An interactive guide for small and medium-sized businesses

HOW TO GET AHEAD IN 2018

Courtesy of NewPath Consulting

www.newpathconsulting.com
The marketplace has changed. You need to adapt to survive. These tips will make you thrive.
When you’re competing against big online companies such as Amazon, you need to show your customers that there’s no disadvantage to working with you. You must delight your customers by using modern technology to market your services and offer 24/7 service and support across multiple channels.

In the next few pages, we will share our secrets to success for competing in a modern marketplace. Whether you’re starting from scratch or you just need to review and regroup, our tips will help you save time, improve how you run your business, and increase your bottom line.
Your Core Business Capabilities

These business capabilities underlie our proposed tips and technology tools. We will be using 5 colour-coded wedges to identify which capabilities are related to each tip.

**Business**
Clarifying your business model and business objectives, and your professional ethics and legal practices such as contracting and intellectual property.

**Market**
Understanding the customer and what motivates them to engage, and defining your value proposition and the 4 Ps of marketing (product, price, promotion, place).

**Design & Usability**
Creating the necessary online environment to deliver value to customers, which includes branding, graphic design, security and privacy.

**Implementation**
Developing or acquiring technical knowledge and fundamental capabilities of digital workplace software tools and services.

**Content Marketing**
Combining capabilities 1 through 4 to publish and distribute content that will help you find and retain customers and business partners.
But first click below to answer this illuminating question.
It may change the way you view your business.

Now for the first and most important tip!
At NewPath Consulting we embrace the concept of the digital workplace. In a digital workplace, a business uses cloud-based technology to deliver value to customers, ensure customer success, and manage their resources. They also use technology to help deliver their value proposition consistently, delighting customers and attracting prospects through digital marketing.

To become a digital workplace your company must work through the following steps:

1. Recognize the shifts in the marketplace
2. Refocus your business model
3. Create a strategy
4. Develop processes and capabilities
5. Measure and analyze outcomes

…. After you measure what works, begin the five steps again with your new knowledge.
Businesses that don’t spend enough time refining their value proposition, customer messaging, and key sales and marketing processes fall behind. As tempting as it is to solve your pain with a quick-fix piece of technology, running these apps can bring about worse problems.

At NewPath we start by examining the business model with a focus on core business capabilities.

As your first strategic exercise towards improving your business, click here to fill out this interactive Business Model Canvas template.
Your customers and prospective customers are online. So you must have an online presence to meet them, but that’s not enough to satisfy the sophisticated buyers we want as long-term customers. To cultivate brand loyalty, you also need to provide improved customer service and responsiveness - two qualities that are more important than price these days.

Web-based tools and services can support your business by helping you run a tight ship, maintain transparency, and provide self-serve or automated options that keep your customers happy and engaged.

By interacting with your customers on their terms and providing a better experience, you build brand loyalty and keep customers coming back. Never ignore your customers online because if an unhappy customer posts about a poor experience with your business, you can take a serious economic hit.

We’ll show you how easy it is to incorporate automation into your operations so that this extra customer service and responsiveness is tackled by technology and isn’t a drain on your resources or time.
Part of setting up or revising your website will be to choose a domain name, for example yourbusinessname.com. The right domain name can help your search engine rankings.

Also consider the letters after the “dot.” While .com is the most common, there are hundreds of top-level domains (TLDs) currently available (including .biz, .org, .store, .tech, and .club). Choose a TLD that has meaning for your business.

Use your domain address for your company’s email addresses (you@yourname.TLD) to appear more professional. Hosting companies such as GoDaddy generally offer this service for a small fee.
Your prospective customers are researching your products or services on Google and will get in touch once they want to buy. That means if you don’t have a website, you need one. If their search leads to your website and you answer their questions, chances are they’ll buy from you. If all they find is a glossy online brochure, chances are they’ll move on.

No matter where you’re starting, we can help make your online presence better and more effective.

If you do have a website, Click here to gauge your current presence.

No matter where you’re starting, we can help make your online presence better and more effective.
The best website starts with a solid foundation. NewPath recommends **WordPress** as a website builder that can be extended to allow your site to do more than ever before. WordPress is an open-source platform supported by a world-wide community of users, designers and developers. WordPress powers over 25% of the websites on the Internet today. Check out this NewPath **WordPress case study** to see how we built a low-cost, feature-rich site for a small alumni club.

For larger clubs, associations and membership-based organizations, NewPath recommends the #1 ranked **Wild Apricot** membership management system. Wild Apricot offers an out-of-the-box, fully functional and responsive website that features online membership applications and renewals, password-protected members-only content, event management, email marketing, financial reporting and more. Find out why **Wild Apricot beat out Salesforce** for this NewPath customer.

**Click here for a video presentation on the benefits of managed hosting.**
SEO has changed significantly over the last few years, and it continues to evolve. Adding content just to rank for key phrases is no longer enough. Today, your search engine ranking is influenced by how long people stay on your website and interact with your content. There are many “signals” that show search engines that you are serious about your web presence. You should provide answers to the questions your target market is asking so they spend time interacting with your content. You must also build inbound links from other reputable websites related to your services.

Optimize Your Site for Search Engines (SEO)

The right SEO approach will help you impress your website visitors and gain their trust. When combined with good quality content, you can stay squarely in the good books of any search engine.

Your business model will help you prioritize how you should optimize to be found online.

You should ask your business partners to help you build your online reputation, and put your brand in front of prospective customers.
For this exercise, look back to your business model canvas. What did you identify as your value proposition? Who are your customers and what do you think they’re looking for? What can you do for them?

All of these answers should appear at the top of your website’s first page, in the headings. This is the area ‘above the fold,’ or what users can see without having to scroll down. Fill this section wisely! Use only high-quality images and be sure they’ll be relevant and appealing to your audience.

Include a ‘call to action’ – an easy way people can interact with you. Whether your call to action is, ‘Buy Now’ or ‘Talk to an Agent’ or ‘Free Offer,’ you have to make it easy for people to click and interact. Ideally they will leave their email so you can add them to your contact list.

While what’s above the fold is most important, you do want people to scroll and spend time on your website. That’s because the longer they stay on your page (at least 90 seconds is ideal), the more search engines like Google increase your ranking. Include several short sections of text or interactive elements such as a pop-up offer or an automatic quote feature. Install and regularly review your Google Analytics to check how your website is performing over time.
You can provide better service by offering self-serve options on your site including e-commerce, quote requests, and other automated interactions. Through the smart use of technology you can save time, qualify prospects as most likely to buy, and offer 24/7 service and support without any draw on your resources.

Having forms on your website are a great way to allow customers to reach out and tell you what they are looking for, and to order and buy when they’re ready. Check out our webinar with Formstack which illustrates how a not-for-profit used a set of forms to transform their operations.

NewPath recommends the form builder as well as several excellent WordPress plugins like Ninja Forms and Gravity Forms.
Now that you’ve set up your site so that you can passively attract searching customers, it’s time to reach out and build an email list and social media presence.

Remember, customers don’t buy when you want them to, they buy when they’re ready. If you’re consistently broadcasting valuable information, they’ll remember you when that time comes.

By appearing in front of prospects regularly, you show them how active you are online and therefore how well you’ll be able to serve them. It’s a commitment and will take some time and effort, but an active online presence is essential in the 21st century.

Your outreach efforts are best supported with a customer relationship management (CRM) system. NewPath recommends Highrise.
Use an Email Marketing System

Questions to ask before selecting your email marketing platform:
- Does it allow for automation of opt-ins and outs?
- Is it easy to design and send an email?
- Can it integrate with my other technology tools?

Email marketing has helped NewPath **build traffic to our site every year.**

The best email systems will integrate with the rest of your technology stack, such as your website, social media accounts, and customer relationship management (CRM) system. When social media platforms and email marketing systems work together to drive interested parties to the value proposition and call to action on your website, your promotion is a success.

NewPath uses and recommends **Mad Mimi**. If you are using a different email marketing program we can help you integrate it with the rest of your technology to ensure it all works together to continually increase the size of your audience.

Before adding someone to an email list, be sure you have their explicit permission and give them a way to opt-out at anytime. Luckily, email marketing systems have these tools built right in, making it easy to create and send your email marketing content and manage your contact list. Some, like Mad Mimi, also offer the added bonus of tracking which of your contacts opened and shared your email.
You can use Google Analytics to see how your social media presence is helping you gain traction. Video and images get more attention than plain posts, particularly on social media, so include these when you can. Just make sure they’re relevant and appealing to your target audience.

When you see important industry news or other high-quality content, share that with your audience as well. This cuts down your workload of creating your own content. Be sure to credit the author by name - as a bonus, if you tag their social media profile or page you can even make a new connection!

As a result of our own content marketing efforts, NewPath Consulting is on track to increase traffic 20% year over year!

To continue to reach your customers and build your online brand and reputation, you want to show that you are an expert in your field. You can do this by creating and distributing relevant content for your prospects and customers to find and associate with you. Blogs, email newsletters, and social media networks are channels where you can reach your industry and customer base.

If you’re brand new to creating content, you can start with a quarterly newsletter and work up to monthly. You can cross-post your articles to your blog, and promote them on social media with links, catchy descriptions and photos.
Choose your platform(s):

- **Facebook** (everyone is on it)
- **Twitter** (everyone can see it)
- **LinkedIn** (specifically for the business crowd)
- **Instagram** (especially if you have a visual product)
- **YouTube** (for videos)

These channels can work together, e.g., a tweet links to your website, where visitors can watch your embedded YouTube video.

NewPath recommends you start with Facebook and Twitter and then branch out to other platforms. While the more platforms you are active on, the better chance of attracting customers, it is far better to be proficient and active on one platform than old and stale on many.

**Remember:** Social media is a conversation, so join in but save your sales pitch for your website where it’s expected. Contribute valuable information and encourage sharing to get the most out of social media.

With quality, original content you can forge relationships with other experts and business partners who will share and comment on your content, offer reciprocal opportunities, and help you reach new customers.
Smooth business processes and operations go a long way in demonstrating to your customers that your product or service can be trusted and that you and your staff are easy to work with. **Business productivity tools** can ensure a successful operation and offer automation opportunities to many different areas of your business.

Here is the **NewPath Consulting** recommended tech stack:
Once the domain of the big corporations, analytics has become vital to effective forecasting, even in small businesses. Analytics allow you to understand who is visiting your website and what pages they spend time on, so you can track and improve the mechanisms that convert them into valuable customers.

Not only do you need to take the time to understand the visitors and performance of your site, you have to collect the data in the first place. Traditionally it has taken a great deal of time, effort and know-how to produce these forward-looking reports.

NewPath has tracked down the best of the SMB cloud analytic tools and dashboards to show companies the key metrics on how their business is doing and where they should invest. Here are a few questions you should be asking.
Security breaches will lose you customers and hurt your brand. That’s why every SMB must prioritize safeguarding customer privacy, system backup and recovery, and employee cooperation and control.

Migrating data to the cloud provides numerous benefits to a business’s security. By storing your data with an external provider, you can take advantage of their specialized security experience, more resilient systems, and consistent surveillance to check for issues.

NewPath recommends GoDaddy as a professional managed hosting company because they include security and back-ups with their service, and LastPass as a free password manager.
Capacities required in a digital workplace:

- Understand your business and your business model
- Attract and connect with prospects online to build an effective sales funnel
- Nurture customer relationships and build brand loyalty
- Implement services to collect and analyse business performance

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Get in touch

with the NewPath team to learn how your business can become a successful digital workplace.

Learn about our business model

and how we help and support our customers over the long term, every step of the way.