



THE ULTIMATE CHECKLIST FOR
LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS

54 Things You Should Do To Create a
Brand Your Community Loves

YOUR BRAND

Brand = feelings.

And as the business owner, you have the power to shape those feelings associated with your brand.

Here's what I mean:

When I say Nike, what is the first thing that comes to mind? How about Oprah?

Did you think of that swoosh...or perhaps those kicks you got for the marathon you ran a few years ago? Maybe a Super Soul Conversations podcast you listened to on your drive?

With images come feelings. A feeling came bubbling up--good, bad, or indifferent--about each brand when you heard their name. And it might not be what those businesses intended you to feel.

You see, your brand isn't what YOU think about you, it's about what OTHERS think about you. You have the power to mold it but ultimately the customer will have the final say. The brands that are gaining traction in the marketplace are the ones that zag when everyone else is zigging. They stand for something and have a clear identity. They understand that leaning into how they're different is key. Now it's time to dive into your brand.

This doesn't have to be permanent. It can evolve as you do. But building a strong foundation for growth means doing the work in the beginning to narrow in on your brand voice and build an identity customers will recognize, trust, and love.

Use the checklist to build clear and succinct messaging that embodies your brand and ensures you're showing up consistently online.

YOUR BRAND

- Determine your core offering(s) and how you're different
- Determine your ideal customers
- Determine where your ideal customers likely spend time (online, IRL)
- Engage your customers in conversations about your brand to determine ways you can improve or tweak your current business strategies
- Create a tagline for your business
- Determine your position in the marketplace by identifying your direct and indirect competitors
- Create a list of words that encapsulate your brand messaging and will be used frequently in the content you create
- Create a list of words that don't describe your brand and will not be used frequently in content you create

ONLINE PROFILES

You exist in a lot of places online. Most of the time it's a "set it and forget it" type of thing. You set up your Instagram bio, created your Google Business Profile and walked away. But we want to show you that it's worth checking into and optimizing these places because people are making decisions about you based on these profiles.

Let's start with Facebook. Your business lives on a Facebook Business profile and has access to all of the same features (plus many others) that your personal profile does. Think of Facebook as the original place businesses and brands started showing up on social media. As time has progressed, Facebook has prioritized business pages less and less which means your posts aren't gaining the traction they once had. Many users do still go to Facebook to look up or check in with businesses they are interested in so it's important to create some content on this profile, it just doesn't need to be where you spend the majority of your time and energy (unless that's where your primary demographic is hanging out!).

Your Instagram Business profile continues to be one of the best ways for local business owners to gain traction. With over one billion users, the app's popularity continues to grow and the constant innovations and upgrades within the platform make it easier to connect with people. For local business owners, Instagram is often the place new customers, clients, or contacts discover you or go to look for you. It's important to ensure your presence is attracting new customers and keeping them engaged post-purchase.

LinkedIn is another social networking platform you can choose to place your business on to further offer ways for people to engage with you or learn about your brand. Having a personal profile on Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn that links back to your business account is also a wise move. This allows anyone who comes across your profile to also learn about the brand you're building.

People are searching you on Google which means your Google Business profile is a spot that needs to be spiffy in order to convince potential customers to keep learning more about your business. Keeping this updated with images, correct hour information, details about your business and more will help new visitors engage with your brand and likely hop onto your website or social media profiles to take the next step with you.

Use the checklist to make sure you are building a presence for your business in all the digital places you can.

ONLINE PROFILES

- Create or update a Facebook personal profile to link back to your business
- Create an Instagram Business profile
- Create or update a Instagram personal profile to link back to your business
- Create a LinkedIn company profile
- Create or update a LinkedIn personal profile to link back to your business
- Create a Google Business profile
- Make a reoccurring calendar note to regularly update your profiles

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is truly amazing. It allows us to meet new people, engage with our existing customers, sell our products, promote our services, and gain tremendous momentum for our local businesses.

Over time, social media became a place for commerce. However, most people don't come to social media to be sold to. Do you log into your social media accounts hoping and wishing people were telling you how awesome their products are? Probably not. Most of us come to see what our friends are up to or to distract ourselves from another task. ☹️

Everything you create for your brand should place an emphasis on: connection, inspiration, and education. Not. Sales.

Does that mean you should never talk about your product, service, event, program, or whatever you sell? Of course not! But putting all of your eggs in that basket will lead to very little engagement and sales.

It's time to connect with your ideal customer by creating content and conversations that resonate with them and add value. There are a million little threads that could build connection points between your brand and your audience. It could be sharing a photo at the local coffee shop you visit once a week that five of your followers also love or a video of your cat getting into mischief. These little touch points humanize your brand and help build the relationship between you and your customer.

Ultimately, people buy from people. So make sure the posts, stories, and videos you're publishing are serving your audience just as much as they promote your brand.

Use the checklist to ensure you're utilizing the best tools social media has to offer to local business owners.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Create 3-5 content pillars for your brand
- Create 10 ideas for each content pillar
- Determine hashtags you'll use for your brand
- Create a Linktree (or another place to house multiple links on your Instagram account)
- Create Instagram post images for your grid
- Create Instagram stories to engage your followers and share behind-the-scenes
- Create Instagram highlights for your brand
- Determine the best option to schedule out Instagram posts for your business
- Create Facebook posts for your brand
- Optimize your Facebook Messenger with automatic reply options
- Join other Facebook groups to build relationships rather than use sales tactics
- Create a Facebook event for your next business event
- Utilize Facebook scheduling options for your posts

WEBSITE

There are a few strategic places you can optimize on your website to attract visitors, keep 'em there, and convert them to customers! As a rule, your website should:

- Support your visitors
- Educate your visitors
- Build trust
- Make it possible to take the next step with your core offering

If you keep those things in mind as you build or update your website, you're well on your way to creating a strong place for new customers to visit. As you think through your website, you'll need to be aware of all of the places someone could come from before arriving at your site. They could have stumbled upon you because a neighbor recommended you or they might have found you via a Google search for keywords like "hair salon" or "physical therapist" or they might have done business with you many times and just want to check your new hours. All of these people are at different stages in their relationship with you but need to be supported by your one website.

This doesn't mean you need a lot of pages or tons of content, it just needs to be enough to serve a variety of customers and their specific journey in how they found you. It should be fairly simple in nature so that customers can easily navigate your website and find what they're looking for.

Use the checklist to help optimize your new or current website.

WEBSITE

- Create a homepage that clearly directs your customers to the next steps you want them to take
- Create an “about me” or “meet the team” page to introduce yourself and your employees
- Create a “services” or “products” page to explain the details of what you offer
- Create a “contact” page with clear location and/or email information
- Give your customers an idea of what to expect when doing business with you (i.e. menu, general description of goods, service packages)
- Integrate testimonials throughout your site
- Place your location and hours in a very visible spot
- Add links to your social media pages in the footer or header of your website

EMAIL MARKETING

Two of the most low hanging (free pieces of) fruit available to local business owners are social media + email marketing. Of course, email marketing platforms are only free with a certain amount of subscribers or by utilizing specific packages, but anyone can get started with a small list.

Why should you use email marketing?

1. You get to OWN your email addresses.

You don't own your social media followers or Facebook friends, but you can keep these email addresses for LIFE which means you can communicate to every single person on your list forever.

2. Social media is based on algorithms and you can never guarantee that someone will see your posts. Emails, however, are pretty straightforward. If I'm on your list, I get your emails. Sometimes they go to a "promotional" folder or get buried among other emails, but the point is, they are right there for your subscriber to access with ease.

3. Email marketing can be used for many different purposes.

Whether you're sharing new products, a change of hours, new location, a holiday promo, or other updates your customers look forward to hearing about, it's a great place to gather the names and emails of the people who do business with you AND allow you to reach more people and create the response you desire.

Think about the total number of customers who have purchased from you. What would happen if even 10% of them always did the thing you told them about in your email? If you had 1000 customers and 100 of them took action on your email, how would that impact your bottom line?

The worst thing that can happen is people don't open your email, but they see your brand in their inbox and now you're top of mind. The best things? Sales, new appointments, more foot traffic, a forwarded email, educated audience.

When something shifts in your business, how do you get the word out? Social media? Is that it?

If you have a really great following and engaged audience, social media WORKS, but email marketing paired with social media will move your message so much further.

Use the checklist to get your email marketing strategy started.

EMAIL MARKETING

- Select a system to use for your email marketing
- Create a primary “list” or “audience” of contacts
- Create tags or segments to further organize your audience
- Ensure you are following all compliance guidelines
- Create a list of topics you could send emails on in the next quarter
- Create an email template specifically for your local business
- Send/Schedule your first email

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

As a local business owner, you know the importance of customer service. It's honestly what sets you apart from many of the big box stores and Amazon. It's your personal touches and connections with your customers that keep them coming back to you again and again.

But you've likely never thought too strategically about this, it's just something you do.

Now it's time to really think through the customer journey from start to finish and find areas you could make it stronger.

Think about it. How does someone go from totally unaware of your brand to a raving, loyal fan? What are the steps to get there? How can that process be improved, become more efficient or strategic?

You start with where your customer finds you, then what they do next and finally how they either purchase or don't purchase with your brand. Any snag, inconvenience, or unaccounted-for detail could be preventing your customers from moving to the next step on the customer journey. That's why it's important to think through this process as a customer instead of as a business owner to seek out inefficiencies or areas for improvement.

Another helpful strategy for customer service improvement is to utilize a software or spreadsheet to keep track of information about your customers that will help you continue to invest in them. You can also think through ways to add unique touch points that add value to your customer experience.

Use the checklist to make sure your customer service is a positive aspect of your local business.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Make a list of all the places your customers can find you online
- Ensure all the places your brand exists give clear directions for how your customer can engage with you next
- Create a strong first impression strategy for when customers first engage with your brand either in person, over the phone, or online
- Select a customer relationship management solution for your business (a software or even as simple as a Google Sheet)
- Determine ways you can tweak or improve your customer experience and make a plan to implement these changes

PERSONAL BRAND

What is personal branding?

Your personal brand is your reputation. It is the way people talk about you, the feeling they get when you walk into a room and the impact you create when you leave. It is everything you do and everything you are, rolled into the beautiful package of your humanness. The great news? While you already have a personal brand, nothing is set in stone and it can only get stronger from here. You get to be super intentional about who you are and how you show up in this world, not just on social media, but for yourself, in your household and in your community. Your personal brand is one of your greatest assets. It is the runway for growing a business without traditional marketing, to multitudes of referrals from clients and friends. It is the essential ingredient for not only succeeding in business, but building a business your community is proud of and stands behind.

So how do you SHOW those qualities in the marketplace?

That's where social media comes in. What do you want people to know about you? Are you consistent, a team player, fun, innovative, thoughtful, family oriented? Every single one of these characteristics can be displayed in our social sphere. Skeptical? Go look at the social profiles of the people you follow. What does it say about them? What do you read between the lines? Is it accurate? Is it congruent with what you see in real life? Even incongruencies show us something about the person. Are they one person online and another off? This is all valuable information we are taking in about people at every moment.

Our version of personal branding requires you to dig into YOU. Rise up and be who you want to be, so you can share yourself fully with the world. What can you offer the world through your unique lens that allows your audience to engage more fully in their own pursuits? What is your voice and who do you want to listen?

Social media is the single greatest tool we have in closing the trust gap. Every time you share, you are creating yet another personal touch point someone can connect with. Building a strong personal brand means continuing to build on those connection points with every post.

Use the checklist to hone in on your personal brand and use it to build your business.

PERSONAL BRAND

- Determine your core values
- Determine your differentiating factors
- Create a list of a few lighter posts you could write that touch on a few of your favorite things
- Create a few posts with depth, sharing a story from your life or business
- Create a list of 25 ideas or fully formed posts for your personal profiles
- Determine causes and/or organizations that you can connect and engage with

GOALS

You're almost there! Now that you've gone through seven essential areas of your business to set up for success, it's time to dream about what your business can become and take the first step towards getting there. Start with your big vision, the ultimate dream you have for your business. Then take a few steps backward: where are you in three years? one year? next month?

Use this space to break down your vision and set three goals you want to work on in your business for the next month.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their business goals and vision.

QUESTIONS?



We're happy to help!

Pop into our inbox at hello@love-local.co or drop a DM to our team on Instagram at [@love.local](https://www.instagram.com/love.local).

love local