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BUSINESS BASICS



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INTRODUCTION

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Frank B. Phillips
Founder & CEO



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QR Codes And Small Business

You've doubtlessly heard a lot of talk about QR Codes (and seen those little square boxes on countless ads and websites. But what exactly are these codes – and more importantly, can they be used to help your small business?

QR Codes (short for Quick Response Codes) are essentially the next evolution of the barcode. Think of it as the digital generation's barcode. And as the leaner, meaner, more technologically friendly version of the data that gets scanned at grocery stores, QR codes have some serious advantages over their predecessors.

Unlike the old-fashioned barcode, a QR Code can hold a wealth of information. Advertisements, discounts, or extensive information on a product: it can all be contained in a tiny square. And they're remarkably user-friendly. Potential customers can usually grab an app that deciphers QR Codes free of charge and download it directly into their smartphone. This gives them the freedom to scan codes when they're out an about on their daily business.

This is all well and good, but how does that help you and your business? As we mentioned before, QR Codes allow potential customers to interact with your company and products on the go. It's a great way to raise your profile for virtually no cost, especially since numerous QR Code generators allow you to make numerous codes for free.

So once you have a QR Code, what can you do with it? This is when you get to tailor this technology to your particular message and product. Some companies use the codes to connect people to their social media sites, or link them to their landing pages. Others include basic contact information in the code and attach it to business cards.

But that's really just the beginning. QR Codes can hold such awesome amounts of information that you can send customers discount codes and sale announcements with the push of a button. You can add a store's location via Google Maps and make sure people know how to find your establishment. Do you have a restaurant? Then a small QR Code in the front window or by the tables could link people to your Yelp page (and help them write glowing reviews).

Musicians, filmmakers, and artists can use QR Codes to connect people to their art. A free song, a short film, or information on an upcoming gallery event could all be encoded in that small square.

This versatility is part of the reason QR Codes have endured, even while similar advertising fads have fallen by the wayside. So take a long look at this technology and see how you can make it work for you and the goals of your business.

Public Relations For Small Businesses

Most small businesses are on a tight budget. They have to figure out where every penny goes, and determine whether the investment is worth it. One of the categories that most often end up on the chopping block as a result is public relations. After all, you already have an advertising budget – do you really need to set aside additional funds for public relations? When you find out the value of PR, you'll realize just how many great promotional options you've been leaving unexplored.

One of the problems with public relations is how often we misunderstand its role in business. A PR company can give your small business an enormous amount of credibility for very little money. Having an outside source endorse what you're doing can significantly boost consumer confidence. Advertising is great and good (and essential to a successful business), but public relations promotions can give your business a feeling of authenticity that simply can't be duplicated.

If PR is going to work for you, you need to be consistent. Find a firm that understands your vision and can make it a reality. Make sure they connect you with reliable and trustworthy sites to promote your business. Seeing your business on websites like Yelp.com or apps like BreMobile will give consumers the confidence they need to give your business a go. It proves that not only is your business a legitimate operation, but that it's thriving enough to spread its brand across the digital world.

Search engines have made public relations doubly important. Nobody wants to try out a product or company that has no web presence; people become suspicious, and begin to reconsider their options. No search results can prove just as bad for your business as negative reviews. A good PR firm will make sure your brand is widespread in the proper channels, raise awareness in a positive manner, and dramatically increase your bottom line.

When it comes to public relations, a little can go a long way. One media endorsement, one appearance on a positive website, and your company will see an overwhelming increase in attention. It's a different take on your brand than traditional advertising, and in this day and age it's become an aspect of marketing that simply can't be overlooked.

Now that we've sold you on the fact that small businesses need to invest in public relations, it's time to find the right plan for you and your goals. Does your business require a full firm backing it up, or will a single PR professional be enough? As we said before, it's vitally important that your public relations are tailored to your unique focus. Every small business is different, and a cookie-cutter approach just won't work. Find PR individual who is genuinely excited to share your story – and your vision – with the world. It's virtually impossible to fake real enthusiasm, and having a team of people who believe in and support your small business is worth more than its weight in gold. When you find a public relations team that really syncs up with your business plan, you'll know you're on the path to PR success.

Making The Most Of The Customer Experience

Small businesses have a lot to contend with these days. There are countless factors demanding their attention, and the results can be overwhelming. The end result is that vital aspects of your business and brand can often be overlooked – to your company's detriment. And by far one of the most overlooked aspects of modern business (particularly in the mobile world) is the customer experience.

The customer experience covers a wide range of factors, which is part of the reason it's so easy to fall by the wayside. Fundamentally, it's the overall experience a customer walks away with after interacting with your company or brand. And while many businesses have a few great aspects to their customer experience – strong social media, reaching out to new customers, maintaining an effective mobile presence – often the over impact can be somewhat lacking.

The problem comes about when companies go for a cookie-cutter solution. Each small business is different from every other, with different needs and desires, strengths and weaknesses. Trying to gloss over that and force your brand and image into a model it doesn't fit will leave your company lacking – and ultimately hurt the customer experience.

If this seems like a lot to think about on top of all the other concerns and issues surrounding a small business, then you ignore it at your own risk. This is the digital age, where a bad review can travel the whole world a dozen times over before an irate customer has even walked out of your store. With countless websites devoted to reviewing small businesses (many of them mobile), this makes an online community that can instantly react to the pros and cons of any small business.

The simple way to address the customer experience is to focus on what your customers are saying. Social media is a phenomenal way to get real-time reactions to new ventures and programs. If something doesn't work, you can quickly drop it and instead enhance what actually is succeeding. Pay attention to the demographics you're reaching, and those that you can't seem to crack. Websites like BreMobile can offer you analytics that let you see which customers are responding well to your business plan.

Remember, this isn't just about selling your product: it's about selling your company and your brand. Don't turn every single thing into a sales pitch. Let your potential clients see the people behind the company. Personally respond to comments and questions when you're able. Interact with your customers and create a dialogue. This dynamic will help them be personally invested in your small business and you brand, and is an easy and inexpensive way to garner serious loyalty from your clients.

Ultimately, perfecting the customer experience is about trial and error. Some things that work well for one company are going to flop with others; it's the nature of business, and any small business that's going to survive needs to be able to adapt accordingly. Be open, willing, and receptive to new ideas. If your customer base is talking about a new feature or product they'd love to see, look into it. Even if you can't give them what they want, showing you're receptive to their suggestions and willing to try new things will increase your customer's faith in you, and leave them coming back for more.

What's Going On With Growth Hacking?

It's one of those phrases that gets tossed around a lot in business circles: growth hacking. The problem is, more often than not people use it without truly understanding what it is. Is growth hacking another buzz trend that will fade into obscurity in a matter of months? Actually, growth hacking has been around for quite a while – and could be more valuable for your business than you ever imagined.

Growth hacking is an innovative way to streamline your marketing plan and make it work for your company. Growth hackers utilize analytics, social metrics, and unconventional creativity to increase the exposure of a company or product. They don't have to reinvent the wheel or invent an entirely new social network in order to reach customers; instead, these specialists utilize preexisting tools to the advantage of their employers. This cuts out the lengthy process of building a network, and instead allows companies to focus on the matter at hand: reaching the best audience for their brands.

Growth hacking is not a new concept; it's simply the next evolution of marketing. The idea is optimal for startups and small businesses, which rarely have the resources needed to develop an entire customer base from the ground up. By piggybacking on preexisting sites (and with a healthy dose of analytics, SEO optimization, and content marketing), growth hacking can save a small business time and money. Instead of spending money on traditional television and print advertising, growth hackers rely on a positive digital presentation and word of mouth raise their profile.

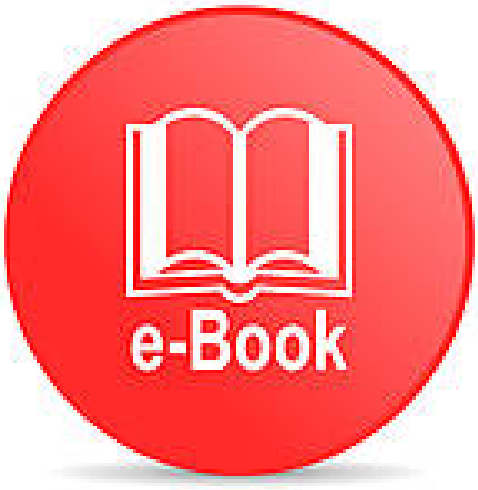
Unlike traditional marketers who deal with the already finished product, growth hackers assume a far more hands-on approach. Indeed, they often offer input and insight into a product to help make it more saleable. Thus they have to think about the product (and the company) from inception to completion – with every step along the way factored in.

Despite its numerous advantages, not everyone likes growth hacking. Some have dismissed it as an overhyped marketing title, and prefer to stick with tried and true methods instead of looking into new ideas.

To make matters worse, growth hackers got a pretty bad reputation for a while when people co-opted the name as an excuse to send spam, do things without users' express permission, and generally behaved in ways not conducive to a successful business plan. Even beginners to the marketing game know that the way to get customers doesn't involving spanning their inbox.

Growth hackers are required to have their finger on the digital pulse, keeping track of new trends and ways to reach customers. Jumping on to new mobile apps like BreMobile or building an impressive follower count on Twitter are both examples of what would be expected of an effective hacker. Those that are suspicious of new technologies or immediately dismiss any developing social network have the wrong mentality for this important job.

Growth hacking may have a buzzword-sounding name, but it's based on solid concepts and marketing common sense. And if you still have second thoughts about this way to optimize your brand and expand your small business, keep this in mind: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Dropbox have *all* benefited from the use of growth hacking. So take a look at your company's marketing plan and see.



4 Tips For Marketing To Millenials

The millennials are a complicated group. They have a soft spot for nostalgia but lust after technology; they're jaded but hate falsehood. And more and more, they're turning to mobile devices for their technological needs. With so many contradictions, quite a few companies are left at a loss over how to deal with millennials. And yet they're an essential demographic for a small business hoping to reach success. Luckily, the mystery isn't as complicated as some are making it out to be. The future of millennials and mobile devices are irrevocably linked, and this can prove a positive factor for many small businesses. Here are some simple tips on how to combine millennials and mobile marketing into one effective advertising plan.

- **Don't Treat Them Like Computer Users**

Millennials are the first generation to have grown up with mobile devices. They've been texting, tweeting, and downloading for as long as they can remember. As such, they're absolutely at ease on their smartphones and other such technology. But don't just mix them in with your standard web users; they have different habits, interests, and behaviors. Treat them like an entirely unique breed of potential customers and you'll be far more likely to achieve success.

- **Keep It Social**

Millennials *love* social media, and are quick to try out any new program that comes their way. Of course, they'll just as quickly abandon anything that doesn't suit their particular needs. Small businesses need to utilize social media if they're going to keep up with customers in general, and millennials in particular. It not only serves to personalize the user experience, it is great promotion; a single good experience on Twitter can generate tons of positive feedback. So go ahead and sign your company up for social media accounts, then get to work interacting with your customers.

- **They Rely On Apps**

Trust me: millennials have an app for that. Whatever their needs or desires, they'll be sure to find the perfect program for it (and share it with their friends). Some companies opt to design their own apps, which can backfire spectacularly for those that aren't confident in that department. Others prefer to leave the legwork to professionals and add their businesses to apps like BreMobile and Yelp. This not only saves small businesses the time and stress of having to sort out all those technical issues, it gives users the confidence they need to try out new brands and products.

- **They're Still Evolving**

Millennials have virtually no time for traditional advertising, but that doesn't mean that you can rest on your mobile laurels. This dynamic and challenging demographic is ever changing, from the way they communicate to how they process information and choose to invest their time and money. Keep that in mind when you're courting this group of customers. And be sure to listen to what they're asking for. Like any other demographic, millennials know what they want and how they want it. The difference between them and their forebears is that they have the means to instantly tell small businesses (and the world) just what they think.

This Is Why We Bre: Why Consumers Will Love BreMobile

BreMobile is a real game-changer. It takes the world of mobile advertising and turns it completely on its head. BreMobile's goal is to give small businesses across the globe the ability to attract local business without busting their advertising budget. By reaching the widest range of customers at incredibly low rates (starting at just $5 per week), there's nothing companies won't love about BreMobile. And they're not alone; see why your customers will flock to this mobile app for all their local shopping needs.

BreMobile Is User-Friendly: There's no complicated interfaces or exhaustive sites to struggle through. BreMobile's app is streamlined and simple, so customers can quickly find the products and services that best suit their needs. The search engine allows users to type in exactly what they're seeking, and quickly come up with a list of results that applies to their interests.

BreMobile Is Local: From a local swap meet to a chain-store discount deal, customers will be able to find every single sale and event in their area. Even when they're on vacation, users will be just the push of a button away from finding great local secrets. They'll feel like local insiders no matter where they go, or what they're searching for.

BreMobile Lets Users Decide: Users aren't jus bombarded with ads that may or may not appeal to them – they pick and choose exactly which ads they want to explore. They can even save interesting ads to look at later, creating a collection of great deals and discounts.

BreMobile Has Coupons: Digital coupons are a huge draw for consumers (especially when it comes to trying out a business they've never heard of), and BreMobile provides small businesses with the ability to share them quickly and easily. Users can find incentives and sales that will encourage them to explore new companies and brands, and walk away with some new favorites.

BreMobile Maps It: Some of us don't have a great sense of direction, and get lost even when we know where we're heading. BreMobile doesn't want customers to get derailed on their way to a store, and makes sure they're on the right path with a clear and well-defined map of the address. This cuts down on confusion, and lets users focus on finding great deals instead of side streets.

BreMobile Is A Social Experience: If a customer finds a great store or amazing brand, they'll wan to share it with their friends. But if it's too hard to get the word out, they'll quickly lose interest and move on. BreMobile makes sure this process is simple and fast by allowing users to share ads, coupons, and deals with the push of a button. Better yet, the process of sharing also provides everyone on their social network with the address and phone number of the company. That cuts down on the steps needed for customers to get in touch with the businesses they love, and share their great finds with family and friends.

Why Small Businesses Can Bet On BreMobile

BreMobile is a revolutionary new mobile marketing app. And considering how challenging marketing and advertising can be, especially for small businesses, this technology has come at exactly the right time. As mobile advertising grows in popularity, small businesses and brands must adapt accordingly in order to survive. Luckily, they don't have to negotiate these uncharted waters alone – BreMobile is here to help small businesses make the most of their mobile advertising plans. Here's why small businesses and brands can't afford to miss out on what BreMobile has to offer.

BreMobile Monetizes Mobile Ad Space: The question on most people's minds about mobile users is money. How do we monetize this new space in a smart and effective manner? BreMobile allows small businesses to do so in a simple and money-saving manner that will allow them to focus on what matters most – their customers.

BreMobile Works With Your Budget: Mobile marketing isn't just the realm of huge businesses; small brands and businesses have just as much opportunity to take advantage of this huge potential audience. BreMobile will work with any budget – large or small – to help small businesses maximize their mobile advertising reach.

BreMobile's Early Bird Special: BreMobile is so committed to giving small businesses the most bang for their buck that as a 'thank you' for early sign-ups, we're offering 20 weeks of free mobile advertising. That's 20 weeks of advertising on a major mobile app for absolutely free. Small business owners can't afford to miss out on this deal! But hurry up – the Early Bird Special ends on July 1st.

BreMobile Loves Small Businesses: Unlike other apps and services that focus on big spenders and major players, BreMobile is interested in helping local businesses. Instead of being tossed to the side or overlooked, small businesses are what BreMobile truly focuses on. Companies will find a fast and user-friendly service backed by a helpful team ready to make mobile advertising work for small businesses across the country, and the world.

BreMobile Takes Care Of The Technical Side: A lot of people still aren't incredibly tech-savvy, especially when it comes to their business. Others are hesitant about trusting their livelihood to a service they don't entirely understand. BreMobile is ready and willing to break down the confusion and turn mobile advertising into a simple and enjoyable experience. Technical consultants and advisors are on hand to answer any questions you might have, and help small businesses figure out how to make the most out of mobile advertising.

BreMobile Means Innovation: Too many digital platforms get stuck in a rut, using the same old tricks and techniques even as trends and tastes change. BreMobile believes in innovation and staying ahead of the curve; the service is always exploring new ways to connect local businesses with consumers and promote brands. The unique and transforming nature of BreMobile means it can adapt quickly to changes in the market and in consumer's habits. This means advertisers will have endlessly evolving resources to reach customers, and turn the mobile market into a major success.

Money Savings Tips

Small businesses are tough; they have to survive difficult odds and tighter budgets than their bigger counterparts. This means entrepreneurs who intend to succeed have to think fast and outside the box. And these unconventional methods extend to every aspect of their business -- even saving money. Here are a few smart ways for small businesses to save money and succeed in a competitive environment.

Keep Customers Happy: A happy customer is a powerful too for small businesses. Satisfied users will often tell friends and family about their good experience, spreading awareness by word of mouth. They may even write a positive review of your business online; conversely, unhappy customers are liable to complain. And in this day and age of social networking, one bad experience can snowball into a ton of bad press. Avoid this and make sure the customer is always satisfied.

Go Paperless: Save the environment (and money) at the same time by switching to paperless communications and invoices. Small businesses can get deals on online data storage that will save them time and money (and protect a few trees too).

Ditch Traditional Advertising: Studies show that people are less and less inclined to listen to traditional advertising methods (like print or television). Digital is the future, and mobile marketing is the new frontier. It's better to invest a small amount of money in this new advertising technology, instead of dumping tons of funds into a rapidly fading medium. And when it comes to saving money, mobile marketing could be your best bet: right now, BreMobile is offering an Early Bird Special for those that sign up before August 1st. Early adopters will get 10 weeks of mobile advertising absolutely FREE. That's more than two months to see how your small business fares in the mobile market, absolutely free.

Try Open Source: Software can cost a ton -- money that most small businesses would rather use elsewhere. So before you spend large sums on software updates that will be obsolete by the end of the year, explore the options around open source. Open source is free, and can prove a great resource for small businesses looking to save money on their technology bills.

Review Your Expenses: Small businesses can't afford to be extravagant. So take the time to look over your budget and see if there's any extraneous material. Be ruthless and scrutinize every aspect of your business -- you might find some unexpected cuts that will save you a ton of money.

Be Unconventional: Entrepreneurs don't succeed by taking the same path as everyone else. They take risks and try new things. Use the same mentality when looking for ways to save money. Explore finding a new bank, or consider hiring more interns. Research the pros and cons of joining forces with another business, or embracing mobile marketing in your advertising campaign. It's this creative sensibility and talent for thinking outside the box that helps small businesses succeed in the marketplace -- and saving money should be no different.