Constant Contact Newsroom

The Rise of the "SMB Creator": How Small Businesses are Leveraging Social Media and AI to Capture Consumer Attention

Constant Contact's latest Small Business Now report reveals that as consumer preference for shopping small triples, 73 percent of small business owners globally are adopting a "creator" identity and rapidly scaling AI usage to capture consumer attention

WALTHAM, Mass., June 10, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Constant Contact, a leading provider of digital marketing tools for small and medium businesses (SMBs) and nonprofits, today released findings from its latest *Small Business Now* report. The comprehensive global study of over 5,000 small business owners and consumers reveals that small business owners are stepping into a new role: the creator.

The SMB creator isn't just chasing an audience online – they're already running a business. Their content has a job: to bring in customers, to drive sales and to keep the customers coming back who already love them.

"The expectations placed on small businesses have never been higher, and they are meeting the challenge by fundamentally changing how they work." said Frank Vella, CEO at Constant Contact. "The explosive growth of AI adoption—jumping to 87 percent in the U.S.—proves that owners are actively relying on this technology to succeed. By embracing AI to automate tasks and analyze data, small businesses are buying back their time, allowing them to focus on what they do best: strengthening relationships with their communities."

While social media has emerged as the primary "front door" for discovery, AI and automation have become essential efficiency tools that allow owners to scale their efforts to be seen without burning out. In fact, **40 percent** of SMBs are now strategically pivoting to these technologies to manage their marketing workload instead of simply spending more.

The shift is already showing up in the numbers. In a 2024 survey commissioned by Constant Contact, e-commerce customers were **1.5 times** more likely to report highly successful campaigns, and internal data from Constant Contact shows AI can cut email production time by **up to 23 percent**.

Key Small Business Marketing Statistics from the Q2 2026 Report:

The Rise of the Small Business Creator As the demand for digital content grows, small business owners are taking on a new identity, emphasizing personal investment in their brand's storytelling.

- Globally, **73 percent** of small business owners identify as "Creators" in some capacity, with 40 percent identifying primarily as Creators and 33 percent as owner/Creator hybrids.
- Nearly half (**47 percent**) of small business owners globally handle all social media management personally.
- Social media is now the top digital discovery tool, with **49 percent** of consumers globally using it to find new small businesses, surpassing search engines (40%).
- Despite this reliance on social platforms for reach, **41 percent** of SMB owners globally feel "very confident" their business would survive if social media disappeared tomorrow, highlighting the importance of owned marketing channels to sustain revenue.

The AI Adoption Explosion Artificial intelligence has rapidly transitioned from a "future technology" to a core business tool, bridging the gap between high effort and high efficiency.

- In the U.S., AI adoption in SMB marketing surged from **26 percent** in 2023 to **87 percent** by April 2026.
- The primary benefit for **50 percent** of users globally is "saving time," particularly through content creation and data analysis.
- Globally, **46 percent** of consumers want businesses to explicitly label AI-generated content. Small businesses are stepping up to this demand, with **37 percent** already practicing full transparency about their AI use.

The "Shop Small" Shift Meets Economic Reality Consumers are increasingly shifting their loyalty toward independent brands, though inflation presents a significant headwind to their actual spending power.

- In the U.S., consumer preference for shopping "mostly at small businesses" has **nearly tripled** over the last five years, jumping from **10 percent in 2021 to 27 percent in 2026**.
- However, rising costs remain a hurdle, with **49 percent** of U.S. consumers reporting they have had to reduce or significantly cut back their spending at small businesses due to inflation.
- When choosing a small business over a large corporation, U.S. consumers cite "unique products" and "supporting the local economy" as their primary driving factors.

For more information and actionable insights to improve digital discovery and retention, visit the Constant Contact website to view the full Q2 2026 *Small Business Now* report.

About the Methodology Constant Contact's Q2 2026 insights are based on a comprehensive global survey. The business data analyzes 3,340 small and medium businesses (SMBs) across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia/New Zealand. The consumer data analyzes discovery habits and economic realities from 2,255 consumers across the same regions.

About Constant Contact: Constant Contact is the AI-powered marketing partner for small businesses and nonprofits. For more than 30 years, Constant Contact has helped entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders run smarter marketing. Today, it combines AI-driven content creation, intelligent audience targeting, and plain-English insights in one unified platform across email, social, SMS, and events. By doing the heavy lifting, Constant Contact gives every business owner the capability of a full marketing team — without needing one. Learn more at constantcontact.com.

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