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If you are struggling to grow your business — and who isn't? — this ebook could help. It includes:



Steps you can take if you don't have a website.



Steps that will make your website work harder for you.

Working through steps 1 – 5, in order, will give you a complete process to attract and convert new customers. Or you can simply dip into each step as and when you need it.



#### Step 1: Figure out who's most likely to buy from you

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It sounds obvious, but it really pays to be super clear who, exactly, you are targeting, what they value and how you can best speak with them. Personas are a great place to start.



#### Step 2: Grow the number of people who know about your business

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Social media can help you broaden the reach of your brand and engage with prospective customers even if you don't yet have a website. Hashtags, question and answer sites, and groups are all part of the mix, along with free scheduling tools to help you save time.



#### Step 3: Drive more traffic to your website

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Driving traffic to your website is the virtual equivalent of getting customers into your store. Awesome content is a must, as well as making sure that your content gets found. Here's how.



#### **Step 4: Turn traffic into leads**

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If you're seeing an increase in the number of visitors to your site, you'll want to make sure that you're able to turn that traffic into leads. A content offer can help you do just that.



#### **Step 5: Convert leads into customers**

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Arguably the most important step of all, but one that's so easy to get wrong. Here we look at what to avoid as well as how email marketing, sales-focused content and review sites — among other things — are your friends.



#### Offline alternatives

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No website? No problem! There are lots of offline tactics you can use to help net yourself some new customers.





You have a website, you've been through your network marketing leads (your warm list) and you now have customers... but not that many customers and most of them are repeat buyers, which is great.



But what you'd really like is some new customers to help your business start to grow. But where do you find them and how do you get them to buy from you?

You might have a few tactics in mind for driving more traffic to your website, like creating funky infographics, or a "how to" video. But how will you convert this traffic into leads and ultimately sales?

Even if you're not yet quite ready to use your website as a tool to convert traffic into sales, this ebook will give you the steps to take when you're ready. And if you don't have a website (and even if you do!) there's a whole section dedicated to offline tactics that can help you acquire new customers.





## Figure out who's most likely to buy from you

This initial step may seem like a bit of a waste of time. After all, you already know who your customers are, right? But it's amazing the clarity this step can give to how you approach the rest of your marketing tactics and how much time it can save you in the long run.

Of course, you could just try to market to everyone – surely that's easier and you'll get more customers? Not exactly. It's more likely that you'll just end up wasting a lot of time, effort and money for little return. Instead, focusing in on a niche set of people who are most likely to buy your product – your target audience – is a far more productive (and cost-effective) first step.

#### So, where do you start?

Creating personas for each customer segment is a good first step and one that'll clarify later stages. If you're just starting out, your personas (three is generally a good number) don't need to be massively in-depth, they should be more of an educated guess combined with a little bit of research. Basically you're trying to figure out:

- who they are
- what they value
- how you can best speak with them

Ask your sales people, your customer service people (if you have them), and your customers themselves, and even take a look online to identify the types of people talking about the issues that your product or service can solve.

The exact details of the persona will depend on whether you're a B2C or B2B company, but it may be useful to consider including gender, age, job title, location, hobbies, salary and family. It's also useful to think about what their goals and challenges are so you can work out how your product or service can help them reach that goal or solve their challenge.



## Step 1 ~ continued

By filling in personas, you can start to see how your product or service may help your audience and what messaging may get through to them. It can also help inform where you'll find them, e.g., David's more likely to be on LinkedIn than Facebook, whereas Margaret's more likely to be on Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest. Plus, it can show you what words they may be using when searching for your product or service.



## For a B2C company selling organic food boxes, a persona may look like:

Sex: Female Marital status: Single
Age: 30-40 Children: None
Career: Marketing Consultant Work: Long hours

Income: \$58,449

Wants healthy, ethical, locally-sourced food delivered to her door that she can prepare in under 30 minutes.



## For a B2B company selling bespoke software, it may be more something like this:

Sex: Male Marital status: Married

Age: 40-55 Children: Two
Career: Chief Information Officer Work: Time-poor

Income: \$149,730

Challenges include overcoming company cultural barriers to adopting open source software and managing internal and

external resources.



## Grow the number of people who know about your business

In the early stages of setting up your business, you probably didn't have time to do much more than set up a website — and maybe not even time to do that. Maybe you relied on word of mouth and other offline methods to get new customers.

These are all excellent, and you definitely shouldn't stop using them, but if you want to turbo-charge the growth of your business, you physically can't meet enough (of the right type of) people to do this. But social media can!

Even if you don't currently have a website, you can still be active on social media. Building a good reputation at this stage will help you extend your reach (the number of people who've seen your social media channels), and build trust in preparation for when you're ready to drive your social media traffic to your website.

The more people who know you, what you do and what you can offer, the better, so you need to utilize all the tools at your disposal.

Cultivating the number of people who know you does a number of things, including:



#### Increasing brand awareness.

More people become familiar with your brand, so even if they don't want to buy from you yet, they may remember you when the time is right.



Enabling you to have conversations online with your customers, answer questions and interact.



#### **Broadening your reach**

so that you can (virtually) get in front of potential customers who would have been unavailable through regular means.



#### Generating leads.

Growing the amount of people who know about your business increases the chance of turning some of them into customers.





## Social media

Developing a presence on social media is an excellent way of achieving all these things. Once you've set up your chosen pages, you can follow accounts and people relevant to your business.

#### **Twitter**

On Twitter, retweeting and/or commenting on useful and interesting content posted by others is a way of building followers. It's also worth checking out what your competitors are posting and following some of their followers, where relevant. Don't forget to interact. You can do this by joining in on a conversation if you think you have something to offer, or answering questions.

You can also run polls, asking questions to give you an insight into what your followers want and what they're interested in, which you can use to create future content.

Hashtags (#) are used to identify posts on a specific topic and a great way to increase followers. If, for example, you perform a search for #smallbusiness, every post that includes the hashtag will appear in the feed. If the hashtag is popular and lots of people are using it, you should include it in some of your tweets on the same subject, and follow relevant accounts mentioning #smallbusiness.

#### Quora

Quora is a website where you can ask and answer questions. If you have expertise in a particular field, it's definitely worth doing a search to see whether you can help out, which can give both your credibility and social media following a big boost.

#### LinkedIn

If you have a LinkedIn account, join some relevant groups. Type a phrase relevant to your business in the search box and select Groups from the drop-down box. There are a ton of very active groups discussing all manner of business-related topics, where you can pick up ideas and followers by getting involved.

#### **Best posting times**



It's tricky to organically determine the best times to post, but there are a number of tools that take the strain out of it. <a href="Tweriod">Tweriod</a> and <a href="Followerwonk">Followerwonk</a> are both great for determining the best times to tweet, and Facebook's own analytics will tell you when your followers are online. If you're on LinkedIn, experiment with different posting times to find out which works best for you.



## Other ways to get noticed



#### **Email**

Don't forget to include links to your social media accounts on your email signature. It's an effective way to increase followers with very little effort.



#### **National days**

Social media is very active during national days, no matter how frivolous! If you're a sandwich store, #nationalsandwichday is the perfect opportunity to get involved in conversations, promote your products and gain some new followers. For an extra boost, you could run a competition with prizes in return for retweets or shares, which really helps to extend your reach and grow the number of people who know about your business.

## Managing your time

There are a number of free online marketing tools that can help you save time on your social media efforts, analyze how you're doing and even post content when you're busy doing other things, like running your business. Here are a few to get you started:



#### **Buffer**

A post scheduling tool for Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest and Google+. With Buffer, you can schedule up to 10 posts to go out over a period of time determined by you.

#### **Right Relevance**

You can use this to search for and post content (news stories, blog posts, articles, etc.) relevant to you and your audience. Simply enter a keyword and the tool will search for content. All you then have to do is share across Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

#### **Social Mention**

This tool helps you track what people are saying about you across social media. By entering details about your company, a new product or another subject, the tool searches for relevant mentions across over 100 social media platforms.





## Drive more traffic to your website

Now that you've built up your followers on social media, it'd be good to start sending them to your website so they can check out some of your great new content. But before you do, you need to make sure your website's ready for them.



With Americans now spending more of their time accessing digital media on their phone (56%) than on their desktop (39%),<sup>1</sup> if you're one of the 40% of small businesses whose website isn't responsive<sup>2</sup> (doesn't work properly if accessed using a cell phone or tablet), you've got the equivalent of a closed door policy and you're losing people at the get-go. If you can afford to, get it fixed.

So, now that you've (hopefully!) got a responsive site, what can you do to drive more traffic its way? Here are just a few tactics:

## Start creating awesome content (that's not all about you!)

Good quality content is the foundation for so many things, including:

- Showing prospective customers you know what you're talking about and are a trusted source when they're ready to buy.
- Getting people to link to your site (backlinks) this can help you rank higher on Google and other search engines.
- Encouraging people to socially share your content which can lead to new followers, increasing your reach and potentially helping your Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
- Showing search engines that your website is worth coming back to again and again because it's a known source for new and engaging, top quality content.



Make the phone number on your website a click-to-call link to make it easy for customers using a cell phone to call you.

<sup>2</sup> Yodle, State of digital marketing, 2016.



 $<sup>1\ {\</sup>it Mary Meeker, Kleiner Perkins, } {\it Internet Trends 2017-Code Conference, 2017}.$ 



## Use SEO to get your content found

Think about what you do when you want to learn about something. You type it into Google, right? And that's exactly what your customers do. But how do you know what they're typing in?

The good news is, if you're writing interesting, relevant, unique content for your target audience, you're already doing the right thing and it's pretty likely that you'll automatically be including "keywords" — the words or phrases that your customers are searching for. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is simply the icing on the cake — a way to ensure that your blog post, or other content, stands the best possible chance of appearing on the search engine results pages (SERPs).

There are slightly different "SEO best practices" depending on what format (e.g., a YouTube video or a web page) the content is in.

#### How to find keywords

If you're just starting out writing blog posts, it's probably best to focus on what are called "long tail" keywords, that is, search terms that have three or four words rather than one or two, as they will be less competitive and in theory, more likely to show up on SERPs. They are also lower down the buying decision process, so are more likely to result in leads or sales. So, instead of "organic food," you'd go for "organic food recipes" or "benefits of organic food." A great way to find these long tail keywords is to type the term into Google and then scroll to the bottom of the page and see the list of "searches related to..."

Google's keyword planner is another tool you can use to come up with lots of long tail keywords. You'll need a Google account and it's a bit more complicated to use, but well worth the effort.

#### Where to use keywords

Use your keywords in your blog post title, where it feels natural throughout your blog post and in the alt-text in your images. If you do this, you'll be well on your way to an SEO-friendly blog post.

Searches related to organic food

organic food definition

benefits of organic food

organic food list

disadvantages of organic food

organic food brands

organic food recipes

organic meat

examples of organic food



## In terms of content format, there are loads of options.

Here are just a few ways that you can use content to drive traffic to your website:



Blogging is perhaps one of the easiest ways of creating new content for your website. But you need to be careful what you're blogging about.

#### What to write about

Your blog isn't the place for writing all about your products and services — how many people do you know who read blogs that are constantly trying to sell them something? Product information is very important — product videos, spec sheets, FAQs and case studies — but it should live on your website, not your blog. Your blog is where you write inspiring content that is relevant and interesting to your target audience.

#### Here are a few starting points:

- Take a look back at the goals and challenges of the personas you created.
- For B2B, check out any websites aimed at the job role you're targeting. Taking David, our CIO, you could take a look at the website CIO.com what's "most read" or "most popular" on their blog?
- Use social media to listen to what your audience is talking about.
- Set up Google alerts such as employee recruitment so you know what's new to your target audience.
- Check out your competitors' blogs. You could even look at what larger companies in your industry are writing about.

It's then a case of figuring out how you can write about this in a way that's related to your company. For example, if you're a florist, it'd be slightly odd to write a blog post about kittens. But what you could do is compile a list of the cutest "cats in gardens" photos and ta dah! Your blog post is now interesting to your audience and relevant to what your company does. Or, going back to our personas, our bespoke software company could create a blog post about "10 ways to get the best out of your database."



## How often to blog?

Ideally, you'd produce at least one blog post per week, but you should always go for quality over quantity. If someone reads one of your posts and doesn't rate it, chances are they won't read anything from your company again. So if it's an awesome blog post every 10 days versus two mediocre posts a week, go for the former.



#### How much to write?

While there's little point writing a blog post with just 100 words (unless it's an introduction to an infographic), a post with between 300 words and 1500 words should be fine. It's really a case of letting the content dictate the length — there's no point trying to write 1500 words for the sake of it. If you're bored writing it, chances are that people will be bored reading it.

#### Write guest blog posts

Once you're up and running with your own blog, you can offer to write something for a similar site or for a site with the same target audience. This is a really good way to get in front of a new audience and, potentially, get a link back to your site.

#### Create videos

"How to" videos can be really popular and also help to showcase your expertise as well as your product. With YouTube now the second biggest search engine after Google, it's also a very effective way to get your content found. Blendtec is a great example of a "how to" video that went a step further. Blending items like golf balls and iPads made the videos highly entertaining as well as practical: not a lot breaks the Blendtec blender!

#### **Create infographics**

Infographics are a visual way to show information or data, making them a quick and easy way for people to absorb information. According to massplanner,<sup>3</sup> infographics are liked and shared on social media three times more than other any other type of content. You can put your infographic on your blog, simply create a paragraph of introductory text and then embed your infographic underneath.



3 Massplanner, 10 types of visual content to use in your content marketing, October 2015.





#### Reach out to journalists

There are sites, such as <u>helpareporter.com</u>, where you can register for free and receive daily alerts about subjects that journalists are keen to get answers about. If you successfully help the reporter, you'll get some "free" media coverage and maybe a link to your site.

#### **Promotion**

Once you've created your blog posts and infographics, and have published them on your site, it's time to tell people about them. Initially, the simplest and cheapest way to do this is by using your social media channels to spread the word — send out a tweet, or add a post to LinkedIn. It's worthwhile tweeting about your new

content more than once as, depending on how busy people's feeds are, content quickly disappears. Tweeting about the same piece of content three or four times over a couple of weeks is worthwhile, and don't forget your hashtags! You could also consider submitting your blog posts to **StumbleUpon** or **Reddit**.

## Testing your content

Your social media channels are also a great place to test how your content is being received. If you notice that a particular blog post gets significantly more shares, it's usually a good indicator that the subject you've written about resonates with your audience.

It's worth either creating more blog posts on this subject (exploring different angles) or, better still, creating a higher value piece of content that people are willing to exchange their contact details for, such as an ebook or white paper.





## Turn traffic into leads

If you've been producing content for a while and promoting it on your growing social channels, hopefully you've started to see an uptick in your monthly website traffic. At this point, you could just keep repeating what you've been doing and hope that the increased visits to your site will result in some new customers, which it may.

But to really capitalize on the traffic you're driving to your site, you need to turn the increased traffic into leads. Here's how:

#### Create a content offer



A content offer is basically a piece of content that your audience is willing to exchange their contact details for. For that reason, it needs to be a bit more in depth than a simple blog post or infographic. It's usually something like an ebook, research you've commissioned, an online course you're running or white paper. Once you've found a topic that your audience is really interested in (indicated by a spike in shares on social media), it's time to act. Creating a bigger piece of content may seem daunting, but there are plenty of free tools to help you.

So, using our persona information, our bespoke software company may have had success with their blog post, "Examples of companies that have great cell phone apps," so now they might create an eight-page ebook, "How to brief a company to get the cell phone app you actually want."

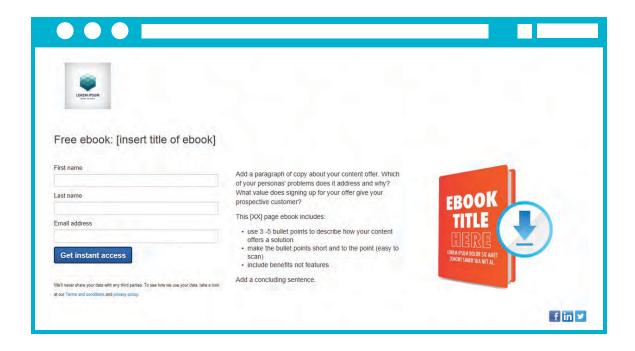


#### Create a landing page for your content offer

You've spent a long time putting together your content offer and naturally you're pretty pleased with it, so you put it on the homepage of your website and wait to see what happens. Right? Wrong.

While it's fine to promote it on your homepage, you want people to give you their contact details in exchange for your content offer. The best way of doing this is to create a separate landing page for each content offer that you produce. A landing page is a page that has just one purpose — in this case it's getting the prospect to fill in their contact details in exchange for the content. As such, landing pages generally have no other distraction in terms of links to other areas on your website.

While sending people to a generic page (like your homepage) may seem attractive as it gives them lots of options (and means you can avoid creating any landing pages), they'll have to spend their time searching for the content you've promised. It's the virtual equivalent of shutting the door in their face. It also means that you won't be able to collect their contact details — the main reason for creating the content offer in the first place.





#### What information to ask for



What to include on your landing page and the information you ask for in return really depends on what you're trying to achieve.

In this example, where we're offering a free ebook, it would be enough to give a brief outline of what the ebook includes, together with an active call to action (CTA) to download it. Be careful about how much information you ask for. The more you ask for, the less likely people are to fill in the form. Figure out what details you absolutely need. In this example, it's probably enough to simply ask for their email address, first name and last name. That way, you'll be able to contact them via email in the future.

#### Promote your content offer

As with your blog posts, initially, the best place to promote your new content offer is on your social media channels.

If it appears to be popular (and depending on your budget), you could consider paying for promotion using some of the following methods. Remember, your promotion should send people directly through to your dedicated landing page.



- You can pay Twitter to promote your content offer beyond your existing followers to reach a wider (but relevant) audience.
- You can pay to appear in the "sponsored" area of the top of search engine results pages. Top tip: Include your telephone number in your pay-per-click (PPC) ads to make it easier for customers to call for more information or to make a purchase.
- To get your content offer in front of a large number of your target audience, consider promoting it via a publication. It's important here to carefully match the subject matter with the publication. So, taking our bespoke software persona, they may consider promoting their new cell phone app ebook offer via CIO.com's weekly e-newsletter that goes out to a large number of CIOs and top IT decision-makers.



#### Call to action (CTA)



#### A call to action is a way to tell your audience what to do next.

Of course, they're not always guaranteed to do it! But at least you're suggesting a next step and, in doing so, either keeping them on your website for longer, taking them a step closer to becoming a lead, or, sometimes, making a sale. Having no CTA is the equivalent of walking off halfway through a conversation.

#### In an ideal world, all of your content would have a CTA:



Your video on YouTube would encourage the viewer to subscribe to your YouTube channel, visit your website, or buy the product you're demonstrating.



Your blog posts would direct people to a content offer on a similar subject (so you could gather their contact details).



Your PPC ad would direct people to a landing page where they could buy your product, or sign up for your content offer.



The landing page for your content offer would have a clear CTA that encouraged people to download your ebook.

#### But don't forget to make sure that your CTA is relevant.

Going back to our personas, there's little point in our bespoke software company putting a "get a quote now" CTA at the end of a blog post about "11 business tech news sites you need to read."

But putting a "get a no obligation quote for a cell phone app" CTA (including a phone number and link to a "get a quote" landing page) in their "How to brief a company to get the cell phone app you actually want" ebook makes sense.





## Convert leads into customers

The final stage (and arguably the most important!) is converting your leads into customers. It's entirely possible that, during the course of the previous steps, you will already have acquired new customers, and that's great. Your goal is now to keep the conversation going with the leads you've acquired until they are ready to buy.

Depending on how long the buying decision process is for your product or service, this could take weeks, or even years. Companies that have products with a long process (typically B2B companies) will have a harder job as there tend to be more decision-makers involved and the buying process — from consideration to actual purchase — generally takes longer.

The point is that, even if you're not converting leads into customers just yet, you're still ticking some important boxes:

- Brand awareness
- Developing trust
- Developing authority in your industry
- Improving your SEO
  (so people can more easily find you online)

All useful attributes when someone's considering who to buy from.



## Don't go straight for the (sales call) kill

It can be tempting to pick up the phone as soon as someone's downloaded an ebook. This might be appropriate if it's an ebook that's really close to the bottom of the buying decision process — for example, our bespoke software company's "How to brief a company to get the cell phone app you actually want" ebook.

But in most cases, it should be avoided as, best case, it'll end in a very frustrating call for all involved and, worst case, you'll blow any future chance of that lead buying from you. Instead, use email marketing to continue the conversation with your leads until such time as they're ready to buy.

#### **Email marketing**

You should now hopefully have a list of email addresses from the people who downloaded your content offer. You may also already have an email list, say, from business cards that you collected at a recent trade show, or a competition that you ran in-store. This is great, but don't forget that if your contacts are older than around six months, it may be best to start fresh as they may not remember you.

A good way to start a relationship with people who've interacted with you and your company is to send them a monthly email with a round-up of your five or so best performing blog posts. This is a pretty easy thing to do and helps them keep you in mind. You could also include other ebook offers or content that's a bit more sales-focused, but keep the mix at least 80/20 with the 80 percent being content that's interesting to them, rather than about you and your products.

As well as blog post round-ups, if you have the relevant information, you could also consider sending your leads:



#### Offers

Have you got a sale coming up? Give them the chance to buy before releasing your sale dates anywhere else.



#### **Birthday gifts**

If you know when a lead's birthday is (you may have asked for date of birth in one of your sign-ups) surprise them with a "happy birthday" email and a free sample product, or money-off voucher.

# Don't forget to include an "unsubscribe" button on your emails.

It's painful to hear, but not everyone is going to want to receive your emails. This is actually a positive as it helps to ensure your marketing email list is active and engaged.

Companies like <u>Mailchimp</u> offer free email marketing tools.

## Important!

You'll need to make sure you comply with the <u>FCC CAN-SPAM policy</u>





#### Sales-focused content

With more and more people now researching products online, it's important to make sure you've got sales-focused content such as product videos, spec sheets, FAQs, case studies and product comparisons on your website. Make sure that you're linking to those pages from your blog posts, where relevant, to make it easier for prospects who are in the consideration phase.

#### **Review sites**



85% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.<sup>4</sup>

It's important to get yourself on the likes of Yelp and Bing Local. And don't forget to display the review site's logo on your website, so people can easily access the reviews.

### Do more of what's working and less of what's not

Use analytics, such as <u>tracking code</u> that you can monitor in Google Analytics to find out what's working — the best channels, best content, best formats, best time of day to post, best keywords, etc. And do more of it and less of what's not working.

As you get more advanced, you may want to think about tools like a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage your customer data and marketing automation to make your life a bit easier. But these are certainly not necessary to start with.

#### And finally...

Remember consistency between all channels is key — whether online or offline. If someone's had a great online experience, you need to make sure you live up to that when you meet them in person, or speak to them on the phone.

 ${\tt 4~BrightLocal}, {\it Local~Consumer~Review~Survey}, {\tt 2017}.$ 





If you don't have a website, and even if you do, there are still plenty of ways to get noticed. While local, offline activities won't have the reach that online produces, it's still a great way to get to know your local community, start building your brand and increase local sales.

## Here are just some of the things you can consider:



#### Get some business cards made

Carry some with you so you can hand one over at every opportunity. The more people who discover your business, the better. And don't forget to include your social media addresses — Twitter handle, Facebook address, etc.



#### Create a customer referral program

What better way to get new customers than getting your existing customers to bring them to you! Simply offer your existing customers an incentive for doing so. If you're an organic food box supplier, offer existing customers a free box for every three customers they introduce (and who subsequently buy a box).



#### Offer a workshop

If you're a flower shop, offer a workshop on how to arrange a bouquet; if you're a cake shop, give a master class on making a perfect sourdough loaf. Put a poster in your window, get some flyers printed and ask your fellow local businesses if they'll let you put flyers in their stores.



#### Offer a prize at a trade fair

This is a great way to get hold of the business cards of prospective customers. If you're a tech company, consider offering a mini robot as a prize. All people have to do is drop their business card in a bowl and then you let them know who's won a couple of days later.



## Team up with fellow local businesses

If you're a local cocktail bar, team up with your local boutique gym and provide delicious ice-cold cocktails at the end of one of their classes. The gym gets the kudos of giving their customers a delicious free drink and you get the chance to spread the word about your new bar. Win-win.



# If you're growing your business, it makes sense to look after your employees — the backbone of your company.

For ideas on how to do this, visit <u>ColonialLife.com</u>

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