapping a picture of a product to find it online) more mainstream.

Optimizing for these trends means ensuring your site is mobile-friendly, your content includes conversational keywords, and your product images are high-quality and well-labeled.

10. Sustainability and Purpose-Driven Messaging Matter More

Today's consumers, especially Gen Z and millennials, want to

support businesses that stand for something. Environmental responsibility, social justice, community engagement—these aren't fringe issues anymore. They're influencing purchase decisions.

Small businesses are stepping up by sharing their values, showcasing their supply chains, reducing waste, and giving back. Authenticity is key—empty virtue-signaling is quickly sniffed out.

11. AI Is Helping—Not Replacing—Human Creativity

Artificial intelligence isn't taking your job as a small business owner, but it can certainly lighten the load. From writing product descriptions to scheduling content and analyzing customer behavior, AI tools are helping small teams do big things.

Tools like ChatGPT, Jasper, and Canva's AI design features are empowering even the smallest brands to create faster, smarter, and more efficiently than ever.

12. Mobile-First Is Non-Negotiable

More than 60% of web traffic comes from mobile devices. If your website isn't mobile-optimized, you're losing

business—period. Customers expect a seamless experience across devices, whether they're browsing your site, booking a service, or buying a product.

Mobile-first design, fast-loading pages, and thumb-friendly navigation should be foundational—not afterthoughts.

13. Influencer Marketing Is Getting Smaller (and Smarter)

Mega influencers with millions of followers still exist, but small businesses are turning to micro-influencers—local personalities, niche creators, and everyday customers with engaged followings. They're more affordable, more accessible, and often more effective at building trust.

Collaborating with micro-influencers lets small businesses tap into tight-knit communities and tell their story in a more personal, believable way.

14. Content Marketing Is Getting More Strategic

Throwing up a blog post every few weeks won't cut it anymore. Smart content marketing is intentional—it starts with understanding what your audience cares about and crafting content



that educates, entertains, or solves a problem.

From SEO-optimized blog articles to downloadable guides, podcasts, and email courses, small businesses are becoming content hubs in their own right. The goal? To become the go-to resource in your niche.

15. Data-Driven Decision Making Is Essential

Finally, let's talk analytics. Gut instinct is great, but numbers tell the real story. Today's tools make it easier than ever to track performance—whether it's Google Analytics, social insights, or CRM dashboards.

Small businesses are using data to guide everything from ad spend to content creation to product development. When you know what's working, you can do more of it—and stop wasting time and

money on what's not.

Stay Current, Stay Competitive

The world of marketing never stands still—and that's exactly why staying on top of trends is so important for small businesses. But remember, you don't need to implement every trend at once. Start with one or two that resonate with your goals and audience. Test. Learn. Adjust.

Marketing is no longer about who shouts the loudest. It's about who listens best, adapts fastest, and connects most meaningfully. Stay curious, stay creative, and let your marketing evolve with your business.

Because in today's competitive world, growth doesn't happen by accident—it happens by design.



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How To Analyze What Your Competitors Are Doing Better Than Your Small Business

Let's be honest—no one likes to admit when a competitor is doing something better. But recognizing their strengths isn't a sign of weakness—it's a strategic advantage. If you're running a small business, understanding why your competition is gaining more traction, visibility, or customer loyalty can unlock valuable insights that help you grow faster and smarter.

Whether you're feeling stuck in a plateau or just curious how others are pulling ahead, competitor analysis isn't about copying. It's about learning. It's about decoding what works, what resonates with your shared audience, and how you can sharpen your own edge.

Ready to peek behind the curtain? Let's dive in.

1. Start With a Healthy Dose of Curiosity

Before diving into tools or data, start with a mindset shift. Don't approach competitor analysis with resentment or defensiveness. Instead, get curious. Ask yourself: What are they doing that's working? What are they not doing that I can do better? A little humility mixed with strategic curiosity is a powerful starting point.

2. Identify Who Your Real Competitors Are

Not every business in your industry is your

competition. Focus on businesses that target the same audience, operate in the same geographic region (if applicable), or sell similar products/services. Choose three to five key competitors—big enough to learn from, but close enough to be relevant. And don't overlook emerging competitors; sometimes the ones flying under the radar are the most innovative.

3. Audit Their Website Experience

One of the easiest places to start? Their website. Is it modern and mobile-friendly? Is the navigation intuitive? Are they using strong calls

to action? Look at their homepage messaging—does it speak directly to the customer's pain points? Use tools like PageSpeed Insights or Ubersuggest to evaluate their performance and SEO strength.

If their site looks sleek while yours feels outdated, it might be time to invest in a refresh. Today's consumers expect fast, beautiful, and seamless digital experiences. Anything less can cost you conversions.

4. Analyze Their SEO Strategy

Search engine optimization (SEO) is often what separates the seen from the invisible online. Use tools like SEMrush, Ahrefs, or Moz to find out what keywords your competitors rank for—and which ones you might be missing. Are they dominating local searches? Do they have high domain authority?

Check out their blog content. Are they consistently publishing relevant, high-value articles? What topics are getting the most shares or backlinks? These insights can inform your own content strategy and help you close the visibility gap.

5. Review Their Social Media Presence

Now, take a look at their social media game. How often are they posting? What kind

of content gets the most engagement? Are they using video, user-generated content, or influencer partnerships? Are they responsive to comments?

If they're getting 10x the engagement with half the posts, it's a clue that their content is more targeted or emotionally resonant. Social media isn't just about volume—it's about connection. Analyze what formats and topics are drawing people in, then test similar approaches with your own unique spin.

6. Pay Attention to Their Branding

Branding isn't just a logo or a color palette. It's a feeling. What's the vibe their brand gives off—friendly, authoritative, luxurious, down-to-earth? Is their voice consistent across platforms? Do they have a memorable tagline or mission statement?

If customers feel more drawn to their brand, ask yourself: What emotional tone are they hitting that I'm missing? Consider investing in refining your own brand voice and visuals to stand out and connect more deeply.

7. Examine Their Pricing and Offers

Sometimes, it's not about being cheaper—it's about being smarter with pricing. Do your competitors offer

bundles, loyalty programs, subscriptions, or seasonal promotions? How do they frame the value of what they sell?

Study how they communicate pricing—not just the numbers, but the why behind the cost. If they're doing a better job of positioning their value, it's time to tweak your messaging to better highlight benefits, not just features.

8. Dig Into Customer Reviews

Reviews are a goldmine of truth. Browse your competitors' Google reviews, Yelp pages, Facebook feedback, or even product reviews on their site. What are customers raving about? What are the complaints?

If their service is praised for being fast, friendly, or knowledgeable, and yours isn't, there's a gap to close. Likewise, if their customers are consistently complaining about something you do well—capitalize on that in your own messaging.

9. Mystery Shop Their Experience

Want to know what their customer experience really feels like? Try it out. Order a product. Schedule a consultation. Sign up for their newsletter. Observe every touchpoint: How quickly do they respond? How do

they follow up? What's the packaging like? How do they make you feel?

These first-hand insights can reveal operational strengths or emotional triggers that data alone can't show. Plus, you'll get ideas on how to level up your own customer journey.

10. Evaluate Their Email Marketing

Emails are often a direct line to your audience—and a great window into your competitors' communication style. Subscribe to their list and study the frequency, design, tone, and content of their emails. Do they offer exclusive deals? Share useful tips? Drive readers to their blog or store?

If their emails feel more engaging, helpful, or visually striking, it might be time to rethink your approach. The inbox is crowded—only the most relevant and personal messages stand out.

11. Observe Their Partnerships and PR

Who are they collaborating with? Are they featured in podcasts, blogs, or news articles? Strategic partnerships and strong PR can amplify a brand's authority fast.

If your competitors are consistently showing up in media or joining forces with influencers, it's a sign they're investing in reach. Identify

local or industry-specific opportunities where your business could do the same—and get visible in new spaces.

12. Study Their Hiring and Culture

Your competitors' job listings and LinkedIn updates can tell you a lot. Are they growing? What roles are they hiring for? Are they investing in customer support, content creation, or tech development? Pay attention to company culture, too. If they promote team wins, employee spotlights, or community involvement, they may be building deeper brand loyalty inside and out. Culture sells more than you think.

13. Benchmark Their Performance Metrics

If possible, compare site traffic using Similarweb or check social follower growth using Social Blade. These tools give you a snapshot of performance trends over time. Are they gaining momentum? Flattening out?

Use these benchmarks to set realistic goals for your own growth. And remember, it's not always about outpacing them—it's about consistently improving your own game.

14. Turn Weakness Into Opportunity

Once you've mapped out what they're doing well, don't forget to ask: Where

are they falling short? Every competitor has blind spots. Maybe they lack authenticity, ignore customer feedback, or struggle with consistency. These gaps are your openings. Step in, serve better, and make your strengths known.

15. Create a Strategy, Not a Copycat Plan

This isn't about mimicry—it's about inspiration. Don't just mirror what your competitors do. Infuse your findings into a strategy that reflects your unique brand, values, and audience. Blend their best ideas with your own insights and strengths to build something even stronger.

After all, people don't want another version of "them." They want the best version of you.

Let Competitors Be Your Best Teachers

We get it—competition can feel intimidating. But with the right perspective, it becomes one of your most powerful teachers. Your competitors' strengths don't have to be a threat—they can be a roadmap. Analyze wisely, stay curious, and always look for the lesson behind their success.

By embracing this approach, you're not just reacting to competition—you're outthinking it. And in the fast-paced world of small business, that's exactly what sets you apart.

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Top Security Issues For Small Business Websites



Let's face it—when you run a small business, your website is often your digital storefront, sales rep, and customer service hub all rolled into one. But here's the catch: just because your business is small doesn't mean you're off a hacker's radar. In fact, you're often **more** of a target. Why? Because small business websites typically lack the sophisticated security infrastructure of larger corporations. That's a neon sign to cybercriminals: "Easy pickings here!"

In today's fast-moving digital world, web security isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. If you're not paying attention to it, you could be putting your data, your customers, and your entire business at risk. So let's dig into the top security issues facing small business websites—and what you can do about them.

Weak Passwords Are Still Public Enemy #1

It sounds basic, but weak passwords are still one of the most common entry points for cybercriminals. Too many small businesses use default logins, "admin123," or worse—reuse passwords across platforms. This is a hacker's dream. Brute-force attacks—where bots try thousands of password combinations until one works—are shockingly effective. Strong, unique passwords combined with two-factor authentication can

block many of these attacks at the door.

Outdated Software and Plugins Leave the Back Door Wide Open

Here's the thing about updates: they're not just about new features. They often patch critical security vulnerabilities. Yet, many small businesses fall behind on updates to their CMS (like WordPress), plugins, and themes. Cybercriminals actively scan the web for these outdated sites. It's like leaving your windows open in a storm—sooner or later, something's getting in.

Lack of SSL Encryption Is a Red Flag for Everyone

You've seen it before—a browser warning that says, "Not Secure." That's what happens when a website doesn't have an SSL certificate (you'll know it's there if your URL starts with "https"). Not only does this expose sensitive information like login credentials and payment data to interception, but it also kills customer trust. Plus, Google uses SSL as a ranking factor—no SSL, lower SEO score. It's a no-brainer.

No Firewall? That's Like Having No Lock on Your Front Door

A web application firewall (WAF) protects your website from various attacks like SQL injections, cross-site scripting

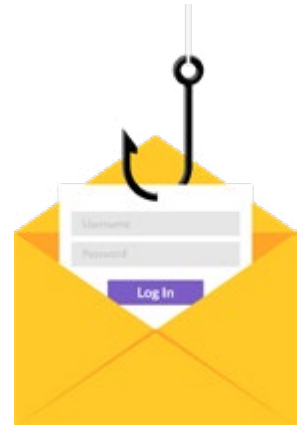
(XSS), and DDoS attacks. Yet, many small business websites operate without one. A firewall filters out malicious traffic before it even touches your site. Think of it as a digital bouncer who only lets the good guys through the door.

Phishing and Social Engineering Aren't Just Email Problems

Many business owners associate phishing with scammy emails. But today's phishing scams go way beyond your inbox. Fake login pages, cloned websites, and clever domain tricks can fool both you and your customers. All it takes is one click on the wrong link to compromise your data or give access to sensitive systems. Employee training is a crucial defense here.

Improper Data Storage Can Lead to Massive Breaches

Storing customer data—especially payment or personal information—without proper encryption or access controls is risky business. Some small businesses store this data in plain text, in spreadsheets, or on insecure platforms. If that data gets stolen? You could face legal consequences, not to mention reputational



damage that's hard to recover from.

Using Shared Hosting Increases Risk Exposure

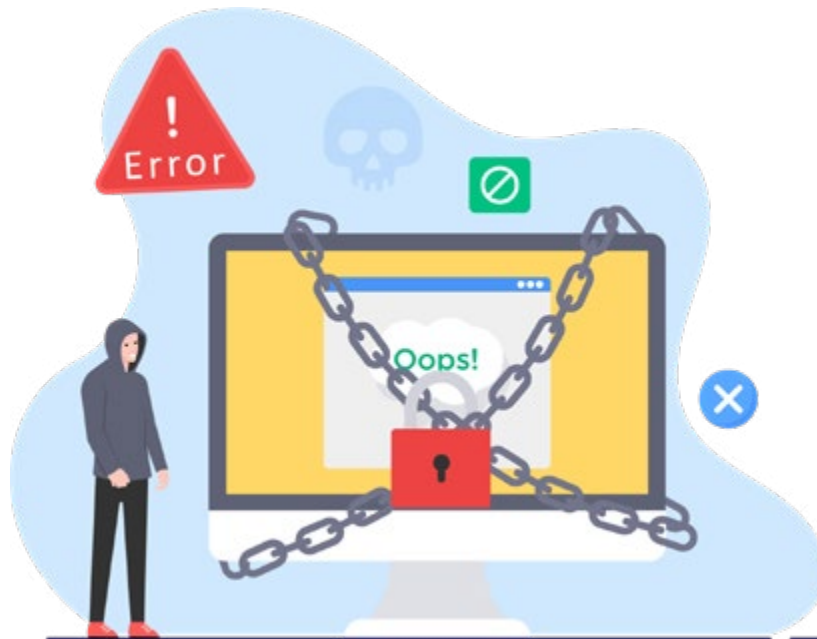
Shared hosting may be budget-friendly, but it's a bit like renting a room in a house where you don't know your roommates. If one website on a shared server gets compromised, others could be at risk too. That's called "cross-site contamination." If you're serious about your website's security, consider managed hosting or at least a reputable host with strong server security practices.

Not Backing Up Your Website Is Playing with Fire

Imagine your site crashes—or worse, gets hacked—and you don't have a recent backup. You'd have to rebuild everything from scratch. Regular, automated backups are your safety net. They won't prevent an attack, but they'll help you recover quickly with minimal downtime. And in today's online world, time is quite literally money.

Lack of User Access Controls Is a Silent Threat

Ever handed over your website login to a freelance developer or a marketing



intern and forgot to revoke it later? It happens all the time. Without proper user role management and access controls, former employees or partners could still have access to your backend. All it takes is one disgruntled person to wreak havoc. Limit access to only what's necessary—and review permissions regularly.

Unsecured Forms Are a Breeding Ground for Bots and Malware

Contact forms, comment sections, and search bars may seem harmless, but they're common entry points for injection attacks and spam bots. Without validation, CAPTCHA tools, and security filters, these open forms can allow malicious code to be injected into your database. Always secure input fields—and monitor them like a hawk.

Ignoring Mobile Security Leaves a Gaping Hole

More than half of all web

traffic now comes from mobile devices. Yet, many small businesses don't optimize—or secure—their mobile experience. If your mobile site uses insecure redirects, outdated plugins, or third-party scripts, you could be exposed. Secure development needs to happen

on both the desktop and mobile fronts.

No Incident Response Plan? You're Not Ready for the Worst

Let's be real: no system is 100% bulletproof. That's why having a response plan is key. If your site *does* get hacked, do you know what steps to take? Who to call? What to shut down first? Having a documented response strategy—ideally tested in a mock drill—can save you valuable time, money, and stress in a real-world breach.

Trusting "Set It and Forget It" Website Builders

Website builders like Wix or Squarespace offer convenience, but security isn't always front and center. Many users rely on default settings and assume the platform handles everything. That's dangerous. While these platforms do offer decent

protection, it's still your responsibility to monitor site activity, enable 2FA, and back up content when possible.

Failure to Monitor and Analyze Traffic Patterns

Would you know if your site was under attack? Most small businesses don't use website monitoring tools that can alert them to unusual traffic spikes, IP address flooding, or unauthorized logins. Analytics and real-time monitoring provide early warning signs and give you a chance to act before serious damage is done.

Compliance Mistakes Can Cost You More Than You Think

Depending on your industry, failing to comply with regulations like GDPR, CCPA, or PCI-DSS can land you in hot water. Even if you're a small shop with a local reach, if you're collecting emails, payment info, or any personal data, you need to comply. Security and privacy laws aren't just for the big guys—they're for everyone.

Security Is Not a One-Time Project

Here's the bottom line: website security isn't a checkbox you

tick off once and forget. It's an ongoing commitment, a daily habit, and a mindset. We get it—running a small business is already a juggling act. But if your website is at the center of your digital presence (and let's be honest, it probably is), then prioritizing its security isn't just smart—it's essential.

Whether you're just launching your site or you've been in business for years, now is the time to audit your digital defenses. Start small, stay consistent, and don't be afraid to get help from professionals if needed. Because when it comes to your website, peace of mind is worth every penny.

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Six Areas Where a Small Business Should Outsource

Running a small business is a bit like spinning plates—marketing, accounting, customer service, product development, IT...the list never ends. The temptation to do everything yourself is strong, especially when you're watching the budget closely. But here's the truth: trying to do it all can lead to burnout, missed opportunities, and—ironically—slower growth.

That's where outsourcing

comes in. Think of it as hiring superheroes for specific parts of your business. You don't need them full-time, but when they show up, they save the day. When used strategically, outsourcing can free up your time, reduce costs, and even increase the quality of your operations. The key is knowing what to outsource and when.

Let's dive into six crucial areas where outsourcing isn't just smart—it's game-changing.

1. Accounting and Bookkeeping: Numbers Aren't for Everyone

Let's be honest—unless you're an accountant, keeping track of debits, credits, payroll, and taxes probably isn't your favorite part of running a business. Mistakes here aren't just costly—they can be catastrophic. According to the IRS, about 20% of small businesses pay a penalty each year due to payroll or income tax errors.

Outsourcing to a professional bookkeeper or CPA ensures your financials are handled accurately and on time. It also gives you real-time insight into your cash flow, profit margins, and expenses—critical data for making smart decisions. With cloud-based solutions, many outsourced firms provide dashboard access so you can keep tabs on things without being buried in spreadsheets.

2. Digital Marketing: Because Visibility Isn't Optional

Here's a hard truth—having a great product or service isn't enough. If no one knows you exist, your business won't grow. Digital marketing is a complex, ever-changing beast that includes SEO, content marketing, social media, PPC, and email campaigns. Trying to master all of that on your own? That's a full-time job—and then some.

Outsourcing your marketing to a specialized agency or freelancer can help you build a cohesive strategy, increase your reach, and improve your ROI. Marketing pros stay on top of trends, algorithms, and performance analytics so you don't have to. And that means you can focus on what you do best—running your business.

3. IT Support and Cybersecurity: Don't Wait for a Breach

We live in a digital-first world.

Whether you're running an e-commerce store or a service-based business, you rely on technology every single day. But tech issues don't wait for a convenient time to strike. Worse yet, 43% of cyberattacks target small businesses, and many don't recover from a serious breach.

Outsourcing IT support and cybersecurity ensures that your systems stay up and running, your data stays protected, and you have a team to call when the tech gremlins strike. Whether it's managing backups, setting up secure networks, or preventing phishing scams, outsourced IT keeps you ahead of the curve—and the criminals.

4. Human Resources: Hiring, Compliance, and Beyond

HR may seem like something only large companies need to worry about, but even a team of five employees comes with plenty of paperwork and compliance headaches. From managing benefits and payroll to ensuring labor law compliance, HR is a complex area that leaves little room for error.

By outsourcing HR functions, you gain access to experts who know how to navigate regulations, write job descriptions, onboard new hires, and handle disputes with professionalism. Many outsourced HR providers

offer scalable services, so you can expand or scale back depending on your business needs.

5. Customer Support: The Voice of Your Brand

Great customer service can make or break a small business. But answering every email, phone call, and chat message yourself? That's not sustainable. As your customer base grows, so does the need for responsive, friendly, and knowledgeable support.

Outsourcing customer service doesn't mean sacrificing quality. In fact, many outsourced teams use scripts, training, and CRMs to represent your brand just as you would. Whether it's a virtual assistant answering queries or a full-service call center handling returns, outsourced support keeps your customers happy—and keeps you sane.

6. Graphic Design and Creative Work: First Impressions Matter

Think your audience doesn't notice clunky logos, poorly formatted flyers, or inconsistent branding? They do. Design isn't just about looking good—it's about communicating credibility and professionalism. But not every business can afford an in-house designer, especially in the early stages.

Outsourcing graphic design

gives you access to creative talent that can elevate your brand without the overhead of a full-time hire. Whether it's for your website, social media, print marketing, or product packaging, a skilled designer ensures your visuals match the quality of your services.

The Real Value of Outsourcing? Time

Every task you outsource is one less thing on your plate. That time adds up—and it's time you can reinvest into strategy, innovation, and growth. Imagine what you could accomplish if you weren't chasing overdue invoices or troubleshooting a broken plugin.

The beauty of outsourcing is that it scales with your business. Start small—maybe hire a freelance marketer or a virtual assistant. As your needs grow, so can your outsourced team. You're not locked into anything long-term, and

you're free to focus on your zone of genius.

Avoiding the Common Pitfalls

Of course, outsourcing isn't without its challenges. Communication is key. Set clear expectations, use contracts, and establish systems for accountability. Choose partners with proven experience, transparent pricing, and glowing testimonials. And remember—it's not just about cost savings; it's about value creation.

The Competitive Edge You Didn't Know You Needed

In a crowded marketplace, small businesses need every advantage they can get. Outsourcing gives you access to expertise, tools, and efficiencies that would otherwise be out of reach. It levels the playing field and lets you compete with the big players—without trying to be

one.

As the saying goes, "Work smarter, not harder." And in today's digital economy, outsourcing is one of the smartest moves you can make.

The Takeaway: Growth Happens When You Let Go

Outsourcing isn't about giving up control—it's about gaining freedom. Freedom to grow, to innovate, and to lead your business with clarity and focus. It's how today's small businesses punch above their weight and build brands that last.

So, what are you still clinging to that could be better handled by an expert? Take a look at where your time is going. Chances are, there's at least one area where outsourcing could change the game for your business. Let go of the busywork. Embrace the expertise. And watch your business soar.



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FUN FACTS

July was originally called Quintilis, meaning “fifth month” in Latin, as it was the fifth month of the early Roman calendar. It was later renamed July in honor of Julius Caesar, who was born during this month and played a major role in reforming the calendar.

July Milestones:

- July 1, 1963: ZIP codes were introduced in the United States, giving mail a five-digit makeover and revolutionizing the postal system.
- July 10, 1925: The famous Scopes “Monkey” Trial began in Tennessee, putting the theory of evolution on trial and captivating the nation.
- July 17, 1955: Disneyland opened its magical gates in Anaheim, California, enchanting generations with the happiest place on Earth.
- July 20, 1969: Neil Armstrong took “one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind” as he became the first person to walk on the Moon.
- July 29, 1981: Millions around the world tuned in to watch the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, one of the most-watched televised events in history.

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WHY EMAIL STILL RULES IN 2025



4.5 billion global email users in 2025



\$36-\$40 ROI per \$1 spent on email



88-93% of users check email daily

TOP TRENDS OF 2025



- AI-Powered Personalization: 34% of marketers using AI for copy; AI email market ~\$2.7 B by 2025
- Interactive Emails: include forms, carousels, mini-games to boost engagement
- Lifecycle Automation: Triggered emails (welcome, cart abandonment) drive huge conversion uplift — 320–332% higher revenue
- Hyper-Segmentation & Timing Optimization: AI optimizes send times and segments based on behavior

BEST PRACTICES

- Mobile-first design and chunked layouts — essential for readability
- Personalized subject lines: +10–14% open rates
- Keep text concise (<200 words), especially in B2B emails
- Include easy unsubscribe links and transparent footers — key to privacy trust
- Clean your list regularly to boost deliverability and reduce bounces



AUTOMATION & CONVERSION BOOSTERS

- Automated email ROI: Triggers convert up to 2,361% better
- Welcome & abandoned-cart emails: almost 1 in 2 purchases after click
- Order & shipping confirmations convert 22x better than campaign emails



TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

- Start simple: Welcome series + monthly newsletter
- Automate follow-ups: Recap purchase, ask for feedback, offer next step
- Leverage segmentation: group by interest, purchase history, engagement
- Comply & communicate: Gain explicit opt-in; use privacy-first messaging
- Test frequently: refine timing, content, design based on performance

MEASURING SUCCESS

Track & optimize leads to open/click/conversion rates
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