



27 low cost ways to **GROW YOUR BUSINESS**

by Peter Chaly & Monique Mayze

27 Low-Cost Ways to Grow Your Business

First published in 2011 by SMARTink Pty Ltd

ACN 150 415 811

www.smartink.com.au

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Introduction

According to a study conducted by the international research firm Nielsen, 82% of consumers now turn to Internet search engines when searching for products or services from local businesses. This puts search engines like Google and Bing far ahead of traditional media like newspaper advertisements, the Yellow Pages and other sources.

This change in behaviour means that how you market and promote your business also needs to change. The days when you could just rely on renewing a yearly advertisement in the Yellow Pages and buying advertising space in some newspapers or magazines are long gone.

For your business to survive and thrive in this new era, you need to employ a wide range of tools and strategies. You need to keep up with all the latest developments and tools appearing on the Internet, and to separate the substance from the hype to work out which ones to use for your business.

But success for your business is not just about using the Internet, so you need to look to a wide range of sources and strategies for your business.

In this book you will find 27 strategies for growing your business. Some of the strategies involve the Internet, but others utilise offline strategies. Many of them cost nothing, or very little to implement, and some will appeal to you more than others. But one thing is certain: in today's business environment, you need to be proactive and agile in the way you promote your business. Each of the chapters in this book will give you practical, easy-to-implement suggestions, tips and advice for growing your business.

We hope you like this book, and are very successful in implementing some or all of these strategies in your own business. We would love to hear your success stories, and if you have any questions, or would like further help, please feel free to get in touch.

Good luck and here's to the continued success of your business.

Kind regards,



Monique Mayze



Peter Chaly

1. Create strategic alliances

Consider partnering with non-competing businesses to work together and cross-promote services.

If you work in real estate, you could partner with mortgage or insurance brokers, financial planners, accountants, marketing professionals or legal firms and hold an information session for loyal customers of each business to update them on changes to tax laws. Your partners could also deliver updates on insurance, accounting, marketing and legal issues that could be of interest to your audience. This kind of cross-promotion can benefit all businesses involved.

“Establishing strategic alliances allows you to refer clients to each other where there may be common needs across your respective client bases.”

You can handpick your own alliances with credible and professional businesses, giving you the confidence that when you refer a client, they'll receive high-quality service. This enhances your reputation as well as that of the allied business.

If you have any questions about forming strategic alliances, or would like advice on creating a marketing strategy that will help to grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

2. Participate in online forums

Online forums are a great way to network with other people without leaving the comfort of your office or home. You can drop by a forum, have a quick look for questions or topics of interest, make a contribution, meet some new people, and then get back to what you were doing.

There are forums attached to association websites, business portals, and even as standalone websites. And while Facebook was originally set up for personal use, it is fast becoming a very effective way to broaden your professional network, raise awareness of your offering and grow your business.

Make it professional

It is very easy to set up a business page on Facebook as an extension to your personal account. You can include business information such as your website address, business overview and other information related to your business. You can also use your company logo or other brand imagery in your profile picture. There is more information on using Facebook for your business in Chapter 17.

Drive traffic to your business website

Often when you sign-up as a new member of a forum, you can create a signature line that is attached to every post you make. The signature line contains your website address, giving your website valuable exposure and the potential to drive new traffic to your website.

Achieve higher search rankings for your website

Another way to contribute is via the comments section at the bottom of blogs and news-related sites. If the comments section has an area where you can enter your website address, then the posts you make will have a link that points to your website. If the website is set with what is known as a “do follow” setting, then these links will be more easily seen by search engines as they crawl the Internet looking for links that point to your site. For more information on improving your ranking in the search engines, see Chapter 16.

Build your network

When you are connecting with forums, blogs and communities on the Internet, your focus should be on contributing to these networks rather than directly spruiking your products and services. Try to achieve a high ratio of sharing information of value to the network versus talking about your own business. And then when people in your network ask for help, you can offer your services knowing that your credibility with the group has been established.

Enjoy sharing and learning

Joining an online community gives you an opportunity to share what you know and learn from others. This in turn builds your credibility and also opens up doors to prospective clients and strategic alliances. Online forums are also a great way to seek advice on problems your business may be experiencing and learn from others' experiences.

If you have any questions about online forums, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email:

peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

3. Participate in networking groups

Face-to-face networking meetings are a great way to build strategic alliances, raise the profile of your business, and source new client referrals.

There are groups that meet on a weekly basis for breakfast, and others that meet after work. Many only allow one member from any profession to join, so that once you're a member of such a network, you'll be the only practitioner of your type in the group, effectively shutting out your competition.

Some groups are casual, with few set procedures, and others are run to a tight schedule that includes an "elevator pitch" from each member to the group every week, as well as a structure for providing referrals to other members. While you might not meet as many people as you would at a large function, these groups allow you to build your reputation and establish long-term relationships with the other members of the group with an aim to helping each other in your businesses.

Speed networking

Speed networking events are another way to meet a large group of people without getting stuck in conversations you find hard to leave. They can be run in a variety of ways, but the general idea is that you get to speak with another attendee or group of attendees for a short, but fixed time. You introduce yourselves, swap business cards, have a brief chat – usually for just a few minutes – and then a bell rings and everyone moves on to the next person or group. It's a very efficient way to meet a lot of people, and once you have swapped cards, it makes it easy to follow up with them after the event.

Identify strategic alliances

At networking groups, there is also a good chance you will meet other business owners with whom you can form strategic alliances. Such strategic alliances are an excellent way for business to cross-promote services and generate new business. (See Chapter One for more details on forming strategic alliances).

Gain access to quality referrals

When you participate in a networking group, you gain access to new referrals – referrals that often come with valuable information about the prospect which increases your chances of converting the lead. Also, by having your referral source make an introduction for you, it is a useful 'door-opener' that can ease the challenge of making that first approach to a prospective client.

Share useful information

Networking groups are valuable forums to discuss common issues that businesses face and an opportunity to garner new ideas. For example, as a legal business, it may prove useful for you to exchange information with a marketing professional who can advise you on how to raise the profile of your business and retain clients. In turn, you may be able to offer them valuable legal advice for their business.

Remember to follow-up

Networking doesn't stop when the networking meeting is over. It's important that you secure the contact details of the people you meet and follow-up on potential leads and business opportunities. Rather than wait for the next meeting, get in touch via phone or email and see if you can build on the positive interaction you enjoyed at the meeting, and perhaps even arrange a face-to-face meeting between the two of you.

Finding a networking group to suit you

Depending on your location, you should be able to find a networking opportunity in your area. In major cities you can usually find events to attend on every day of the week. To find them, contact the local chapter of chambers of commerce, business associations, search the Internet for "business network" and your location, or use websites such as www.meetup.com to discover groups that you can visit or join.

If you have any questions about networking, or would like some more tips on how you can use networking to grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

4. Start your own business networking group

Business networking groups are a great way to build your profile, gain new business and share knowledge and ideas with other business owners. But sometimes it's hard to find a group that is just right for you. Consider setting up your own so you can create a networking group that is fit for your purpose.

Establish your group's purpose

Effective groups have a shared and agreed purpose. So, before kicking off your networking group, consider the following: What do you want it to achieve? What are you prepared to offer? What are your expectations of participants? What might other participants want to get out of it? Be clear about your own intentions and sound out other potential members to listen to what they have to say. Make sure you have established a purpose prior to the first meeting so you can table it and seek input and agreement from the group.

Handpick participants

One obvious advantage of creating your own group is that you can hand-pick who you invite to participate. Selecting complementary businesses – preferably local – and identifying people with shared objectives is bound to make the group more effective.

Agree the process and set an agenda

At your first meeting, you will need to discuss and agree a few key points: how often you will meet, how you will meet (e.g. face to face, online), and what the agenda for each meeting will be. Establishing an agenda provides structure and focus to the group and gives all members a clear idea of what is expected of them at each meeting. Agree who will take minutes so the group will have a documented reference of each meeting and also discuss how you will determine whether the group is succeeding in meeting its purpose. Perhaps you might agree to review the group's progress every two or three months to ensure it continues to meet its goals.

If you have any questions about starting a networking group, or would like some more tips on how to ensure its success, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

5. Set up a Twitter account

Twitter is social networking service where users can send short messages of up to 140 characters in length. In a short space of time it has become a social networking phenomenon.

These messages, also known as “tweets”, are displayed on a user’s profile page. You can choose to follow other users, which means that their tweets will be easily visible to you, and you can also search for users and keywords, as all tweets are, by default, made public (although you can also send non-public, direct messages to individual users too).

Learn from others

You can learn so much from the tweets of other people on Twitter. For example, as a real estate agent, you could tap into an interesting discussion about the latest market trends and gain access to ideas, websites and other media that could expand your knowledge and insights, as well as find people who are thinking of selling their homes before they’ve even contacted a real estate agent.

Connect to industry leaders and other businesses

Twitter is a great way to tap into thought leaders in your industry. By searching on topics relevant to your business, you can see what industry leaders are saying and gain valuable insights to apply in your own business.

Share your knowledge and raise your profile

People regularly use Twitter to ask questions and seek solutions to problems. You can use Twitter to monitor such discussions and where applicable, share your knowledge. Sharing your knowledge in this way raises your profile, promotes your credibility, and can potentially reach new clients for your business.

Monitor your target market

Consumers frequently discuss their experiences, desires and preferences via Twitter so it can be a great way to find out what people are saying about your products and services and those of your competitors. You can even use Twitter to communicate directly with your clients to seek their feedback on different products and services, or to promote an event you are running that might be of value to them.

If you have any questions about Twitter, or would like some more tips on how you can use it to grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

6. Pitch a new idea to a local radio station

Local radio is a powerful medium that provides a valuable service in many communities. Consider how you might be able to use this medium to share your knowledge while also raising the profile of your business.

Know your community

Start by listening to local radio stations in your area and get a feel for their demographic and content. Armed with these insights, consider pitching a new idea that could be a valuable service to a station's listeners, such as offering to appear as a guest to respond to issues relevant to your target market.

Establish your credibility early

If you are fortunate enough to secure such a gig, ensure you establish your credentials early. People want to know they are being advised by an expert, so make sure you communicate your background, qualifications and experience. And seek appropriate legal advice to ensure you are not directly liable for advice you offer via such a medium.

Avoid a sales pitch

People don't like to feel they are being 'sold to', so focus on answering people's questions with as much substance and evidence as you can, and let your credibility speak for itself. You don't need to overtly sell your services if you are offering advice and information that is useful.

Offer a call to action

Make sure you have website people can visit so if they are interested in seeking you out, they have a means to find you.

If you have any questions about approaching the media, would like to create or improve your website, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

7. Improve the copy on your website

Your website is only as effective as the content you deliver on it, so it's important to regularly review your site's content and ensure it is hitting the mark. Content that 'hits the mark' is written with the reader in mind. It addresses what's in it for your site's visitor, rather than simply spruiking your products and services.

Focus on them, not you

Visitors to your site want to know what you can do for them. Consider what a prospective client is looking for from your business. For example, they will want to know that you can offer credible, expert advice. They will want to experience personalised service that focuses on their particular needs. They will want to know that you'll help them avoid potential pitfalls for their businesses or personal finances. Take the time to consider your customers' needs, as this knowledge and insight will form the basis of effective copy for your website.

Include testimonials from satisfied clients

Your credibility and professionalism can be enhanced by sourcing testimonials from satisfied customers which you can then publish on your website. When you complete a piece of work for a satisfied customer, consider asking them for a testimonial. Create a standard template you can send to such clients explaining that the information they provide will be included on your website.

If you have any questions about setting up or improving your website, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

8. Run a competition to build your contact database

Running a competition is a great way to gain new contacts for your database, which in turn can lead to new business. People love competitions and are usually happy to exchange their contact details for a chance to be in the draw for a prize.

Promote your competition

You can promote the competition via your website and invite visitors to enter their details to be in the running to win a prize. Or depending on the value or the prize, you could even team up with other websites, or traditional media (magazines, local radio stations etc.) to promote the competition.

Target your audience

Target your audience remembering that you want to use the competition to do more than just build awareness of your business if possible. So if your ideal clientele are small business owners, then target your promotions accordingly. For example you might have it promoted through a local radio program that caters specifically to the needs of small businesses, or via a business-to-business magazine, or website.

Connect with people on their terms

Make the prize alluring and people will flock to you. And once you have their contact details, make sure you follow up with them appropriately. Don't hit them with sales messages. Instead, make yourself useful, be a resource they can use for more information. Help them with issues they might have that relate to their tax affairs or in the running of their businesses. Use the competition to build your database and then connect with the people on your database in a way that lets the people reading your emails get to know, like and trust you.

If you have any questions about running a competition, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

9. Offer a prize at a business networking event

Offering a prize at a business networking event is a great way to acquire new leads.

“As an accounting business, you could offer people the chance to win a free consultation and audit of their business finances.”

When people enter the draw to win the prize, ask them to record their contact details, such as their name, organisation, email and phone number.

By seeking these contact details as part of the competition entry, you acquire valuable new contacts who you can consider approaching as new business leads.

And, by offering your services as a prize, you raise your profile among participants at the business networking event.

If you have any questions about what to offer as a prize, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

10. Create an online newsletter

Creating an online newsletter builds intimacy with your clients, promotes your credibility and expertise and is cost effective.

Build client intimacy

By emailing a regular e-newsletter to your clients, you can ensure your business remains 'top of mind' and gives your clients a way to respond to you directly with their comments and questions. This two-way interaction is a valuable means of promoting intimacy and client retention. You can also use your online newsletter to seek direct feedback and input from your readers and offer them early access to new products and services.

Drive traffic to your website

Publishing a regular online newsletter is an effective way of driving traffic to your website. Make sure you embed hyperlinks in your email content that link to pages of your website where readers can find out more information about the topic you are promoting.

Be cost effective

Online newsletters are far more cost effective than printed newsletters, as you save money on design, print and mailing costs. And when you email your audience directly, you can find out which newsletters reach their destination and which don't – a valuable way to maintain the currency of your contact database.

Promote your credibility and expertise

Communicating with your clients via an online newsletter is not about you selling your wares. Use the opportunity to talk about what's in it for them, and in doing so, you will promote the credibility and expertise of your business which will make readers more likely to do business with you in the future.

Establish yourself as a thought leader

When new research is published in the media, or there is a major issue or event that might affect your readers, you can provide commentary, explaining what it means to them in your newsletter. In doing this, you are offering something of value to your readers while establishing yourself as a thought leader who is aware of current issues and their potential effects.

If you have any questions about creating your e-newsletter, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

11. Pull a publicity stunt

Remember when Dick Smith claimed he would tow an iceberg from Antarctica to Sydney Harbour, cut it up into ice cubes and sell them to the public? His stunt made a splash across the Australian media and brought his electronics business valuable publicity, raising its profile in the minds of Australian consumers.

While you may not have the resources of Dick Smith, consider what your business could do to generate publicity.

“Creativity and newsworthiness are the most important attributes for generating attention.”

Try and think of something visual that will play out well on TV and in photos online and in newspapers.

If you are looking for inspiration, try these books:

- ‘How to Have Kick-Ass Ideas’ by Chris Barez-Brown
- ‘Disciplined Dreaming: A Proven System to Drive Breakthrough Creativity’ by Josh Linkner
- ‘Purple Cow, New Edition: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable’ by Seth Godin

If you have any questions about getting publicity, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

12. Post videos on YouTube

Specialist news site, '[Social Media News](#)', recently published statistics that demonstrate just how powerful social media has become (data and statistics courtesy of Google DoubleClick Ad Planner). According to their site, Facebook currently has around 9.8 million unique Australian visitors going to the site every month, YouTube has 6.7 million, and Twitter has 1 million unique Australian visitors every month.

These statistics underline why social media is a powerful marketing opportunity for businesses and posting videos on YouTube can be a compelling and cost effective way for you to market your business.

Access to a large audience

Based on the visitors going to YouTube, publishing a video on the site is one way you can access a much larger audience than you might find using other online channels.

Cost effective

You can make your own videos and publish them directly to YouTube for free, avoiding the costs associated with creating expensive corporate videos or advertisements for television.

Promote intimacy

Making a video allows your clients to see and hear what you have to say directly from you. If you offer content that is valuable to the viewer, rather than making a sales pitch about your business, viewers will more likely to engage with you and view your offering as authentic.

Drive traffic to your website

Make sure you finish your video with a call to action so the viewer knows where to go to find out more about your business. Quote your website address in your script and also make sure it appears on the screen.

YouTube offers a tremendous opportunity to you and your business. If you have any questions about what you could post on YouTube, and how to do it, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

13. Write articles

Sharing your expertise by writing articles is a great way to raise your profile and build your client base. You can write articles for websites, magazines, or even your local newspaper. Here's why writing articles could be good for your business.

Expand your audience

There is a raft of online publishers that welcome content from credible sources. By posting your articles on such websites, you have an opportunity to share your expertise and ideas while giving your business exposure to a wider audience.

Drive traffic to your website

When you publish an article online, you have an opportunity to promote your website without paying a fee. This is because at the end of your article, most sites ask you to include a short bio with a link to your website. If the content of your article is credible and valuable to the reader, they are more likely to click on your link and visit your website, which may in turn lead to new business.

Boost your search engine ranking

If you know which keywords rank the highest in search engines for people searching online for your services, make sure you incorporate these keywords in article content you post to your own website. These keywords can help your article gain higher search rankings.

Build your authority and credibility

Writing articles is an excellent way to build your authority and credibility, as you demonstrate your expertise and knowledge by providing valuable content to readers. Consider providing commentary on important emerging issues and trends as this will help position you as a thought leader in your industry.

Print works too

Consider approaching a local newspaper to see if there is an audience for the expertise you can offer. Many smaller, local newspapers welcome contributors. Review your local newspapers and get an idea of their content and themes before you approach them.

If you have any questions about writing articles, would like help writing one, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

14. Add a blog to your website

Adding a blog to your website is an effective way to boost your website's search rankings, drive new traffic to the site and engage with your clients.

Boost search rankings and traffic to your website

Because search engines like Google value up-to-date content, publishing regular, new information on your site in the form of a blog is an effective way to boost your rankings and expose your site to new visitors. Search engines 'crawl' content on websites looking for the most relevant and fresh information, so every time you post a new blog, you increase the chance of your content featuring higher in search engine results.

Engage your customers

Blogs are typically conversational and personal in tone, so they are a great way to introduce new ideas and commentary that may not be covered in other parts of your site. You can ask your audience to share their opinions, give you feedback, or test an idea with them. Engaging readers and involving them in your thinking is far more effective than making a direct sales pitch about one of your products or services.

Establish your credibility

A blog is a good way to promote the credibility of your business as it offers a forum for you to share your thoughts on issues that affect your customers. To do this effectively, make sure the content you deliver responds to the needs of your audience. For example, if you are a mortgage broker, you could write a blog on the 'top five mortgage pitfalls people need to avoid when buying a property' which gives your readers information they value, establishes your credibility, but avoids directly promoting your products and services.

If you have any questions about blogging, would like help adding a blog to your website, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

15. Run your own events

As a business owner, you have probably been invited at some time to take part in a conference, exhibition or trade show. And there's no doubt that sponsoring or exhibiting at these events can be a great way to get exposure to potential clients. But they can also be very expensive, time consuming, and if you don't meet enough of the right people, a complete waste of time too.

One way to get around the high costs and risks associated with these events, not to mention the sometimes very low return on investment, is to run your own. They're not as expensive or as difficult to set up as you might think.

There are many advantages for business owners who run their own events.

“You can establish yourself as an authority among participants, strengthen relationships with existing clients, and set up new connections with potential clients too.”

Here are ten good reasons for running your own event, as well as some ideas on the types of events you can run that keep the costs low and the impact high:

1. You can keep the costs down

Exhibition stands at conferences and trade shows can be very expensive. When you calculate the cost of acquiring just a single potential client at one of those events and then realise that most of the people you speak to will have also been exposed to your competitors at the same event, the decision to run your own can become a very attractive alternative.

2. Increased client acquisition

Because your own events can cost less to run, you can afford to run them more often and maintain more frequent contact with your current and prospective clients. And that means you stand a greater chance of catching prospective clients when they're ready to sign up with you.

3. Cut out your competition.

At trade shows, conferences and expos you're most likely going to be competing with other people from your industry who are also vying to make contact with the same people. Running your own event cuts your competitors out of the equation and maximises your exposure to your target market.

4. Spread the load

By holding a series of events, you create a more consistent pipeline of leads throughout the year, and you can schedule them to avoid too much down time.

5. Your place, your rules

You get to choose the venues that suit you and your clients, and don't have to travel halfway across the city (or depending on the event, the other side of the country) to take part. And you can run your events on dates that fit in best with your schedule.

6. Customer intimacy

By holding your own highly targeted events on a frequent basis, you create more opportunities to get to know your customers and prospects, and for them to get to know you.

7. Fly under the radar

Running your own events makes it harder for your competitors to monitor your activity. You can market directly to prospective clients and reduce the chances that your competitors discover your latest strategies and detailed offerings.

8. A reason to get in touch

Organising your own event gives you a great reason to call your clients and prospective clients and touch base with them.

9. Better exposure

Paying for an exhibition stand at an event usually doesn't entitle you to speak on the conference program. However, if you run your own event, you not only get to set up your promotional materials, lay out brochures and business cards, but you can also deliver a presentation from the podium or stage and reinforce your position as an authority on your subject. You also get full control over your topic and can present it without being dictated to by an event organiser, and deliver it in a way that you know will meet the needs of your market.

10. Select your own audience

When you take part in someone else's event, you not only pay for exposure to your target market, but you're also paying for exposure to people who are outside your target market. By running your own event you can hand-pick the people you want to attend, and maximise the return on your investment.

Okay, now that you're convinced of the value of running your own event, what sort of event should you run?

You have a wide range of options to choose from. You could run a lunchtime briefing, a breakfast seminar, an information evening, a half-day workshop, or any other type of session. The important thing is to structure an event that suits your current and potential clients.

For example, if you decide to run an event that covers tax tips for plumbers, you probably wouldn't want to run a breakfast session, as most plumbers start their workdays early in the morning. Or maybe you could partner with a local law firm and run a joint evening information session for small business owners and you could share the costs, get exposure to each other's client base and discover ongoing synergies between both businesses that could help you both grow your businesses.

The options are many, and the benefits can be long lasting and great for growing your business.

If you have any questions about running events and would like more ideas or suggestions for your own events, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

16. Optimise your website for search engines

As a business owner, there's a very high chance that you've been exposed to a marketer or self-proclaimed SEO (search engine optimisation) expert who has offered to optimise your website for Google, Bing and the other search engines.

Some of these people offer an excellent service, but many are overpriced, offer an incomplete service, confuse clients with jargon and gobbledegook, and use dubious techniques that could result in your website being penalised because of unethical strategies (commonly called "black hat strategies") that artificially try to boost your rankings in the search engines.

This chapter outlines, in simple, easy-to-follow language, some of the key things you can do to make sure you get found in the search engines. Even if some of it is beyond your technical capabilities, it shows you what you need to tell your web builder. And you can rest assured that these techniques are valid and practical because it is based on information that Google itself has given us.

1. Create unique page titles for each page of your website

When you visit a website, your web browser (Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, Google Chrome etc.) will display some text at the very top of the browser. It will be the top line of text you can see on your screen. This text is known as a "title tag" and search engines use the information in your title tag when they are working out where you should sit in search results.

If you have access to the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) elements on your website via a CMS (Content Management System) you should be able to change these yourself. If not, then ask your web builder to do these for you.

Your title tags should describe the content of each page, and contain keywords that people might use in search engines to find you.

Avoid the temptation to cram lots of keywords into your titles, as they will be hard to read and will be shortened by the search engines so only a portion of them will show anyway. It's best to just keep your titles short and to the point. As a general rule of thumb, try not to have more than 10 words in your title tags.

2. Write useful descriptions for each page

Your website's description also gives the search engines more information about your business and the work that you do. While the titles of your pages need to be very short, you can elaborate a little more with the description tags. Description tags can be used by the search engines when they display your website in search results. Google for example won't always use the description tag, but it's much better for potential visitors to your website if you fill it out.

Use the description tag to summarise the page's contents, and use unique descriptions for each page wherever possible.

3. Use keywords in your domain name and addresses of sub-pages on your website

The search engines will look at your domain name and the addresses of individual pages of your website and use them to determine more about your website. These addresses are also displayed in the search results and could be another reason why someone searching on Google might click through to your website.

For example, compare these two web addresses:

- a) www.companyname.com.au/page1/63253437292.htm
- b) www.MyMelbourneAccountant.com.au/tax_savings_for_small_business.htm

Use words that relate to your business and that someone might use in an internet search and the search engines will reward you.

4. Create fresh and useful content

You should regularly update the content of your website with unique content. Not only will it keep your visitors coming back, but the search engines love it too. And if the search engines see that your website is changing and being updated on a regular basis, then they will schedule more frequent visits.

One easy way to update the content of your website is to have a blog (originally called a “web log”) installed. Blogs are easy to update, and are a great place for articles, which can be displayed in chronological order so it’s easy for visitors to see your latest content.

5. Create meaningful anchor text

Anchor text is the text that visitors to websites can click on. This anchor text is what is also known as a hyperlink that can be used to take visitors to other pages on your website.

Having descriptive anchor text is good for both human visitors to your website and the search engines. And if your anchor text has some of your keywords in it, you can gain a further boost to your SEO efforts.

6. Improve the way you use images on your website

If users can click on images on your website to take them to other pages, then the image’s tag (also known as “alt text”) will be treated similarly to anchor text (see point 5. above). So make sure your alt tags for images on your website use your keywords too.

7. Write search engine friendly header tags

Headings on your website’s pages can be indicated with what is known as a header tag. And search engines recognise their significance and treat them as more important than plain text. So make sure you plan out the headings for your website carefully, and include your keywords in them where appropriate.

If you have any questions about improving the search engine results for your business, give Peter Chaly at SMARTink a call. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to discuss ethical ways to help your business rank better in the search engines. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

17. Create a business page on Facebook

The shift in the online world has been massive. Consumers and businesses are searching for and buying more products and services online. Traditional media, advertising and slow adopters in many areas of the business world are feeling the strain. The Yellow Pages is shrinking, and its owner, Sensis Media, is reporting declines in revenue.

It's about a two-way dialogue

The idea of the website as a one-way conduit where you broadcast your services to the world has been replaced by websites that create a two-way dialogue with visitors and customers. And those visitors are now networking with others. They are sharing opinions; they are talking about products and services; they are making recommendations or issuing warnings; and they're doing all those things in relation to you and your business. They're doing it online, and in greater numbers every day. And when they're not talking about you or your business, they're talking about your competitors!

Position your business for success

Businesses that are slow to embrace the shift in consumer and business behaviour are suffering. Many businesses are turning around and asking "where have our customers gone?" But smart businesses are positioning themselves to take advantage of online opportunities and are engaging with clients and potential customers like never before.

Most industries are being affected by these changes, and the leverage that comes with online networks can create massive opportunities for business owners if they are quick enough to adapt to this new environment.

So how do you take part in these conversations? How do you interact with visitors, clients and potential customers? How can you tap into the vast networks that are appearing online?

One way to get involved with the "social media" and connect with these networks is by creating a specific page on Facebook for your business.

Facebook is now a business tool

While Facebook started as a way for university students to stay in touch with, and to check up on, friends and contacts across campus, it has rapidly grown to the point where it is being used by hundreds of millions of people of all ages across the world. And with that growth are some great opportunities for businesses for interaction with potential clients who are now connected to more referral sources than ever before.

What is a Facebook page and how do you set one up for your business?

Facebook Pages are specifically intended for organisations, celebrities, bands and businesses and allow them to publicly make announcements to people who connect to those pages. They are also an excellent opportunity for your business to engage with clients and potential clients. You can use your Facebook business page to listen to your customers' needs, to provide links to helpful

information, to participate in discussions with potential customers, and to capture new business through referrals and recommendations.

In order to create a Facebook page you need to be an official representative of your organisation, and you can do so from your personal page of Facebook. Just log into your account and then go to this page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php> and you'll have a business page set up on Facebook in no time.

Join Facebook groups

Become an active member of business networks on Facebook by seeking groups you can contribute to. There is a search window at the top of the page on Facebook that lets you search for people, groups and organisations. You can also use it to search for colleagues, business contacts and potential clients and then invite them to be friends, or to connect with your company's Facebook page.

If you have any questions about setting up a business page on Facebook, or would like to know more about how you can use Facebook to grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

18. Put out a press release

A good press release can get you more exposure than an advertisement, save you some marketing dollars, and get your business some very good coverage in both traditional and online media. But if your press release is badly written, contains nothing new, or is boring, then it will most likely be ignored. And just because you might run a small business, don't think that you don't have anything that could interest the media. So how do you write a good press release, what should you include in it, and who should you send it to? Here are some tips:

1. **Keep it short and to the point.** Your press release should be a short document that draws the media's attention to something that they might be interested in covering. Most media outlets receive many press releases every day, so keep yours short and get your point across quickly. The best press releases usually fit on a single page.
2. **Choose your media outlets.** Many niche publications are interested in publishing stories that don't interest the mainstream media, so research a wide range of publications, websites and other media and get an idea of the sorts of things they publish. Then make sure your press releases are matched to those outlets. If your press release is likely to be very specific and appeal to a niche audience, then consider tracking down a specific reporter and offering the information to him or her before you send out a wide press release.
3. **Meet the media's needs.** Try to think from the journalist's point of view and write your press release in a way that makes it easy to turn into a story or news item.
4. **Make yourself available.** Make sure that your press release includes your name and contact details, and states that you are available to speak with any journalists who would like more information.
5. **Don't turn your press release into a sales pitch.** Many press releases come across more like advertisements or sales pitches than true press releases. When you write yours, don't try to push your products or services. Remember to think from the journalist's point of view and ask yourself what information you can provide that could make for an interesting story.
6. **Make it timely.** Is there a reason why the media would be interested in your press release at the moment? Has something happened in the world that you can address? For example, perhaps you could conduct a survey of small businesses and compile the results into a press release? Or have you noticed a trend that you can comment on? If the topic is hot, then the media has an insatiable appetite for information that relates to it. So if possible, make your press release timely.
7. **Make sure it is well written.** A poorly written press release is going to get a lot less attention than a well written one. So make sure that you proofread yours closely, and get a colleague or friend to check it for you as well.

If you have any questions about writing press releases, or would like help writing one, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

19. Run a free webinar

Small businesses can harness the power of webinars to connect with potential clients, build relationships with them, and turn them into paying clients.

A webinar is a web seminar that is conducted over the Internet. Participants can watch the presenter or presentation slides on their screen, and listen to the presentation via their computer's speakers, a set of headphones, or in some cases even a telephone.

Webinars have become a popular and low-cost way for people to connect without leaving their offices. So why should your business think about running one? Here are just some of the reasons why webinars can help you and your business:

1. **They help you build relationships with clients and potential clients.** You can run a free webinar that helps people with issues they are facing. For example, you might decide to run a short webinar that focuses on pitfalls to avoid in the real estate market to help your clients make informed choices when purchasing a property.
2. **You raise your visibility and authority.** By presenting a webinar you show your audience how knowledgeable you are on a topic and by raising your authority and reputation, you are also more likely to attract more clients.
3. **You can showcase your services.** Webinars are excellent opportunity for you to highlight your practice's areas of expertise and to keep those strengths in the minds of your clients and potential customers.

In order to host a successful webinar, you will need:

1. **A presenter.** This could be you, a colleague, or you could choose to have a client join you as a case study, or even as a subject for you to interview.
2. **A webinar service.** There is a wide choice of low-cost webinar providers that you can engage to provide a good service.
3. **An auto-responder.** Auto-responders help you manage your webinar participants as you can collect their email addresses when they register, and then easily email the whole group in one batch. You can then stay in touch by sending them reminder emails in the lead-up to the event.
4. **A way to advertise the webinar.** You can do this with an "opt-in" box on your company's website, a lead capture page, emails to your database, online advertisements, word of mouth, and a wide range of other methods.

When you are running the webinar, you can also hold a Q&A session and get the participants to type questions to you that you can address during the session, or you could ask them to email you before the event. You can also run quick polls and ask for a show of virtual "hands" on a particular issue to get a better understanding of you audience's knowledge levels and needs.

You can also record the webinar and use it as a marketing tool after the event, or as part of a training course that you could offer to clients. And because they are visual and auditory, and you can back them up with documentation and other support, webinars are an excellent way to increase our engagement with your existing and potential client base.

If you have any questions about running webinars, or would like help running one, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

20. Get a free Google listing

Google has publicly stated that 20% of searches on its search engine are related to location. That means that one in every fifth search on Google has a place name or location-related keyword in the search (e.g. Melbourne hairdresser, North Sydney hair salon etc.).

This statistic offers a very, very good reason to make sure your business has a Google+ Page.

What is Google+?

Google+ is a social network, similar in some ways to Facebook, and like Facebook it also includes a provision for creating a business page. It costs nothing to set up and it can be used by Google when someone makes a location-based search, and the search engine displays a map with local businesses marked on it. It allows businesses to list key information such as business address, contact details, images and even special offers.

“Not only is a Google+ Page listing great for helping your visibility on Google for location-based searches, but it is easy to set up and maintain, and costs nothing to establish.”

To set up your listing, just go to plus.google.com and follow the prompts.

If you have any questions about Google+ Pages, or would like help setting up your listing, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

21. Give and you shall receive

Every day we are all bombarded with messages from advertisers wanting us to buy something from them. There are so many messages that many of us just switch off when we are confronted by these advertisements. This “push” style of marketing is one way to get your product or service noticed, but today’s consumer has become more sophisticated and is tired of being bombarded.

So how do you get your business noticed in all of this noise?

One way is to attract an audience rather than bombard them. Instead of trying to force your sales message onto a potential client you can give away something of value, something that the viewer or visitor to your website can use, something that will be noticed and help you to stand out at the same time.

Create an e-book

For example, this e-book is a prime example of such a giveaway. In the past we might have chosen to protect this information, to save it only for valued clients, or to sell consulting services based around some of the sections in this book. Many companies have made a lot of money by doing so. But instead, we packaged up some of our top tips for marketing your business and gave it away. (See Chapter 24 for more information on creating an e-book).

The aim is to connect

Of course, we did it in a way that we DID get something in return. We made contact with you; we established a connection, and used this e-book not only to help you progress your business, but also to position ourselves as trusted experts should you ever need any help with any of your marketing needs in the future. And you can do something similar too.

You can do this too

As an expert in your field, you are uniquely positioned to help your clients. The knowledge you have is valuable, and can be used to build intimacy with your existing clients and to attract new clients to you.

Establish your value and build trust

You could choose to do this by writing a list of tips for your clients and making it available from your website. All the visitor to your site has to do is fill out his or her email address and give you permission to get in touch. They’ve benefited from the suggestions you listed, and you’ve just connected with a new potential client.

By giving information away, you are positioning yourself as an expert in that niche. Instead of bombarding people with a marketing message, you are getting them to come to you.

And don't be too worried about giving too much away. In general, the more you give away, the more you will be trusted and regarded by people looking for help. And aren't they the sorts of people you would like to have as clients (people who trust you and regard you highly)?

When it comes to giving information away, as a rough rule of thumb, if it feels like you're giving too much away, then you're probably on the right track!

If you have any questions about how to structure a giveaway, or would like help writing an e-book, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

22. Participate in business associations

When it comes to exposing your business to potential clients, developing rapport and building trust with them, nothing comes close to actually meeting them in person. And one of the best ways to meet potential clients is by taking part in business association gatherings, and at other events.

In Chapter 3 we covered how you can use networking events to meet potential clients and grow your referral network, and then in Chapter 4 we discussed starting your own networking groups. But another way to increase your visibility is to join and take part in business associations.

Look for allies outside your profession

You are most probably a member of at least one business networking group, and while that membership includes a lot of benefits for you and your business, it is worthwhile looking at associations outside your profession where you can meet with business people who could end up becoming clients, strategic allies, and referrers of new business to you.

Be active and be noticed

There are business associations for different size businesses, so pick one that matches your client base and join one and get involved. Another option is to take on committee responsibilities, or the role of facilitator at association events, to even further increase your visibility, authority and credibility amongst members.

If you have any questions about some of the other ways you can increase your visibility and grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

23. Be a guest speaker

Speaking at conferences is a great way to establish yourself as an authority on a topic, to network with your peers, and to meet potential clients. Here's how you can do it.

Don't wait to be invited

Identify the areas where you can add value as a speaker and then hunt down the conference organisers who specialise in those areas. Some conferences are advertised before the speaker line-up has been finalised, so you can contact the organisers to offer yourself as a speaker.

How to get on the speaker panel at conferences before they are marketed

Look at past conferences. Call a couple of the speakers from past conferences and ask them what the experience was like. Find out how many delegates attended. If the conference was successful, then there's a very good chance that the organiser will either repeat the topic, or run a program with a similar theme. Also, some organisers specialise in particular topics, so keep a list of the organisers that run conferences on your favourite subjects and stay in touch with them on a semi-regular basis. It also pays to keep a calendar of yearly conferences and to get in touch with the organisers during their production window.

Respond to a call for papers

There are some conference organisers that put out a call for papers, but many don't. It pays to be proactive and find the associations and commercial organisers before they have produced your ideal conference so you can submit a proposal. But if you have missed the window and the program has been finalised you can still offer your services as a replacement speaker, although if you are a late addition to the program, you will have missed the exposure that comes with being on a brochure that gets sent to thousands of people. So get to them first!

Be active in professional associations

Join and be active in your professional associations. Conference producers typically look for speakers from a wide range of sources. These include: book authors; people who are quoted in articles; or who have written articles in newspapers and magazines; and word-of-mouth referrals during the research phase of conference development.

If you have any questions how to become a guest speaker, or would like some more tips on growing your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

24. Create an e-book

Want to capture new leads for your business using your website? Consider writing a short e-book, posting it on your site and inviting visitors to submit their email to receive their free copy.

What's an e-book?

An e-book is just like a printed book, but you post it online, usually in a PDF file format.

Why's an e-book a good idea?

An e-book is a way for you to give your site visitors something they value, while using it to gather new leads for your database or update your existing contacts. It's all about offering something for free so you can get something you need – email addresses – for your business database.

What can I write about?

Your first priority should be to offer information that will be useful to your customers and potential customers.

Are there some tips and tricks you can offer them? Could you offer them some case studies that illustrate best practice in your industry? Perhaps you could write a short article on how to avoid certain pitfalls. You are an expert in your field, and you have knowledge that is valuable, so you are well equipped to come up with useful content to share with visitors to your site.

And your e-book doesn't have to be long – just make sure it is useful and targets what your audience wants to know.

How do I get an e-book published?

To create your own e-book, you don't need a deal with a publisher, a distributor, or bookstores. You don't need any specialised software either. All you really need is a word processor (like Microsoft Word, or similar) and a willingness to share your knowledge and experience. E-books don't have to be long or complicated. They just need to contain some information that is useful to the reader. Your finished e-book could be ten pages or two hundred pages long. It doesn't really matter. It is your e-book, and you can distribute it via emails, through colleagues, clients and potential clients, and through your website. Once you have written the book, it is usually a good idea to save it in a format that can be universally read such as in a .pdf file. The popular word processors can do that these days, but even if yours can't, there is software available on the Internet that can do it for you at no cost.

If you have any questions about how to write your own e-book, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

25. Create a LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn is a social networking site used mainly used for professional networking. It's a great way to raise your profile, reinforce your brand, and build your professional network via an easy-to-use interface.

Join communities of interest

LinkedIn offers a huge range of forums for communities of professionals who want to share information about products, issues, trends, opportunities and events and stay in touch with the latest news from their field.

Find out about events

You can also find out about events such as conferences and training events that might be relevant for your business or promote your own event by posting it on LinkedIn.

Post a professional profile

Use the LinkedIn profile to promote your skills and experience and the products and services your business can offer. You can include company contact details including your business website.

Access job information

LinkedIn offers you an easy-to-use job search function that tailors search results to your requirements. And if you are recruiting, you can also post jobs on the site.

It's free

LinkedIn is free, so why not go online, take a look around the site and reap the benefits of this great professional networking tool. And if you do choose to post a profile, remember to put a link to it from your website.

If you have any questions about LinkedIn and how to use it, or would like some more tips on how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

26. Ask your clients for referrals

Satisfied clients can often be your best advocates in promoting your business and gaining access to new clients.

Describe what you want

When you ask a client to refer you, remember to be specific about the type of person or business you want to be referred to. If you can be specific about your needs, your client will be better equipped to seek a referral for you and that referral is more likely to be relevant for your business.

Consider the best approach

Also, be clear about how you want the referral to be conducted. Do you want your client to set up an introduction? Are you looking for your source to set up a lunch with the three of you? Do you simply want to use your source's name when you approach the prospect directly? Consider the best approach and make sure you communicate it to your client.

It doesn't have to be a blatant approach; you could create a new blog post and ask readers to forward a link to it to their friends and associates. Or you might decide to run an information evening for clients, where you give a short talk for free that outlines some important advice relating to taxes, or some other key financial matter. Once again, you could promote it to clients and tell them that are welcome to bring guests.

But remember, one of the best sources of new business is word-of-mouth. So make the most of your satisfied clients, and find a way to seek some referrals from them.

If you have any questions about how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au

27. Create a short course – real world or online

Your knowledge of your industry is a very valuable resource and one way to promote loyalty with existing clients and reach prospective new clients is to create a short course – real world, or online.

What's the best approach?

It depends on the nature of your clients, the technology you have available to you and the kind of format you feel most comfortable using. To make your delivery of the course effective, you must feel at ease, so make sure you select an approach that plays to your strengths.

What approaches should I consider?

Face-to-face

You could host a small seminar for a handful of clients and ask them to bring a guest to the lecture, thereby ensuring you gain exposure to prospective new clients. Make sure you use engaging visual aids such as PowerPoint slides, and incorporate practical examples such as case studies in your presentation. Remember to make your presentation interactive by asking questions of the audience and even giving them activities to do. Remember to prepare a 'takeaway' for audience members to take home with them, highlighting your key points and including a call to action if they want to ask questions or find out more.

Webinar

A webinar is a live web conferencing tool that allows you to deliver training to participants who sit at their own computer and are connected to other participants via the Internet. This is a useful communication tool that allows you to get a group of people engaged in your training, without the need for travel.

Online video

You can create a short online video – or series of videos – that deliver key tips and information that would be useful for your clients. Try to keep each video to no more than five minutes and remember to cover one theme in each video. You can then upload the videos on your website and encourage your clients to view them by sending out an update to your client email list.

What content should I deliver?

It's all about your audience. Consider the kind of information that would be of most benefit to clients and prospective clients, such as:

- Are there any upcoming changes to your industry that you could explain to them via your short course?
- Are there some pitfalls they should avoid that you could share?
- Do you have some useful case studies that illustrate good practices in your field?
- Is there some new research being released that you could provide commentary on and

explain how it is applicable to your clients?

Running a short course positions you as an expert and authority figure. It also exposes you to potential clients, and if positioned and promoted well, can be a very cost-effective way to grow your client base.

If you have any questions about running a course, and how you can grow your business, please call Peter Chaly at SMARTink. He is a marketing expert and would be more than happy to help. Contact Peter at SMARTink on tel: 07 3878 1448 or email: peter.chaly@smartink.com.au