

3 proven ways to grow your business without a lot of money

[Business](#)



\n[[Table of Contents](#)]\n

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1. [1. Educate your customers](#) \n \t
2. [2. Build an email list from the start](#) \n \t
3. [3. Leverage your existing customers for growth](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Q: What is the best way to market to corporations when you are a small business and don't have a large budget and are new to your area of focus?

A: With the emergence of marketing channels, tools and low-cost services, it's easier and cheaper than ever to market a small business. However, it's also very easy (and common) for small businesses to fall into marketing pitfalls and waste their money on advertising that's going to be too expensive due to their conversion rates and marketing channels that won't ever move the needle.

As someone who has been in the marketing world for years, these are the three most common pitfalls I see:

1. Lack of commitment on a marketing channels
2. Focusing on the wrong channels
3. Don't know who your customers are

That's why it's important to and your business's unique-value proposition. I highly recommend small-business owners spend time building out customer personas so they have a deep understanding who's buying from them and their pain points.

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After that task is complete, here are three proven ways to grow your business with little money. All the tools I have used and have seen results.

1. Educate your customers

The best way to create a loyal customer base is to educate them and help them solve their problems before they're at the buying stage. You can do this by leveraging content marketing, curating great content on social media and having an email weekly newsletter.

Don't have great writing skills or the time? You can hire great bloggers on for fairly low cost. Keep the content focused on educating and helping customers rather than talking about yourself. When done right, you won't need to talk about yourself as your customers will be doing that for you (aka customer advocacy).

You can automate curate content on social media using tools like (I am an investor in) for as low as \$9 a month, and if you want a little more customization you can do it. Either way by sharing helpful information you're showcasing your company's value prior to the customer's purchasing decision

2. Build an email list from the start

Don't just build an email list: keep in communication with your subscribers and nurture them with value-added content. You can do so simply by having a weekly email newsletter. Just as you are doing on social media, you want to continue to provide value once someone has visited your website,

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engaged with your brand and even purchased from you. And remember you don't have to be the creator of information, you can be the provider of information, also known as content curation.

You can use low cost (yet powerful tools) like and to collect email addresses and services like and to send out email newsletters.

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3. Leverage your existing customers for growth

is hiding in plain sight and is too often overlooked. Your customers are going to be your lowest cost and more trusted channel to market and grow your businesses. There are a few simple, yet effective ways to do this:

Ask your customers for reviews via email. If you're a local business point them to your Yelp or Google business page. If you're a software company, drive them to comparison sites such as Capterra and Getapp.

Ask your customers for referrals or to spread the word. You don't need to over complicate this with fancy software or a complicated strategy. Simply ask them via email to spread the word. If it works you can expand and create a .

Delight your customers. Go out of your way to show your . Buffer does this with a thank-you email (instead of a receipt), does this by sending thank you cards to every new customer and swag. At my company, , we delight our customers by adding them to our social-media community (via a Facebook

group), so they can learn the latest and great about social media from their fellow customers.

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