

# How to Advertise Your Business Online

If you need to advertise your business online, chances are your advertising budget may be on the limited side, particularly if you're just starting out, or have only been trading for a short time. Thankfully, there are some excellent cost-effective methods of advertising your small business - depending on the industry you're in, some may be better suited than others. However, all of them are proven to work when it comes to advertising any business, small or large.

## Write a Press Release

Although you might think that a press release is just something that is written when there's a major story to share, you couldn't be further from the truth. Besides, who says your business isn't a major story? A press release - particularly a search engine optimized press release - is one of the best forms of advertising around. There are hundreds of online release agencies that will distribute your news and some you have to pay for. If you're not too confident about writing your own press release, hire a copywriting service. You should expect to pay a couple of hundred dollars, but it's a small price to pay for the extra traffic and queries it could potentially bring.

## Use Social Networks

Everyone knows how popular the likes of Facebook and MySpace are, and other social networking sites like Bebo, Digg and more. Yet not everyone realizes how effective they are as marketing tools for your small business. Just having a profile and a presence offers a direct and **free** link back to your company website, and links coupled with fresh and unique content on your website increases your visibility on the search engines. The more visible you are on the likes of Google, the higher your chance of people finding your website and turning into customers.

## Start a Blog

While it used to be viewed as the domain of the sad loner with nothing better to do, writing a blog is now one of the most popular forms of communication online. Best of all, it's free - there are a myriad of blogging websites available to choose from, from Blogger.com to BlogWebsites.net. There are also blog sites that you can pay a monthly subscription to, like Squarespace. These usually offer more design tools and advertising features, hence the extra cost. Either way, whether it's using a free blog or premium one, maintaining a blog is a great way of letting both existing and potential customers know the latest news about your company. Depending on how you wish to approach your blog, it can also enable you to be a little more personable than your normal business style allows, which may just make you appear more human to anyone interested in your company.

## Join a Forum

Another potentially lucrative method of free online advertising for your business is via a forum. This is where like-minded individuals are members of an online message board, sharing advice and tips as well as offering potential business. Two of the best are [Small Business Forums](#) and [Small Business Online Community](#). One thing to keep in mind, though - make sure that whatever forum you join allows you to post your business services within the message boards. Many forums aren't too keen on this approach, classing it as spam, so take the time to read the Terms of Service before you join.

## Opt-In Email Lists

One of the more contentious forms of online advertising is via the use of opt-in email lists. This is when either individuals or other companies have agreed to receive mail from businesses whose services they are interested in. The reasoning behind these email lists is that you're guaranteed a receptive audience when you send out a marketing or advertising email. However, be careful - there have been many cases recently where unscrupulous providers of opt-in email addresses haven't actually received permission from some of the people or organizations on their list. Instead, third-party companies that then sell them on have appropriated their names. If you're thinking of using an opt-in email provider but are wary of whether they're reputable or not, a quick call to the Better Business Bureau will be able to tell you whether the company has had any complaints filed against them.

There you have it - a list of some of the most effective ways to advertise your business online. As I mentioned, some are more cost-effective than others, and some may be better suited to your company than the rest. Yet all offer a cheap yet proven way of advertising your business, compared to offline methods like newspaper advertisement or similar. Of course, there are some great and effective ways to advertise offline - flyers, for example, are inexpensive and simple to put together. Yet with so many people using the Internet as their main form of interacting with others, using the web as an advertising source makes sense. As long as you take the time to put together the right message and decide on the most effective approach for you, you should find that advertising your small business online will reap the rewards.



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