



April Newsletter: Gaining New Customers

Hello!

Spring has sprung and the economy is perking up. It is time to focus on gaining new customers. Almost every small business has a website, while online banner ads and sponsored links are quickly becoming overlooked visual clutter. Did you know that many of your potential customers are now looking to local, socially-driven "search and review" engines to determine where to go for retail and services?

In this newsletter, we look at three of these tools to help you determine if they can help you reach new customers.

All the best,
Your friends at Cartwheel

Three Ways Your Small Business Can Win New Customers:

1. Yelp

Yelp (www.yelp.com) is a user based reviewing system that has become a leader in the local search business. It combines local search with social networking and local reviews.

Yelp Highlights

- Yelp has fostered a strong online community where customer reviews hold weight. People are more likely to choose your service when positively reviewed by a user.
- Yelp recently enabled check-ins which will soon offer businesses the opportunity to offer special incentives to users.
- Yelp strengthens its online community by planning offline events with registered small businesses.

Yelp Cons

- Yelp has recently come under fire for using ratings and reviews as a way to influence small business owners to spend advertising dollars. However, recent changes to the Yelp platform have quieted those fears.
- Although Yelp is improving its platform, it doesn't have the real time, instant, social networking appeal that other sites have.



2. Foursquare

Foursquare (www.foursquare.com) is a social application most often used on iPhones and Blackberrys. It's best for location-based businesses such as restaurants, salons, or galleries. When foursquare users come to your location, they "check-in" so their friends know what you are doing. While it is a young start-up with a mostly urban audience, it is a fast growing resource for small business owners.

Foursquare Highlights

- It has an enticing quality that allows real life daily events to be played like a game. For example, checking in more than any other person in a given time period will make them the mayor of that location. This drives repeat traffic to your business.
- Users connect foursquare with other social networking applications like Twitter and Facebook so that every time a user checks in, it updates their entire social network.
- Foursquare connects to Yelp and Google Places (see below) to allow users to read and leave immediate reviews.

Foursquare Cons

- It is available worldwide, but only useful in large metropolitan areas.
- The user tends to be a younger and may not be applicable to all businesses' target market.
- It is fairly new and does not have a large user group yet.

3. Google Places

Formerly known as Local Business Center and recently renamed Google Places (www.google.com/places), this online service combines the power of Google's search engine to allow entrepreneurs to create business profiles that are easily found by customers.

Google Places Highlights

- Google Place pages are free, but for \$25 per month, Google offers a simple way to advertise.
- For US based businesses, customized QR codes can be downloaded which can be placed on business cards and other marketing materials. Customers can scan the QR code with most smart phones to view your mobile place page and quickly receive information about your business.



- You can keep track of your traffic, keywords, and even what locations your customers are traveling from.
- You can also use real time capabilities to make announcements, send coupons, or add incentives.

Google Places Cons

- Although teamed with Google's search engine, Place Pages are still being developed and customers are not as aware of its services as they are with other advertising tools.
- Paid advertisements are only currently available in a small number of cities.
- Google Places lacks a social aspect and if not used properly to communicate with customers it can feel like a traditional static listing.

Wrapping Up

While your knee-jerk reaction may be "these new ways of reaching potential customers aren't for my business." You may be surprised – and should invest in researching your future. Because pricing is low (or in most cases free), why not give them a try? Finding and navigating your way through these new types of engines may seem daunting, but your future customers will be using them, and you should be too.

Finally if you are curious about how these services work, you can visit Cartwheel at all of the above. While there, why not review us?

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/cartwheel-it-new-york>

<http://foursquare.com/venue/2762840>

http://maps.google.com/maps/place?hl=en&georestrict=input_srcid%3A4cf77c97c85ca470