



5 Steps

To Promoting Your
Online Uniform Store

UniformMarket

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5 Steps

To Promoting Your Online Uniform Store

How can your business start to reach more clients and customers by leveraging online sales and content? This question is one that every uniform retailer has to ask these days. In fact, there is a growing percentage of uniform retailers are completely online operations, without a brick and mortar store to back up their digital sales.

The others—whether they started as physical stores and have evolved over time to offer online sales, or added brick-and-mortar business later to bolster brand presence—need to learn how to tie their online promotions and in-store activity together for the most effective outcome. Both groups can benefit from utilizing the five steps below to promote their online uniform stores.

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1.

Organize Your Social Media Strategy

Social media is one of the most pervasive communication channels of the 21st century—if not the most pervasive. To say that building a social media presence for your business is essential is an understatement. However, it is also important to remember that not every social media network is necessary for every single business.

Even in the uniform retail industry, there can be a range of social networks you choose to adopt. If your business is focused primarily or entirely on the law enforcement market, for instance, you will likely have a better opportunity reaching hospitals or private practices through LinkedIn than through Pinterest. As you develop your social



media strategy, make a list of your biggest clients and accounts and then start looking for them on social networks. Which networks do most of your clients have a presence? Or, which social channels best align with your audience and seem to receive the most engagement? Those networks should be the core focus of your social media strategy.

Once you've decided which networks to give the majority of your focus, you should start devising "marketing week" or "marketing month" calendars to help you stay on top of

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your posting. Ideally, you should be posting new content daily on each channel, but the volume of your posts can vary per channel as well. Facebook and Twitter can typically handle a larger volume of posts without burning out your audience where, on a platform like LinkedIn, you may stick to posting once per day, or even every other day. You can also mix and match between “sponsored” ads and basic social media posts. Most social channels today have an advertising platform that allows you to allocate a budget towards targeting a specific audience, reaching more people, and building a larger following on your social pages.

Finally, remember to have fun. Strong social media marketing is half traditional advertising, half informal customer interaction. In other words, don’t just post promotional content. Share articles or videos that relate to the industry you’re targeting; share pictures of people wearing your uniforms; engage followers in conversations; ask clients questions to learn how you can serve them better. These social media tactics may not require a lot of planning but can go a long way toward building your brand reputation and making your social pages a welcoming place for your customers to congregate.

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2.

Plan Your Email Strategy

With your social media calendar sketched out, you can start fleshing out your marketing strategy in another hugely important digital realm: email. While social media may prove to be where your customers and clients choose to interact with you most, email marketing is still hugely important for your uniform retail business. Try to establish a habit of sending out email messages on a weekly or biweekly basis. What the emails can actually say will depend on the business, but your main goal should always be to provide value to the customer with your emails.

“How can I make my email communications valuable?” you may ask. Some customers will be happy to get regular email content from you, such as catalog information about the uniforms, footwear, gear and accessories you offer, or special featured products arriving in your store. Some might appreciate your insight on trends going on in the uniform industry. Others will be looking for communications that directly influence their bottom line in a positive way, like coupons, discounts, or special sales announcements. An email marketing campaign that balances these factors is typically one that will grow its subscriber base.

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Be Smart with Coupons & Discounts

Online coupons and discounts, just like print coupons, can boost interest in your brand and bring in more paying customers. However, there are a number of concrete dos and don'ts for this specific online marketing tactic. Specifically, when designing an online coupon or discount program, you should remember to consider the following five items:



Offer something of value.

DO - provide discounts and coupons that your customers will consider valuable.

DON'T - create promotions for products nobody wants. In many cases, your coupon marketing strategy is going to go hand-in-hand with your email newsletters. If you offer plenty of coupons, but none of them provide value to the customers, they can actually hurt your business more than they can help.



Define a clear term of use

DO - Think about restrictions on your coupons and promotions.

DON'T - Just tell yourself you will deal with any misunderstandings or miscommunications later. Customers are never happy to hear that they can't use a coupon, but at least when you have detailed the terms of service, there is a specific section of the fine print you can point towards to explaining your decision. Without the restrictions and terms, customers will feel cheated and frustrated, which can have a definite blowback on your business and brand reputation.





Set an expiration date.

DO - Define a limited window where customers have to use your coupon.

DON'T - Release an open-ended coupon. Ever. Expiration themselves are restrictions, which means this point fits into the bit about terms of service discussed above. More than just avoiding frustrated customers, setting an expiration date can create a sense of urgency that will drive more of your customers to use their coupons now before they forget about them.



Track your redemptions.

DO - Run reports regularly to see which coupons worked and which didn't.

DON'T - Run coupons and then never bother to check if anyone cared. A successful coupon promotion is one that gets a lot of people interested in your products. Tracking your promotions will help you find out which coupons were a hit, so you can repeat the success in the future.



Consider your finances and margins.

DO - Offer promotions that makes your business money.

DON'T - Offer huge discounts that your business can't reasonably afford. Above, we said that a successful coupon promotion is one that gets customers buying from your store. That statement is true, but only if you aren't hurting your business to get those customers through the door. Look at your margins to determine what kind of discounts you can afford to offer, but don't go overboard just to boost traffic. You could end up losing more money on honoring the discounts that you earn from the extra purchasing activity.

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Be Sure to Get Offline

Much of the traffic for your online store is going to come from people who discover your business on social media or through Google. If you have a brick-and-mortar presence though, then you can translate your in-store traffic into more hits for your online store.

First, think about your in-store experience itself. How can you direct your brick-and-mortar shoppers to your online store, without necessarily cannibalizing your physical sales? Asking customers to sign up for your email newsletter at checkout (perhaps to receive a coupon or discount) is one good option. Printing paper coupons with information about your website and social channels on them is another. You can even use QR codes on your store's shopping bags or promotional materials to encourage customers to find you online.



Secondly, think about how you market your physical store. Do you use traditional media advertising like radio, print media, or television? Instead of just talking about your physical store in your advertising, include a line about where customers can find you online. Not everyone who hears or sees your ad has the time to come into your store to shop, but that doesn't necessarily mean they aren't interested.

By offering information about your online store in traditional media advertising, you widen your reach simply by offering more options.



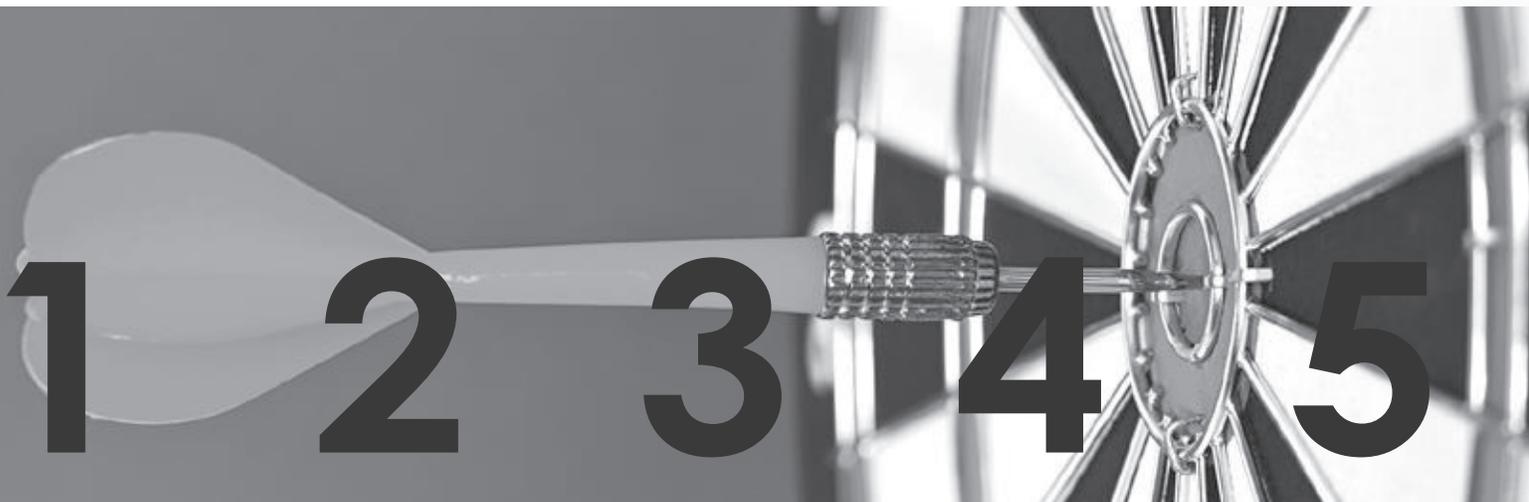
5.

Take Time to Re-target

Retargeting essentially means to re-engage with visitors who have interacted with your site in the past, but not necessarily made a purchase. These visitors may have explored the content pages on your website or they might have added items to their shopping cart but left the site without finalizing a transaction. When you re-target these people, then, you are reminding them about their potential purchases and, hopefully, turning them into paying customers.

How does re-targeting work? Usually, it depends on your display network partners. When a person visits your website, a tracking cookie monitors the pages they are looking at or the items they put in their shopping cart. If and when that person visits a network partner site, that site will recognize the tracking cookie and send targeted advertisements reminding them about your brand and their still-pending purchases. Since these customers already recognize your brand, they are three times more likely to click the advertisement and return to your site. These returns help to increase advertising conversions and boost revenue.

Another common form of re-targeting uses email contact information to try to re-engage prospective customers. You can automate your system to check for abandoned shopping carts and send emails to customers who were showing interest in your uniforms, but never finalized their purchases. These emails can take a number of different forms—from friendly “Did You Forget?” reminders to coupon or promotion codes.



In the End...

Online marketing can be tricky for any business, particularly one as niche as a uniform retailer. As you can see, there are a plethora of different factors to consider when promoting your products and brand on the web—from social media and email to coupons and advertising, both online and offline. Luckily, learning to promote your brand online is a bit like riding a bike: once you get used to it (and draw out a comprehensive marketing calendar), you will begin to establish a routine that feels like second nature.

If you need help getting started, though, or simply need a few extra pointers for online promotion, we invite you to contact UniformMarket today! We love helping online uniform stores, just like yours, promote their businesses, boost online reach, and grow their revenues. Click here to get in touch. Our contact information is also listed below.

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