Business Ideas and Trends for 2011

Last week as I was visiting with folks at a Holiday gathering, a couple of business people, said “Dean what does SCORE predict will be the big news for small businesses in 2011?” WOW!! I didn’t know that I was supposed to be some “Carnac the Magnificent”, and certainly SCORE is not in that business, but now that you ask, it made me do some digging.

Most small businesses are hoping that 2011 will be better than the last few years. Depending on who you listen to or what you read, we are supposed to be in a state of “recovery”. But, if that is the case, most economists agree that it will be slow and probably slower than most of us want it to be. So an important consideration for the small business is to ask what should we know to make 2011 better for us?

So, I did some digging into my resources and one of the best business predictions that I found was a piece done by John Jantsch who is a marketing coach, award winning social media publisher and author of two best selling books, Duct Tape Marketing and The Referral Engine. If you haven’t read these books, I would recommend them to you.

Jantsch says, “The thing about predictions and small business is that no matter what trends are reported in the media, small business will always adopt it much slower and in ways that are counter to much of the hype. Small business owners don’t care what’s cool. They care about what seems practical and what seems obvious – and that’s not always what gets the buzz.”

Here are some of his insights for 2011:

1. Social media is. This year we will simply stop talking about social media as though it were some new, sexy, foreign cousin of marketing. It’s just a fact of marketing life and will get integrated into strategy and tactics alike in ways that produce ROI. It will become standard operating procedure to include social media activity into a prospect of client’s CRM record and use social networks as the primary way to acquire introductions and make warm sales calls.

2. Mobile lands. Mobile’s promise always seemed to be tied to mobile ads, text messaging and proximity pushes, but consumers don’t want these in their life any more than they want spam in their email, so mobile’s promise has evolved. Mobile for the small business will be about mobile payments, search related apps, and location based offers.
3. **O2O marketing Strategy.** Online and offline, traditional media and new media, will stop competing and start working together. For 2011 a new kind of strategy will emerge for the small business and that is one of using the online space to drive people to the offline space. The in person experience is the ultimate competitive advantage of the small business and how they beat the online and big box competition. Get them in the store, get them to a meeting, get them to an event, get them in a community, or get them on using an app.

4. **Networked referral automation.** Search engines now tell you who in your social network likes those shoes or wrote about that topic you just queried. The evolution of this behavior will be the total automation of social surfing. Surfers will be able to view who in their network knows those who also know the real estate agent they are considering hiring and who on Facebook also went to high school with the attorney that was referred to them.

5. **Apps over Web.** The good news is that you can find anything on the Web these days. The bad news is you can find anything on the Web these days. Information seekers will grow tired of the unpoliced nature of the Web and will increasingly turn to trusted sources of content and willing pay to have that content contained, packaged and delivered in application form to the device of their choice. Marketers need to consider this behavior when they develop their content strategies and take a look at the community of content approach vs. the free information approach. Trusted networks will become even more important.

For more information about starting or operating a small business here in Southeast Minnesota, contact SCORE on our website: www.score-SEMinnesota.org

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Dean L. Swanson  
Southeast Minnesota SCORE  
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce  
220 South Broadway, Suite 100  
Rochester, MN 55904  
*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Counselor.*