

Effective (and Ineffective) Marketing Tactics for Small Businesses

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The Seth Godin Way

Are you happy with your **marketing strategy**? Has it been successful in promoting your company and raising awareness of who you are? Have the effort and expense you've put into it attracted the customers you were hoping to attract? If the answer to any of these questions is no, you might want to listen to what **Seth Godin** has to say.

Seth Godin may be one of the most influential figures in marketing today. Recently inducted into the **Direct Marketing** Hall of Fame, Godin has authored 19 international bestselling [books](#) that have been translated into 35 languages, including ***Linchpin***, [Permission Marketing](#), ***Purple Cow*** and his latest, [What To Do When It's Your Turn](#). His daily [blog](#) is one of the most-read and most popular worldwide.

Godin has also launched successful entrepreneurial ventures such as **Yoyodyne**, one of the world's earliest online marketing companies, which he sold to **Yahoo!** in 1998 for \$30 million, and **Squidoo**, a platform acquired by **HubPages**.

A tireless teacher and "ruckus maker," **Godin** recently launched a popular online course, The Modern **Marketing** Workshop.

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OPEN Forum recently spoke with **Godin** about **marketing** for small-business owners, and found out why old-school **marketing** tactics may no longer work, what the Pavlov Effect has to do with marketing and what it really takes to be an effective marketer today.

What are some of the key changes in the current state of marketing that a small-business owner should be aware of?

If you own a small business, you've made a commitment of time and money that few ever do. It's tempting, but a near-fatal error, to believe that the world you built your business in is going to stay stable.

Not only is the way we produce things changing, but the way that messages spread has shifted forever. **Facebook** and **YouTube** are not effective ways to market average goods to average people. Garnering likes, counting **Twitter** followers, playing endless social media games is a distraction.

Your market demands two things:

1. Remarkable goods and services. Stories worth sharing. Things worth talking about. Something they would miss if you were gone. Because they have options, more than ever before.
2. That you earn permission to talk to them. No spam, but the privilege of delivering anticipated, personal and relevant messages.

You say the network effect is essential to marketing today, that you must be "making a product or service that works better if my friends and colleagues are also using it." Can you elaborate on this?

Here are things that work better when others use them, too: **Airbnb**, **Facebook**, **Uber**, **Nike** shoes, **Starbucks**, etc.

The insight is to start designing products and services that people like to talk about, because talking about them benefits them.

In your Skillshare course, [The Modern Marketing Workshop](#), you provide more than 60 concepts or big ideas to help people work on developing their marketing strategy. One of these is the idea of the Pavlov Effect. Can you explain the importance of the Pavlov Effect in marketing?

A **brand** is nothing but a story. You can't eat a **brand** or put money in a brand or drive a brand. But the story the **brand** tells can remind you of something. It can create an association, just as the bell did for **Pavlov's** dogs.

The **marketer's** job, then, is to tell a true story, one that resonates, one that matters to people, and to repeat it often enough that it creates value.



Seth Godin suggests small-business owners should be less like "shopkeepers" and more like "artists."

You talk about the importance of emotions in marketing, and primarily two emotions: fear and delight. This is probably one of the most challenging concepts to put into practice. Can you give an example of how a small-business owner can use these emotions in marketing?

Stop being a shopkeeper! We have plenty of shops. We need artists.

In your book *We Are All Weird*, you advise companies not to pursue the mass market but to focus their marketing efforts on the "weird" buyers, the niche markets. Are there any potential pitfalls for a small business in pursuing this marketing strategy?

The biggest pitfall is that you will be on the hook, that choosing to focus on a niche means you can no longer treat the market as an indifferent mass of mass.

There seems to be a consensus that cold calling is an old-school marketing idea. Should a small-business owner abandon this practice altogether? How about email marketing?

You mean spam? Should small-business people spam by phone or by email?

Next question!

What are the biggest challenges marketers face today, and what can they do to address them?

I think the biggest challenge is to stop acting like a **marketer** and start acting like a **human**.

Photos: Brian Bloom; Ciudad de Ideas