How Internet Radio Helps Small Businesses Grow

The new information era is forcing small business leaders to adapt new marketing techniques and channels.

One such new media is Internet radio.

While many small business leaders may be reluctant to make the jump into this new media, K. David Katzmire points out "fortunately, there are tools out there that don't require time consuming learning curves. So if a small business leader is looking to expand his or her outreach, he or she may wish to consider extending one tool they already have, their voice."

As a small business owner offering web services to clients, Katzmire has helped a growing number of web clients move into blogging, podcasting, live streaming and more.

He maintains that the ability to produce media rich content is now available to small businesses and individuals just as the printed word had downsized to micro-publishers and self-publishing in digital format.

Like many small business leaders, Katzmire has found the need to broaden his marketing efforts. Through his clients he moved into Internet radio and seen his business grow because of his efforts.

 "Demands on my company were constantly taking us into new territory but some good examples of how this media can be an effective tool may encourage other small businesses to explore ways it can help them," he says.

Like many other small business leaders, Katzmire learned through trial and error.

Based on his experience and using one of his clients, A Better World Radio & TV, as an example, Katzmire outlines the steps to creating an Internet-radio program.

Katzmire says that after producing public access television programs for 20 years, Mitchell Rabin began a weekly radio program A Better World.

Rabin uses a service called Blog Talk Radio. This service is used by small businesses and individuals alike from amateurs to world renown personalities, (Blog Talk Radio is not the only talk radio station available, but it is the one Katzmire says he prefers).

As Rabin found out, getting started on an Internet radio station is relatively quick and easy but maintaining a weekly schedule requires some commitment. Nonetheless, Katzmire and he believe it holds good potential for generating greater traffic, increased sales and higher profits when integrated with other resources.

Katzmire outlines a format used by some of his clients and was honed on www.ABetterWorld.tv :

- **A simple production schedule moves like clockwork**. Each week a newsletter is e-mailed to announce the upcoming radio broadcast along with other company related news. The newsletter contains links to the radio program and the company web site.
- **The company web site** has an opt-in link for the newsletter on the home page, so these two things are mutually supporting.   A post of the forthcoming radio show is placed on the company web site and the Blog Talk Radio web site with a description & photo of the guest as well as link back to their web site. This provides a guest with a new traffic source and it makes the show a viable and sought after venue for other quality guests seeking publicity.
- **The programs can be dynamically connected** to various social media to syndicate content, (Word Press is not the only system with this capability, but it is the one we prefer). What does this mean? When a post of an upcoming show is made on the web site it automatically syndicates throughout the company's social network, so, one post shows up on numerous places including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and RSS feeds.   Posts promulgated on the social network contain brief descriptions of the posts and links back to the web site and/or Blog Talk Radio channel. Now all spokes lead to the center of the wheel and the company web site is at the center. Blog Talk Radio also automatically syndicates the radio archive to iTunes giving the company its own iTunes channel with shows made available to a greater listening base with mobile ready downloads.   For an illustration of how all of this works together, see the Social Clockwork of The Web Elves at: www.TheWebElves.com/social-clockwork .
- **Establishing a specific time each week** or each month for the show. Listeners can here the show in the archives and a majority of listeners do just that, an example of how the new era of lifting the confines of time evolving in today's media world.
- **Running the show is like driving an automatic transmission**.   The host logs in to the programs control panel page and acts as his or her own engineer with a setup that can be learned in minutes. (Some small business leaders may want to find someone in the organization or an outside source to man the control panel.)
The control panel shows a a countdown to show time, then it displays the time remaining while the show is live.
- **The host** can call in with a telephone or use Skype to speak on the program. Since guests can call in or Skype out to reach guests around the world and more than one guest can be on at the same time, it is possible to have a talk show style. Incoming callers will have their telephone numbers displayed on the control panel and the host can click to connect them, mute them or disconnect them from the show.
- **The show can be done** live or pre-recorded programs to accommodate guests or to enable the host or staff to edit and broadcast at a specified time. To edit the show Katzmire suggests Audacity audio software, which is free).
- **Since it is possible to upload pre-recorded shows or segments**, the host can place startup music, have pre-recorded announcements or advertisements that play at a click of a button and even sell advertising time. After your show is done, it is possible to download the audio archive and upload audio files to the company's own web site to be played from there. It is also possible to set up the radio home page and display links back to the company web site, Facebook & Twitter, and brand the page with your a logo.

As Katzmire points out these tools take one beyond thinking in terms of, "what can we do?" to focus on "what do we want to do?"

Katzmire also points out the cost on Blog Talk Radio and other sites are relatively cheap. Rates start at $39-a-month at the premium level.

With a relatively easy support platform of usability and tips on how to do a show, a small business leader may ask: So what do you want to do?

Katzmire's own experience with Internet radio may be a good guide.

"After facilitating effective production models for clients, I decided to use the system for my own work, so I became a client of The Web Elves, as it were.   My life's work is the study of the cycles of history, the cycles of change, known as KalaRhythms, featured at: www.KalaRhythms.org .   In order to talk about the changing times, review history and look ahead, I set up my own weekly radio program called The Cycles Of Change on Blog Talk Radio at: www.BlogTalkRadio.com/cycles , he says.

"Within weeks I was averaging more than an a thousand listens a week and numbers climbed from there.   Best-selling authors and accomplished people asked to be on the show and guests announced their upcoming appearances to their contacts which broadened my listening base," he goes on.

For instance he spoke recently at Marble Collegiate Church in New York City and received numerous queries to be guests and to listen to his program.

Katzmire and others point out the key to a successful small business show is providing information of interest and value to listeners.

He urges small business leaders to keep references to the company's own products and services to a minimum.

"Get guests who provide information and knowledge useful for listeners. If you sell widgets, highlight guests who provide hands on suggestions on how better to use them. Go a little far afield and invite guests on how better to manage cashflow. If you supply garden tools, give suggestions on how to make a better garden. Etc."

Katzmire also reminds readers the potential down sides should not be forgotten.

A Better World founder, Rabin, offers this precautionary note regarding Internet radio: "It can help a small business owner but it can hurt a business as well. Embarking upon the production of, say, a weekly radio show is a good amount of work, energy and preparation time. If the show isn't up to the standard, instead of serving your small business it could do the opposite. If the owner or program host isn't good at the job and is not well-spoken, it will not reflect well on the business. On the other hand, with proper time and preparation an internet radio show can very helpful. An option to consider is advertising on compatible, existing shows. That's the quickest and probably most cost-and-time effective way to gain exposure without diverting too much time and attention to what is, in a sense, its own enterprise. Make no mistake: it's a commitment."

Another factor to consider according to Katzmire, is **something old and something new are the elements for success.** Know when to use either. Sometimes tradition must be preserved and sometimes must differentiate beyond our comfort zone. Utilizing expanded media and following good business guidelines as are found on Small Business Digest can be the combination that put things in perspective. It has worked for Katzmire and he hopes it works for he read.

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