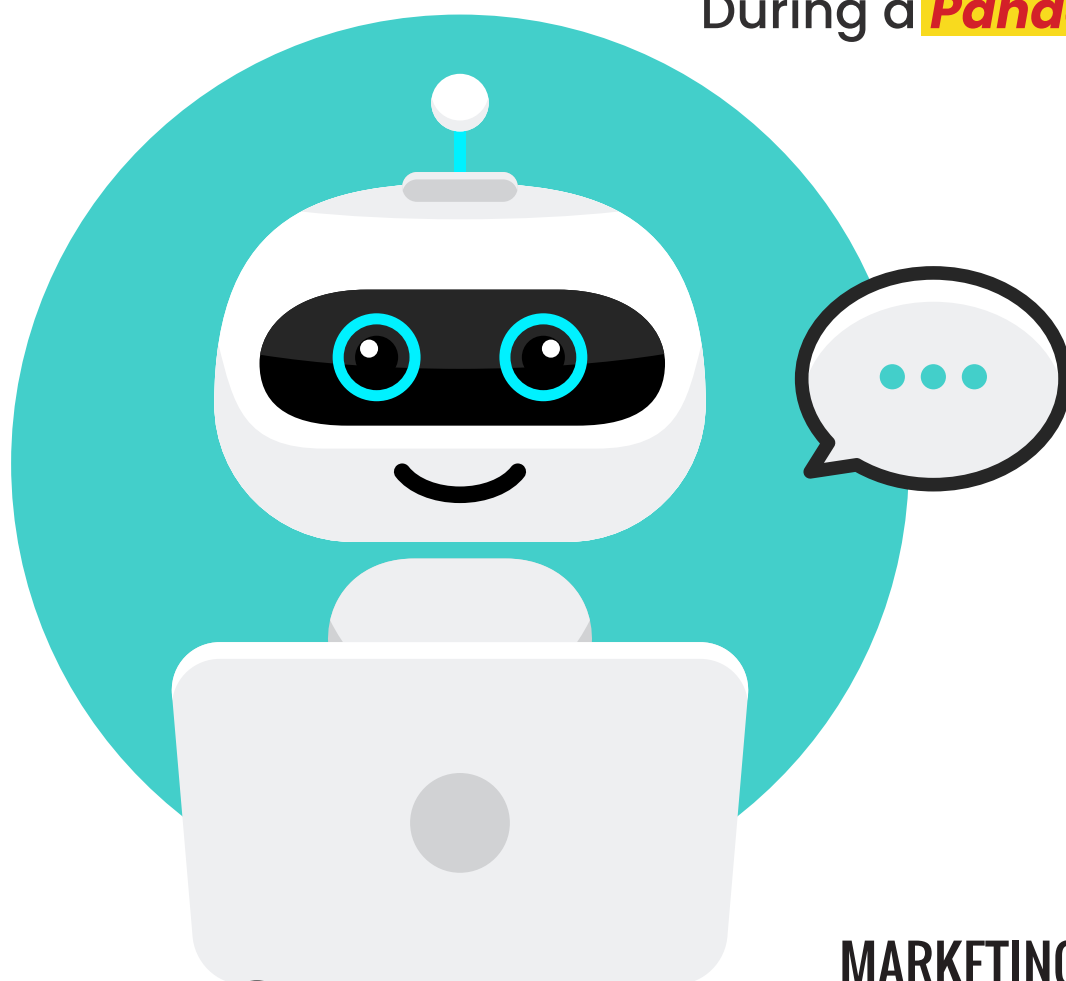


THE PROSPEROUS PARTNER

How to get your customers to
PROMOTE
YOUR BUSINESS FOR YOU!

HOW TO OFFER
MORE VALUE
To Your Customers
During a **Pandemic**



How
CHATBOT
MARKETING WORKS 101

MARKETING ON A
BUDGET
AND STAYING AFLOAT DURING THE
PANDEMIC

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How to get your customers to promote your business for you!

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You want to grow your business. That's a given. New customer acquisition is expensive. Another given. What a business owner to do? If you have an unlimited marketing budget, you can

simply put it into attracting and nurturing new customers. But I don't know many small business owners who have that luxury. Fortunately, there are alternatives. One of the best options is to start a referral program. Here's how to do it.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world. Business owners have had to scramble to find ways to stay afloat even as they've had to work from home and halt in-person sales

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What do you do when business is slow, and profits are down? If you think the answer is to stop marketing," then it's time to think again. The truth is that a solid marketing plan could spell the

difference between success and failure. It doesn't mean you should go on a marketing spending spree, but what it does mean is that smart marketing should be your focus. Here are some tips for marketing on a budget.

Welcome To The Prosperous Partner

Thanks for checking out our 69th issue of The Prosperous Partner, your online marketing resource guide for small business. Each month we will be covering topics that resonate with local businesses just like yours.

Our goal is simple. We want to enable you to do big things online, and it all starts by breaking down the complexities of marketing your business online.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting out, or an established business owner in your local community, you can always benefit from increasing your brand's visibility online.

To your Success,

Eddie Hill
Grand Master Prosperite

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Prosperous Internet Marketing Inc. is the leading small business marketing service in the U.S. for over eight years. We help small businesses connect with more customers online.

If you want to build your business, you need to market, it's that simple. But you can lose thousands of dollars if you don't know what you are doing. So we urge you to take action with some of the strategies we recommend.

For a more "hands off" approach, we offer affordable solutions and can deliver results. We hope you enjoy this issue of The Prosperous Partner and feel free to reach out to us anytime.



HOW TO GET YOUR CUSTOMERS TO
**PROMOTE
YOUR BUSINESS**
FOR YOU! >>>

You want to grow your business. That's a given.

New customer acquisition is expensive. Another given.

What a business owner to do? If you have an unlimited marketing budget, you can simply put it into attracting and nurturing new customers. But I don't know many small business owners who have that luxury.

Fortunately, there are alternatives. One of the best options is to start a referral program. Here's how to do it.



WHY YOU NEED A REFERRAL PROGRAM

A customer referral program is a program that encourages and incentivizes your existing customers to refer other people to your business.

You already know that it's costly to acquire new customers. In fact, as of 2020, it cost about five times as much to acquire a new customer as it does to hold on to an existing customer.

New customer acquisition is also time-consuming. It takes between 5 and 7 interactions with a brand for people to remember it.

Referral programs are both less expensive and less time-consuming than traditional customer acquisition. One of the biggest reasons is that they come with built in social proof.

Research shows that more than 80% consumers trust a personal recommendation from a friend more than they would a review in a newspaper or magazine.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STARTING A REFERRAL PROGRAM?

The biggest benefit of starting a referral program is that referral programs are proven to work.

Here are some statistics that illustrate their potential.

> 60% of marketers say that customer referrals are an excellent source of leads

> 54% agree that the per-lead cost of referral programs is lower than other lead channels

> 78% of B2B marketers like referrals as a way of generating qualified leads

> People who are referred by a friend are 4 times as likely to make a purchase as people who find your company any other way

Referral programs provide a low-cost, high-reward way to attract new customers to your business.

People are already asking your customers for recommendations. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to harness something they're already doing to make it beneficial for them – and profitable for you.

A hand is holding a square wooden sign. The sign has the text "A SATISFIED CUSTOMER IS THE BEST BUSINESS STRATEGY OF ALL" written on it in a bold, sans-serif font. The background is a light gray with a subtle pattern of diagonal lines.

**A SATISFIED
CUSTOMER**
IS THE BEST
BUSINESS
STRATEGY
OF ALL

THE BEST REFERRAL PROGRAM IDEAS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Now it's time for the fun part. There are dozens of different ways to set up a referral program and you can get creative with it.

The main components you need are:

- A fun and appealing name
- Rules for how the program works

- A system of incentives and rewards
- A way to let your customers know about the program

One of the biggest things you'll need to decide ahead of time is when the rewards kick in. Will you give a customer a reward when they refer someone, or only if that referral turns into something more. It's important

to be specific, so that your customers know what to expect.

To get an idea of how your referral program can work, let's look at some examples.



Invite your friends to enjoy \$7 off delicious delivery right to their door!

Every friend you refer will get \$7 off their first-time Grubhub order of \$15 or more - and you'll get \$7 off once they place that qualifying order!*

Share with Email

[Address Book](#)

Hey BFF! I thought you wouldn't mind saving \$7 on your first-time Grubhub order of \$15+ from Grubhub. Have all your favorite restaurants delivered right to your

[Send Email](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

GrubHub

GrubHub is a food delivery app that's become hugely popular. People can use it to order food from local restaurants and have it delivered to them at home or at work.

GrubHub's referral program is especially clever because it incentivizes people to order at both ends. When an existing GrubHub customer refers a friend, the friend gets a discount off their first order; AND the person who made the referral gets a discount at the same time.

I know a lot of people who use GrubHub and refer people for exactly this reason. It's a great program that is set up for success.

DapperTime

DapperTime is a watch company that puts a different spin on the discounting game. Instead of offering a flat discount their referral program works more like an affiliate program.

The key difference here is that the person who does the referring earns a percentage

of their friend's purchase. That way, if the friend turns into a big spender, the person who referred them will get to share in the rewards.



This model won't work for every business, but it's worth considering if you think it will appeal to your customers.



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Apply Now



Apply

Hubstaff

When it comes to B2B referrals, you may need to offer a bit more incentive for your clients to refer other business owners to you. One option is to set up a recurring commission option like Hubstaff did.

Participants in their referral form get a dedicated link they can use to refer people to Hubstaff. When one of their referrals signs up, they get a 30% commission for life.

Let's be clear. That's a big reward and not one every small business can afford to offer. However, because the incentive is so attractive, it's the kind of thing that will incentivize people to participate because they'll start spending their commission mentally as soon as they hear about the program.

Dropbox

One of the earliest and most successful digital referral programs is the one created by Dropbox.

Instead of offering participants money back or a commission, they offered what is arguably their most valuable commodity: storage space. For each friend that a customer refers, they get additional storage ranging from 500 MB to 1 GB per referral. That space is theirs for as long they have their Dropbox account.



Help center

Community

Earn more space by referring friends

You can earn extra space by inviting your friends to try out Dropbox:

- Basic accounts get 500 MB per referral and can earn up to 16 GB
- Plus accounts get 1 GB per referral and can earn up to 32 GB

To send a referral, follow these steps:

1. [Sign in to dropbox.com](#).
2. Click the avatar at the top of any page.
3. Click **Settings**.
4. *If you paired a work and personal account, select the **Personal** tab.*
4. Click **Invite a friend**.

WHO

**DO
YOU
KNOW?**

Soylent

Not all referral programs offer a reward directly to participants. Some, like Soylent's, give them an opportunity to give their reward to people in need.

This program gives participants' friends a discount and donates four meals to a food-related charity. In other words, the reward comes in the form of a good deed. People who join the program do it and have the satisfaction of knowing they've helped someone who needs it.

A similar program is the one at PillPack, where each referral that results in a sale gets a \$100 donation to a charity that builds healthcare facilities for children. Charity-based referral programs are highly appealing to Millennials, who like to align themselves with companies who share their values.



Share Soylent, spread good nutrition.

Invite your friends to get 50% off of their first 12 bottles of Soylent Drink and for each new subscription, we'll donate four meals to World Food Program USA.

[Start sharing](#)

These are just a few examples of successful referral programs. My suggestion is that you start with your customers and figure out what's most likely to appeal to them. Then, you can work backward from there to create a referral program that works for them and you.

Tools to Build Your Referral Program

Not sure how to start building your referral program? Here are a few tools that can help you do it with a minimum of time and trouble.

- Extole has beautiful templates you can use to sign people up for your referral program, and options to add the rewards you choose.
- Yotpo offers custom-designed landing pages and pop-ups and a choice of reward structures.
- Omnistar Affiliate Software has built-in sign-up forms, promo codes, and free promotional tools to help you advertise your referral program.

- TapMango has an array of customizable programs to choose from and offers SMS, mobile push, and email options to manage your referrals.

What are you waiting for? Starting a referral program now is one of the best ways to secure your future success!

How to Offer **MORE VALUE** TO YOUR CUSTOMERS DURING A PANDEMIC



The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world. Business owners have had to scramble to find ways to stay afloat even as they've had to work from home and halt in-person sales and services.

It's a lot for anybody to deal with at a time that's already stressful.

The solution for most business owners is to find ways to offer more value to customers to keep them on board and ensure they'll stick with your company in the long run.

That sounds great, but what's the best way to do it? As you might suspect, the answer's both easy and complicated.



🧩 The Pandemic by the Numbers 🧩

Let's start with some statistics that help to paint a picture of what your customers might need during this difficult time

Record numbers of Americans have filed for unemployment benefits, meaning that many are living with financial uncertainty and stress. Over 6 million people filed in the week ending March 28th.

Between 1.4 and 2.1 million small businesses are at risk of closing their doors permanently.

More than 75% of consumers have experimented with new buying behavior during the pandemic, including a shift to online and digital buying and a decrease in brand loyalty.

The only category of spending to experience growth is things people consider to be essential – in other words, impulse buying is down.

The takeaway here is that the pandemic has made a significant impact on both consumer confidence and consumer spending. If you want your customers to continue buying from you, you must give them a reason to do so.

Focus on What Your Customers Are Feeling

The first thing you'll need to do is to make sure that your customers know you understand what they're feeling. Some of the most common emotions right now are:



FEAR



Uncertainty



Sadness



Doubt

In the marketing world, you probably know about FUD – fear, uncertainty and doubt. In normal times, there's a tendency for marketers to try to create a sense of uncertainty or fear, such as FOMO, the fear of missing out.

That's not a good idea during the pandemic because people are already feeling those things. You don't need to do anything to incite those emotions. Instead, your job is to empathize with them. Consumers are far more likely to buy from a company that understands them than with a company that only seems to be out to make money.






⚙️ Communicate Your Empathy Effectively ⚙️

Understanding your customers is one thing, but it won't matter if you can't effectively communicate your empathy. That means focusing on clear, compassionate communication that reassures your target audience.

What does that look like? Here are some possibilities:

- Putting a COVID-19 statement on your website and making it apparent what you're doing to keep your customers safe. Examples may include social distancing markers and procedures, escalated cleaning, and shipping precautions.
- Sending an email series addressing your customers' concerns and detailing how you can help.
- Engaging more frequently on social media and encouraging your audience to share their thoughts and feelings with you.

The focus should be on letting your customers know that you're there to help. If they know that, they'll be more likely to buy from you even if they're not buying from other businesses.



Selling products and services that meet the immediate needs of your customers is a good way to stay relevant.

Offer Increased Value

Since consumers are mostly spending only on essentials, it's your job to offer as much value as possible to your customers to encourage them to buy from you.

Small business owners are getting creative. Here are some of the things I've noticed:

- > An increase in online ordering options, including expanded ordering, delivery, and payment options.
- > Addition of new product and service options, including things like delivery, curbside pickup and by-appointment in-person services.
- > Creation of new products and bundles designed to meet the needs of people as they quarantine and work from home.

It's no accident that many apparel companies, for example, have started to manufacture and sell masks. There's a huge need for them and a natural desire for people to get masks they like.



⚡ Refocus Your Marketing on Digital ⚡

Your marketing focus during the pandemic should be fine-tuned to reflect the needs and wants of your customers. For many small businesses, that means doubling down on digital spending and solutions.

Your customers may need:

- Additional online ordering and delivery options
- Additional payment options
- Increased communication on social media
- More emails offering them immediate value and solutions to their problems

You may also want to consider allowing customers to sign up for text updates in addition to email.



❑ Revamp Your Budget ❑

Finally, you should take a close look at your budget – both for marketing and operations – and reallocate your resources accordingly.

For example, if you have applied for and received a PPP loan to cover your payroll, you may be able to put some extra money into marketing.

Search engine marketing and social media marketing are both useful right now as people hunker down at home and spend more time online.

If you've had to lay off employees or downsize your office, you may have money in the budget that can be repurposed. Or you may need to cut across the board. Either way, it's a good idea to review your marketing mix and figure out what's going to work for you in the short term.

It's also worth noting that the reallocation process should include testing. It may take some trial and error to arrive at the most effective marketing mix. It's useful to view your

budget as a fluid thing and be willing to reallocate funds as needed.

The bottom line? The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of stress for small business owners, but it also represents an opportunity to realign your business with your customers' needs. Your willingness to meet the challenges head-on can help you to solidify your brand, ensure customer loyalty, and protect your business in the long term.

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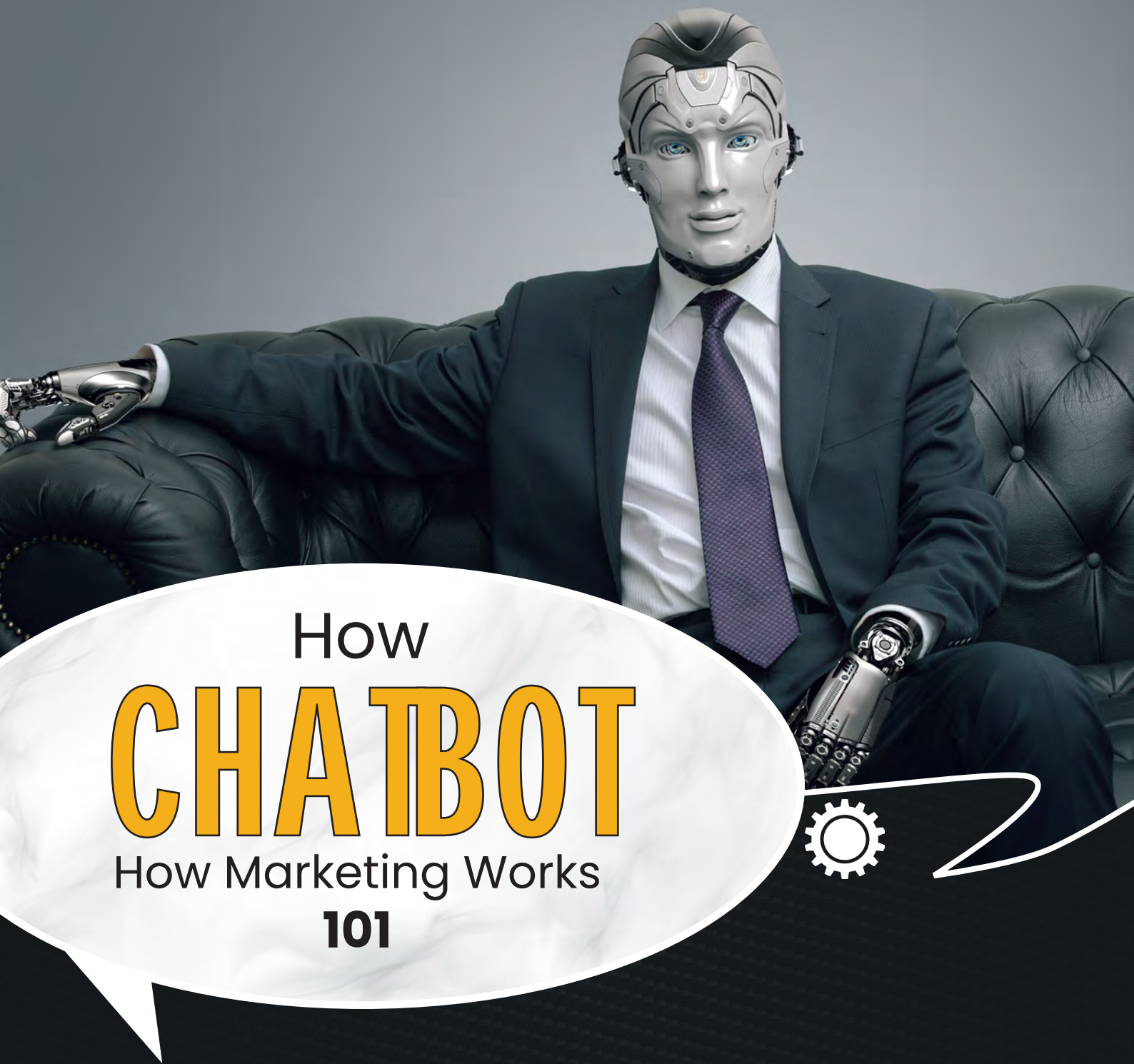
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It wasn't that long ago that the idea of a chatbot would have seemed like the stuff of science fiction, right up there with Daleks or droids.

Not anymore.

In fact, chatbots are everywhere these days. They're readily available, highly effective and – believe it or not – not that expensive to create.

That said, a lot of small business owners aren't on board with them yet because they don't understand how they work to improve marketing and attract new business.

By the time you're done reading this article, you won't be able to use lack of knowledge as an excuse anymore. Get ready to learn everything you need to know about how chatbot marketing works.



What is a Chatbot?

Chatbot is short for chatterbot. A chatbot is a computer program and a form of Artificial Intelligence. It uses something called Natural Language Processing (NLP) to simulate human speech.

When programmed properly, a chatbot can interact with customers on your website, on social media, or via a messaging app such as Messenger, WhatsApp, Slack, or Kik.

If you're like a lot of small business owners, you might hear 'artificial intelligence' and default to thinking that it's going to be hugely expensive and time-consuming to incorporate AI or a chatbot into your marketing. As you'll see, that's not the case.

How Does Natural Language Processing Work?

I want to say more about NLP because it's a big part of what makes chatbots work. I'm not a programmer or an AI expert, but here are some things you should know.

Natural Language Processing is what allows a user to type a question into a chatbot and get a relevant and useful response. In other words, it allows the chatbot to interpret the question correctly even if it is not worded in a way that's standard or grammatically correct.

As human beings, we have built-in NLP. If someone talks to us and misuses a vocabulary word or uses an incorrect verb form, we can still understand them in most cases. That's because

our brains auto-correct the mistakes they made and tell us the intention behind their words.

NLP allows chatbots to understand conversational intent. It knows what a customer wants to ask even if the customer doesn't word it in an expected way.

If you want an idea of how NLP works, pay attention the next time you use a virtual assistant such as Alexa, Siri, Cortana, or Google Voice. You've probably noticed that these assistants can grasp your meaning even if you misspeak or stumble over your words. That's because they use NLP to get at the meaning behind your words.

Pretty cool, right?





What Are the Benefits of Chatbot Marketing?

Now that you have a basic understanding of how chatbots work, let's talk about their applications in marketing. Chatbot use was already on the rise, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made their benefits more apparent than they were before.

Using chatbots in your marketing can help you:

- Provide around-the-clock customer support and service – chatbots are always ready to help
- Redirect customers to self-service options and make their experience more enjoyable
- Triage incoming customer service requests to flag the ones that need your attention
- Speed up your service and reduce waiting times for customers
- Move people through your sales funnel quickly
- Suggest products and services for potential

customers to try

What I hope you can see from this list is that chatbots, when used properly, can speed up the process of turning a visitor to your website or social media page and turning them into a lead, and then into a paying customer.

By collecting information to qualify leads, they can allow you to focus your attention on the people who are most likely to buy from you. And, if you own a retail business where lead nurturing isn't a big concern, they can direct customers to the products they're most likely to buy.

In other words, chatbots provide in-the-moment interaction at an affordable price.

How Much Does It Cost to Build a Chatbot?

When I talk to small business owners about chatbot technology, their most common objection is price. The perception of anything related to artificial intelligence is that it will be both expensive and complicated. Let's get the cost part out of the way.

If all you want is a simple chatbot to handle basic customer interactions, you can use a chatbot builder and create one for very little money. Examples of builders include:

- MobileMonkey
- TARS
- Quip

- Flow XO
- Botsify

Some of these builders, such as Flow XO, offer free trials or even free versions. Opting for one of them will limit your programming choices, but it's a good way to familiarize yourself with bots and get a first-hand look at how they can help your business.

Even if you opt for a paid subscription, you can build a simple chatbot for under \$1,000. Of course, some businesses spend far more than that for custom chatbots, but you don't need to do that to reap the benefits of chatbot marketing.

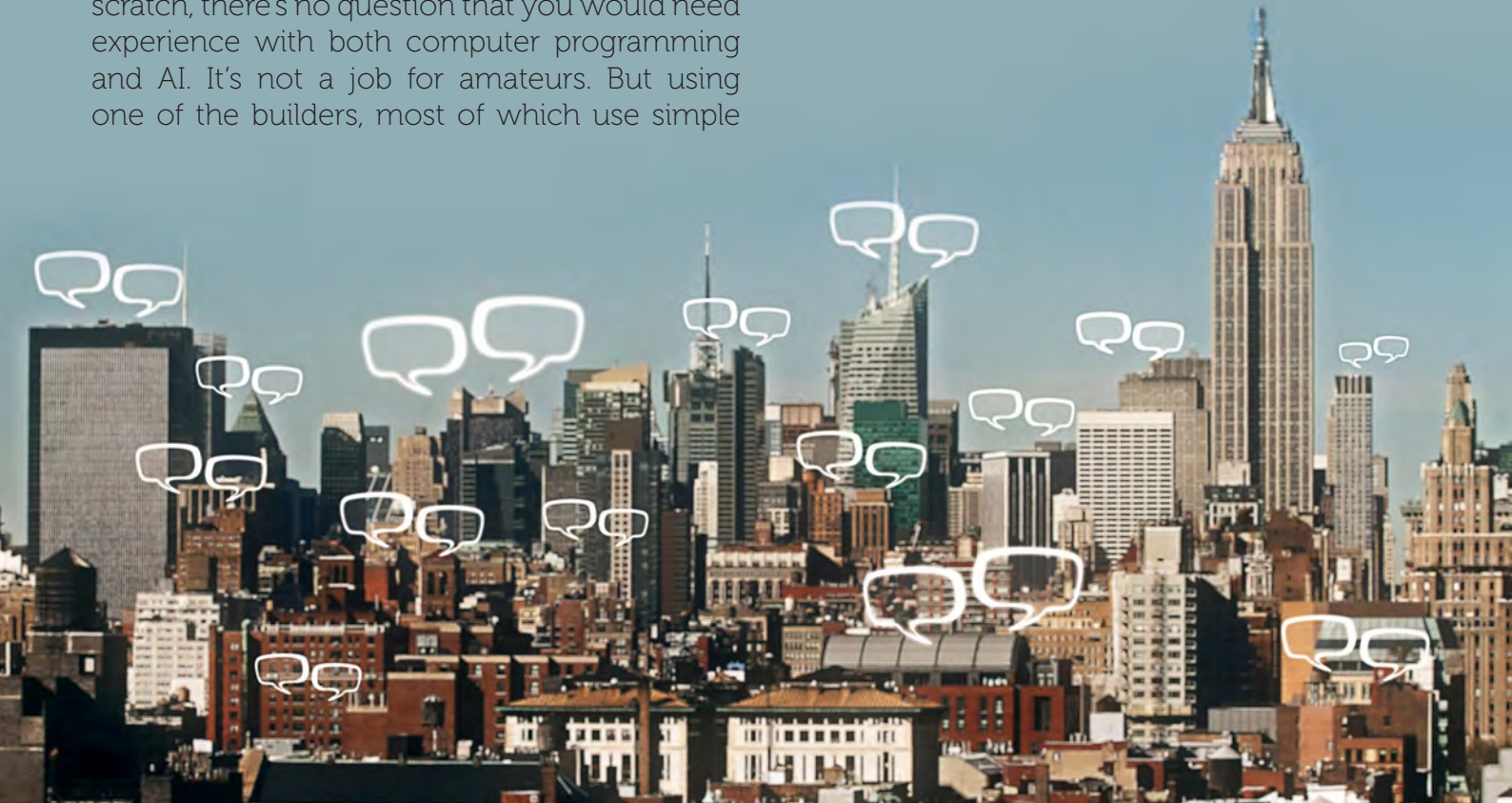
Isn't Building a Chatbot Complicated?

The second main objection to chatbot marketing is that building a chatbot is complicated. As you've probably guessed, using one of the chatbot builders I've listed above takes the guesswork out of chatbot programming.

If you were to try to build a chatbot from scratch, there's no question that you would need experience with both computer programming and AI. It's not a job for amateurs. But using one of the builders, most of which use simple

drag-and-drop technology, makes it as easy as starting a free blog or creating a meme.

Please don't let fears about the technical aspects of chatbots keep you from using them. Those fears aren't realistic – and you'll be missing out on one of the best ways to market your business.





How to Use Chatbots in Marketing

Now that you have a framework for understanding chatbots, let's dig into some of the ways that you can use chatbots in marketing. There are layers of technology, starting from basic and going all the way up to include advanced bots. Most small business owners will start with the basics.

AUTORESPONDERS

The first tier of chatbot strategy is so simple that you won't even need to build a chatbot to use it. On Facebook Messenger, businesses have the option of setting up an autoresponder that will reply to messages instantly, letting customers know that you'll reply to them as soon as you can.

While autoresponders won't really shorten your lead time or help you convert customers, they

can satisfy the need for an instant response, making potential leads feel that you're paying attention and giving them reassurance that they'll hear from you soon.

LIST NOTIFICATIONS

The next tier of sophistication involves building what amounts to a list and using a messaging app to send notifications to people who have messaged you in the past. Again, this is a feature you can use on Facebook Messenger without building an actual bot.

The benefit of sending notifications is that it's a quick way to get the word out when you have a new product to launch or you're running a promotion. The downside is that, for now, you'll need a minimum of 1,000 people to use this feature on Facebook.

SALES FUNNEL STRATEGY

Earlier, I mentioned that chatbots can be used to shorten the time it takes people to move through your sales funnel.

There are two different options to consider:

1. A basic funnel strategy which amounts to a slightly-more-involved version of autoreponders. To use this strategy, you can send automated messages to recipients and ask them them to respond to questions.

2. A contextual funnel strategy which uses NLP to respond to questions and direct leads to products and resources.

You can decide which option to choose. Both can be worthwhile depending on your needs. For a business where lead nurturing can be minimal, the former is probably enough to get you started. If lead nurturing tends to take a long time, you may benefit more from a contextual strategy that allows for natural interaction throughout the nurturing process.

The AI-Powered Marketing Strategy

Now it's time to go beyond the basics. A marketing strategy that's powered by AI might include:

- Automated customer support
- Handling of repetitive tasks, such as order tracking or password resets
- Sales suggestions
- Redirection to self-service options

If you want to take it even further, then you can use a tool like DialogFlow, which is a cloud-based software owned by Google. It allows you to "train" your bots.

The concept of training might sound odd, but

here's what it means. A basic bot searches for keywords and provides a boilerplate response when it recognizes a keyword. For instance, if someone types "Reset password" into your chatbot, the bot knows to walk the person through the password reset process because it's been programmed to recognize those keywords.

With the training option, chatbots can interpret language using NLP. Over time, the machine teaches itself using something called machine learning. It picks up clues from context and gradually learns how to interpret and understand language even when it doesn't match the keywords it's been programmed to understand.

This type of marketing strategy allows bots to nurture leads in a way that feels natural and intentional. Instead of answering multiple choice questions, the chatbot can ask and respond to questions in a conversational manner.



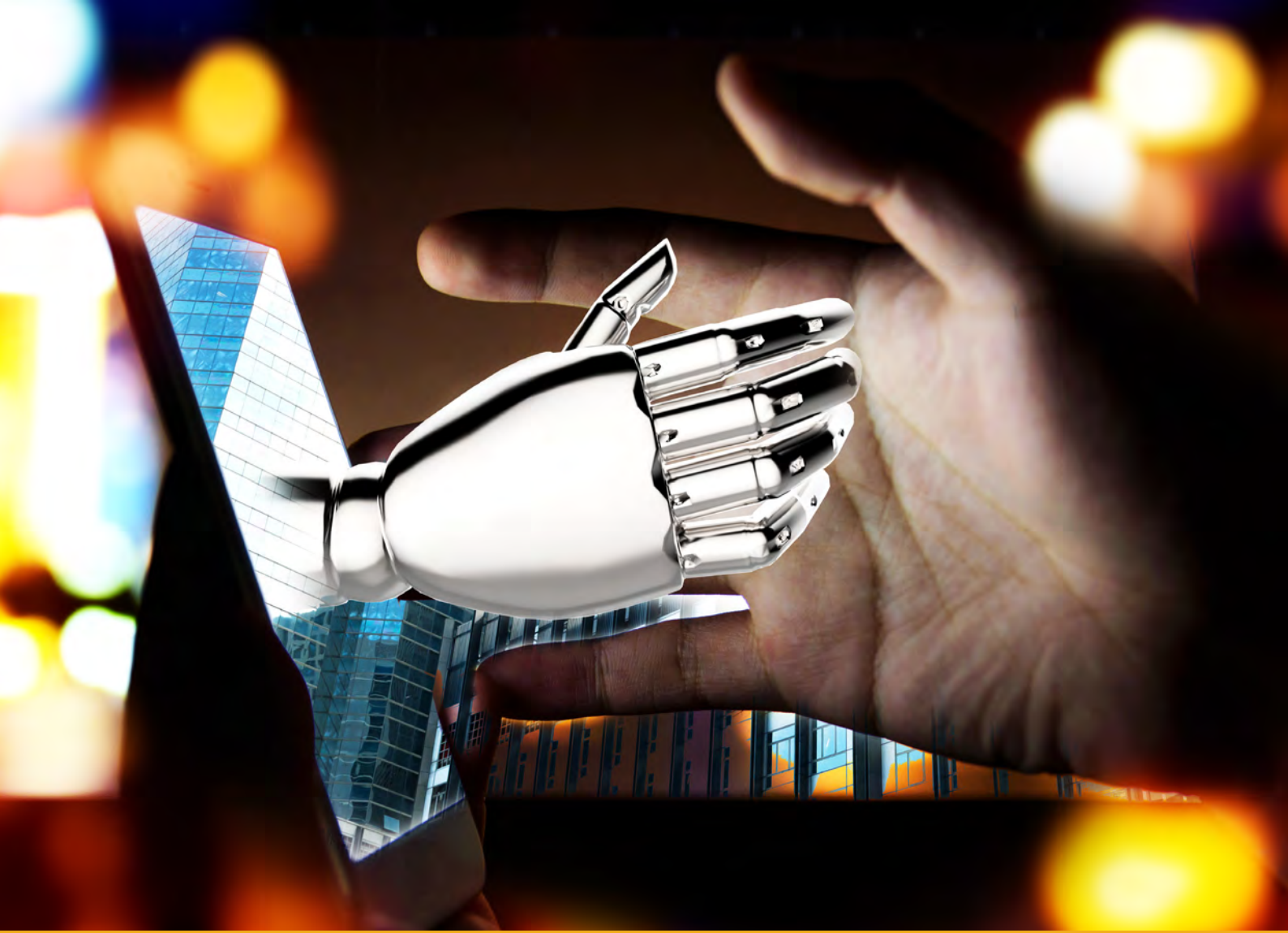


OMNICHANNEL CHATBOT STRATEGY

The top tier of chatbot marketing involves omnichannel marketing, where you integrate your marketing and chatbots across all platforms, ensuring that your customers will have a seamless experience wherever they engage with you and your company.

That might mean taking the people from your Messenger list and exporting them to a list that you use for email or a text notification list. Keep in mind that you'll need to get permission to add people to those lists. You'll also need to let them know if you're collecting and saving data from their chats. Within Facebook Messenger, you can ask people for information that you need to add them to other lists, including their mobile number or email address.

Other potential integrations include mobile pay options such as GooglePay or Apple Wallet. Today's consumers are comfortable with mobile technology and may prefer to pay you with these tools. They offer encryption that protects users from identity theft.



Getting Started

If you're convinced and you want to give chatbots a try, here are my suggestions.

1. Try a free chatbot builder to get your feet wet.
2. Start with simple, automated responses.
3. Let your customers know that your chatbot is there for them to try.
4. Solicit feedback about your chatbot.
5. Refine your offerings as needed.
6. Step up your chatbot to include NLP and machine learning.

7. Integrate your chatbot across multiple platforms and channels.

The bottom line is that chatbots are here to stay. Eventually you're going to need to build one – and you might as well do it now, when getting on board with the technology can give you a leg up on your competitors!

Do you want to learn more about how a chatbot can benefit your business?

[Click here to learn more about our Chatbot Marketing Service today!](#)

MARKETING

on a Budget and Staying

AFLOAT

DURING THE PANDEMIC



What do you do when business is slow, and profits are down?

If you think that the answer is “stop marketing,” then it’s time to think again. While it’s true that marketing might seem to be less essential than other areas of business, the truth is that a solid marketing plan could spell the difference between success and failure.

Not convinced? It turns out there’s research to support the idea that marketing is critical during a recession. A Harvard Business Review study looked at the performance of 4,500 businesses during recession. It found that the companies with the most forward-thinking attitudes – in other words, those that didn’t engage in drastic cutting of their marketing budgets – performed the best both during the recession and in the long term.

This evidence doesn’t mean you should go on a spending spree, buying ads left and right. What it does mean is that smart marketing should be your focus. Here are some tips for marketing on a budget.



Audit Your Existing Content

One of the best ways to market on a budget is to make use of what you already have. Existing content can be updated or repurposed. Here are some tips:

- Review your blog posts, videos, graphics and photos to see what may be relevant to your current marketing plan.
- Make note of content that would need updating to be used again.
- Don't forget to review your social media posts to find content that can be used again.
- Other assets to consider include emails, lead magnets, eBooks, white papers, case studies, infographics, and web pages.

You may want to set up a spreadsheet to keep track of everything. You can use it to indicate different potential uses for content, too.

Brainstorm New Ways to Use Old Content

Once you've completed your inventory, it's time to think about what you can do to repurpose your old content and make it relevant to your audience in the here and now.

For example, you might be able to take an old blog post and revamp it as an infographic; or turn an eBook into a webinar.

Keep in mind that you may need to do some work to make the content reusable. A blog post that uses statistics from three years ago will need updating before it can be turned into a chart or infographic. You don't want to have outdated data.



Connect with Your Customers

It can be tricky to determine what kind of content would be useful to your audience in the new reality we're all experiencing. You might not be able to spend a ton of money on customer research. That said, there's no reason you can't reach out to your audience and ask for their input.

One of my favorite ways to conduct audience research

is by creating a survey and sending it out to my email list. Surveys should be short – no more than 5-10 questions at most. Make sure it's easy to complete.

Another option is to create a poll or post a question on social media. On Facebook, you can actually create a poll and post it as a status update. For other

sites, such as Instagram and Twitter, you may want to pose a question and ask the people who respond to use a hashtag you create for that purpose.

Any information you collect can be used to inform your new marketing strategy. Your focus should be on learning what kind of content

Focus on Local SEO

You're probably sick of hearing me talk about local SEO, so I'll keep this section brief. Local SEO is your best bet for pandemic marketing on a budget.

Let's talk about why. First, consumers are eager to support local businesses in this time of need. They need to know who

you are to support you and local SEO is the best way to reach them. Second, local businesses can avail themselves of options that national businesses can't.

For example, you can deliver or offer curbside pick-up services. Those things are convenient to customers and can help you attract new business.

Finally, local SEO is, by definition, highly targeted. It lends itself to marketing on a budget because you'll spend less to reach people in your local audience.

Enough said.



CLIENT

TESTIMONIALS

Collect Reviews and Testimonials

Online reviews have never been more important than they are now. I've already quoted the statistics for you in past articles, but here's why you should be focusing on them now.

As noted above, customers are actively looking for local businesses to support. They'll be more likely to take a chance on you if you have recent reviews on sites like Yelp and Google My Business.

It's also worth noting that reviews are free, which means they're an inexpensive way to attract new business.

My suggestion is to decide how and when to ask customers for reviews and be consistent about it. For example, you might send them an email asking for a review a day or two after they order from you (or within a few days of delivery, if applicable.)

Then, monitor your reviews and respond to all of them, positive and negative. Consumers want to reward businesses that engage with their customers.



Create a Digital To-Do List

So far, I've focused on short-term strategy; now, let's talk about something you can do that will help you out in the long term.

I'm willing to bet that there are a lot of things in the marketing arena that you've been wanting to do. They might include:

- Updating your website
- Creating an online store
- Segmenting your email list
- Standardizing your social media profiles
- Fixing broken links
- Testing ads and content

Guess what? This is the perfect time to tackle some of these projects. Not only will they give you a focus during a time that might otherwise be stressful, they'll also set you up for success in the future. You can do many of these things without spending a ton of money.

Nobody's a fan of this pandemic, but if you handle your marketing properly now, your business will survive the storm. You may even find that you come out of this time more successful and profitable than ever!



Remember, you are not alone.

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