

Market Smarter

WSIB clearances – now just a click away

Did you know, you can now obtain wsib clearance certificates on line? If you hire contractors, or you're a contractor yourself, the WSIB's online [eClearance](#) service lets you obtain your own clearances easily and effectively on their website — anytime you want.

In the past, getting a clearance took 24 to 48 hours because it needed to be issued by WSIB staff. Now, you can obtain one instantly. Simply go to www.wsib.on.ca - and click on e-services. The site will also tell you who's eligible for a wsib clearance certificate – and who's not.

Four essentials in your marketing arsenal

Marketing does not have to be complicated – nor does it have to cost you a fortune. When marketing your company, you are basically trying to do two things: reach new clients and remind existing clients. It is that simple. The essence of marketing is to understand your customers' needs and effectively communicate how you provide/answer those needs. If you embrace the four basics of good marketing – as we'll outline in this issue of InfoPays – you'll have the foundation you need to keep you ahead of the game...and probably ahead of your competition too.

1. A marketing plan

Before you build your brand or website, book that ad in the local paper or sign up with Google adwords, you need to have a strong roadmap. A marketing plan is fundamental to the success of any business. Take the time to develop a marketing plan that addresses your marketing goals, the strategies to get you there and encompasses the SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities – facing your business today.



Most important in your plan should be your unique value proposition describing what sets you apart from your competitors in the marketplace including your key benefits – whether is lowest price, or highest customer service. And of course, flowing out of that plan will be a range of marketing tactics that will keep you on track for success.

Solid marketing strategy is the foundation of a well-written marketing plan. It shouldn't be a massive undertaking – it's a rough guide that documents what you are planning on doing and why you are doing it. If you're not sure how to structure it, there are a number of excellent marketing plan templates you can find online. Or, it's easy to find a marketing strategist or agency in your area to help you craft one suited to your business goals.

2. A good brand/logo

The initial lack of customers and cash flow often causes new business owners to put off designing a logo and marketing materials professionally until they have established a client base. Unfortunately, designing your own marketing materials when you launch instead of having them professionally created will make getting those initial clients more difficult. Even worse, it may result in a business that will not succeed.

A strong brand Identity and design boosts your business in many ways, providing:

An established and professional feel.

This, in turn, increases the customers trust in the products or services your company offers.

Memorable. “A picture is worth a thousand words”. A strong company logo can

often be remembered and identified with greater ease than a thousand words describing your business.

Greater awareness. Logo graphics can bring about awareness of the products or services that you offer in cases where your company name is not self-explanatory.

Higher brand value. The brand you create can also be leveraged when selling stock in your company – and can even help you sell your business for a higher perceived value than the actual value.

3. A strong website

Your website should be your prime marketing tool. Not only does it efficiently present your products and services to the world, it can save you a great deal of money in advertising costs. With a wide range of professionally designed and even free templates out there, web development can be affordable, and initially may be as simple as a one page description of what and where your business is, and what you are selling.

Worldwide exposure

Another advantage is reach. Remember that with a website you now have a global business. Your website is not just viewed by people locally, but it can be viewed by anyone, at any time, from all over the world, thereby, introducing a product to a greater number of people faster.

You can change the content on your website whenever you choose, keeping it fresh for those who visit your site more than once.

Convenience and access

An updated site is also a good way to give your clients convenient access to information about you in the privacy of their office or home – anytime of the day or night. Plus, since many potential buyers use the internet to research future purchases, your site gives you the opportunity to present yourself and your

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products/services in the very best light – and compellingly communicate your high standards for great service and customer satisfaction.

4. Social media

No, it's not just for teenagers chatting with their friends anymore. Most fortune 500 businesses today have recognized the value of a social media strategy, have embraced some form of blogging in their organization (ideally by their CEO) and have established presences on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter... to name but a few.

Today, your business too needs to fully integrate social media if you want to gain an edge on their competition. By linking other marketing efforts with different social media channels you ensure that your customers find out about different promotions happening currently. The world will see you're not just in this for marketing gain, but instead you're interested in a continuing dialogue and developing better customer relationships that are not only driven by sales goals.

The benefits of social media are extensive – but here are just a few:

Increased awareness of your company

Improved perceptions of your 'brand'

Ability to monitor conversations about your company

Better understanding of customers perceptions of your business

Early warning detection of potential product or service issues

In short, marketing is an important cornerstone of your business success. Ensure you have these four areas professionally handled, and your business will be in a better position to survive and thrive -- now and into the future!

Add Wow to your Website

Clarity and simplicity are key

How many times have you tried to access a website only to have to wait while the intro loads? And have you often clicked away from a site because you got frustrated and did not want to wait – or have to think that hard about where to go next?

It may surprise you, but a great website is not about bells, whistles and flash. On the contrary, the simpler and more intuitive your website is, the greater the 'wow factor' - not to mention, the better the sales power and customer conversions for your business. In fact, simplicity and ease of interaction should permeate everything from the copy and design to the interface and navigation.

After all, the main reason that people use the internet is to get information, and they want it quickly. So, the wise business owner will focus on the beef (the content) rather than the 'sizzle', when developing his web presence.

Here are some other tips to make your site captivate – and sell !

Hone in on your homepage

The first page most visitors will visit is your homepage and your chance to make an impression that will keep them there. It is imperative that this page sets out clearly, quickly and simply:

- what's on your site
- where to find it
- how to contact you
- why they should explore further.

Get this right – and you are more than half the way to website success.

Scannable content with focused messaging

A common homepage mistake is to write too much. In fact this is a problem on ALL web pages. Decide what you want people to do – identify two actions and focus on them.

Everything else should be subordinate to these two results.

It's important to understand that most people don't read websites – they scan them. There are billions of pages out there and life isn't long enough to read them all. In fact 79 % of web visitors scan rather than read copy. For this reason, you should abandon long-winded, text-heavy paragraphs in favour of bulleted lists and strong headlines and subheads supporting your key messages.

Be found – with search engine optimization

Your site should be written, designed and programmed so it appeals both to your readers and the search engines, like Google. To do this, you need to include keywords and phrases so that the engines' robots detect the high relevance of your site to the keywords you've identified as important in your market. Couple this with a healthy amount of incoming links and regularly refreshed content – and you have a site that will rank high in the search results for your market and be easily found – and enjoyed – by your target customers and prospects.

It's about them - not you!

Finally – here's a word about your site messaging and tone. For greatest impact, your web content should be written from your customer's perspective. Use “you” more than “we” to personalize your message, and be sure you know precisely who you are talking to before you set words to website, in terms of your ideal prospects, including their age, sex, income – and even more: What are their fears, dreams – and how do your products, services and business offering address them? Ideally all this should shine through in your web copy.

Above all things, remember to keep it simple, customer-friendly and be sure to always engage your visitors with jargon-free, benefit-rich language to keep people wowed by your site – and coming back regularly to see what's new!