

Savvy SMEs Buck Economic Outlook Using Social Media to Boost Customer Engagement and Grow Their Follower Base

A calligrapher, a farm, and a magic retailer: three social media success stories

LONDON--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--A new breed of social media savvy SMEs is emerging in the UK, as businesses turn to alternative media channels to engage old customers and bring in new ones.

A group of small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) has been working with [Constant Contact®, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: CTCT), the trusted marketing adviser for small businesses, and has revealed their experiences in the hope that other business owners can benefit.

Despite a difficult economic climate, these businesses made the best use of all of the cost-effective marketing channels at their disposal, from social media to email marketing, and achieved some extraordinary results.

[Recent research](#) with British small business decision makers shows that around one quarter (24 per cent) use Facebook™ to market their organisation. Twenty two per cent of these reported that they had found new customers, and twelve percent of Facebook-using small businesses credited it with generating repeat sales.

Furthermore, one third (33 per cent) say they've added up to 25 new fans over the last six months, and 31 per cent say they have seen value in spreading the word about special offers or new products.

Becoming the expert

For Simon Rous from [Scribblers](#), a Suffolk-based calligraphy supplies retailer, the key to social success was marketing his company's impressive expertise.

Scribblers had been present on Facebook for about two years and was doing well through a combination of Facebook advertising and targeting those with an interest in calligraphy, but Simon felt there was even more potential for growth.

"Rather than offer fans a generic coupon, I wanted to show people that we knew exactly what calligraphy was all about," said Rous. "I think proving to potential buyers that you know your stuff can drive sales better than any coupon. We created a guide of 50 calligraphy tips, but wanted to make sure that it was an exclusive download only available to Facebook fans. That's when we tried [Social Campaigns](#) from Constant Contact."

According to Rous, the guide took a while to make but setting up and running the campaign was straightforward and very quick. "Anyone who was interested in the guide could access it, they just had to 'Like' our Facebook Page," he said.

The campaign was more successful than Rous could have imagined and he garnered 116 new Likes in just 24 hours. That social success has continued and the Scribblers Facebook Page now has more than 5,000 Likes.

"Our campaign wasn't built on Facebook alone; one of the key steps to success was an email that we sent to all our newsletter subscribers," said Rous. "This helped get the word out about the guide and encouraged people to click through to the Facebook Page to Like it. Right now, it seems that my social campaign is generating as many Likes as Facebook ads, and it's a lot more cost-effective."

Magical content

The trick for magician Owen Packard, co-founder of [Bigblindmedia](#), a Shropshire-based online magic retailer, was to build a community through engaging content.

"We make playing cards and magic trick tutorials," said Packard. "We've been doing a lot of wholesale, but we're trying to encourage direct sales through our website, so growing our social channels was very important to us."

Packard explains, "What we really wanted was an active base of fans on the Bigblindmedia Facebook Page. I had attempted running campaigns on social media using various tools before, but to be honest they had been rubbish, too complicated to put anything up and difficult to even get it working."

To achieve this active base, Packard and his team created content tailored for the audience – videos of magic tricks, tips on performance, articles explaining how to do magic and general news from the industry.

"From there, we promoted our content through Facebook, Twitter and our Constant Contact emails lists," said Packard. "We were blown away by the result, and quadrupled our active fan count in just a month. It's all about the content. If the content is really desirable, people help grow your Facebook page with one simple click."

Target and integrate

[Craigie's Farm, Deli and Café](#), a family-owned and -operated business, based between South Queensferry and Edinburgh, realised that understanding its audience and reaching out to them in variety of personalised ways was the key to marketing success.

John Sinclair, who owns and runs the farm with his wife, their two children and his mother, said, "We know the type of audience we're reaching on Facebook, with 80 per cent of our 2,668 fans being between 25-45 and the majority being female. With this in mind, it's important we use email to stay in contact with our older customer base, who typically do not use social networking sites. However, social media is an important way for us to grow our email list and maintain momentum. As such, we're always looking to post engaging content that our customers will like and share. We also monitor our competitors on social channels."

The combination of email and social media, both tailored with specific audiences in mind, has proved to be an excellent way to grow the business. Craigie's has been able to cut the vast majority of its newspaper advertising, saving an estimated £20,000 a year.

Integrating online marketing tools for further success

"Despite being time and resource starved, and facing extraordinarily tough economic conditions, these small businesses have managed to achieve fantastic results through some simple measures," added Annette lafrate, the managing director of Constant Contact UK.

"They've taken two powerful yet affordable tools – social media and email marketing – and used them together to drive impressive business results," said lafrate. "At Constant Contact, we are passionate about small business success, and these are three great examples of that success at work."

Constant Contact works with more than 10,000 UK SMEs, supporting their efforts by coupling social media marketing and email marketing tools with free KnowHow, personal coaching and award-winning product support. To learn more, go to www.constantcontact.co.uk.

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About Constant Contact, Inc.

[Constant Contact](#) wrote the book on [Engagement Marketing](#)™ – the new marketing success formula that helps small organisations create and grow customer relationships in today's socially connected world. More than half a million small businesses, nonprofits and associations worldwide use the company's online marketing tools to generate new customers, repeat business, and referrals through email marketing, social media marketing, event marketing, local deals, digital storefronts, and online surveys. Only Constant Contact offers the proven combination of affordable tools and free KnowHow, including local seminars, personal coaching and award-winning product support. The company further supports small organisations through its extensive network of consultants/resellers, technology providers, franchises and national associations.

About the study

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1009 Small Business (1 to 49 employees) Senior Decision Makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd and 6th July 2012. The survey was carried out online.

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