

# Marketing trends include more interaction with customers, social media strategies

by Lee Nelson

Even if a company's marketing and advertising budgets are small, there are numerous ways businesses can engage customers.

"Social is the word in small business marketing," said Chris Doyle, president of Envoy Inc. "It's no exaggeration to say that it allows business owners to really connect and communicate with customers and potential customers, engage their interests and most important of all, listen. I don't know a small business owner who doesn't want to hear what his customers think, positive or negative."



Mickelsen

In today's technological world, it's a little difficult to keep up with social media with so many options. Now, making your online presence and marketing campaigns mobile device friendly is immensely important, too, he said.

"We are seeing more than 50 percent of Web traffic on many of our sites coming from mobile devices," Doyle said. "If you can capture the attention of this audience and give them a good experience, you'll have a greater chance of getting them to come back. Tactics like QR codes or mobile-specific sites or landing pages have also proven successful for some of our clients."

The difficulty in social media is that there are so many choices — daily deal sites, online

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ment Statistics survey.

The employment outlook is positive, Mann said, and everyone is feeling growth right now in Omaha except for a couple of industries.

"The economy is healthy, so there is lots of movement going on in Omaha. Before people were sitting tight and were grateful for a job; now the hiring culture is phenomenal if they are looking for other opportunities," Mann said.



President Chris Doyle of Envoy Inc.

coupons, loyal programs, Pinterest and on and on, said Kim Mickelsen, managing principal at Bozell.

"Don't try to do it all or be all things to all people," she said. "Pick one thing and do it really well. With social media, it's easy to feel like you need to have a presence on every social media channel."

She recommends to small businesses to first find which network has the highest concentration for their audience. This can be accomplished by using tools like Follower Wonk, Facebook's free advertising platform, and LinkedIn's search features.

"The hottest and most effective use of social media today is video," Mickelsen added. "With all the recent changes in how Google and other search engines index Web pages, adding short videos is the number one way to increase SEO."

Things cannot be stagnant when marketing your business, said Tom Albers, president of Albers Communications Group.

"It's important to continually look for new ways to inform, engage and connect with

you are currently doing."

The public is becoming savvier in how they shop or how they choose where to spend their money.

"More than 75 percent of local consumers use the internet to find a local business and online reviews influence choices," Doyle said. "Make sure your online presence is



Albers

positive. Companies should be searching themselves to see what is written on the internet."

Customer review sites like Yelp, Insider Pages, Google Maps, Bing Local, City Search, Yahoo Local and Merchant Circle allow the consumer to leave ratings and reviews of a business. Monitoring these sites is very important, he said.

When using social media, Mickelsen said you should have a conversation and engage your friends and followers.

"Don't just broadcast messages — a dialogue keeps it fresh," she said. "But be sure to create new relevant content all the time, and the more you can tell stories, the better."

Traditional media such as television and newspapers are still very effective, but the budgets of small businesses can be a limiting factor, said Doyle.

"As a result, traditional media such as television and radio should serve as a driving force for the centerpiece of a company's communications efforts — its website. All roads lead online," he said.

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