

THE BUSY BUSINESS OWNER'S CHECKLIST TO SUCCESSFULLY MARKETING TO MOUNTAIN-TOWN VISITORS



MARKETING TO MOUNTAIN-TOWN VISITORS



Colorado, Nevada, Utah and California are globally renowned for their beautiful mountain towns. Whether visitors are looking for an epic place to glide down powdery slopes, hike or bike aspen-laced trails, hit the rapids on a rafting trip, or just revel in the scenery, there is no better place than these thriving resort communities.

And each mountain town has something unique to offer. From breathtaking mountain scenery to world-class recreation to fine dining and world-class shopping, there is sure to be something to enjoy for every visitor in your mountain town.

While you as a business owner or decision-maker have to do little convincing that your business is nestled in an awe-inspiring setting (let the snow-capped Rockies do that for you!), we understand how it can be hard or confusing to figure out how best to market

your brand at different times of the year. And let's face it, often you feel like you just don't have time to spend on marketing efforts.

A common pitfall for seasonal business owners is underestimating the importance of marketing year-round. And as a small-business owner in a mountain town, we know you—more than anyone—understand the challenges of the dreaded off-season. Business slows down, Main Street can resemble a ghost town, and your website traffic drops dramatically. Instead of letting the seasonal slump get you down, use that valuable time for marketing!

You heard us! Seasonal business owners who remain focused on the big picture (and use their off-season time wisely) can do wonders preparing their business for smashing successes and uncharted growth when the next peak season arrives. But with



a year-round marketing strategy comes the need to plan ahead. It's absolutely crucial to the success of your business to be prepared and not wait until you are in the middle of a season to make decisions. By planning ahead you can get the best advertising rates, leave room for testing and optimization of your marketing initiatives, and have the most strategic plan for adapting your message to fit different seasons and each one's unique audiences.

In this guide, we'll discuss how you can maximize the audiences you'll be reaching with clearly outlined goals, we'll break down tips and tactics for year-round and peak and shoulder season marketing, and we'll provide you with industry guidelines to successfully market to mountain-town visitors.

Keep your business top of mind year-round. The following guide will provide a checklist for your ongoing success.



TIPS & TACTICS: PEAK SEASON

For most mountain-town businesses, peak season is summer (mid-June to September) and winter (mid-November to March/mid-April). Your storefront is abuzz, the phone is ringing, and employees are far too busy ringing in sales to daydream about their next camping trip. It's the most wonderful time of the year!

PEAK SEASON MARKETING GOALS

While business is thriving, be cognizant of how you can optimize your marketing opportunities by setting goals for you and your team. Just as in your personal life, setting goals gives you (or your business) real direction. Having clear marketing objectives and goals will help you and your staff remain on course no matter what comes up.

TIPS AND TACTICS

RAMP UP YOUR IN-MARKET ADVERTISING

While in town, many visitors like to live like the locals. As a result, they'll eat local, shop local and pick up your town's paper. Caught up in the excitement of the mountain lifestyle, many visitors find themselves perusing the real estate section contemplating a property purchase. Because of this, it's important to fire up your in-market advertising during your busy season(s) to optimize results.

This is where planning ahead comes into play. Booking advertising campaigns in advance is not only a less expensive option, but it allows you to lock in premium placement for your ads so you can maximize your exposure.

Successfully Marketing to Mountain-Town Visitors

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) reminds all business owners that marketing is essential to profitability and growth. But [marketing takes time, money, and lots of planning](#). All that being said, the SBA cautions, many small businesses do not allocate adequate dollars toward marketing. Worse, some spend their marketing budgets haphazardly. This is a clear sign of lack of planning. As a mountain-town marketer, you must plot your course month by month based on projected revenue, time of year, expected customer traffic, special events, and so forth.

The fourth quarter is right around the corner—put pencil to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and [plan your 2017 marketing budget now](#).

GROW YOUR DATABASE

Even though you may be running around like a chicken with your head cut off, take advantage of this busy time of year by [growing your database](#). Having a solid list of past customers and people who've shown interest in your business will enable your brand—and the memory of positive experiences associated with it—to remain alive in your customers' minds all year long. It will also give you time to market to and convert new leads for your next season.

To grow your database, and in turn your business, make sure to invite customers to subscribe to your newsletter or blog, have plenty of [knock-out calls-to-action](#) (CTAs) on your website for customers to stay in touch with you, and even offer discounts or promotions to “insiders” as a “thank you” for being a loyal customer. Of course, crafting a growing list is so much easier when you have a plethora of traffic in your store or on your website, so while it might seem like a pesky task to add to your ever-expanding to-do list, set a reachable goal for this project and remember that your peak-season success is relying on your off-season productivity.

COLLECT REVIEWS

It's no secret that online reviews can be influential, but just how significant are they to the success of your business? Can they actually make or break a sale? Can the quantity or quality of the reviews have that big of an impact on your bottom line? The short answer: Absolutely.

Think about it—you're in a new town looking for the best pizza spot. How do you find it? If you're like the [145 million monthly users](#)—you go to Yelp. There, you can read reviews, browse pictures, and scan menus. And while customer reviews might seem secondary to your picture perfect pies and competitive pricing, they are no joke. A [recent Vendasta report](#) found that consumers are more likely to select a local business if the reviews are positive.

While 57 percent of consumers will frequent a business with a three-star rating, that percentage jumps to 94 percent for businesses with a four-star rating.

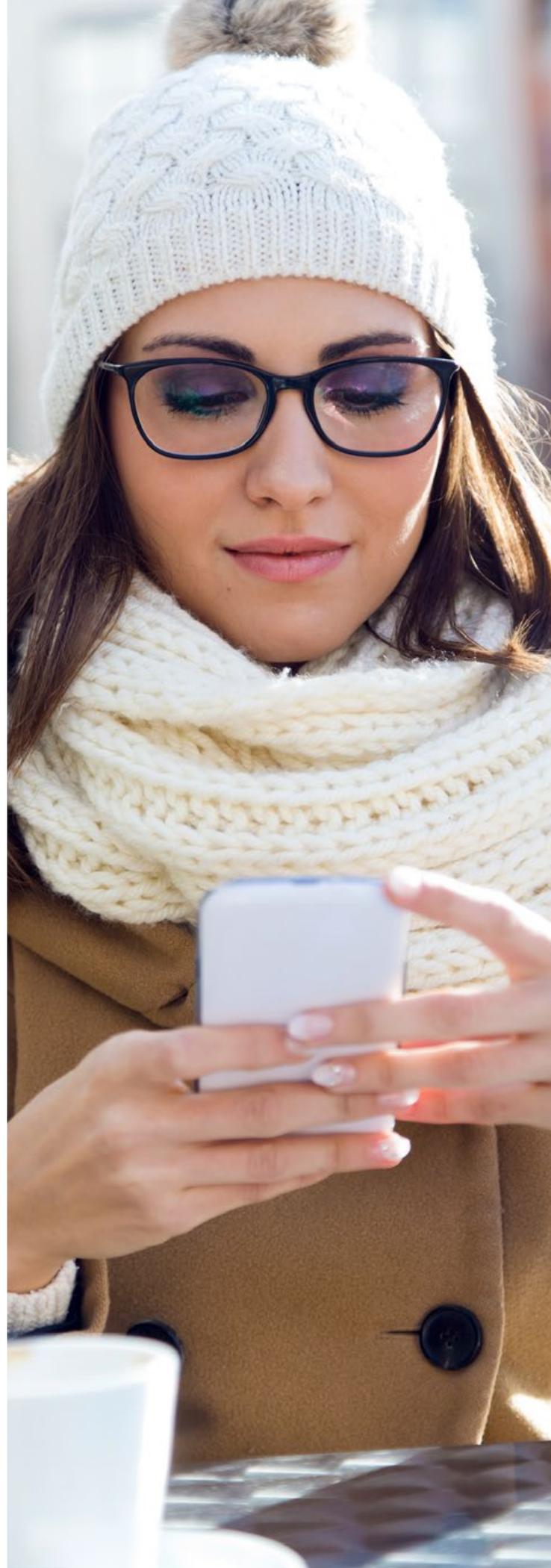
So, be sure to add this to your checklist—ask for and collect reviews. As a business owner, you should always be focused on gathering reviews from happy customers. With the growth of social media and review sites, customer opinions are an invaluable (and free) marketing tool you can use to help with your year-round marketing. During the shoulder season, [gather stellar reviews and testimonials to highlight certain aspects of your business](#) that you can then repurpose throughout the year in the following ways:

Inbound marketing:

Ensure the best reviews are visible in most of the traditional inbound channels, such as blogs, tradeshow materials, brochures, direct mail, and even email signatures.

Email nurturing:

When it comes to email, lead nurturing is no different. You might think email is purely transactional; the customer requested something, you gave it to them. But this is ultimately the way to make sure you're creating sustainable sales and growth. As such, you should send out [nurturing emails](#) throughout the year. Even if said email is not focused on testimonials, per se, you can always find a way to include snippets of them to showcase positive reviews and remind customers why you're so great.



Direct sales:

Your sales reps can use the power of reviews to have more relevant conversations with prospects. Reps can use reviews to overcome common sales objections, show why you're better than the competition, and eliminate the need for a customer reference. After all, the whole point of sales is to overcome objections, and arming your sales team with testimonials is a great way to do this. If people think your spa is too far from their Lake Tahoe condo, for example, arm your sales team with solid testimonials from customers saying that the travel time is totally worth it.

EXTEND YOUR SEASON

Or, promote the extended parts of your seasons. Thomas "Mac" Harman, founder of Balsam Hill Christmas Tree Co., a now [\\$90 million artificial Christmas tree company](#), discovered in October 2006 that the Christmas tree season had begun more than a month earlier. Seasonal businesses can benefit from extending their selling season by kicking off marketing efforts earlier, and holding sales or promotions immediately following the close of their season.

As Harman discovered more about Orthodox Christmas, which is celebrated on or near Jan. 7, he realized his season was longer and his marketing opportunities were even greater than he'd thought, giving him more time to branch out with his promotions and, as a result, sell more Christmas trees.

Successfully marketing to mountain-town visitors is a year-round job. But during peak season, simply sitting back and watching the sales roll in is a fatal marketing mistake. There is no better time to set yourself up for a profitable shoulder season than when business is booming.



TIPS & TACTICS: SHOULDER SEASON

It's like the Sunday that marks an end to your long vacation: You know it's coming, but it's painful nonetheless. And so it is with mountain-town business owners and the inevitable slowdown of the shoulder season. Instead of blaming the lack of fresh powder on the slopes in the spring, or cooler temps in the fall, manifest your own goals and don't allow your marketing communications to take a vacation.

Here's how:

SHOULDER SEASON MARKETING GOALS

Setting reachable goals during your slower months allows you and your team to remain focused when things start to quiet down. Without concise goals, your business could easily lose its direction and begin to unravel. So, if business is hot in the cold-weather months and then starts to slow down until summer, find ways for your staff to remain busy!

You can do this by refreshing your marketing efforts—consider revamping your website, re-designing your brick-and-mortar location, [developing new and unique blog content](#) (perhaps set a monthly blog post goal), combining email and social media marketing efforts, updating outdated collateral, even overhauling your logo and brand image. With extra time on your hands, shoulder season is the time to make those back-burner projects a reality.

As a business owner, make sure to visit your shop on a regular basis. This lets your staff know you haven't checked out mentally, and in turn, they won't either. This is also a great time to begin marketing to those coming to town during peak season. Reach prospective visitors and past customers by way of that bulky database you grew during peak season. Get them

to reserve adventure trips or book services now by offering them a discount or special package, and remind them why you're so great with testimonials.

TIPS AND TACTICS

GO DIGITAL

During slow seasons, [keep your digital game strong](#). For example, many real estate businesses might cut off or reduce local advertising during the shoulder season, but they keep their out-of-market digital advertising intact to reach those in other locations who might be planning a trip during the peak season.

Email marketing can be a great way to engage with customers, highlight sales, and generate business during slower seasons. According to George DiGuido, former head of email marketing at Airbnb, [email is very powerful for “imagine yourself here” kinds of communications](#). As a promotional channel, email marketing allows us to inspire and bring new and interesting properties and travel ideas to our users,” DiGuido said. Regardless of your business, providing readers with awe-inspiring images (which we know isn't a problem for you mountain-town folk) or captivating messages will effectively plant a seed in their minds about the experiences you offer—be it retail, dining, lodging, or adventure.

RAMP IT UP AND REACH A NEW MARKET

While perhaps counterintuitive, consider ramping up advertising during shoulder season. Because some competitors might close entirely due to low traffic, the decreased supply of restaurants in town, for example, equals more demand for yours. By simple supply-and-demand logic, you'll get more foot traffic because you're the only option available (or the only visible one).

Ramping up advertising also allows you to reach a completely different market—the locals! By advertising during this period, and targeting those who live in the area looking for services you provide, you've just expanded your target demographic significantly. Remember to adapt your message to the audience you're reaching—no need to put a touristy spin on an ad targeted to your neighbors. For auto businesses, shoulder season is a great time to advertise your selection of snow tires—odds are many mountain-town locals will be in the market for them.

Another great thing about getting in good with the locals is when they have friends and family in town during peak season (or whenever), you're now their go-to spot! Your neigh-

bors not only live in the area, they work, shop, and dine in town. Having loyal locals spreading positive word-of-mouth for your business could do wonders for your on- and off-season sales.

STAY SOCIAL

Contrary to what you might think after spending some time in your store, your customers don't disappear during the off-season. Imagine your social channels as your virtual storefront. Because even if your customers aren't stopping in to grab coffee and pastries every morning, [they're most certainly perusing Facebook](#). It's important to stay connected with your leads and past customers by leveraging the power of Facebook, [Twitter](#), Instagram, etc., throughout the entire year to stay top of mind.

Use this space to offer special discounts, highlight shoulder season activities, gather and publish complimentary reviews and testimonials, share website content, post interesting and relevant photos or stories, run contests and giveaways, and generate overall hype for the next season. Don't forget—just as you should with your marketing efforts, people plan ahead to get the best deals. If you're constantly in front of eyeballs, virtual or otherwise, you could be the one to spark their interest in that rafting trip they didn't know they wanted to take.



TIPS & TACTICS: YEAR ROUND

Ongoing, consistent marketing is the name of the game for your year-round tactics. Regardless of business type—an ice cream parlor in Laguna Beach, a marina near Lake Tahoe, or a ski shop in the Rockies—year-round marketing allows you to brand your company and keeps your business top of mind when busy season rolls around again.

YEAR-ROUND MARKETING GOALS

We're not rocket scientists, but we can safely bet you won't be renting too many skis in June. Just because your customers can't pizza/french fry down the slopes this summer doesn't mean you can't get people excited about your brand. When it's a sweltering 94 degrees out and people are hiding indoors dreaming of a winter wonderland, what better time to kick off a ski gear sale?

Conversely, even during busy seasons, it's important to keep your advertising presence strong. Cutting off advertising because you're already busy is a fatal mistake. You're busy because of your efforts to market your business. Once you stop those efforts—because you see results—the traffic to your website and storefront will taper off.

Year-round marketing goals should be centered on branding and maintaining advertising frequency so that your ski shop remains top of mind—yes, even in the heat of the summer. If your advertising plays upon the excitement of upcoming months by offering early bird pricing and off-season specials, you can bet you'll have an excited and engaged audience by the time they can take advantage of your products and services again!

TIPS AND TACTICS

ADAPT TO THE SEASON

In any environment, adaption is critical to survival. It's especially true for seasonal businesses. The leaves are changing color, and they aren't waiting for you to keep up! Your marketing tactics must quickly adapt as well.

Advertise year-round, but adapt to the different needs of your customer that change based on the season. For example, your customers might not be able to raft in February, but after a few months of sub-zero temperatures, they will be dreaming of those long summer days. Take advantage of that by offering early bird specials on rafts, helmets, and other rafting-related gear to give them a reason to shop and get them excited about the months to come.

INTEGRATE YOUR MARKETING TO CREATE A COHESIVE STRATEGY

Regardless of the season, it's important to keep your message consistent. This helps customers get to know your brand, and in turn trust it. Integrated marketing is a simple concept. It ensures all forms of email communication, print and digital advertising, and social media posts, etc., that your brand creates are carefully linked together. At the most basic level, having a cohesive strategy means integrating all your promotional tools so they work together in perfect harmony.

This is not to be confused with adapting your message based on the time of year. Of course, your message will change with the seasons, but having an overall synergy and clarity among your advertising elements builds a clearer story.

STAY SOCIAL

As followers of many seasonal businesses, we definitely notice a dip in people keeping business social media accounts up to date year-round. Often, they'll post they are closed for the season and not touch their social channels until months later when they try to get everything ready for the upcoming season.

There is merit in updating your social profiles year-round. Not only does updating your channels on a consistent basis get you more engagement, it maintains momentum and sustains growth. It even reminds past and potential customers of the experience they had, what it's like doing or having XYZ at your business, and why they loved it so much. Consistently posting content to social media accounts will help keep your business top of mind with your

followers, allowing them to see constant content on their newsfeeds and continue engaging with your brand. Additionally, consistently posting content will help generate more traffic for you during your peak season; you'll already have momentum which will contribute to a higher page reach.

BE INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Running or managing a small business can be a challenge. One way to make an impact with your business is to first make an impact in your community. Never forget about the locals. This is the crew that will keep you afloat during slow seasons.

To do this, find out how to make what you are trying to sell relevant to your neighbors by becoming a core part of what it is that they need most—a business willing to connect with them on a real and meaningful level. Whether you're selling adventure packages or gourmet pastries, find a way to connect with and engage your community in a way they won't forget.

To make your business vital to your mountain town, consider serving on a community board, volunteering at a local soup kitchen or joining a local community service organization, and/or participating as a vendor in local events. This gives you a chance to let your community know you on a more personal level, and it shows you're willing to give your time to be part of something bigger than your bottom line.

MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION

Be sure to use that great database you've been growing. But do so respectfully. During the off-season, it'll be less likely (or totally impossible) for your email recipients to be an actual customer. As such, during your shoulder season your emails will be less frequent than they would be during your busy season, which is OK!

Whatever the season, you can (and should) stay in touch with your customers via email. Just be mindful that you're [always delivering relevant and high-value content to their inboxes.](#) This means, be sure to tailor your message based on the season offering promotions, early bird pricing, contests, etc., only when appropriate.

Year-round marketing is an investment. It takes time, money, and planning. But with all the effort, your investment will pay off. So just because your town might go into hibernation, never forget that your customers don't; they're out living their lives. Keep your business top of mind year-round so they remember you and your business next year.



IN SUMMARY

The core of your success as a business lies in when and how you market it. Think of marketing as the heart of your business. While, at times, your marketing efforts might slow down, in order for your business to maintain a long and healthy life, the heart cannot stop beating.

Your company might offer the best products or services in your industry, but if you don't market your business correctly, none of your potential customers would know about it. Use the previously mentioned goals, tips, and tactics to successfully market to your mountain-town visitors and avoid the "feast or famine" effect of seasonality.

While the busy season is just that, never lose track of your ultimate goal—building and cultivating leads to lay the groundwork for when sales really start to slow down. And when you find yourself in a seasonal slump, remember there are other strategies you can utilize to better your business.

Take the slow time to check items off your back-burner to-do list, get involved in your community, and forge relationships with the locals. Always rely on year-round marketing efforts (such as social media and email communication) to keep your customers engaged, in-the-know, and excited to return to your shop the next time they're in town.

Let's market your business! We will work with you to define your target customer and how to connect with them. With Swift, you'll always stay on top of the latest marketing trends, online advertising best practices, mountain-town business insights, and so much more!

We're ready to talk when you are—contact us today to [discover how Swift's audience will take your business to new heights.](#)

CONTACT US

THE BUSY BUSINESS OWNER'S CHECKLIST TO SUCCESSFULLY MARKETING TO MOUNTAIN-TOWN VISITORS

PEAK SEASON

Ramp up your in-market advertising

Book advertising campaigns in advance to save money and ensure premium placement.

Grow your database

Invite customers to subscribe in person and online.

Collect reviews

Consistently ask for and collect reviews--especially when you have happy customers who are vocal.

Extend your season

Start marketing before and extend after peak season to create a longer time period of demand.

SHOULDER SEASON

Go digital

Use your website, emails, and other online platforms to promote your business even when people aren't in town.

Ramp it up and reach a new market

Consider increasing your advertising during slow times and beat out competitors by gaining a larger market share.

Stay social

Stay active on social with discounts, photos, content, and engaging posts. Remind customers why they should think of you first next time they're in town.

YEAR-ROUND

Adapt to the season

Advertise year-round but adapt your creative to the changing consumer needs for that season. Think outside the box!

Integrate your marketing to create a cohesive strategy

Tie all your different media together (print, social, digital, email, and beyond) with a cohesive and synergistic brand.

Stay social

Maintain momentum and stay top-of-mind by engaging past and potential customers year-round.

Be involved in your community

Get to know your neighbors and be involved in your community in an authentic way.

Maintain communication

Tap into your (hopefully) growing database year-round with timely, high-value, and relevant communication that keeps you top-of-mind.