



# The Wordsmith VA

## 50 Non-Traditional Marketing Ideas for Small Businesses

When it comes to marketing, small business owners need the best bang for their buck. That's why traditional marketing, including television and newspaper advertising, isn't the ideal choice for small business owners looking to spread the word about their companies. Instead, small business owners should turn to non-traditional marketing. It's efficient, flexible and cost-effective. And best of all, non-traditional marketing creates a "buzz" around your company.

Ready to tackle some new marketing ideas for your small business? Check out these 50 ideas you can start implementing today. Some are free, and some cost a little money. Some are easy, and some may stretch your thinking. But all of them can get your community raving about your company.

1. **Print a coupon on the back of your business card.** Give prospects two business cards – one to keep and one to pass along.
2. **Connect with bloggers** who can give honest reviews about your company and its products or services. Invite them to visit your store or provide free samples of your product in exchange for a sincere review.
3. **Ask your best former clients for testimonials** to post on your website. Written is great, but video is even better. Train your staff to ask for referrals, too.
4. **Get custom graphics for your car**, create a vanity license plate with your company name or design a clever bumper sticker or car magnet. These are great if you're a realtor or other professional who is out and about in your community.
5. **Update your e-mail signature** for all of your outgoing messages. Be sure it contains important contact information, such as your store's location, your company's blog or website and a telephone number. But don't forget a call-to-action – even something as simple as "Find our latest sales on Facebook" or "Tweet about our newest product."
6. Introduce your company to new customers by **offering a discount on a daily coupon service**, such as [Groupon](#) or [Living Social](#).
7. **Use your current clients to gain new ones.** Give a free gift to your customers when they bring a friend to an event or give a coupon to customers and ask them to share it with someone else.
8. **Offer discounts to members of certain companies or organizations.** If your restaurant is located near a big business, offer employees there a discount on meals when they show their employee ID. Offer discounts to members of certain clubs or groups in exchange for promoting your company in their publications.
9. Everywhere you go, **wear a pin** with your company's name and logo.
10. **Provide a service that complements your core services.** If you have an HVAC business, offer an energy audit. If you are a social media expert, offer a free analysis of a company's Facebook page.

These complementary services will provide an additional value for your company's services and may lead to larger investments from your customers.

11. **Put a QR code in your business' window.** Connect it to a mobile landing page that includes the details of your company and the benefits of your products and services.
12. **Make a video.** Create a short and interesting video that explains your company's products or services. Share the video on your company's website, blog, Facebook page, Twitter page and YouTube page.
13. **Join groups or associations** that are related to your industry. This could include trade associations, social clubs, civic groups, fraternities, alumni associations and chambers of commerce.
14. **Send handwritten notes.** Whether it's saying thank you to someone you met at a networking event, showing customers you appreciate their business or even sending birthday cards and seasonal greetings, a handwritten note will go a long way to making you and your company memorable.
15. **Pay for someone's parking meter** and leave your business card along with the parking receipt on the windshield.
16. **Present yourself as an expert in your field** to your local media. Newspaper, television and radio reporters are always looking for local businesses to feature in their stories. Jump on this idea if a current news story really connects to your company's products, services or brand.
17. Target specific potential clients using **Facebook ads**. You can target customers based on their location, age, gender and more.
18. **Improve your building signage.** And invest in a custom neon sign to make your business visible at night.
19. **Use e-mail marketing.** Create an opt-in form on your website then send a weekly message about the latest news from your company.
20. **Share your sales literature with your business partners**, including your attorney, accountant, banker, temp agency, office supply salesperson and others.
21. **Advertise on carts in local grocery stores.**
22. **Be a trusted source online.** Contribute to conversations on Facebook pages and LinkedIn groups where your customers and prospects spend time. Avoid promotional talk; instead, showcase your expertise by answering people's questions.
23. **Dress up your company's Facebook page.** Update the profile image with your company logo, improve the cover photo with an eye-catching image that tells your company's story, be sure all of your contact information is current and stay active by posting frequent news and updates and responding to customers' comments.
24. Volunteer to **speak at a career day** at a local school.
25. **Get a booth** at a local festival, fair or trade show. Sell your services, demo your products and offer a raffle (the prize is something you sell!) in exchange for names and e-mail addresses for your e-mail list.
26. **Use Google Adwords** for pay-per-click advertising targeted at specific keywords your potential customers may use to search for your business online.

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27. **Donate your products or services** to a non-profit organization, including local schools, military organizations and other charitable events.
28. **Participate on a panel at a professional conference.** Share your promotional materials with the seminar's attendees along with a free sample of your product or a special discount on a future purchase.
29. **Publish an e-newsletter for customers and prospects.** It doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. Determine the frequency, plan the content, offer discounts and be sure you always direct readers to your website and social media pages.
30. **Join local networking groups** – in person or online.
31. **Create a giveaway item that is specific to your business.** If you own a nail salon, give your customers an emery board emblazoned with your business' logo. If you own a computer repair business, give your customers a flash drive branded with your company's website address. Get creative!
32. **Host a [Google+](#) hangout.** Converse with your customers, answer their questions and share an inside scoop about your company or its products.
33. **Write, write, write!** Write a column for your local newspaper. Write articles for trade publications. Publish an eBook. Use your writing to demonstrate your expertise and to present your company as the area's go-to business for your products or services.
34. **Give a discount to your regular clients.**
35. **Host social events for your current customers.** If you own a bookstore, host a book club. If your store sells musical instruments, host an after-hours jam session.
36. **Post a link to your latest blog posts on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).** And don't forget about [Digg](#), [Reddit](#) and [Delicious](#). Then start a discussion about the topic to engage your fans.
37. **Host educational seminars and classes** about topics in your industry that are important to your customers.
38. **Celebrate customer milestones.** Award a free prize to your store's 100th customer on a special day or offer a discount to your company's 500th client of the year.
39. **Create a robust, professional website for your company.** Be sure to include content about your company's history, information about its products and services and the best ways to contact your company. If possible, allow customers to purchase your products and services through your website.

40. While creating your website, **also create a blog**. Write about topics that are important to your clients and your local area as well as sharing news about your company. Share ideas and tips for your clients and prospects. Start out small by posting once a week. And be sure you can commit the time, energy and resources to your blog for an extended period of time.
41. **Diversify your products**. Offer a simpler, cheaper or smaller version of an existing product or service. Or offer a fancier, more expensive or bigger version.
42. **Teach a class** or participate in a seminar at a local college or adult education center.
43. **Establish a customer loyalty program**. Customers earn points when they make purchases, and the points can be used as discounts on future purchases.
44. **Find a champion for your company**. Choose an important influencer in your community who uses your product or frequents your store. Talk to them about partnering together to spread the word about your company. This could be a local celebrity, a local blogger or someone else who is highly recognizable in your community.
45. **Challenge your customers to a game**. Ask them to find the hidden prize or a “golden ticket” in your store to win a year’s supply of one of your products.
46. **Offer special perks and discounts to your fans on social media**.
47. **Barter with other small businesses in your area**. If you are a techie, offer to help a local landscaping company update its website in exchange for planting new flowers on your business’ property. Or if you own a restaurant, share gift certificates for your restaurant in exchange for advertising on the radio.
48. **Create a temporary body tattoo of your company’s logo or even a QR code**. Then ask your staff to wear a tattoo when they represent the company at events or when they hand out flyers on the street.
49. **Ask to make a guest post on a local blog** that focuses on your company’s industry, especially if your target market reads the blog.
50. **Sponsor** local festivals, church events, school events and sports leagues.

**Do you need help marketing your company’s services?**  
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