



# Proof: Why Selling to Diverse-Owned Small Businesses Is Smart Business

How to gain market share, drive engagement, and deepen loyalty in a \$300 billion untapped market.



**SMART SIMPLE MARKETING**  
GAIN CLARITY. TAKE ACTION. GET RESULTS.



## Welcome to Smart Simple Marketing!

We are thrilled you've downloaded this resource and are prioritizing getting to know your small business audience so you can effectively serve their needs.

Our CEO, Sydni Craig-Hart, is a 4th generation entrepreneur. Our COO, Wil Hart, also comes from a family of successful entrepreneurs. Our team is excited to share the depth of our insights cultivated over the past two decades in our work with more than 31,000 small business owners.

Based on untold hours of hands-on experience, this expertise has inspired countless corporations to understand the unique needs of small, minority- and women-owned businesses, serve them well, and increase engagement and revenue. We are sure your organization can follow suit.






And if you have questions or want to discuss how your organization can leverage our inclusive marketing experience; high-impact, quick turnaround, revenue-boosting solutions; and small business insights, please reach out at **510-365-6148** or **[Info@SmartSimpleMarketing.com](mailto:Info@SmartSimpleMarketing.com)**.

We can't wait to speak with you.





What clients say about partnering with Smart Simple Marketing:

-  **Oracle:**  
*"With a spark of brilliancy... you captured our attention... and you thrived in getting results in unfamiliar territory."*
-  **Google:**  
*"You know the small business community, how to provide excellent customer service, and know how to make the unknown a reality."*
-  **Dun & Bradstreet:**  
*"Your expertise and knowledge base are impressive," and we love your "intelligence and enthusiasm for the small business community."*
-  **Verizon Wireless:**  
*"Thank you for helping us stay top-of-mind for our customers and prospects by building a means for ongoing communication."*
-  **Constant Contact:**  
*"You played a major part in growing our presence and recognition in the San Francisco Bay Area as well as [in helping] innumerable small businesses to succeed."*



## Selling To A Diverse Small Business Market

With [32.5 million small businesses in the U.S.](#) alone, the small business market offers a tremendous revenue opportunity for enterprises and startups, especially since 99.9% of all U.S. businesses are small businesses and only 500,000 are franchise establishments.

While these numbers represent companies with fewer than 500 employees, the numbers are even more staggering when the focus is narrowed to micro businesses: 26.5 million small businesses have no employees, and 5.4 million small businesses have only 1–19 employees. That means 81% of small businesses are owned by solopreneurs who have a pressing need for a variety of products, services, and solutions to help them scale their business and meet their goals.

### The benefits of selling to the small business market are clear:

- 💡 Market size is vast, and opportunity abounds as small business owners are actively looking for guidance and support to start, manage, and grow their businesses.
- 💡 Small business buyers make decisions faster because there is far less complexity in their organizational structure—often the owner is the sole decision-maker.
- 💡 Small business networks are small, and owners trust each other more than the average consumer because they understand each other. If you can win the trust and loyalty of one small business customer, the chances of being referred to their peers dramatically increase.

### But selling to a diverse small business market isn't as easy as it might seem.

While the opportunity is massive, small businesses have complex dynamics, nuanced needs, and cash flow constraints. They actively look to invest in solutions that deliver immediate and long-term value, scale alongside them as they grow, simplify their workflows, and help them reach their goals faster.

Yet [90 percent of brands struggle](#) to identify, understand, and connect with small business decision-makers.

The knowledge and empathy gap between enterprise marketing teams and small businesses makes sense. If you've never owned a small business and don't regularly talk to owners about their day-to-day problems and needs, figuring out the nuances of marketing and selling to small businesses—and owners who often tie their personal identities to their businesses—can be challenging and intimidating.

Worse yet, the lack of lived experience as an entrepreneur, a person of color, or a differently-abled person can lead to making expensive marketing mistakes, as small businesses are more diverse than ever.



- 💡 Entrepreneurs of color operate more [than 8 million businesses](#), generate \$1.4 trillion in revenue, and employ more than 7 million people.
- 💡 Between 2007 and 2017, businesses owned by people of color [grew 10 times faster](#) than the overall growth rate for U.S. small businesses during the same period.
- 💡 According to [American Express](#), from 2014 to 2019, firms owned by women of color grew twice as much (43%) as all women-owned businesses (21%). As of 2019, these firms accounted for 50% of all women-owned businesses.
- 💡 [Merchant Maverick](#) reports that Black-owned businesses grew 38% between February 2020 and August 2021 and more Black Americans started businesses in 2020 than in the previous 25 years.

In response to the global pandemic and social injustice, hundreds of enterprise companies proclaimed their support for diverse-owned businesses, yet as time passed and things “went back to normal,” their commitment and interest waned. This is a huge misstep for enterprise brands, as these savvy buyers demand more than “skin-deep” efforts to engage them and win their business.

*“Trust can’t be bought with a marketing campaign—authenticity is the new cultural currency. Founders of color are the hero image that communities are looking for. They want to see themselves and their realities represented in the companies they engage with, and that loyalty translates into long-term value for companies.”*

— [Ramona Ortega](#), *My Money My Future*, as quoted by [Barclays](#)

Small business owners, especially historically underrepresented small business owners, want to buy from brands that care about their day-to-day challenges and big dreams. They want to partner with brands that truly understand who they are, how they think, what they need, and what they want—and they reward those companies with their buying power, loyalty, and referrals.

## Increasing Small Business Market Share

While a little effort can yield big gains in other markets, in the small business space, organizations must go all-in with a strategic, consistent, and sustained marketing approach that is tailored to the needs of their perfect-fit small business customers.



## If you've been tasked with increasing small business market share:

- 💡 You already have or are developing a program, product, or service for a multicultural target market.
- 💡 You have a budget to create new marketing campaigns aimed at small businesses and must demonstrate a decent ROI on the spend.
- 💡 You understand that the small business landscape is diverse and that diversity isn't only about culture and race, but also age, language, education, economic status, gender, and ability.
- 💡 You know content marketing is a proven effective strategy but aren't sure how to tailor the content you create to the right small business buyers for your solution.
- 💡 You're nervous about making a misstep in today's charged climate of social media takedowns and cancel culture and want to make sure you get it right.

## And rest assured, you're in the right place.

Smart Simple Marketing is the multi-award-winning communications consultancy that global brands and enterprise organizations call on when looking to drive engagement, gain market share, and increase loyalty.

For more than 17 years, we have been the go-to resource for inclusive product marketing and strategy, content creation and amplification, diversity marketing training, and strategic communications—and as a certified minority-owned, woman-owned firm, Smart Simple Marketing is sought after to infuse an unparalleled sense of enthusiasm, energy, and passion into helping big businesses effectively sell to small businesses and underrepresented markets.

This resource pulls from our deep experience working alongside enterprise organizations like Google, Facebook, Ikea, Oracle, LinkedIn, and Verizon, as well as thousands of entrepreneurs and small businesses to provide insights and actionable methods for deploying effective marketing campaigns aimed at diverse small business markets, making meaningful connections with small business owners, and building trust with new prospective customers.



Backed with hands-on experience, proven data and real-world examples, Smart Simple Marketing will help you:

- 💡 Develop a greater understanding of the diverse small business landscape and the role of diversity and inclusion in marketing beyond multicultural marketing.
- 💡 Learn how small businesses think, how they make buying decisions, what holds them back, and how you can help them be more confident in those decisions.
- 💡 Understand the buying power of diverse customers and diverse-owned small businesses and how your brand can leverage the opportunities available to generate more leads and increase sales in an authentic, feel-good way.
- 💡 Realize the consequences of making a marketing misstep and how you can avoid mistakes that damage brand perception, and trust and get your marketing right.
- 💡 Discover how inclusive marketing ensures your efforts resonate with the right buyers and empowers you to form deep connections with customers, increase loyalty, and generate more referrals.
- 💡 Gain new ideas to position your brand as a small business resource and discover the three top-performing marketing strategies that drive engagement, grow market share, and deepen brand loyalty with diverse-owned small businesses.

*Let's get started...*



## Understanding The Small Business Mindset

Small business owners have a lot in common with traditional consumers but think about spending and risk much differently from consumers who collect a regular paycheck.

The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reports that 82% of small businesses survive one year, 50% survive to the five-year mark, and just 35% survive ten years. As revenue is never guaranteed in a small business, instead of 5-year plans and annual marketing budgets, owners are primarily focused on engaging new customers, generating enough revenue to cover their operating costs, and making enough profit to stay in business and avoid becoming a negative statistic.

- 💡 Owners, particularly in underrepresented communities, often rely on [personal investments or loans](#) for financing, so while they have less formal buying processes and can move faster to make purchases, they have limited time and little margin for error.
- 💡 Owners are often the decision-makers, and because they assume responsibility for many different roles and juggle many different tasks, they need things to be simple, easy to understand, and hassle-free.
- 💡 Owners, especially those in Latinx communities, are also typically the sole support for their families, which means they need reassurance that your solution can get them from where they are to where they want to be with as little risk as possible.

Because small businesses are budget sensitive, can be hesitant to make big purchases if the ROI isn't clear, and are more focused on the needs of today than what the future may hold, selling to them requires an intentional strategy. Every message, engagement, and marketing campaign must be tailored not only to their most pressing problems and needs but their motivations and fundamental paradigms.

## Understand The Small Business Customer

**You must understand who small business buyers are to ensure they are accurately represented and included in your marketing and messaging.**

If you are to gain their trust, small business owners must be able to see themselves in your marketing and feel like you care about them and created your solution just for them. This means you must have a clear picture of what you are selling, who you are selling to, how your offer is relevant, and why buyers should care.

And you can't lump all small business owners together in one homogenous group, as the small business market is becoming more diverse every day:



- 💡 [Guidant Financial](#) shares that in 2022, 68% of small business owners are members of minority ethnic groups.
- 💡 According to a [new survey](#) of more than 3,000 business owners conducted by SCORE, a non-profit organization affiliated with the Small Business Administration, 51% of US small businesses are owned by people older than 55.
- 💡 In a 2020 analysis of educational attainment among U.S. entrepreneurs who start employer businesses, [Kauffman Foundation](#) found that 51.4% of all entrepreneurs held at least a bachelor's degree, with 28.8% holding this as their highest level of educational attainment; one in five (19.2%) entrepreneurs' most advanced degree is a high school diploma with a similar portion (22.6%) holding a graduate degree; 3.6% of entrepreneurs have not completed high school; and small portions have completed vocational school (5.9%) or hold an associate degree (5.5%).

Small business owners want to feel seen, acknowledged, understood, and valued for who they are, and they want to partner with and buy from brands that align with their values. They also don't want to feel like they're being sold to or as if they only matter when your organization needs a revenue boost.

*You wouldn't call your best friend only when you need help moving, so why contact a small business owner only when you're looking for a sale?*

*— Sydni Craig-Hart, CEO, Smart Simple Marketing*

If a small business owner feels ignored, misunderstood, or excluded from the conversation, believes you don't value their day-to-day issues or care about the problems they need to solve, or thinks you're using them to hit your sales targets, you won't earn their attention or business.

But if you take the time to get to know your audience, position your brand as a helpful partner, and stay in touch beyond the sale to provide resources and support, you'll not only earn their attention, you'll earn their business, loyalty, and referrals.

## Understand Small Business Purchasing Intent

**You must understand why and how small business buyers make purchasing decisions to ensure your offers are crafted to meet them where they are and deliver the value they need.**



The changing business climate and the pandemic have not been friendly to small businesses—72% of business owners say business ownership has become harder over the past decade, due to more competition, challenges reaching new customers, a more competitive labor market, and e-commerce impacting brick-and-mortar sales. But small businesses are resilient, and that resiliency has led to growth.

According to the [Bank of America 2022 Small Business Owner Report](#), small businesses saw a 48% increase in revenue in 2021, and 52% of women- and minority-owned businesses plan to expand. **The report also found that 70% of small business owners adopted new digital tools and strategies for their businesses over the past 12 months.**

So yes, small business owners are strapped for time and operate on razor-thin margins. They are price-sensitive and looking to save money and trim expenses. But that doesn't mean they'll sacrifice value for price.

If the value exchange is clear and the investment is smart, small business owners have no problem making a purchase—and they are willing to pay a premium for convenience and reliability and to establish a relationship with a brand partner they respect and trust.

*“If you can demonstrate that you’re going to be here whenever and however I need you, that switching to your solution isn’t going to be painful, and that this time it’s going to be different, I’ll pay a premium.”*

*— John Jantsch, Small Business Expert*

## What does this mean for enterprise brands?

If you fail to understand what motivates small businesses to buy, and you get your small business marketing wrong, everyone loses.

- 💡 Business owners struggle to see the value of your solution, and because they're strapped for time, they don't have time to figure out if it's a fit; they don't learn the details they need to know to feel confident, and they don't buy.
- 💡 As a result, they miss out on the opportunity to secure a solution that could help them improve their operations and reach their goals faster, and you miss out on a potential customer.

On the flip side, if you establish your brand as a trusted educator, build meaningful connections with your audience, and get your small business marketing right, everyone wins.



- 💡 Your education-based marketing and customer-centric content help business owners get to know your brand, expand their awareness, improve their knowledge and skills, and clearly see the value of your solution.
- 💡 As a result, they buy and use your solution to operate more efficiently, increase revenue, reduce costs, and deliver better experiences, and you gain a delighted new customer.

**Bottom line: The opportunity to help small businesses make smart investments is yours to lose—and it's not an opportunity to miss.**

The truth is that small businesses aren't interested in your product, program, or service until it's obvious that it can fulfill a deep desire, solve a pain point or problem that's causing them to lose sleep, or advance their biggest business goals.

The easiest way to do that is to leverage education marketing.

If you can use education to build trust early in the buying process and communicate a tangible, immediate return on investment (ROI), you are more likely to beat out your competition and win new small business customers, even if your offer isn't as strong.

Think about how your brand can educate prospective customers about:

- 💡 New or forgotten technologies, techniques, and success paths.
- 💡 Ways to access new leads and gain visibility in untapped markets.
- 💡 Tools to nurture relationships, follow up with leads, and close more sales.
- 💡 Opportunities to reduce costs, make smart investments, and streamline systems.
- 💡 Resources to gain an edge over their competition to increase market share.
- 💡 Ways to measure the results of their efforts against their goals.

And when crafting your education-based marketing campaigns, stick to clear, simple, and straightforward messaging and answer these crucial questions:

💡 **What problem does our offer solve?**

What are the biggest, most pressing challenges small business customers face day-to-day? What is causing them pain or creating feelings of frustration, worry, and overwhelm?

💡 **What drives buying decisions?**

What motivation do your small business customers have to buy your solution? Why is solving their problem a priority right now?



 **What makes us relevant?**

How does our offer help the small business buyers we want to reach? How will it add value or make their day-to-day responsibilities and tasks easier or faster to complete? How will it reduce cost?

 **What is the impact of our offer?**

What are the benefits of buying? How does experiencing those benefits improve the businesses or lives of the small business owners who make a purchase? What's the ripple effect?

## Understand Small Business Purchasing Obstacles


**You must understand the obstacles that delay or prevent purchasing decisions so you can help remove barriers and empower small business buyers to take action.**


Purchasing managers within corporate enterprises consider the long-term effect buying decisions will have across departments, initiatives, and projects. Small businesses, on the other hand, think about the daily minutiae and their never-ending to-do list and weigh each buying decision carefully as making a wrong move or a poor investment could mean a major setback.

*“Small business owners don’t respond well to future ROI messages or value received over time because mostly we’re usually looking to fix something right now. Talk to me about the pain I have today, fix the problem that will get me immediate relief, and then we can talk about the future.”*

*— John Jantsch, Small Business Expert*

At every stage of the small business lifecycle, purchasing decisions are made with the utmost care to protect the owners and their investments.

 **Small businesses are not always quick to purchase, even if they really want a product.** Making a purchase is as much about cash flow, timing, and making the right decision as it is about cost, which means owners will research and compare and contrast options before making a purchase. Whenever possible, highlight the immediate and long-term value of your solution and communicate the anticipated ROI.

 Big business solutions aren’t usually a fit for small business customers who operate at a different scale and have very different needs. **Small businesses need packages and plans that are appropriate for their size**, operational scope, and responsibilities, and scalable to grow alongside them into the future.



- 💡 **Small businesses also need opportunities to sample, test, demo, or trial products before they buy** so they can see the immediate impact and future potential first-hand. If that isn't possible, they need social proof in the form of case studies, testimonials, and customer success stories to see how your solution has improved the businesses and lives of other small business owners like them. Help them see your solution as a way to accelerate the timeline of their goals.
- 💡 Cash flow is paramount, and expenses create constraints. **Small businesses need flexible payment options**, like monthly payments instead of annual payments or credit instead of cash. Offering a guarantee to mitigate risk can help a hesitant buyer feel comfortable taking action.
- 💡 **Small business owners value personal relationships** and don't want to be a nameless, faceless number in a system. For them, the ability to work with an account rep who calls them by name and knows their business or to have a specific person to reach out to if there is a problem holds tremendous value.
- 💡 Because the success of a small business sits squarely on the owner's shoulders, **they regularly seek learning opportunities to enhance their skills, improve their operations, and grow their revenue**. Brands that meet small businesses where they're at with the educational content they need can quickly build trust, create vital connections, and engage new customers at the start of their entrepreneurial journeys—and that can translate to your solution being embedded in their systems as a vital part of their business.

When seeking to better understand the small business mindset, remember that for small business owners, nothing is guaranteed and every day brings new challenges—and that creates uncomfortable risk and an underlying sense of fear and uncertainty.

If you can provide options to start simply and scale up as needed and position your offer as a way to mitigate risk, eliminate fear, overcome uncertainty, solve problems, and make running their businesses easier, you'll be lightyears ahead of your competition. And you may just earn unparalleled loyalty from your small business customers.





## Buying Power And Inclusive Marketing

Diversity education and inclusion in marketing isn't a new concept, and it isn't a trend. Some of the most successful brands in the world, like Coca-Cola, have made inclusivity a priority since the 1970s, which makes sense considering the diversity of the communities where they do business.

[Deloitte](#) shares that on a given day, the average consumer is bombarded by up to 10,000 discrete advertisements—and those consumers, especially among the youngest generations, are expecting more from these ads and messages than just details about the latest seasonal sale. They are questioning whether a brand walks its talk and supports diversity and inclusion both in public and behind the scenes.

Your audience is not one-size-fits-all, and inclusive marketing is becoming increasingly important as global brands realize the immense buying power (total income after taxes) of historically underrepresented communities:

**According to [AdWeek](#), the 2020 U.S. census revealed that 53% of Americans under the age of 18 are multi-racial and more than half of Americans will belong to minority groups by 2044.**



[McKinsey](#) reports that in 2019, consumer expenditures by Black households totaled approximately \$835 billion, and Black consumers are willing to [transfer approximately \\$260 billion](#)—about 30 percent of their current aggregate spending—to companies that can better deliver what they need. They’ll even pay up to 1.2 times more on average for offerings that are better suited to their needs and preferences, which could unlock another estimated \$25 to \$40 billion in net new spending. Together, these two figures add up to \$300 billion in unmet demand.

In 2021, the [Selig Center for Economic Growth Multicultural Economy Report](#) shared that the buying power for Asian American, Hispanic, Native American, and African American consumers has exploded over the past 30 years, from \$458 billion in 1990 to \$3 trillion in 2020.

💡 Asian American buying power grew by 111%.

💡 Hispanic buying power grew by 87%.

💡 Native American buying power grew by 67%.

💡 African American buying power grew by 61%.

According to Cisco’s [2020 Small Business Digital Maturity Study](#), small businesses could add \$2.3 trillion to the overall GDP of the eight markets included in the study—the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France—by 2024.

That is serious consumer and small business buying power, and the data signals a critical shift already underway: **Today’s underrepresented groups will be your future customers but only if they feel represented and included.**

## Values And Buying Decisions

Now more than ever, people are voting for their values with their wallets.

In a 2022 [article on the inclusive customer](#), McKinsey showed that two out of three Americans claim their social values now shape their shopping choices, and 45%—likely representing well over a hundred million shoppers—believe retailers should actively support Black-owned businesses and brands.

*“Businesses that meet the needs of inclusive consumers will likely do more than raise revenues and loyalty—they may also earn dividends in other areas of the business, including attracting and retaining talent ... the inclusive consumer is changing the imperative for retail ... leading the pack, influencing consumers across demographics, and voting with their pocketbook for retailers that support diverse entrepreneurs and their products.”*

— [McKinsey, The Rise of the Inclusive Consumer, 2022](#)



And it isn't only about multicultural diversity; it's also about gender, age, and ability inclusion.

- 💡 [McKinsey](#) highlights growth potential in the GDP of \$12 trillion if the gender gap is narrowed.
- 💡 A 2021 Gallup poll highlights that [LGBTQ identity has risen](#) from 3.5% in 2012 to 5.6% in 2020—and includes one in six among Generation Z (ages 16 to 26 in 2021).
- 💡 In the 50 largest U.S. metros, [LendingTree](#) researchers found the average age of folks requesting small business loans is 40.2.
- 💡 [American Institutes for Research](#) reports that in the United States, working-age (16–64) people with a disability have an estimated total disposable income of \$490 billion.

### CASE STUDY: Adobe's Foundation of Inclusivity

To quote the brand directly, “At Adobe, we believe that when people feel respected and included, they can be more creative, innovative, and successful. While we have more work to do to advance diversity and inclusion, we're investing to move our company and industry forward.”

Unlike other brands, Adobe didn't launch a diversity and inclusion campaign to prove its allyship. Instead, the brand walks its talk by infusing inclusivity into everything it does. Yes, the brand [elevates unique stories](#), creates [diverse stock photos](#) and [inclusive stock photography](#), and supports artists from underrepresented groups with its [Adobe Stock Advocates program](#), [Creative Empowerment Program](#), and [Artist Development Fund](#). But messages of inclusivity can be found in its daily actions across social media as well.

Scroll through Adobe's [Instagram](#) or LinkedIn page, and you'll find inclusive content that highlights both employees and artists of different cultures, races, shapes, sizes, genders, and sexual orientations. Search the hashtag #WomenCreateWednesday on Twitter and see Adobe amplifying the stories of inspiring women.



## Representation And Buying Decisions

Your customers have different backgrounds, experiences, stories, perceptions, and values. They want to buy from brands that recognize and value who they are, and they put greater trust in people and brands that feel aligned, related, and familiar.

[Microsoft Advertising](#) shares that 59% of consumers are more trusting of brands that include people who look like them, in their marketing campaigns. That number jumps to 61% with women buyers and 67% for people of color. And the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#) reports that when it comes to referrals and word-of-mouth marketing, 61% of people find information from “a person like me” to be credible or very credible.

Speaking about the importance of representation, president of [Greenwood Bank](#) Reese Giddins said, “When you have people that don't look like you, that can't understand you, and can't help you, it's hard to build trust.” That trust stems from a sense of community and belonging, and it translates to action:

- 💡 64% of consumers surveyed said they took some sort of action after seeing an ad they considered to be diverse or inclusive, and 69% of Black consumers are more likely to purchase from a brand whose advertising positively reflects their race/ethnicity. ([Google](#))
- 💡 70% of Gen Z consumers are more trusting of brands that represent diversity in ads, and inclusive ads have seen 23% more “purchase intent” from this audience alone. ([Microsoft Advertising](#))
- 💡 61% of Americans find diversity in advertising important, and 38% of consumers are more likely to trust brands that do well with showing diversity in their ads. ([Adobe](#))
- 💡 A 2019–2020 survey of 8,709 consumers in 29 countries and 956 business users in 24 countries found that 65% prefer content in their language, even if it's poor quality; 40% will not buy in other languages; and 73% want product reviews in their language if nothing else. ([CSA Research](#))
- 💡 59% of consumers said they prefer to buy from and are more loyal to brands that stand for diversity and inclusion in online advertising. ([Facebook Advertising](#))

### CASE STUDY: The White Collection Bridal Boutique

In 2019, The White Collection Bridal Boutique in Portishead, England, unexpectedly drew global attention for its inclusive window display featuring a mannequin in a wheelchair, wearing a wedding gown. This simple act expressed a powerful message of inclusion. Photos of the display went viral, not only earning the local retailer widespread praise but also inspiring others to share their own photos of wheelchair-using brides in wedding gowns.



As [Today reminds us](#), “Sure, there's nothing unusual about a bride in a wheelchair. But seeing one represented in a window display? That type of inclusivity doesn't happen every day—and it's about time it does, say supporters who are applauding the boutique.”

The White Collection Bridal Boutique in Portishead, England, got rave reviews for its simple yet powerful message of inclusion.



## CASE STUDY: Visa Sensory Branding Suite

Also in 2019, Visa announced its sensory branding suite that provides customers audible, haptic, or visually-animated cues when a financial transaction is complete. At the time of the announcement, Visa Chief Marketing and Communications Officer [Lynne Biggar](#) shared, “Giving greater dimensionality to our brand and letting our customers see, hear, or feel Visa when they pay is an essential ingredient.” Early studies showed that the move [improved brand perception by 14%](#) compared with those who did not experience sensory branding.

## Inclusivity Equals Opportunity

While data proves the importance of inclusivity in marketing and its effect on consumer and small business buying decisions, the majority of marketing campaigns by big brands and enterprise organizations still largely focus on a traditional, homogenous audience that lacks diversity and fails to accurately portray the communities where their buyers live and do business.

- 💡 54% of consumers said they do not feel fully culturally represented in online advertising, and 71% expect brands to promote diversity and inclusion in their online advertising. ([Facebook Advertising](#))
- 💡 66% of African-Americans and 53% of Latino and Hispanic Americans feel their ethnicity is portrayed stereotypically in advertisements. ([Adobe](#))

This gap creates a vital and lucrative opportunity for innovative companies.

Those that fail to close the gap will continue to miss out on new customers and potential revenue. Even worse, they could inadvertently reinforce negative perceptions of people who don't look, think, and talk like them. But those that do close the gap—those that get creative, think beyond their offers, focus on making an impact, and help every customer feel like they belong will become trusted customer advocates.

Inclusive marketing empowers you to form deeper connections with customers, make more sales, and increase customer loyalty. But inclusion and representation cannot just be a box-ticking exercise.



## CASE STUDY: Avon My Story Matters Campaign

Global beauty and personal care brand [Avon](#) surveyed 8,000 women across the globe to understand what issues were impacting them most during the pandemic. When Avon found that 41% lost confidence during the pandemic, the brand partnered with models of various races, ethnicities, and abilities to drive awareness on its “My Story Matters” platform, a space to give women a chance to share their authentic, unedited stories.

## Diverse Teams Cultivate Diverse Buyers

Marketing teams must consider the potential perception and impact of their creative decisions and evaluate concepts from all angles to avoid the kinds of cringe-worthy missteps you’ve likely seen splashed across social media followed by the token brand apology:

*“We’ve missed the mark! We apologize!”*

**— You don't want this to be the theme of your next campaign message**

### Dolce & Gabbana

In a tone-deaf attempt at culturally-significant humor, [Dolce & Gabbana](#) mocked and offended hordes of Chinese consumers with its portrayal of an Asian model’s clumsy attempt at eating Italian food with chopsticks. The brand quickly pulled the ad and issued an apology but Chinese consumers still boycotted the luxury fashion house, and several years later, D&G is still paying the price, with its Asia-Pacific market [shrinking from 25% to 22%](#).

### Burger King New Zealand

Incredibly, just months later, [Burger King New Zealand](#) launched a similar ad for its “Vietnamese Sweet Chilli Tendercrisp” burger, which showed people awkwardly attempting to eat burgers with chopsticks. It sparked outrage among Asian communities, who accused Burger King of cultural insensitivity and racism for diminishing the tradition of eating with utensils. That outrage spread to China where the hashtag #BurgerKingApology allegedly gained over 50m views in a few days. The brand’s response? *“The ad in question is insensitive and does not reflect our brand values regarding diversity and inclusion.”*

### Heineken

When a series of commercials for Heineken’s light beer showed a bartender sliding a beer past three black people to a lighter-skinned woman with the tagline, [“sometimes, lighter is better,”](#) it was immediately slammed, and Chance the Rapper led the charge, tweeting about how “terribly racist” the commercial was, to his more than 7 million Twitter followers. The brand’s response? *“We missed the mark, are taking the feedback to heart, and will use this to influence future campaigns.”*



## Volkswagen AG

A Volkswagen [Instagram ad for the new Golf 8](#) featured a giant white hand pushing and flicking a black man away from the parked VW Golf into a French restaurant named Petite Colon, which means Little Colonist. Viewers across social media also noted that the slogan “Der Neue Golf” (“The New Golf”) spells the German N-word when fading out and the hand seems to make a White Power sign.

According to the carmaker, more than 200 people in various departments saw the ad before it went live, and no one deemed it even slightly problematic. Volkswagen reps initially defended the ad, claiming it was misunderstood. But critics quickly fired back: “No one here got the wrong impression. This is bad and racist communication.”

*“Without question: the video is inappropriate and tasteless,” Volkswagen said in a statement. “We will clarify how something like this could happen, and there will be consequences.” Another statement communicated, “We posted a racist advertising video on Volkswagen’s Instagram channel... We understand the public outrage at this. Because we’re horrified too. On behalf of Volkswagen AG, we apologize to the public at large for this film. And we apologize in particular to those who feel personally hurt by the racist content because of their own history.”*

Imagine the embarrassing, expensive brand damage these companies could have avoided if their marketing teams and focus groups included actual people from their target demographics, who were given an opportunity to review the campaigns and provide feedback before they were launched to the world stage!

### **Gaining buy-in from a diverse audience is easier when the voices on your teams are also diverse.**

To infuse inclusivity into the fabric of your messaging and marketing, you must give underrepresented voices a seat at the table and include them in the creative and decision-making processes. [Deloitte](#) shared that teams, both internal and external, that closely reflect the markets they serve can reduce cultural and demographic distance between brands and the consumers they aspire to reach.

- 💡 If you’re **marketing to Black and Latinx buyers**, don’t assume you understand them, their culture, or their history. Instead, add Black and Latinx creators, marketers, and even customers to your teams and focus groups.
- 💡 If you’re **marketing to a differently-abled audience**, identify consumers in that audience to consult with your team, review concepts, test products, and share their first-hand feedback and insights.



- 💡 If your **marketing will run in another country**, make sure a diverse group of people who live in that country have the opportunity to review the campaign and messages to identify potential hazards.
- 💡 **If your audience is diverse** and made up of people of different genders, ages, races, economic statuses, and abilities, test your content and visual imagery with representatives in those consumer groups.
- 💡 **If your current team does not include a diverse group of people** who have walked in your customers' shoes, bring in outside help.

### **And above all, listen to what they have to say.**

Listen to their experiences and stories, their feedback and suggestions, and yes, even their criticisms, as they may save you from making a marketing blunder that sticks with your brand for years.

Collaborating with the right partner allows you to infuse priceless empathy into your campaigns and spare your brand the unfortunate experience of having to make yet another awkward “we missed the mark” apology.

### **And know that if the worst does happen and your brand makes a serious blunder, all is not lost.**

Take Dove Soap for example.

In October 2017, Dove released a [video ad on Facebook](#) showing a black woman taking off her shirt and morphing into a white woman who did the same and morphed into an Asian woman. It was accused of promoting the message that darker skin was unclean and received almost 3,000 negative comments, with many calling for a boycott of Dove's products. Dove responded with an apology, stating: *“This did not represent the diversity of real beauty... We apologize deeply and sincerely for the offense that it has caused.”*

That same year, the brand advertised a limited-edition soap [packaged in different shapes](#) and sizes, with the intent to represent the diversity of female body shapes and celebrate “real beauty.” Customers, however, perceived the move as an abject objectification of women's bodies. And when Dove dismissed consumers' comments and blamed production issues rather than take ownership, it only infuriated customers further.

Dove later proved that brands can indeed learn from their mistakes and overcome past brand gaffes.



In 2019, the brand, in partnership with Getty Images, launched [Project #ShowUs](#), a user-generated campaign and initiative aimed to “create the world’s largest photo library created by women and non-binary individuals to shatter beauty stereotypes.” Instead of the brand driving the agenda, consumers around the world took to their cameras and drove the conversation how they saw fit. The result was a library of [more than 5,000 photographs](#) of 179 women from 39 countries, featuring women of all shapes, ethnicities, and abilities, along with traditionally perceived “visual imperfections,” and these images are available for other brands to license.

## Opportunity To Expand Partnerships And Grow Revenue

Inclusivity efforts also translate to more diverse small business vendor partnerships, increased employee retention, and higher revenue.

[Kapor Center](#) reports that a lack of diversity drastically affects the retention of underrepresented groups, which costs the tech industry more than \$16 billion every year.

Research by [McKinsey](#) showed that companies with more racial and ethnic diversity are 33% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians, and workplaces that are gender-diverse are 21% more likely to outperform their counterparts. Another [McKinsey study](#) showed those numbers jump to 36% and 25% respectively when evaluating executive teams.

*“It’s not just who we hire internally, but who we work with.”  
“We want to make sure we’re working with a diverse array of content creators, agencies, directors, and producers to influence the industry and be culturally relevant in how we convey those messages—in an authentic way.”*

*— Marissa Solis, Senior Vice President of Portfolio Marketing, Partnerships, and Media at Frito Lay*

### Bottom line:

To effectively work with or sell to small businesses, brand marketing campaigns must accurately represent the communities where they do business to ensure the messaging, imagery, and stories resonate with buyers.

And that starts with speaking their language.





## Learning The Language of Small Business

We've already addressed that small businesses are more conscious of price and personal relationships, which means messaging around personal connection and value tends to perform well. Small business owners are also smart, savvy, education-focused, and driven to succeed, and they demand to be treated with respect, which means you need to speak their language—a language that is:

- 💡 Approachable, not elitist.
- 💡 Familiar, not confusing.
- 💡 Helpful, not condescending.
- 💡 Inclusive, not exclusive.
- 💡 Clear, not complicated.

**To ensure your marketing connects and resonates with small business buyers, you must take these three actions:**

First, give diverse voices that represent your full audience a seat at the table and make them a part of the conversation. “When at least one member of a team has traits in common with the end-user, the entire team better understands that user,” write Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Melinda Marshall, and Laura Sherbin for [Harvard Business Review](#).



Second, engage with and speak to small business owners to gain direct insights, and perform customer research and keyword research to understand the language that resonates with them. This means avoiding confusing acronyms or industry jargon, speaking in plain language, and aligning your messaging with the problems, wants, and needs buyers care about most.

Third, never forget that when communicating or working with a small business, you're likely dealing directly with the owner. "It's very rare in other industries to have access to the person who has power over the entire enterprise, so make the most of this special feature and build a relationship," says Andrew Gazdecki, CEO of Biznessapps.com. "If you become more than just an expense to the owner, if you're dependable, understanding, and flexible, you'll likely be in a position for a long-term relationship."

## The Corporate/Small Business Language Gap

The current language gap between corporations and small businesses presents an opportunity to position your brand as a small business resource, gain greater brand awareness, and build relationships, trust, and loyalty, all of which translate to an increase in sales and referrals.

Seize this opportunity by avoiding common communication mistakes such as:

### 1. Referring To A Small Business As An Acronym

When talking about small businesses, in-house marketing teams often use acronyms and jargon to talk about segments of their audience, terms like:

- 💡 Small office/home office (SOHO)
- 💡 Small and mid-sized (or medium-sized) businesses (SMBs)
- 💡 Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- 💡 Minority-owned businesses (MBEs)
- 💡 Woman-owned businesses (WBEs)

A lot of small business acronyms are tossed around, and most are labels small businesses would never use when describing themselves.

Problems arise when these internal inside-baseball terms get used publicly in conversation with real small businesses. "When marketing to small business owners and managers, use the labels they use," says Rex Hammock of SmallBusiness.com. Small business owners consider themselves to be business owners, entrepreneurs, and freelancers and should be addressed as such.



Similarly, Trust Radius, in their [2020 People of Color in Tech Report](#), highlights that 29% of respondents prefer the term People of Color or POC, followed by 22% preferring BIPOC. While the term “minority” is still being used in the United States to describe a person who isn’t white, [Google](#) shares that it is disliked by many, and often factually incorrect. By replacing “minority” with a more precise term, like “historically underrepresented,” your words are more accurate and empowering to people who identify as such.

## 2. Speaking With A “Group Mentality”

As already proven with numerous research- and data-backed statistics, the small business market is vast, and the global buying power of diverse-owned small businesses is tremendous. While opportunity abounds, organizations can’t phone it in and rely on the same old messages and generalizations.

Your marketing can’t be broad or generic. Never is the statement, “when you market to everyone, you market to no one,” more true than when marketing to small businesses. The owners on the receiving end of your marketing are busy. So busy that they only have time to care about things directly related to themselves and their business, which means broad, generic messages get ignored.

*“Small business owners are focused on 15 things at once, and have little time for distractions. They don’t have time for a long sales pitch, not even 10 minutes. If you get their attention, you’ll have a minute or two to keep it.”*

— **Matt Heinz of Radius.com**, a data-based marketing platform for B2B marketers

If you want to stand out and capture the attention of small business owners—the people making the buying decisions—you must narrow your focus, personalize your marketing messages, and answer these questions:

- 💡 Why should I care?
- 💡 How does this help me right now?
- 💡 What’s in it for me?

Only then will they feel you’re speaking directly to them, and when small business owners believe a brand is personally invested in their success, engagement, sales, and referrals increase. Luckily, there are many ways to segment your small business audience and narrow your focus for more targeted, tailored marketing campaigns, including:



### 1. **Owner Identity:**

Segment by who the owner is, how they identify themselves, or why they started their business.

### 2. **Brand Identity:**

Segment by how the business is identified, the category it operates in, its mission, its purpose, or what it sells.

### 3. **Location:**

Segment by the geographic location of a business.

### 4. **Entrepreneurial Journey:**

Segment by stage of business. Is your customer just starting out and struggling to learn and implement basic concepts? Do they have systems in place, but everything is manual, and they lack technology and automation? Are they tech-savvy owners always seeking better, faster, more streamlined technology? Are they established and successful and seeking ways to gain leverage and grow?

### 5. **Buyer Journey:**

Segment by how ready a customer is to make a purchase. Are they gaining awareness of a need or problem that must be solved and starting to look for solutions? Are they in the research phase, comparing and contrasting solutions and considering their options? Or have they narrowed their choices and are ready to make a buying decision?

Remember, each small business owner is an individual with individual needs. Segment your audience and tailor your marketing efforts to directly address them and their needs, and you'll not only make more meaningful connections with members of your audience but also convert more of those people into loyal customers.

## 3. **Focusing on Features Alone**

Your technology, product, or service likely has a long list of impressive features with fancy, clever names you can use to dazzle small business prospects and impress them with your prowess. The problem is that small business owners don't care about fancy terminology and they don't have time to review a laundry list of features that you deem important.

If you want to earn the attention, consideration, and buying decision of a small business owner, your marketing must focus on benefits over features—and not just any benefits. Small business marketing success isn't about the features and benefits you think are important or the most impressive. It's about what your customers think is important and about solving their problems, saving them time, and making it easier to do what they need to do to run their business on a daily basis.



Rather than list every single feature, highlight those that are most relevant to your small business customers. For each feature selected, communicate:

- 💡 Why the feature matters.
- 💡 How the feature will help the customer.
- 💡 The impact the feature can have on their business.
- 💡 What's possible if the customer gains access to the feature.

## SIDEBAR

Meet your sales and revenue goals by using your content marketing to help small business owners solve their problems. They are looking for help in many different areas of their business:

- 💡 Generating enough leads and word-of-mouth referrals.
- 💡 Converting leads into clients and customers.
- 💡 Reducing customer churn and increasing retention.
- 💡 Managing workloads and workflows.
- 💡 Satisfying clients and customers and improving loyalty.
- 💡 Accounting and financial planning.
- 💡 Managing employees and/or contractors.
- 💡 Lacking the time needed to get everything done.
- 💡 Having lots of ideas but no clue where to start.

However, the number one problem facing almost every small business owner is having predictable sales and revenue. If you can link your solution to increasing leads and sales, increasing revenue, or stabilizing sales and revenue fluctuations, you'll earn more kudos from your small business prospects.





## Positioning Your Brand As A Small Business Resource

Small business owners understand that your products and services are essential for their success. They're aware that you may be offering the exact solution they need to solve their most pressing problem, but they need to be convinced that investing in your product will be worth parting with their hard-earned money.

The best way to do that convincing is with customer-centric content marketing based on audience research and authentic customer engagement. Done right, it leverages empathy, focuses on helping rather than selling, and covers topics customers care about, not topics brands think their customers care about.

**But which content marketing strategies are right for your organization and produce the most bang for your buck?**

The [Content Marketing Institute's 13th Annual Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights for 2023 report](#) provides an unbiased perspective backed by data. As previous years' reports have shown, the top three goals content marketing helps organizations achieve are:

1. Creating brand awareness.
2. Building credibility and trust.
3. Educating audiences.



While 73% of respondents said their organizations have a content marketing strategy, finding success isn't easy:

- 💡 61% said their teams find it challenging to create content that appeals to different stages of the buyer's journey.
- 💡 Only 33% claimed to achieve consistency with their messaging.
- 💡 Just 34% have been able to access subject matter experts to create content. *(Ahem, Smart Simple Marketing can help with that!)*
- 💡 38% said they struggle to differentiate their content from the competition.
- 💡 65% said finding partners with adequate topical expertise is a top challenge. *(Smart Simple Marketing can help with this too!)*

**With that said, over the last 12 months, educational content and events have taken center stage.**

Events, virtual experiences, and research were rated as the top-performing content marketing strategies, and looking to the future, that trend is expected to continue with marketers increasing their investments in:

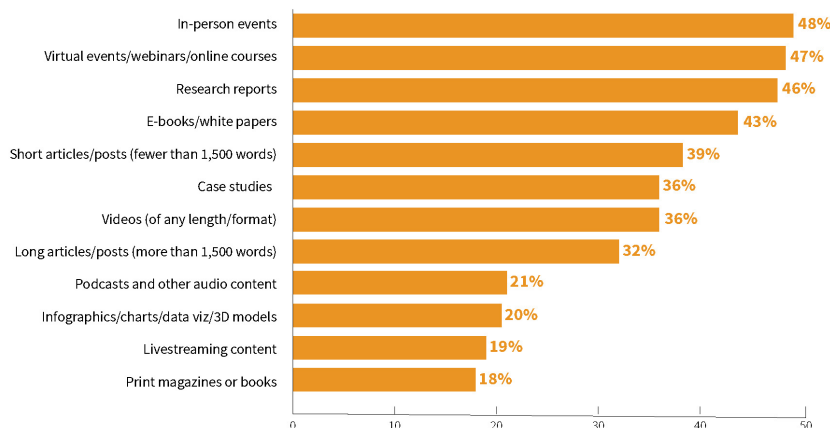
- 💡 In-person events (48%).
- 💡 Virtual events/webinars/online courses (47%).
- 💡 Research reports (46%).

## CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

### There's no denying the power of face to face.

Marketers said in-person events produced the best results for their content marketing in the last 12 months (48%). Virtual events came in a close second, followed by research reports.

**B2B Content Assets That Produced the Best Results in Last 12 Months**






The focus on events and courses makes sense because these strategies are all about engaging with buyers, providing support and education, building trust, demonstrating value, engaging in real-time research, establishing meaningful relationships, and deepening brand loyalty, all of which are critical when selling to small businesses.

*“The more you engage with customers, the clearer things become and the easier it is to determine what you should be doing.”*

— **John Russell**, former managing director, Harley-Davidson

## Smart Simple Marketing Can Help

At Smart Simple Marketing, we have deep experience in bridging the gap between enterprise organizations and small businesses, helping organizations understand diversity and embrace inclusion, and leveraging strategic content marketing and education-based events that drive metrics that matter.

-  We have built a global community of more than 31,200 diverse-owned small businesses spanning 79 industries.
-  Our team has delivered 448 classes, workshops, seminars, and virtual events across the U.S. and beyond, educating more than 11,600 small business owners and entrepreneurs.
-  We have researched and created over 10,000 pieces of original content and received multiple industry awards.

If you're ready to expand your small business market share, it's time to position your brand as a valuable resource to small businesses with these results-focused marketing strategies:

1. Live Voice of the Customer Events
2. Engagement-Focused Virtual Events
3. Free Online Courses And Training



## Live Voice of the Customer Events

A live event introduces your brand to new people and gets your product or service in front of your perfect-fit buyers. Live events also help prospective customers connect with people in your organization and get to know your brand while accelerating the trust-building process.

What's even better is that live events don't have to be large, formal, or expensive.

Smaller, intimate events tend to yield higher conversions because attendees are able to receive more personalized attention, ask questions, and eliminate concerns so they feel better about investing in your solution. Casual events help prospective customers feel comfortable talking candidly about their businesses and sharing their challenges.

While some events may boast a high-profile keynote speech or high-level lecture, successful events come in a variety of formats:

- 💡 A networking breakfast or lunch.
- 💡 An event where you give away free samples or trials of your product.
- 💡 An “open house” where customers can peek behind the scenes of your business.
- 💡 A “customer feedback” event where you pick your customers’ brains and offer special deals and discounts.

### **And with a simple shift, live events can become one of your most valuable marketing strategies.**

Voice of the Customer (VoC) events—events aimed at discovering what customers say about your brand and gathering their feedback and perspectives—present a huge opportunity to better understand customer needs, meet expectations, improve your products, programs, and services, and drive loyalty and increased sales.

Similar to traditional live events, VoC events are education-focused. The difference is that they are designed to solve specific challenges for your customers as they use your product and create opportunities to speak with them about their experiences.

Capturing their questions, preferences, problems, and complaints, as well as their wins and success stories provides brands the vital data needed to capture unparalleled opportunities to improve how a customer experiences your solutions and interacts with your brand, which directly translates to increased customer satisfaction.



## SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: Constant Contact

Smart Simple Marketing partnered with Constant Contact to increase the email marketing provider's brand recognition and generate small business leads in Northern California. We leveraged our extensive network of small businesses and small business experts to co-host small-scale, live, in-person training events that empowered small business owners to use digital marketing to attract more customers while saving time and money.

- 💡 Constant Contact developed direct relationships with vital small business-focused organizations and gained greater brand awareness with the 7,936 small business owners who participated in the workshops and seminars.
- 💡 The content was then repurposed and enhanced to design and deliver 222 training programs to reseller partners to improve lead generation and sales.

## SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: San Francisco Small Business Week

Smart Simple Marketing produced a hands-on hybrid event (virtual and in-person participation) to increase brand recognition for Instagram, LinkedIn, and Yelp. The educational program, a part of San Francisco Small Business Week, provided training for small businesses to help them optimize their profiles to attract more customers and increase revenue using the free tools available on each platform.

- 💡 75 local women small business owners participated in interactive, hands-on workshops and rated their experience a 4.5/5.
- 💡 Instagram, LinkedIn, and Yelp increased their reach with 21,000 small businesses (by way of 64,975 impressions) with a turn-key, repeatable solution and gained valuable brand insights from direct engagement with customers.

👍 **64,975** Impressions

💬 **782** Comments

👁️ **21,428** Views

❤️ **914** Reactions

📄 **68** Shares

👉 **569** Clicks

⚙️ **3.9%** Engagement



## Engagement-Focused Virtual Events

No longer the second-best option or back-up for live in-person events, virtual events have proven to be a highly effective marketing strategy for brands that sell to small businesses.

As with in-person events, education-focused virtual events position your brand as a small business expert. Done right, they can expand brand awareness, build credibility and trust, drive engagement, increase product adoption, and fill your sales pipeline with qualified leads. The difference is that these events are held online. Any small business owner who can connect to the internet can access your virtual event, and every attendee gets a front row seat.

Virtual events offer the ability to reach prospective customers and loyal brand fans around the globe and deliver engaging, impactful experiences that produce powerful business outcomes. Without the costs traditionally associated with in-person events, more budget dollars can be allocated to marketing your virtual events and increasing visibility and attendance.

Webinars, virtual summits and conferences, virtual tradeshow and exhibitions, online masterclasses, virtual workshops and seminars, and yes, hybrid events that blend in-person and virtual experiences give your organization the opportunity to:

- 💡 Speak to small business owners about your products and services while giving them the option to watch your presentation live or as a recording.
- 💡 Cultivate relationships with underrepresented groups and diverse buyers and reach small business buyers who are unable to attend or travel to live in-person events.
- 💡 Provide vital training and learning sessions related to your product or industry to educate prospective customers and help existing customers better leverage your products and services.
- 💡 Connect customers with industry thought leaders by hosting webinars that feature special guests.
- 💡 Position your brand as a small business resource and build trust as customers get to know your face and voice online.
- 💡 Invite leads to take the next step and book a call, request a quote, sign up, visit your retail location, or even make a purchase.

Plus, with today's robust virtual event platforms, you can replicate all of the traditional features and benefits of in-person events online and gain access to even more.



Virtual event software makes it easy to gather attendee feedback on the spot through live polls, interactive surveys, rating systems, and push notifications. And real-time user activity logs show you when attendees join a session, where they are located, how many people used the chat or participated in event activities, who connected with each sponsor, and more.

### **SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: Email Marketing Simplified Virtual Conference**

Smart Simple Marketing leveraged cutting-edge technology to deliver an email marketing-focused, live, interactive, three-day virtual conference experience for more than 1,000 small business owners.

*“We made some excellent connections with qualified leads and also generated several new partnership opportunities”*

*— Shea Kane, Marketing Director, DirectPay*

The robust virtual environment empowered brands to engage directly with prospective customers, deliver educational webinars to build trust and familiarity, and generate new small business leads. Attendees were treated to a full-scale conference and tradeshow experience with virtual goodie bags and access to speakers and training sessions in the main auditorium, sponsors in a virtual exhibit hall, and other small business attendees in the virtual networking lounge.

Through personal interactions with prospective customers, eight high-profile brand sponsors learned more about the needs of the small business audience, showcased their products and services, answered questions, and increased awareness and trust with new prospects.

### **SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: PG&E**

Smart Simple Marketing partnered with PG&E's supplier diversity team to deliver virtual and in-person technical-assistance programming for small diverse-owned businesses and existing suppliers to help them learn how to fully leverage their diverse status to increase capacity and revenue. The hybrid educational program gave PG&E the opportunity to engage with 215 diverse-owned small business participants, deepen loyalty with existing suppliers, and strengthen relationships with partner organizations.



## Free Online Courses And Training

Competition is fierce, and attention is scarce, especially when selling to diverse-owned small businesses that are strapped for time and often operating with razor-thin profit margins. But you can win over small business customers in droves by leveraging your thought leadership and leaning into eLearning—an industry expected to be worth [\\$325 billion by 2025](#).

You now know that while small business owners are happy to invest in tools, technology, and solutions that will help them advance their goals and grow their businesses, they weigh options very carefully before making buying decisions because making the wrong decision can have dramatic consequences.

Adding a free educational resource to your lead generation strategy and a high-quality online course to your marketing funnel is the best way to connect with small business buyers who are interested in your solutions but not quite ready to buy.

- 💡 For prospects who are still in the research, information gathering, and consideration stages of the buyer's journey, a free online course can show them how your solutions will solve their most pressing problem and provide the information they need to move from prospect to paying customer.
- 💡 For large organizations and brands, online courses and free training offer an opportunity to become a trusted resource and get your products, services, and solutions in front of prospective customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Plus, every time a small business owner signs up for your free course or training, you secure their contact information and open a channel of communication. This allows you to **follow up, stay in touch, and nurture the relationship** until they are ready to buy.

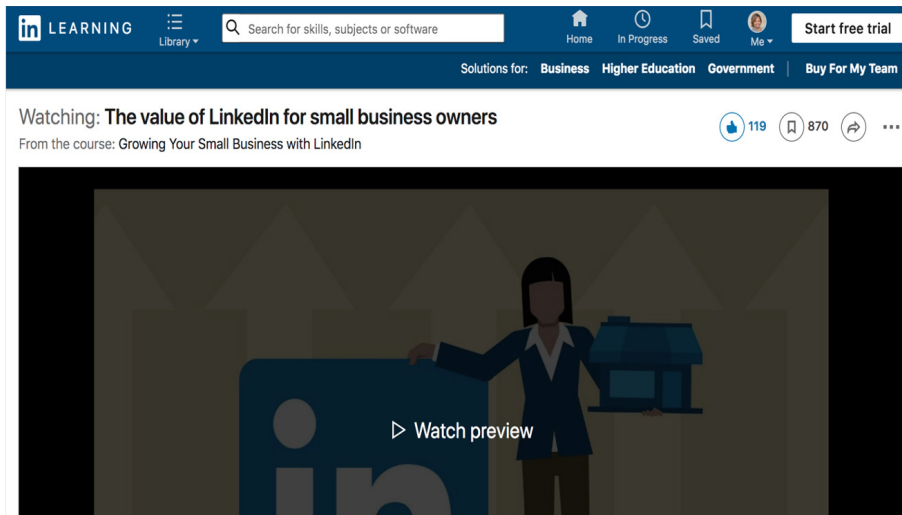
And the good news is that creating a free online course or training is easier than you might think. The right course development and content creation partner can help you identify the best topic for your course, define the learning outcomes, create the content, and track the results.

Even better, the content doesn't have to be created from scratch. For brands that also include Voice of the Customer events and [virtual events](#) in their marketing strategy, past event content, transcripts, and video recordings can be repurposed to see results fast.

### SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: LinkedIn

Although LinkedIn launched in 2003, the brand had yet to create small business-specific training to teach entrepreneurs how to use LinkedIn products to solve pressing problems. With the goal of increasing engagement with existing users, Smart Simple Marketing created [the first LinkedIn online training for small businesses](#).





The FREE online course included dozens of pragmatic tips small businesses can implement immediately for quick wins; 58,950 diverse-owned small businesses across the globe participated in this online training.

## SMART SIMPLE MARKETING CASE STUDY: Verizon

Smart Simple Marketing partnered with Verizon to create a five-part webinar series, [The Busy Entrepreneur's Guide to Business Success](#), that shared best practices on marketing, time management, technology, and accessing capital, as well as tips for using Verizon's products to manage their businesses more effectively, increase productivity, and save money.

- 💡 The series connected Verizon with hundreds of multicultural small businesses and Black and Latinx buyers.
- 💡 Promotional email campaigns promoting the webinar series **grew Verizon's email list by 86% and increased sales leads by 40%.**
- 💡 An email newsletter featuring success stories and additional helpful information laid the groundwork for ongoing communications with prospective customers and doubled email open and click-through rates within weeks.

**Owning your business has never been more rewarding...or more challenging.**

As a small business owner, you wear many hats—marketing, finance, IT, business development, sales, administration, you name it. You're responsible for it all. This responsibility puts pressure on you to be able to manage your business through various hurdles such as:

- How do you create marketing messages that generate leads and revenue?
- What are the best ways to secure capital—without giving up control of your business?
- Where and when should you invest in your company's growth?
- How can you manage your time efficiently when you're always on the go?
- Which technologies should you be keeping up with—when it all changes at lightning speed?

Verizon Wireless and BlackBerry® are committed to providing you with the solutions to make you successful. We have the tools and business expertise to help you become more efficient, lower your operating costs and increase productivity in an effort to maximize your bottom line.

That's why we're proud to offer this FREE five-part webinar series featuring leading experts who will be sharing strategies that you can take away and immediately apply to your business.

**YES, I'm ready to learn the strategies used by successful business leaders. Register Now for our first webinar: Five Ways to Market Your Business and Increase Your Profits When You're Always on the Go.**

[Register Now](#)

By participating in the webinar series, you'll learn:

- The **top 10 mistakes** most small business owners make and **how to avoid them**
- **Finding capital** and managing your business' finances to position your company for growth
- **Five tools that can save you time**—your most valuable resource
- **How to save money** with the **business technology** you really need

The webinar series begins on Tuesday, September 24, 2013 and concludes on Friday, November 22, 2013. Each session will cover one of the hottest topics in today's small-business marketplace, helping you to avoid the most common pitfalls you're likely to face as a small business owner. Join us for this landmark web-based event, and get the insights you need to grow your small business to its greatest potential.

**And don't worry if you can't attend the live webinars—your registration**

**FIVE WAYS TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS AND INCREASE YOUR PROFITS WHEN YOU'RE ALWAYS ON THE GO**

Sept. 24 at 2 p.m. EST  
Presented by Sybil Craig-Hart [REGISTER NOW](#)

**THE TEN BIGGEST MISTAKES SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE AND HOW TO AVOID THEM**

Oct. 8 at 2 p.m. EST  
Presented by Melinda Emerson [REGISTER NOW](#)

**HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN SAVE YOUR BUSINESS MONEY**

Oct. 22 at 6 p.m. EST  
Presented by Navarow Wright [REGISTRATION COMING SOON](#)

**FINDING CAPITAL AND MANAGING YOUR FINANCES SO YOUR BUSINESS IS PREPARED FOR GROWTH**

Nov. 5 at 6 p.m. EST  
Presented by Laurence Hayward [REGISTRATION COMING SOON](#)

**FIVE SECRETS TO HELP YOU UNCOVER HIDDEN TIME IN YOUR DAY**

Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. EST  
Presented by Dave Crenshaw [REGISTRATION COMING SOON](#)



## Create Your Small Business Sales Strategy

This resource provides insights and actionable methods for deploying effective and inclusive marketing campaigns aimed at the diverse small business market, making meaningful connections with small business owners, positioning your brand as a helpful partner and your solution as a must-have, and building trust with new prospective customers.

**Now, it's time to put what you've learned into action, and we can help.**

Smart Simple Marketing helps companies gain market share, drive engagement, and deepen loyalty with small businesses, women, and people of color.

If you have questions or want to discuss how your organization can leverage our inclusive marketing experience; high-impact, quick turnaround, revenue-boosting solutions; and small business insights, reach out, and let's talk.

**Book A Complimentary Sounding Board Strategy Session**

Even the sharpest knife can't carve its own handle, so let us be your sounding board. In this free call, we'll help you determine the best marketing strategy for your target market, learn how to improve your marketing to effectively sell to small business owners and convert them into paying customers, and discover new ways to integrate events into your marketing plan.



## Learn About Our Hands-On E.M.P.A.T.H.Y. Lab™ Workshops

The E.M.P.A.T.H.Y. Lab™ helps organizations and their marketing teams learn how to connect effectively with diverse-owned small businesses. In a hands-on workshop format, we'll work with you to inform your growth strategy by uncovering perceptions of your brand, products, and services, as well as vital information about your audience demographic, industry, and competition.

*"It would have taken me 18 months to discover what you shared with us in one afternoon."*




*— Nichole McNeil, Product & User Researcher, Instagram*



# Contact Our Team Today:



**SMART SIMPLE MARKETING**  
GAIN CLARITY. TAKE ACTION. GET RESULTS.

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