

July 27, 2022

Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce

JULY DIGITAL MARKETING PANEL

Digital marketing, social media, and online presence have been key topics among our members over the past year. Putting together a panel of local professionals to share insights and connect with business owners and employees was a unanimous decision this month.

If you missed it, we've got a recording of the session to share (visit our Facebook page, website or reach out to us by email).

No time to watch the video? No problem. We also captured a Q&A from the session.

Our own director, Kristeen Millett (Sprout Digital) moderated a fantastic discussion between our guest speakers, engaging the audience in person and on Zoom.

Panel members:

Larry Hales, Marketing Technology Director (West, Willison Financial Group)

Kelliana Cole, Owner, Managing Director (Revere)

Casey Evans, Video Producer (Casey Evans Media)

***“Be found, be seen, be heard.”** Larry Hales shared this straightforward wisdom about your social media and online presence.*

***“Consistency of your brand is key for engagement.”** Kelliana Cole spoke to the importance of consistency and staying on-brand.*

***“Dedicate time to recording content – use your phone!”** Casey Evans encouraged creating short, relatable, organic video posts yourself.*

***“Google’s paid ads are like rental space – your organic content is what you own.”** Kristeen Millett suggests focusing on your own content and engagements before turning to paid ads, and enlisting the help of a professional to help navigate how to get the most out of paid ads.*



DIGITAL MARKETING PANEL Q&A

July Members Meeting, 7/27/22, Ridgefield Administrative & Civic Center

Q: Is there a “target amount” for paid ads? What’s the best bang for my buck?

A: Each click costs your business *depending on* activity of other businesses in your category. There are many factors at work with Google’s paid ads, and you could end up spending a lot of money very quickly, without getting results. In short, Google’s paid ads are like “rental space”, and if you aren’t familiar with how the algorithms work, it would be advisable to hire someone who does, so you don’t end up wasting your money. If that isn’t an option, just focus on your organic business content and reviews.

Q: How do location searches work? For instance, if someone searches “coffee shops” in Google, what makes a business come up as one of the top results?

A: First things first, be sure you create a **FREE** Google Business Profile. There are many resources on YouTube that can get you started. Once you register and set your categories, you can begin managing how your business shows up. Relevance (reviews), Prominence (how much content you generate through photos, videos, posts, information, etc), and Location (proximity to the person searching) all play into which businesses show up first. ***Bonus tip: Reviews, reviews, reviews! Trade reviews with other businesses.***

Q: How important is color in my brand(ing)?

A: VERY! Color plays into aesthetic and how people “feel” when they are browsing your brand. Color can evoke emotion, and even action. What people SEE of your brand represents you and your business. The colors used in your branding tie back to consistency, and your followers, fans and customers knowing what to expect and recognizing you.

Q: What is the fastest and most efficient way to make universal changes to internet information about your business? For example, getting rid of old reviews & pictures or updating your hours or menu.

A: Google Business Profile (see previous Q&A above!). This can be accessed through the Google Maps app, the Google search app, or online. Here you can update hours, add temporary hours, even post updates, notices and content (like your menu).

Reviews can be very difficult to outright *remove*, but you can flag them – and the more people that flag a review, the higher importance it will be for removal. This is an option with both Google and Facebook reviews, but Yelp reviews won't likely budge, as it's a paid review service/platform.

Bonus tip #1: *how you respond to negative reviews speaks volumes about how you manage your business, your customer service, professionalism, etc. ALWAYS respond, to EVERY review, even if it's negative.*

Bonus tip #2: *Reviews, reviews, reviews (see previous Q&A above!). ASK people in person to go online and give you a review. Provide a QR code that links directly to your review site to make it as easy as possible for them. Reply to thank you notes and emails by asking for a review. Asking through organic conversation is far more effective than just posting a code or a link.*

Q: How can I best leverage Facebook and Instagram? I feel overwhelmed by having to constantly check and post. What can I do that will give me the biggest bang for my buck without sucking up my whole day?

A: If you don't already have it, get Meta Business. This is offered by Facebook and is free to set up. With Meta Business, you can schedule your posts ahead of time. Imagine taking one day and scheduling your entire month instead of trying to post every day. This helps your brand feel more consistent, and is planned, strategic and meaningful instead of strained, inauthentic, and forced. Stories can even be automated. The best way to leverage it is to schedule it.

Related Q: When should I invest in a social media content manager?

A: *If you're stressed out and have the revenue, do it!*

Q: #Hashtags...should I use them? How?

A: In the real world, it doesn't really make a difference. Hashtags were originally used for categorizing, but machine learning is now sophisticated enough to handle that. If you want to use hashtags, it is now recommended to use no more than 4 or 5, but you aren't likely to see any real results from it. ***Bonus tip: if you have a very unique hashtag, particularly one you've used for a long time (like the Chamber's #SpudLocal) – keep using that one! This is the exception to the “it doesn't really matter” rule.***

Q: I don't have a lot of time or money...what's my absolute best investment with social media?

A: Scheduling. Schedule your posts to minimize your time up front to maximize your return. You don't have to post every day! Reduce, reuse, recycle – if you find a post or image that works, keep using it! This also helps with consistency.

Focus on Instagram – Facebook has become saturated and overwhelmed with so many different types of content. Instagram is more friendly and focuses on user-generated content from individual users.

If you have an important event or promotion, experiment with a small (inexpensive) Facebook paid ad and see how it does.

Bottom line: if it's not valuable to you, your business or your brand, don't feel pressured to waste your time and money trying to keep up with social media and posting “every day”. Be thoughtful and invest the time you do have on quality and genuine content.

Bonus tip #1: if it looks like an ad, people won't engage with it. Let your posts be natural, organic, inviting and engaging. Test styles and posts out – see which ones get the most reaction and run with it. Spend a little time researching other businesses successful on social media – what types of content are they creating? Emulate what works. What do you, as a social media consumer like? Do that!

Bonus tip #2: What about video? Keep it short! Definitely 30 seconds or less, but 9 seconds or less is the sweet spot. People will decide in the first second if they want to keep watching. In-the-moment videos are great to capture genuine interactions, but don't be afraid to schedule some time recording short clips of your daily business. Coffee being brewed, pizza being made, smiles and handshakes – you can use these clips as stock backgrounds and change it up with different audio and text.

Q: How do I prevent my emails from going into spam?

A: Unfortunately, if you're using a service like Constant Contact or MailChimp, it is more likely your emails will go to spam, junk or deleted folders. Fortunately, there are some tips to help minimize this.

1. **BE ENGAGING** and genuine. Make sure your emails actually have genuine content. If you received this email, would *you* want to open it and engage with it?
2. **SUBJECT LINES** are important. Using gimmicky phrases like “Special”, “Free”, “Offer” or “Limited Time” will likely send you right to spam – along with subject lines that are ALL CAPS.
3. **TAKE ACTION** – give them something to do! Something to click on, interact with, reply to. This will help ensure future emails from you are not sent to spam.

Q: Business cards...physical, or digital?

A: Both! Know your audience and the situation. Physical business cards are great for in-person events. It's something tangible to hand out and connect with, and start a conversation. Use the physical connection to cross over into the digital world – provide a QR code right on your business card that links to a digital v-card (business card or contact info) to make it even easier for them to store your information. If your event is centered around digital media or that space, feel free to go fully digital. In short, use whichever is right for the event and/or the person.