



## **New Web.com Report Indicates More Than Ever Small Business Owners Embrace Online Marketing Tools**

*Small Businesses Use Some but Not All Necessary Online Marketing Tools*

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – February 7, 2017** – A majority of small business owners now embrace the use of online marketing channels like websites and social media to grow their company's reputation and their revenue, but many have not harnessed the full potential of their online presence and may be leaving money on the table. This is according to a report released today by Web.com (Nasdaq:WEB), a leading provider of Internet services and online marketing solutions for small businesses, and Dr. David Ricketts, Innovation Fellow in the Technology and Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard.

"The good news is that our survey shows nearly two-thirds of small business owners truly believe having an online presence will help them grow revenue and attract new customers. However, our report also indicates those same small businesses find it difficult to keep up with the continually changing dynamic of the web," said David Brown, chairman, CEO and president of Web.com. "In 2017, it is no longer enough for small businesses to be online with only a simple website. They need marketing tools like search engine optimization (SEO), which will get them to the top of search lists, and they need business-specific social media channels that engage customers. The real challenge they face is not knowing where to find the online marketing help they require so that they can focus on running the business."

The first-ever [Web.com Small Business Digital Trends Report](#) surveyed small business owners nationwide to learn how they are using online channels to grow their businesses. The survey includes small business owners in a variety of professions, including dentists, contractors, artists, welders, hair salon owners, dry cleaners, and retailers with ecommerce sites.

### **Online Marketing: Using Basic Tools but Not All Necessary Tools**

Despite the number of small business owners now embracing online marketing, only 54 percent of small business owners report they are very confident that their business's online presence is doing the job it's supposed to do. A deeper dive into the data shows small business owners have not yet tapped into the full suite of online marketing tools that are needed today to attract their next customer:

- Only 17 percent of small business owners will be investing in SEO in 2017
- 42 percent of small business owners admit they don't use *both* a robust website and social media channels to market their business
- Only 12 percent cited that the main purpose of their website was for e-commerce, yet 31 percent of respondents identified themselves as a retail business
- 26 percent admit to having only a single-page website

- 43 percent say they have no plans to change or improve their online presence in 2017
- 85 percent are hitting some kind of roadblock when attempting to use social media to promote their business

A majority of small business respondents (68 percent) say they are handling the building and maintenance of their online presence entirely in-house or on their own, compared to 22 percent who outsource this work to an online marketing firm, and 9 percent who solicit help from friends and family. When asked the number one area in online marketing they need help with in order to meet their top business priorities, the most popular answers were online advertising (29 percent) and website maintenance or expansion (26 percent).

### **Search Engine Optimization: An Underutilized Asset for Small Business Owners**

Although SEO can help businesses stand out from their competitors, most small business owners are not citing it as a priority. Only 17 percent say they plan to add SEO to their online marketing strategy in 2017, and only 5 percent of respondents consider SEO a top priority for the year. The low number of respondents investing in SEO in 2017 may indicate a lack of awareness of the changing but important role of SEO and where to get help implementing it.

“Whatever a business’s strategy is to reach customers – whether that’s via social media, a website, or a combination of different strategies – small business owners need to stay focused on their main objective: to get their business in front of the right customers,” says Brown. “The best way for small business owners to be found is to first identify what’s unique and special about their business, and then make sure their site is visible using the right keywords and effective SEO.”

### **Online Security and Small Business: Security Breaches May Go Undetected**

An overwhelming majority of small business owners (81 percent) say their webpages are secure or very secure – but they may be unaware of vulnerabilities that could compromise their businesses. A report from online security company Whitehat Security finds that 86 percent of all websites have at least one vulnerability, indicating small business owners may be putting too much faith in their current cyber protections.

“When addressing cybersecurity, the primary question is – do these small business owners truly know if they are secure or not?” says Dr. Ricketts. “Security breaches can go undetected by even the largest of organizations, so small business owners may unknowingly be at risk.”

### **Small Business Owners Are Hitting Roadblocks with Social Media**

Small business owners are overwhelmingly (88 percent) embracing social media to support their businesses and half (54 percent) plan to invest in social media in 2017. However, a clear majority (85 percent) reported encountering challenges or roadblocks when using social media to market their business. These include:

- Concern of reputational risks (15 percent)
- Being overwhelmed with the upkeep, including the need to constantly develop interesting content (14 percent)
- Lack of understanding of how social media will help their business (13 percent)

- Knowledge of how to set up social media channels so they integrate with their business (10 percent)

Additionally, 23 percent of respondents admit they only use their personal social media handles to market their business.

When asked which social media platform was most effective for their business, Facebook emerged as the clear winner, ranking as the 'most effective' four times more than any other social media channel. Twitter was the next most effective platform, ranking ahead of channels like Pinterest, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+ and Snapchat.

[Click here](#) to view an infographic on the Web.com Small Business Digital Trends Report findings.

## **Methodology**

The Web.com Small Business Digital Trends Report surveyed 300 small business owners (defined as a business with 1-500 employees) in the United States regarding their experiences of building and maintaining their online presence.

## **About Dr. David Ricketts**

Dr. David Ricketts received his PhD from Harvard University. He is an Innovation Fellow in the Technology and Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard (TECH). Operating from within the John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, TECH enables holistic exploration by serving as a crossroads of innovation education. Dr. Ricketts writes and speaks internationally on strategy, trends and best practices in entrepreneurship and innovation.

## **About Web.com**

[Web.com Group, Inc.](#) (Nasdaq:WEB) provides a full range of Internet services to small businesses to help them compete and succeed online. Web.com meets the needs of small businesses anywhere along their lifecycle with affordable, subscription-based solutions including domains, hosting, website design and management, search engine optimization, online marketing campaigns, local sales leads, social media, mobile products and ecommerce solutions. For more information, please visit [www.web.com](http://www.web.com); follow Web.com on Twitter [@webdotcom](https://twitter.com/webdotcom) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/web.com](https://facebook.com/web.com).

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