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## articles

### 5 Trends that Will Shape Small Business in 2011



*Sep 30, 2010 -*

Last year I wrote a piece where I predicted trends for 2010 – [you can read them here](#) – and I must say that I was pretty much spot on with most. The thing about predictions and small business – and I think I've developed a bit of knack for this odd duck – is that no matter what trends are reported in the media, small business will always adopt it much slower and in ways that are counter to much of the hype.

Small business owners don't care what's cool. They care about what seems practical and what seems obvious – and that's not always what gets the buzz.

Here are my predictions along those lines for 2011. Some of these might seem pretty obvious, but again, not in the way small business will adopt them.

138  
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#### Social simply is

This year we will simply stop talking about social media as though it were some new, sexy, foreign cousin of marketing. It's just a fact of marketing life and will get integrated into strategy and tactics alike in ways that produce ROI. (I hope all the social media consultants heed this.)

It will become standard operating procedure to include social media activity into a prospect of client's CRM record and use social networks as the primary way to acquire introductions and make warm sales calls.

#### Mobile finally lands

Seems like we've been talking about mobile marketing for as long as I can remember. So, why hasn't it become a part of the small business mix yet? I think it finally will this year, but not in the way it was always portrayed.

Mobile's promise always seemed to be tied to mobile ads, text messaging and proximity pushes, but consumers don't want these in their life any more than they want spam, so mobile's promise has evolved.

Mobile for the small business will be about mobile payments, search related apps, and location based offers and not about SMS.

Small business doesn't care about Foursquare or Gowalla, but they do care about the behavior these services are instilling.

#### O2O becomes strategy

Last year I talked about fusion of online and offline and, as social simply becomes a part of the fabric, so has the logical integration of instant media with traditional media, social networks with chamber mixers. Online and offline, traditional media and new media, will stop competing and start working together.

For 2011 a new kind of strategy will emerge for the small business and that is one of using the online space to drive people to the offline space. The in person experience is the ultimate competitive advantage of the small business and how they beat the online and big box competition.

Get them in the store, get them to a meeting, get them to an event, get them in a community, get them on using an app.

Online 2 offline will be a strategic marketing approach employed by the most successful local businesses where conversion will be measured in hugs and handshakes.

#### Networked referral automation

Once again, returning to last year's prediction, I suggested that search would become social and it has. Search engines now tell you who in your social network likes those shoes or wrote about that topic you just queried.

The evolution of this behavior will be the total automation of social surfing. Surfers will be able to view who in their network knows also knows the real

estate agent they are considering hiring and who on Facebook also went to high school with the attorney that was referred to them.

Using an individual's social graph match with that of your own will become standard business behavior.

### Apps over Web

The good news is that you can find anything on the Web these days. The bad news is you can find anything on the Web these days.

Information seekers will grow tired of the unpoliced nature of the Web and will increasingly turn to trusted sources of content and willing pay to have that content contained, packaged and delivered in application form to the device of their choice.

Marketers need to consider this behavior when they develop their content strategies and take a look at the community of content approach vs. the free information approach.

Trusted networks will become even more important.

*John Jantsch is a marketing coach, award winning social media publisher and author of two best selling books, Duct Tape Marketing and The Referral Engine.*

*Image credit: Lev*

Tags: *mobile, duct tape marketing, social media, business owner, business strategy, apps, online, john jantsch, small business*

Article Comments (15)

Mike Burtner



*Executive Search Consultant at Integrity...  
(2 hours ago)*

I agree wholeheartedly that contact-seekers and others seeking information from the social web will move (and pay) for that information from trusted sources. The 'tragedy of the commons' rule applies here; what is made available wholesale at little-to-no cost also loses value. Great article, John; you are right that SMBs don't 'care' but will still be impacted by mobile and social technologies. Those of us who do care would do well to translate features to benefits.



John Jantsch

*Founder (1 hour ago)*

Amen Mike - translation is the new master skill in today's environment - right up there with aggregation and filtering.

Marie Wiese



*Marketing CoPilot (1 hour ago)*

This is so well stated. For the last 18 months I have been working with small business owners to help them understand the importance of an online strategy for their business. Your O2O prediction is a perfect way to state the strategy and the execution to a small business owner. The objective of all marketing professionals should be to take the trends and prove the ROI. I have seen companies struggle with all 5 of the predictions. Looking forward to seeing them pay off in 2011.

Dan Kraus



*Founder & President, Leading... (1 hour ago)*

John, you've got a unique vantage point on the trends and agree with them. The one thing I would add to all of them - aimed towards vendors, consultants and anyone else that is working with small business - is that trend adoption by the small business is driven by simplicity and ease of use. The small business owners don't have time to learn new for the sake of new - it needs to fit in

Kelly Marsh



*Marketing Director | Non-Profit Board...  
(1 hour ago)*

Hey John, Can you predict some stock for me too? Just kidding... I think your prediction about people paying for well packaged information is also spot on. It seems that internet product launches keep getting bigger and bigger with each launch and most of it is all driven by affiliates and e-mail. When I think about it as a consumer, I