



20 FREE WAYS

TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE



Starting a new business is hard work and entails a lot of thinking on your feet, and learning fast while you're getting off the ground. Plus, budgets are almost always tight for any new start-up, so finding free ways to promote your business in the early stages can be invaluable.

That's why we have put together this comprehensive list of 20 free ways you can promote your business online.

1 Writing a blog can be great because it's a cost effective way to promote your business and develop your brand image, because you're in control of managing the perception of your brand. They allow you to engage with your audience, building a relationship with them and humanising your business. This is down to the trust and credibility blogs allow you to build through your content.

Regular blogging will drive constant traffic to your website and will increase your SEO (Search Engine Optimization), meaning people will find your site more easily in search engines. Incorporating keywords and URL links will also help you to rank higher in search engine return pages (SERP).

2 List your blog and website on as many search engines and directories as you can find. There are many blog directories you can list your blog on such as **Technorati**, **Reddit** and **Blogorama**. Also use bookmarking sites such as **StumbleUpon**, **Outbrain.com** and **Digg.com**. People sign up to these sites to receive content from across the web based on a particular subject matter.

3 Make sure your URL is listed on Google using **Webmaster Tools**.

4 Use keywords. Insert keywords and images that describe your business into the HTML <META> tags on your website pages. Repeat these keywords in the text of your websites homepage. Strategic use of keywords can put your business name at the top of customers' search results. The more relevant your website the higher it will appear on search engines. Use **Google Adwords: Keyword Planner** to find the most searched for words and phrases related to your business, and use them in your blog and website titles, main pages and within the first paragraph of your posts.

5 Put your URL on everything. It may seem simple but just think about how many emails you send in a day. Put a link to your website or blog in your email signature, as well as adding it to your social media profiles and on all of your company literature, including your business cards.

6 Ask guest bloggers to contribute to your site and vice versa. It's the quickest and easiest way to drive traffic to your site as well as positioning you as an authority in your field.

7 Use vloggers (video bloggers) and bloggers to promote your product or service. They are called influencers as they have large groups of fans who they have an influence over. Find ones that are relevant to your business and audience and send them your product or service for free. Many of them make their living this way and are approached by big brands and paid tidy sums to promote their products. But try to build a relationship with them as they'll only want to help people they know and like. Perhaps you could try interviewing them for a post on your blog then asking them to promote it to their audience.

8 Build an email database and send them regular newsletters. Make sure you are sending them interesting content which drives them back to your site. Nobody wants to receive junk in their inbox so be thoughtful about what you're sending out. You can easily build a database by asking people to sign up to receive a free ebook or guide. Be sure to email your customers with any special offers or promotions you plan on running.

9 Use YouTube. It has worldwide views of around 1 billion a month. This is the easiest and most cost effective way for you to get your message out there. Create your own page and regularly upload videos which you can then share via social media. Remember to make

the titles of your videos catchy and relevant using keywords so that they can easily be found through searches.

10 Create podcasts and post them on your website and on iTunes. This is a great way to reach a wider audience and build up a fan base who prefer to listen on the move.

Use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, to present and promote your content to a wider audience. Ultimately you're aiming to peak people's interest and drive them back to your website or blog. Tailor your images and content to suit each platform and try not to promote the same thing on each site. Often people will engage with you across different platforms and will want something different depending on where they are accessing you.

12 Go onto Google+ Business Pages and join relevant groups where your target market will be, share photos and information and link up with your customers in Google Hangouts.

13 Set up different Meet Ups as a way to not only promote your business and position yourself as an authority, but as a way to really get to know your niche audience, build relationships and find out more about them and what they want, so you can sell to them more effectively.

14 Host free webinars to draw interest and introduce people to your brand. Pick a relevant topic and share it with your audience. Make it interactive and turn it into a Q&A. Not only will it benefit your audience but you will gain valuable insight into the issues your niche are interested in.

15 Join online communities and converse with people via the notice boards, responding to any relevant questions being asked or topics being discussed. Offer them advice, tips and information then drive them to your site for more.



16 Become an expert in your field. Research conferences, workshops, websites and online magazines, and approach them as an expert in your field. Offer your services as a contributor or someone who could provide quotes for relevant articles they may be publishing. Be sure your website, blog, product or service is name checked within anything you contribute to. You could also try teaming up with further education colleges offering to consult or contribute to courses in your subject matter.

17 Publish information, reports and research about your industry or audience online. This positions you as the expert in your field. PR your results finding an interesting topical angle that people will respond to. Just publishing statistics is not going to do anything for your business. What story do the statistics tell? Use **Poll Daddy** or **Survey Monkey** for your free online research tools.

18 Set up business partnerships and sign up to affiliate programmes with other relevant businesses, websites and blogs and share links on each other's sites.

19 Ask your friends, family and loyal customers to share your website or blog with their extended network. You'll be surprised how far your message can travel with a personal recommendation.

20 Use Vine to create short videos to promote your blog posts and website content. These videos can be shared via Facebook and Twitter.

Remember

You'll need to be regular and consistent with the content that you share. It's no use posting content once a month. You need to be consistently visible and on people's radar.

The content that you share needs to hold some value and be of interest to your niche, so be mindful of what you're putting out there, as it's a direct reflection of your brand.

