Constant Contact Newsroom

New Research from Constant Contact Reveals Small Businesses Struggle to Market Effectively Due to Low Confidence, Limited Time, and Lack of Knowledge

73 percent lack confidence in their marketing strategies, and 81 percent are nervous the current economy could negatively impact their business.

WALTHAM, Mass., April 23, 2024 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Constant Contact, a digital marketing and automation platform that has helped millions of small businesses and nonprofits globally, issued its latest Small Business Now report. Featuring insights from over 1,300 small businesses in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, the findings reveal most small businesses struggle to market themselves effectively due to low confidence, time constraints, and insufficient marketing knowledge.

With more than 300 million small businesses (SMBs) in the world, marketing is essential for differentiation and conveying value to customers. However, Constant Contact's Small Business Now report reveals a concerning trend — many small businesses feel overwhelmed by marketing, and they are not confident that their current strategy is contributing to their business goals. Uncertainty about the best methods for communicating with customers and a lack of time to execute campaigns fuel a cycle of procrastination that prevents small businesses from reaching their potential.

"Small business owners are usually much more passionate about their products and services than they are about marketing, but they still need to attract and retain customers to grow," said Sarah Jordan, chief marketing officer at Constant Contact. "Our research shows that while most SMBs recognize the importance of marketing, they often lack the time and expertise to be effective, especially in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. Constant Contact is committed to providing easy, yet powerful, tools that automate marketing to help our customers achieve better results in less time."

Confidence is Low, Driven in Part by Economic Concerns

The economy is a bigger concern than in 2023, and small businesses aren't sure their marketing is effective. To account for that uncertainty and keep up, they expect to spend more time and resources on marketing this year.

- 81 percent of SMBs surveyed are concerned the current economy could negatively impact their business.
- Small businesses in the UK report the highest level of concern about the economy (32 percent are very concerned) compared to other countries polled.
- 73 percent of small businesses surveyed show a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of their marketing strategy.
- 39 percent of SMBs surveyed plan to increase their marketing budgets this year, and 46% expect to spend at least 10% more.

There Isn't Enough Time to Prioritize Marketing

The daily responsibilities of small businesses often overshadow marketing efforts. When they do find the time, they say it takes too long, which leads them to procrastinate on the things that could make a big impact.

- 56 percent of SMBs surveyed say they only have an hour or less each day to spend on marketing, and 34 percent feel marketing more efficiently is an area of opportunity.
- Small businesses in Canada report the least time available for marketing of any country polled.
- 52 percent routinely put off marketing in favor of other activities, with Australian SMBs the most likely to procrastinate. Comparatively, their counterparts in the U.S. are least likely to put off marketing tasks.
- The most time-consuming marketing tasks are posting on social media (51 percent), planning and strategy (40 percent) and determining what's working (35 percent). Those are also the areas small businesses are most likely to avoid.

Knowledge Gaps Prevent Growth

Small businesses understand that they need to acquire customers, but they aren't sure which marketing channels to leverage,

what strategy works best, or how to improve their campaigns.

- The top marketing challenges facing SMBs are acquiring new customers (60 percent), understanding what's working (33 percent), and lack of resources (32 percent)
- When asked how to improve their marketing this year, 37 percent of SMBs surveyed said using the right channels is their biggest area of opportunity. In fact, 41 percent plan to increase the number of marketing channels they use in 2024.
- 82 percent agree that using multiple marketing channels leads to better results, but just 16 percent are confident that they are using the correct channels to reach their customers.
- Australian SMBs cite lack of knowledge as the biggest obstacle preventing them from using more than one marketing channel.

To learn more about the findings from Constant Contact's Small Business Now,download the report.

Study Methodology:
Constant Contact's Small Business Now report analyzes insights from over 1,300 small business decision-makers at the Director level and above at companies with under 250 employees. Polls were conducted in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States and aggregated to determine global trends. All stats are representative of their associated demographics. The survey was conducted by Ascend2 in February 2024.

About Constant Contact
Constant Contact delivers everything small businesses and nonprofits need to build, grow and succeed. With powerful online marketing tools, contact management, sales features, and innovative AI capabilities, Constant Contact makes it easy to attract the right people, engage more customers, close more deals and grow.

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