5 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING

A SIMPLE GUIDE TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS IN 2017

By Stevie Bales

ABOUT ME

My Name is Stevie Bales and I am a multi-skilled Visual Interaction Designer. I work with Small Independent Businesses and Local Non-Profits to enhance their overall presence and help them connect with their audience and/or clients.

Officially, my job is to create and develop graphic and digital designs that generate leads, connect with users, and are optimized for a specific audience. But really? I spend time getting to know my clients I work for, help to determine their largest problems, and solve using design.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This eBook is meant to be a short introduction to small business marketing, and how best to create your presense locally. Most of these tips can be implemented by anyone with a little time and effort. Even the most non-design-savy individual can start making a new visual and digital presense to help their business.

Each tip includes examples from projects I have designed and created. Many of the images link to their projects online. If, after you read this short eBook, you find you are in need of a design professional, I hope you will contact me for assistance.

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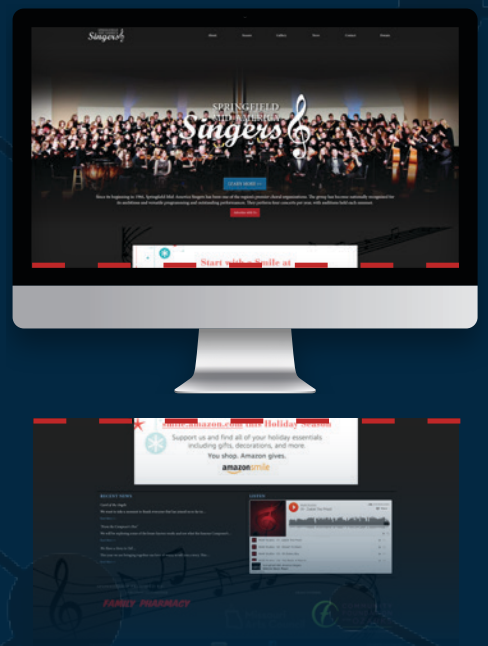
1 MAKE YOUR PURPOSE LOUD AND CLEAR.

When you market to your businesses target audience, either in print or digital form, what do you want them to do? Contact you? Sign-up for your mailing list? Inquire about your Services? Make this purpose very clear from the beginning. The worst thing to see is a marketing brochure or website without a clear purpose (*aka call to action*).

Make titles short & sweet.

Always drive home the point with a nice, short, and to-the-point title. The majority of readers (*80%*) only read headlines and titles, they simply skim the remainder of the other information. When the get to a title that sounds like they need to know more, then they read.



Clearly feature the most relevant information.

Keep the most important information at the top, where they are likely to see it. Make it big, bold, and to-the-point. On websites this info is kept on the main area of the website when you first enter (*aka above-the-fold*). In print designs this means adding some kind of indicator to the info so it stands out (*i.e. bigger font, bold weight, different color, etc.*)

Springfield Mid-America Singers Website Design by Stevie Bales

2 DESIGN MUST BE AUDIENCE CENTRIC.

Why have a website if it doesn't talk to your audience? This point always seems like common sense but far too often businesses don't take it seriously.

Your website should look good on Mobile Phones (& Tablets).

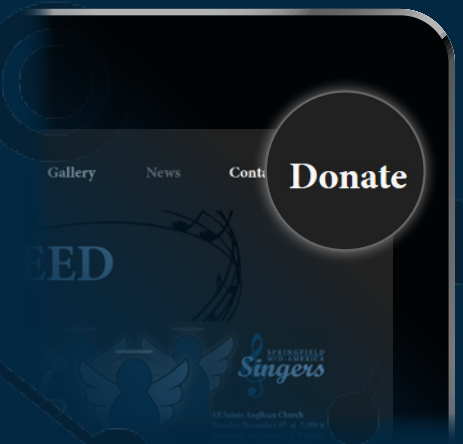
Also known as Responsive or Adaptive, the majority (~50% to ~80%) of your current and prospective customers are going to find you on the web, via their smart phones. These devices have tiny screens with a small amount of real-estate. So if your regular website needs to be zoomed-in or scrolled around to even be legible, then they are likely to leave. A responsive design, dedicated to your mobile user will not only make your site easier to use, it will help your customer trust you but proving that you pay attention to market shifts.

The Mythic Gazetteer Website Design by Stevie Bales

Audience Friendly.

Do you have donors, volunteers, employees, or shoppers coming to your website? I'll give you a hint, the answer is YES. Making a site revolve around the type of extra audience you have is possibly the one thing that can make or break a site.

If you want a new volunteer to contact you, make it easy for them to do so. Use a contact form not a listed email, this makes it easier for them to accomplish their goal. Let this volunteer know what is expected of them before hand.



If you want a donor to donate money to your cause, then give them a clear path to do so. Buttons in the most obvious places tend to help. If you want shoppers to request an estimate, then make sure they are guided through the process of setting one up.

If you want more followers and sign-ups then again, show them so. Making less steps for customers is the key to successful on-line transactions.

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3 MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE UPON YOUR BRAND IDENTITY.

What's in a brand? Well everything your business does, shows, and says. Everything your marketing says about your brand should emphasis the important features of the business. Making sure to emphasis what you say in do in all places.

Make Your Website Consistent with Other Promotional Materials.

Do you have set of streamlined colors you always use? How about a specific set of fonts? Better still, do you have a short 'what we do' statement (*aka elevator pitch*) that you use in many places? These things are what will help keep you consistent and ultimately memorable. Memorable is important, especially for gaining new customers.

Connect to your social media accounts.

Are you using social media? No? You should be. I'm sure you've heard it 1000 times, but in today's day and age, you really need to be hitting the free market that is social media. Keep your accounts info up to date, easily found, and always connect them to your other marketing materials. Websites should link back to your Facebook account, and printed marketing materials should list your Twitter handle directly. If you want new customers, young or old, social media has a built in referral function (*also known as sharing*).

Proper Hijinx Productions Branding & Website Design by Stevie Bales

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4 USE STORYTELLING TO MAKE COMPELLING CONTENT.

Every business has a story, from a childhood love of watching live shows came the birth of a small independent theatre company. Or from a family's love of BBQ, came a restaurant. Use this story to make your business human. Customers connect with their emotions, and stories create those emotions.

Maintain this content strategy in everything you do.

Once you've written your story, maintain it. It can evolve and change with time, but use it everywhere. If you change overnight from a happy Mom & Pop attitude to a large franchise business voice, you are likely to lose your faithful customers.

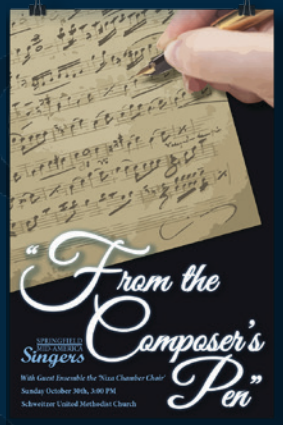
Proper Hijinx Productions Promotional Marketing Design by Stevie Bales

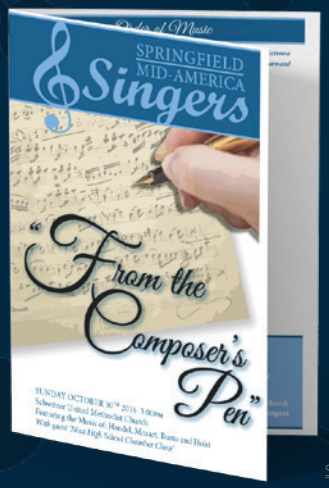
Pictures speak louder than words.

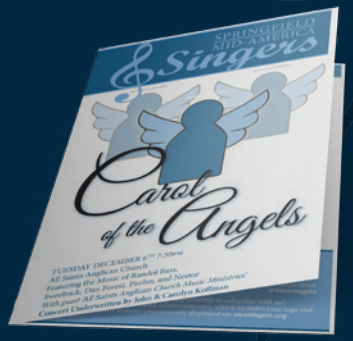
We've all heard it, but are you actually utilizing this famous saying? Pictures, and I mean well thought out ones, are the driving force for both digital and printed marketing. Pictures also help your customers connect with your and what you do. Much like the state we live in, your customers want you to SHOW them what you can do.

Use a CMS to continue the content machine.

This final tip is directly for websites. A CMS (Content Management System) will let you website be editable by you, the owner. You can change and update the necessary content where you see fit and let others know when things change. For many this an invaluable resource.







Springfield Mid-America Singers Promotional Marketing Design by Stevie Bales

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5 LESS IS ALWAYS MORE.

Again with the never aging words of wisdom. A long standing phrase is about as good as a used napkin, unless you know what to do with it.

Leave room for breathing.

Always let your marketing materials breathe. Ever seen a label full of text, with no differentiating qualities to the words? Well, if you haven't, then let me tell you, it's illegible. Space around logos, pictures, and text are essential to establishing what is most important, secondary, and what is extra information.

Stefany Cambra Personal Portfolio Website Design by Stevie Bales

SERVICES.

When you are working on your next business marketing project, or just getting off the ground, I hope you consider giving me a call. I have over 3 years of experience in creating graphic marketing materials and can also help with your digital marketing needs. I offer the following services:

Graphic Design

- Logo & Branding Materials
- Business Cards and/or Business Systems
- Brochures
- Posters
- Postcards
- Digital Social Media Ads
- Printed Ads

Digital Design

- Websites from one page to 100
- Content Management Systems for Websites
- WebApps or Native Mobile Apps
- Other Interactive Digital Projects

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STEVIE BALES

VISUAL INTERACTION DESIGNER

+1 (417) 893 0839
design@steviebales.com
www.steviebales.com