

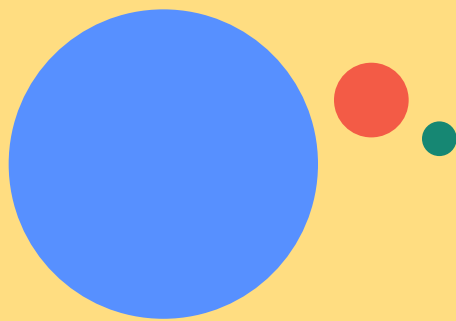


SMALL BUSINESS OWNER'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING 2023



Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What Awaits Small Businesses in 2023 (And Beyond)	3
Beating Supply Shortage	4
Overcoming Staffing Issues	6
Adapting to Inflation	11
The Two Critical Needs of Any Small Business in 2023	15
• Create a Budget-friendly Marketing Strategy	16
• Establish Your Own eCommerce Website	18



Introduction

As a small business owner, we know you deal with many challenges daily. Some of them may be difficult to predict, and you'll have to tackle them as they come. For some challenges, however, you can prepare yourself in advance. Being ready and knowing what to do to overcome these challenges will save you time and money and ensure that 2023 will be the year where you'll see success and expansion for your business!

In this guide, you'll find out how to deal with these pressing issues:

- Supply Shortage
- Staffing Issues
- Inflation

Additionally, we'll let you in on our little secrets for setting up critical points for any independent business in 2023:

- A digital growth strategy and
- An ecommerce website

We know that as an independent business owner, you are super busy and might find it hard to make time to do research about the challenges to expect. That's why we created this helpful ebook with (easy and doable) tips for overcoming the challenges of 2023. Let's make your business thrive together!

What Awaits Small Businesses in 2023 (And Beyond)

While it's still unclear if--and how--much the U.S. economy will slow down in 2023, small business owners foresee growth next year. In fact, 66% of small business owners expect revenue increases next year. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, 52% plan to expand their business in 2023.

These optimistic trends are either telling us more about the state of small business on the ground or how incredibly adaptable small business owners have become over the past few years. Either way, there are other reasons to be hopeful about 2023.

E-commerce and social commerce will continue to boom. E-commerce's place in the market is here to stay--and growing. 58% of global internet users buy something online every week. Those numbers don't look like they'll be going down anytime soon. Social media is emerging as a significant e-commerce player, with many people shopping on Facebook or Instagram. If your business isn't selling online, this gives you a whole new revenue source to consider.

Brick and mortar still have its allure. While more people are buying online, 61% of customers still want to try products in person before buying. Perhaps 2023 is the year to think about your business from an omnichannel perspective. If you don't have a website, consider getting a website where customers can order online. Find ways to offer more convenience, like delivery, curbside pickup, or self-checkout.

Now let's get into the nitty-gritty of what 2023 has in store for small businesses.



Beating Supply Shortage

After two years of pandemic-related supply and inventory shortages, we all hoped things would return back to normal in 2023 – unfortunately that won't be the case. How come, you might ask – since the pandemic is over? Well, here are some reasons:

- **The pandemic aftermath** – Remember those difficult quarantine days you spent ordering your favorite food online? Well, millions of people across the country were doing the same thing, all while manufacturers were cutting supplies and retailers were stocking up inventory. These chains have become more flexible since, however, the road to full recovery is too bulky to be as quick as many hoped for.
- **Infrastructural challenges** – Since the start of 2022, ships are stalled at ports for an average of seven days – which is a 20% increase since 2020¹. Even with a \$550 billion federal investment into infrastructure², such huge structural changes will need multiple years to take effect, meaning that shippers will use outdated tracks for years to come.
- **Poor driver retention** – The American Trucking Association³ showcased that the driver shortage is an all-time high in the industry, with a minus of 80,000 drivers. And, by 2030, there is a chance the shortage could surpass 160,000 drivers. Even with increased wages and working conditions for drivers, the chances are we will still see a shortage of workers needed for the supply chain to return to normal.

We, unfortunately, can't end this global crisis, we can help your small business withstand and pivot in these trying times. Here are our three most effective short- and long-term strategies to help you manage any future challenges with the most optimal results.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/01/business/supply-chain-disruption.html>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/28/fact-sheet-historic-bipartisan-infrastructure-deal/>

³ <https://www.trucking.org/news-insights/ata-chief-economist-pegs-driver-shortage-historic-high>

#1 Diversify Shipment & Supply Options

Problems of shipping and supply are huge structural issues all business owners will be experiencing in 2023, and because of their nature nipping them in the bud won't be easy. However, you can still turn things around, no matter whether the source of your problem is the shortages your supplier is experiencing, or it's the port congestion.

Either way, if you want to get your supplies in on time, you should start by diversifying your shipment and supply options. It's only natural that with just one single supplier or port of entry the chances of you experiencing a material deficit are on the rise. To shorten your delays considerably start by obtaining backup importers, turning to local suppliers, or even switching the Asian lanes for Mexican ones.

Turning to local suppliers can benefit your business in more ways. With the increased demand towards local and sustainable food production, if you choose more local suppliers, you will respond to these changes in demand and stay competitive.

#2 Influence Consumer Demand With Strategic Merchandising

The problem with inventory and supply shortages is that they create a palpable mismatch between the intensity of demand and the supply capacity of a business. To overcome this discrepancy, small businesses must swiftly neutralize increased consumer demand for unavailable products through advertising efforts – specifically by repurposing marketing spending.

By lowering ad expenses for less available or unpredictable products, an opportunity arises to highlight other items instead. By shifting focus to readily available products, you'll increase sales overall and ultimately balance out your revenue. An inexpensive way to promote them is by using social media platforms to put contests and giveaways into place and create buzz around the products you can provide.

#3 Stop-Gap Solution: Focus on Customer Care

To withstand the current turbulence without losing your clientele, relying on long-term strategies only won't be enough. A stop-gap solution such as heightened customer care is crucial for managing the situation as it unfolds. In these turbulent times, transparent and responsive communication will go a long way in retaining customer loyalty and keeping your business afloat.

When handling unavailability, the worst thing a business can do is overpromise to clients or keep them in the dark. Rather than promising a product will be available in a week or a month only to push the date back again, opt to set realistic predictions instead. Use social media to keep customers in the loop about new availability dates and quantities.

PROTIP Implement a "notify me" button for unavailable products on your website to keep customers engaged and get the items in their hands as soon as possible. This might even boost their loyalty.

Shipping disruptions can't be controlled, so you'll need to prepare for all scenarios and outcomes as a small business owner. While you can't influence what happens, you can regulate how you act. Try to be proactive, prepared, communicative, and always learning, and you'll manage any supply chain turmoil.

Overcoming Staffing Issues

You may have heard about The Great Resignation, the term many use to describe the labor shortage brought about by the pandemic. And even if you didn't, we're sure you are all too familiar with the problem. Let's take a closer look at what happened with the labor force and how you can best address this issue.

Data from August 2022 shows that with over 10 million job openings across industries, there are still around 6 million unemployed workers⁴. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, here are the most important reasons people are not returning to the workforce:

- **An increase in savings** – The enhanced unemployment benefits, which lasted until September 2021, stimulus checks, and the Lockdown imposed frugality added about \$4 trillion to the collective American savings accounts⁵.
- **Early retirement** – In October 2021, over 50% of adults that are 55 and older have gone into early retirement due to the COVID-19 recession and gradual labor market⁶.
- **Poor access to childcare** – Due to the pandemic, many childcare providers had to close or scale down, forcing around 370,600 people into unemployment⁷. The massive shutdowns created an endless loop – to return to work, people require childcare, and at the same time, childcare providers were, and still are, facing challenges in their own industry.
- **Increase in entrepreneurship** – Many who left the workforce used their savings to start new businesses. Since 2020, almost 10 million business applications have been put in place, and over 4 million new businesses opened⁸.

In this climate, you, as a business owner, are surely wondering what you can do to attract and retain more quality talent. First, take a look at the key findings from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce survey⁹ conducted among unemployed Americans.

⁴ <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage>

⁵ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/03/most-of-americas-extra-pandemic-savings-are-going-to-the-wealthy-.html>

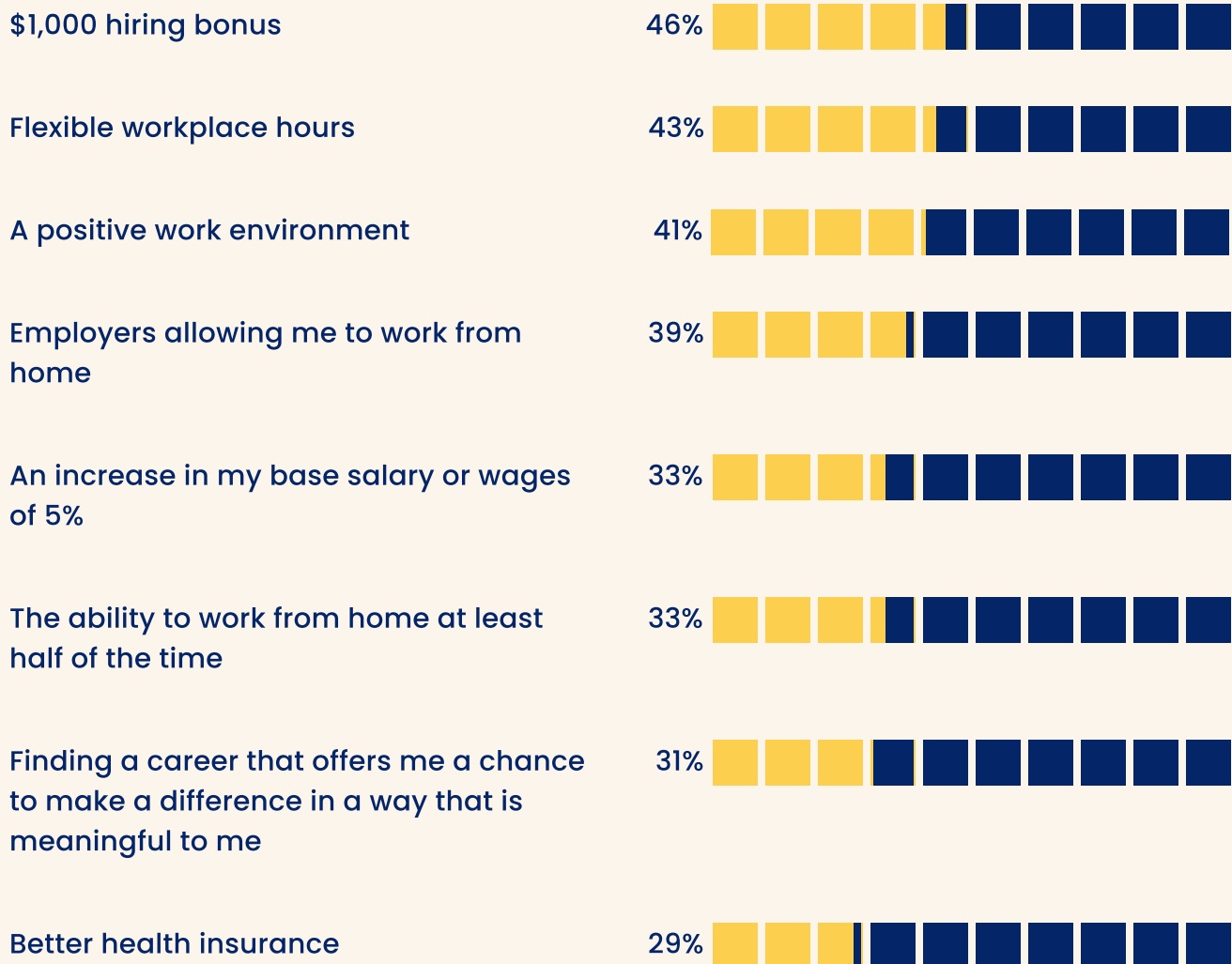
⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/11/04/amid-the-pandemic-a-rising-share-of-older-u-s-adults-are-now-retired/>

⁷ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ChildCareWorkersFS.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/small-business-pandemic-entrepreneurs/>

⁹ <https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/new-updated-poll-the-covid-19-unemployed>

Q: Which of the following would increase your urgency to return to full-time employment?



Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Although many reasons why people aren't getting employed are of financial nature, there is still more to it than just finances. As a small business owner, you may not have the option to always increase wages or offer large bonuses, so it's important to make a plan for hiring and retaining staff that helps your workers feel valued and respected. Here are a few steps that will help make that happen.

#1 Close the Communication Gap

If you're looking to hire ambitious and dedicated staff that will stay with you for the long run, we suggest showing them the opportunities of being employed at your business. This becomes much easier when employees feel they have a say in how the company operates. After all, their day-to-day experience of working in your business is a learning resource.

Close the communication gap by having weekly or monthly meetings where employees do the talking. Ask your best employees what, apart from money, would make their working conditions and experience better. Use these meetings to explain pathways to promotions and give your employees a clear and exciting idea of their future. By giving them the opportunity to contribute to the business culture, you'll make them feel appreciated and valued.

Additionally, take a chance to learn from employees leaving the business. Perform an exit interview with departing employees and ask for their honest review of the working conditions and work-related reasons why they are leaving.

Have your staff's back when they encounter difficulties or challenging situations with the customers. Of course, the golden rule is that the customer is always right, but you might want to hear from your employees too and let them know they are appreciated.

#2 Offer Schedule Control and Flexibility

As a small business owner, it's unlikely you can offer child care at your business, but you can still give your parents options. You might work with them to create their schedule. After all, working with people often means considering their needs and looking for compromises, since these things not only improve the business culture, but the overall morale of the workers as well, helping them increase productivity.

Investing in a shared scheduling platform is a great way to share schedule control. This technology allows employees to update and switch their shifts and schedules in real-time, surpassing the usual problems of miscommunication and resentment in the collective. This may even improve employee performance since they'll feel more respected and able to schedule around personal issues and priorities.

#3 Foster and Reward Employee Development

When it comes to everyday operational decisions, it's important your employees don't feel like their hands are tied. After all, since they are the ones engaging with customers daily, they need enough freedom to do their job efficiently, fulfill customer demands, and have a positive employment experience overall.

Make sure your employees feel like they're trusted to handle a variety of decisions their line of work might throw their way. Of course, that requires that all employees are aware of and comply with the same business standards. Before providing workers with executive freedom, make sure the rules of the game are set. After that, the space within these standards will help your workers make necessary decisions and feel engaged in their work.

Great employees are those who are motivated, and most people love working in a place where they can envision their ability to grow. Encourage ambitious employees by allowing them to take on additional responsibilities, shifts, or even a new role (under mentorship, of course). By giving them ways to expand their expertise and experience, you'll show you care for their goals and professional development. And once they feel invested, they'll share your mission.

PROTIP Is your business a minority-/LGBTQI+/women-/veteran-owned? Did you know that by putting your values out there, you can recruit more long-term talent? Research shows that most ethnic, gender, sexual, and other minorities feel left out and unwanted at their workplace, especially when working for large companies¹⁰.

By making your mission and company values public, you may attract more potential workers who want to spend time and energy working for a business just like yours. The statistics show that people prefer working with employees who share their values¹¹. Shared values and a positive work environment tend to increase their performance overall.

¹⁰ <https://globescan.com/2022/02/25/insight-of-the-week-most-minority-employees-have-felt-left-out-in-the-workplace/>

¹¹ <https://www.spiceworks.com/hr/diversity-inclusion/news/51-job-seekers-inclined-to-work-for-minority-owned-company/>

Adapting to Inflation

Inflation is, unfortunately, here to stay. However, in 2023 we can expect it to drop from the 2022's 8% rate to a 3.5%¹².

The Inflation Reduction Act¹³ and the resilience of small businesses we all saw during the pandemic shows that many local business owners are confident that they can overcome inflation. The seventh Small Business Recovery Report issued by Kabbage from American Express shows that over 80% of 550 surveyed local businesses believe they can withstand a recession.

Even if you're confident in your business, it doesn't hurt to consider a few practices that can help offset economic issues and support the expansion of your company. Here are the most successful practices, per the Small Business Recovery Report, that businesses like yours are using to thrive amidst inflation.

#1 Change Prices / Upsell Customers

In March 2022, we saw an average 21% increase in prices across industries, mainly because of increased costs from vendors (54%) and raw materials (45%). One way to deal with the increased costs is by increasing the prices of your products. Depending on your business, decreasing the product is another way to deal with inflation. But use this solution with caution, as it may cost you, customers, in the long run.

A third solution is to focus more on upselling customers. Some store owners report success in keeping their prices the same (or slightly up) while using marketing efforts and customer engagement to upsell toward premium or additional products.

#2 Invest in Branding and Marketing

About 57% of larger and medium small businesses and 29% of the smallest ones cite branding as the primary way they put their business on the map. Most of them use social media and other digital advertising channels to differentiate themselves from the stiff competition.

¹² <https://www.kiplinger.com/economic-forecasts/inflation#:~:text=Inflation%20will%20end%202022%20at,the%20economy%20slows%20next%20year>.

¹³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rhettbuttle/2022/08/15/five-truths-about-how-the-inflation-reduction-act-will-help-small-business-and-working-families/?sh=4aba75185482>

Predicted trends for 2023 say that the majority of small business marketing efforts will be through online channels. When searching for reviews and recommendations, most consumers turn to online sources such as Google. They also discover new products and businesses on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. You can build your brand awareness, engage with customers, and advertise inexpensively on your website and social media.

#3 Acquire Additional Funding

The inflation got many small businesses to rethink the ways they manage their cash flow. In order to avoid the potential situation of simply making ends meet, about 46% of local owners will be covering inflation costs with additional capital, acquired by applying for credit¹⁴. Here's a step-by-step guide to preparing a strong business case that will position your business as worthy of investment.

¹⁴ <https://newsroom.kabbage.com/news/new-kabbage-survey-shows-80-of-u-s-small-businesses-are-confident-they-could-withstand-a-u-s-economic-recession/>



1. Figure Out Your Funding Source

First things first – you have to choose the right funding source. No financial solution is a one-size-fits-all, but most businesses go for one of these three most common funding sources:

- **Investors** – Most investors work either as individuals, also known as “angel investors,” or as venture capital firms. Whichever type of investor you decide on, do thorough background research on the firm to ensure you’re turning to a reputable investor.
- **Crowdfunding** – Need capital but don’t want to give away a share of your business or provide a financial return? Crowdfunding is the way to go – all you’ll have to provide is a one-time gift or store credits (oh, and closely read the financial and legal obligations of obtaining crowdfunding).
- **Loans** – A bank or credit union loan will get you capital, and you won’t give away any control of your business. Pro tip: don’t settle on a loan before getting a few offers and comparing them to choose the best one.

2. Make the Business Case

Every funding source you land on requires different types of documents and statements to make your case. However, most of the time, you’ll need a solid business case.

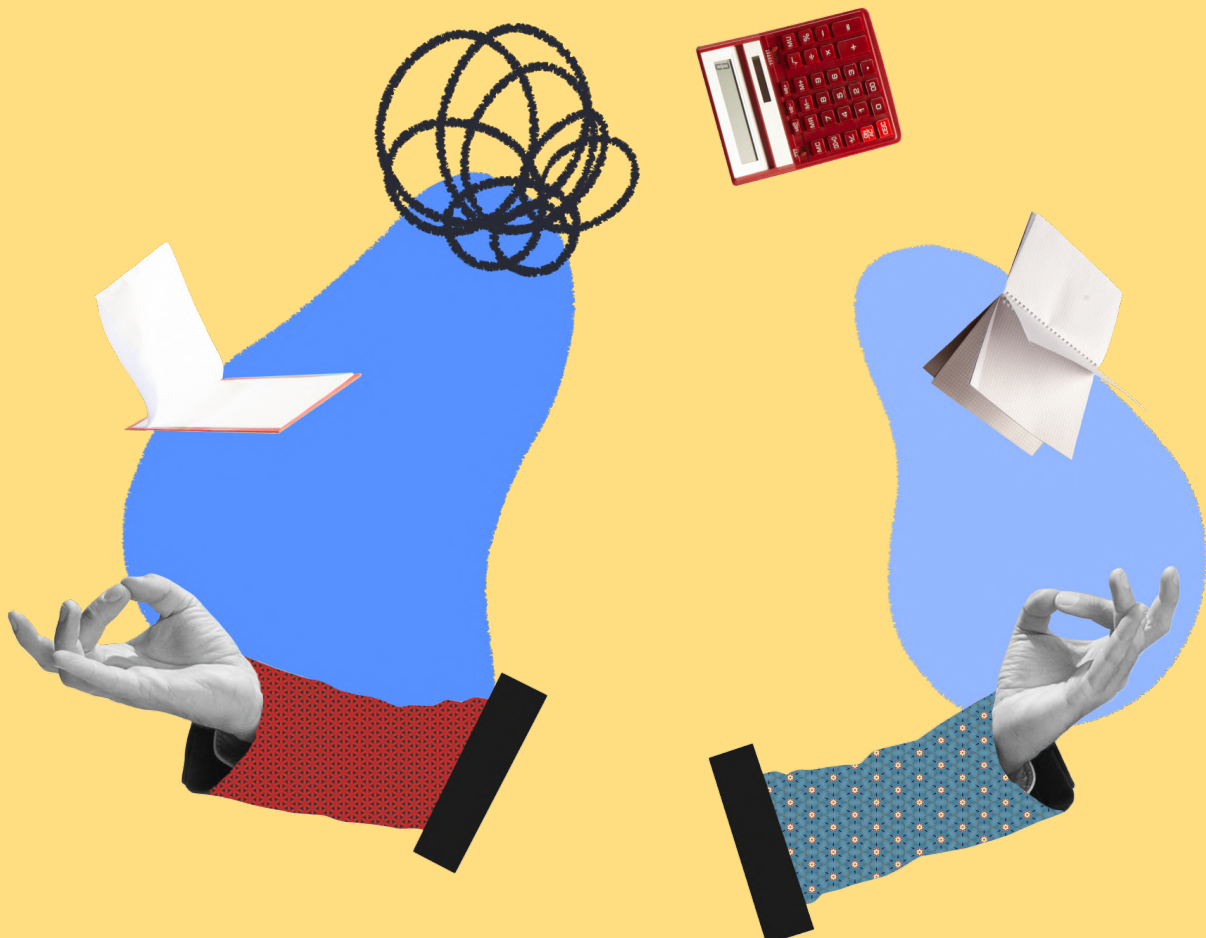
In this statement, discuss the reasons for requesting funding, and include the total amount you need. Showcase why this amount is required to provide assurance that the money won’t be mishandled. For a more detailed look at how to write a business plan visit this [U.S. Small Business Administration guide](#).

3. Collect Your Financial Statements

You should provide funding sources with all the relevant financial statements, including:

- **Financial history statement** – Reports of revenue, expenses, and profit over time show that your business is solid. If you don’t have proof of growth, collect your financial history and explain how additional funding will help you move on to bigger and better things.

- **Business credit report** – An accurate business credit showcases you are financially responsible. Get your report form and score improvement indicators from [Dun & Bradstreet](#).
- **Business valuation** – There are many ways to determine how much your business is worth. The most popular methods are doing a self-valuation or contacting and [selecting a qualified business appraiser](#).
- **Business forecast** – Whatever the past of your business may be, it's the future that matters – and a detailed forecast is the best way to predict it. Complete a quantitative of your business's revenue and expenses, and include the methodology of estimation for a strong forecast.





The Two Critical Needs of Any Small Business in 2023

No matter what challenges the next year brings, there's something to be said about considering the critical needs of your business. We suggest you invest time in two key elements of your business: creating a marketing strategy and establishing an e-commerce website.

A **marketing strategy** will help you organize your efforts, plan ahead and avoid unnecessary strolling while making business decisions. It will point you in the right direction and give you the frame to follow.

Having a professional **ecommerce website** is crucial for any contemporary business. Numbers show that more than 70% of Americans order online. And the number of people purchasing online is increasing each year. Even when they don't order online, people tend to investigate the business' website before deciding to visit. Without a professional e-commerce website, you risk losing customers and thousands of dollars each month.

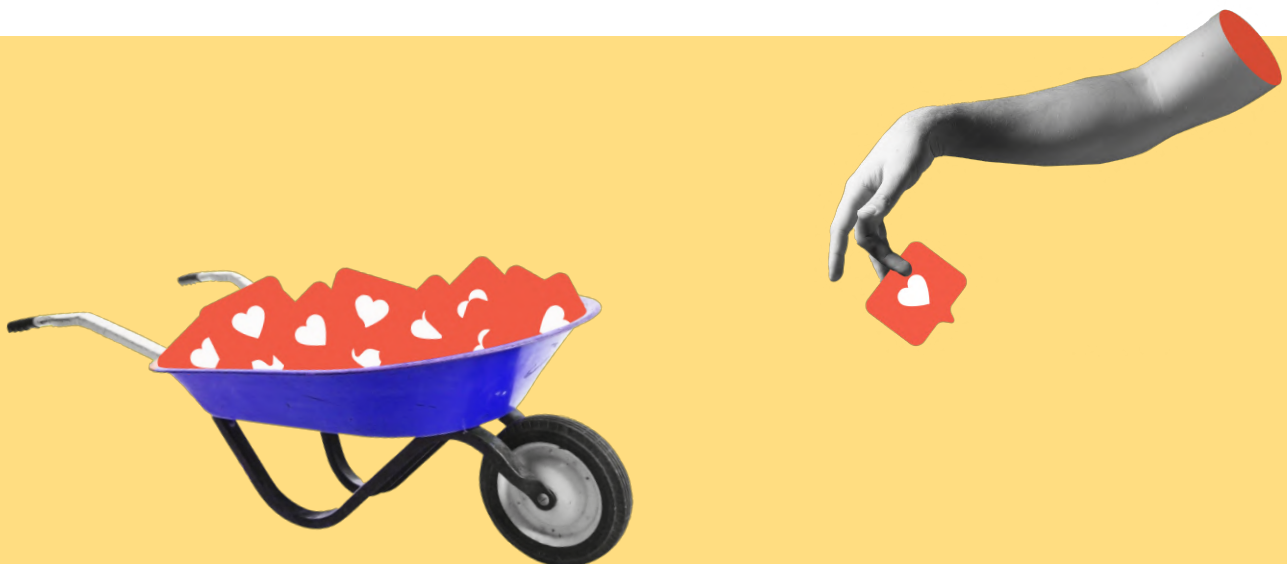
Creating a Budget-Friendly Marketing Strategy

Creating a marketing strategy equates to making a strategic plan for your business's growth. As people nowadays spend a large portion of their time online, digital marketing is both effective and inexpensive! In terms of cost and business growth, the best digital marketing channels are social media and emails.

Social Media

Social media is an excellent way to increase brand awareness and build customer relationships. First, choose the platform that best reaches your customer base. For example, Facebook and YouTube are the most widely used platforms. In fact, Statista shows that 77% of people aged 35-44 are on Facebook. Additionally, you can set your Facebook account to post automatically share on Instagram anything you post on Facebook. Younger customers? No problem. The most preferred platform for 18-29 year-olds is TikTok. **Conclusion:** For customers over 30 years old, Facebook and Instagram are great online platforms for everyday content and promotions.

Are you worried about the set-up and management cost of your social media profiles? Don't be. The set-up is free, and there are plenty of options and low-cost solutions to manage your social media presence. From hiring personal consultants and companies to college interns and part-time social media managers to your ranks.



Email Marketing

Another great way to embark on a digital marketing journey is through email marketing. It allows you to engage with your customers on a much more personal level and to deepen your customer relationship. And it's a channel of communication that is practically free--yet brings the highest return on investment of them all!

All you have to do is 1) build your email list and 2) plan the content and the frequency of your emails. Building your email list doesn't require any technical skills. It only takes adding a pop-up form to your website, which gives your customers a quick way to subscribe to your newsletter.

Considering that more than 40% of people report they like to receive personalized offers based on their dietary preferences, purchase history, and current location, this is an opportunity you don't want to miss. You can send exclusive and promotional offers, discounts, holiday wishes, or other relevant information about your food and offers.

Email marketing is a powerful tool for building customer loyalty and audience growth. However, it is important not to send emails too often. Otherwise, your customers will feel like you're spamming them. Also, you can set expectations with your customer base about the frequency and the type of content they will receive. If your customers know when and what to expect, it's more likely they will open your emails. Sending one email weekly is a good approach.

With email marketing, you can expect several significant benefits:

- You will create advocates
- You will increase organic recommendations
- You will build repeat business

A solid marketing strategy will ensure you get a continuous stream of customers - both new and existing ones. Once you get their attention, all you need to do is direct them to your storefront or website. However, that requires you to have a well-created website that provides a smooth and memorable shopping experience. Let's get into it.

Establishing Your Ecommerce Website

A professional ecommerce website enables you to:

- **Attract new customers.** An ecommerce website that is SEO optimized will bring more customers and increase your revenue.
- **Increase the credibility of your business.** Customers can visit your website for information about what you offer. This makes your company seem trustworthy and knowledgeable about the products they're seeking.
- **Highlight the unique qualities of your brand and offer.** Your website is perfect for sharing your story, information about your offer, and a product's unique quality.
- **Be in charge of your online orders and delivery.** A website allows you to offer online ordering and delivery while being in charge of it, without using third-party services.
- **Keep your customer information and grow a loyal customer base.** Since the website is yours, you keep all your customer information. You can create a database to boost your sales by advertising to this audience.

How to do it?

The best two options for establishing your ecommerce website are: hiring a website designer or choosing a business platform to bring your business online.

Option #1: Hire a website designer

The cost of hiring a website designer can be expensive. The prices range from a few thousand dollars to 10K or more – depending on the number of web pages, the complexity of the website, and the fee your chosen designer charges. Before approaching a website designer, prepare the approximate number of web pages so that they can give you an exact offer. Building the website this way can last up to three months or more, depending on the designer's schedule.

Option #2: Select a business platform to bring your business online

Solutions that offer customized websites are a quick-and-easy way to go. These complete e-commerce platforms will also provide you with a package of tools for running and managing your back-office operations. Unlike a simple website, an e-commerce platform enables you to process orders and delivery, track customer information, and update and manage inventory. Be sure to look for an e-commerce platform that is simple to use while offering all the tools you need.

When deciding between these two options, think about what fits your business best and how to stay loyal to your brand and your brand's story. The design you choose should represent your business. Be sure to use your logo and brand colors. Add lots of high-quality photos to your website. If you're unsure how to achieve this, we advise hiring a photographer. After all, a picture is worth a thousand words. Your e-commerce website should be simple to use--for you and your customers. Use the following advice for setting up your online store and driving traffic to your website.

Setting Up Your Online Store

Setting up your online store is all about providing customers with a great shopping experience. Since people do everything on their mobile phones these days, first make sure your website is mobile-optimized. Just imagine how frustrating it would be if your website isn't working correctly when people visit it from their phones. Your business would lose credibility, and many would decide not to order.

To create a great ordering experience, consider including features such as:

- A quick ordering system
- Simple payment processing
- Easy navigation
- Delivery scheduling
- Delivery tracking
- Product search

Another great feature for your website is automatic upselling and cross-selling of your products. With this feature, your customers are encouraged to add more relevant items to their shopping cart during checkout, increasing your average order value (AOV).

Driving Traffic to Your Website

Two simple ways to drive traffic to your website are SEO optimization, and social media & email marketing.

#1 SEO Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) will make your website a magnet for new visitors. SEO is a process to improve how high your website ranks on search results. For example, when someone searches for your product, if your website is optimized, your shop will appear at the top of the results.

Seeing your business as the top result of a Google search will make your company seem trustworthy. It increases the chance that customers will know of your business and choose it over competitors. SEO optimization is a step you shouldn't skip when setting up your online store.

There are three essential aspects of website SEO:

- **On-page optimization.** To achieve on-page optimization, you should add keywords to your website and include all relevant information, accurate descriptions, and valid images. To discover which keywords are suitable for your business, you can try using free online tools such as Semrush Keyword Magic Tools, AnswerThePublic, and similar.
- **Content optimization.** Your content should answer consumers' needs and wants. When adding content to your website, avoid writing general phrases, and focus on producing short, relevant, authentic descriptions. Always add keywords.
- **Technical optimization.** Make your website user-friendly. Ensure that the security of your website is high while the load time is low. Mobile optimization is a must.

SEO optimization can be challenging if you are new to it. But, with the right information, you can do it smoothly. If you don't have time or will to deal with it by yourself, you can hire an SEO company or use a business platform that includes website optimization.

#2 Social Media & Email Marketing

Social media and email marketing are great ways to promote your brand and drive traffic to your website. At the same time, you can connect with your customers and build relationships. When creating social media content, try to post regularly. Write captions from the heart, share your story, and be sincere and authentic. Some of your content should directly lead them to your website. You can add links to your website – on your posts and stories.

Another great way to drive traffic and connect with customers is email marketing. You can send monthly or weekly offers and purchase reminders. Consider sending your customers happy birthday emails with special offers as well. It will make them love you even more. Be sure to include the link to your website in all your emails.

Are you old school? Old schoolers are cool. We've got you covered.

Even if you're not prone to new technologies, that shouldn't stop you from having a professional e-commerce website. Today's modern platforms make the process quick and seamless. Companies do the work for you, and you can access their customer support for issues.

Promenade is an all-in-one business solution that provides small businesses with a custom-branded website, online ordering, delivery with access to a network of drivers, automated marketing, payment processing, and much more. Promenade focuses solely on helping small businesses thrive against big retailers and e-commerce players. Let's partner to grow your business, together.

[Book a demo](#) to see how we can help your business grow.