



INDEXIC

Online Management Solutions



Driving Your Business to Stand Out from the Crowd

The travel industry is booming, and thanks to the digital age, it's becoming more complex than ever. There are a handful of elements that can take your business to the next level and help accelerate your success. Here, we'll outline those elements, and will expand upon some simple guidelines that you can implement at your business to help drive sales and satisfy customers.

Competition

You know what the old adage says – if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Competition is one of the key drivers of a business' success. Competition leads to innovation, and if a business is the only player in the market, it's difficult to improve. With un and friendly competition in place, diversity is encouraged, which will motivate improvements in technology and customer experience. Entrepreneur Magazine analyzed the United Airlines' new 'basic economy' class as a reactive response to the growing market for more economical travel solutions, which presented a potential threat to existing and higher priced United fares. So United offered travelers a "bare minimum" travel option. No seat selection, no frequent travel miles, boarding after everyone else, etc. They addressed their customer's pain point of economy, while offering a solution that required additional expenses for anything additional.

The now-optional services cost little or nothing to provide, but with a price-tag attached, they were seen as gouging the customer for all their worth. It's the [lackluster customer experience](#) that's just the latest in the PR bonanza plaguing the airline. Take from United this lesson – if you're going to respond to market competition, do so carefully, and with the customer in mind. Often a customer will spend more to know that they'll get more in return.

The other upside of competition? It can be FUN. Whole Foods Market, one of the few companies to make it to Fortune Magazine's Great Places to Work list 16 years running, prides itself as a haven for fun & friendly competition. Store employees compete to outsell selected products, chalk artists compete for drawing of the month, and cashiers compete to earn customer praise. It's not uncommon, in fact, to see Team Members in chicken costumes to sell chicken. We're certainly not suggesting you suit up like Chicken Little, but a little competition never hurt anyone, and it might just make you a better small business owner.

Are you keeping tabs on the competition? Stay connected with your peers by attending trade shows, remaining active on social media, and more. If you see strides being made, take a moment to think how you can react. There's a whole world of opportunity out there if you get creative.

Go Digital

According to a new study from Bing, since the year 2000, the average attention span of humans has dropped from 12 seconds to 8 seconds. Well, it's time to take your place on the Internet Superhighway and fast. Having a powerful website can make all the difference when it comes to the success of a small business, and the travel industry is no exception. Experiences are the bread and butter of the travel industry, but more and more, travelers want to be able to put themselves into the moment. In a study published in FORBES Magazine, it's said that 70% of a site's web visitors will never come back. That means that you either need to ensure that your 30% return customer is a die-hard fan, or you need to make sure that your content is engaging enough to capture them and make a sale the first time around.

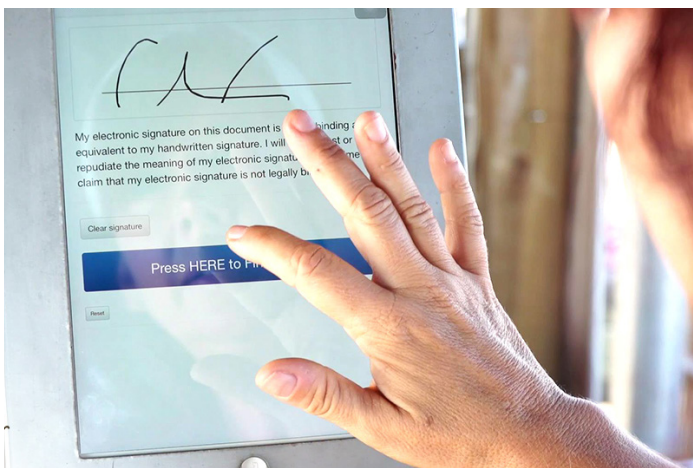
In a study entitled [Trust and Mistrust of Online Health Sites](#), a survey of 15 participants directed them to search the internet for health information that was relevant to them, and then asked for their first impressions of the sites they visited. Respondents reported that of all the factors they claimed for rejecting or mistrusting a website, 94% were design related, while only 6% were content related. When choosing the photos that are used to market your company, choose wisely. Make sure your images are appropriate – showcasing proper safety techniques and protocol. Use imagery to tell your story, such as the vibrant photos featured on the blog for renowned travel company [TCS World Travel](#).

In 2017, FORBES reported that only 71% of all small businesses have opted into developing their own website. In today's age, a business without a website isn't a business at all. But just what can you do to make yours optimal? When building a website, there are several

important things to keep in mind. First, make sure your business' contact information is easy to locate. If possible, even go so far as to implement a call to action (CTA) for prospective clients to ask for information, to contact you directly, or even book reservations online. Secondly, ensure your website is mobile friendly. In the era of the Smartphone, it's a guarantee that many of your users will be accessing the content on their mobile device, and it's up to you to meet them with responsive content. Third, be sure to tell your story. If the average attention span is 8 seconds, make sure they know your bottom line in 6. Who are you, what do you do, and why do you do it. Expand on those topics for those looking to get thorough information, but in the "too long, didn't read (tl;dr)" age we're living in, less is more.

Finally, stay social. Chances are, you're leveraging social media to grow your business anyway – well why not include it on your website? Feature links to all accounts, and feature a full feed if possible. Make sure it's visually appealing – a plain text RSS feed won't cut it.

But the web isn't your only digital friend. In a white paper entitled "Does Virtual Reality Have a Place in Travel?", publication Eye for Travel analyzed trends to discover that between 2017 and 2021, shipments of VR devices are expected to grow by over 400%, with many of them to fall into the hands of travelers. For example, in May 2015, travel agent Matoke Tours invested \$30,000 to launch the equivalent of a virtual travel brochure. With the help of some Dutch filmmakers, they developed a '[Virtual Gorilla application](#)' whereby consumers could [download an app](#) and then order a cardboard viewer, allowing users to virtually track gorillas in Uganda, giving tourists a chance to preview their experience before committing financially.



Presentation

In a survey conducted by Office Depot of nearly 1300 small business owners, more than 60% felt that an organized office directly correlated to their business' profitability. Just because we're not *supposed* to judge a book by its cover, doesn't mean we don't. In business, presentation is everything. When choosing a spa, would you choose one that's dirty and full of old products? No. When looking for a daycare center, would you allow your child to spend the day somewhere the trash hasn't been taken out, and the kids' food is everywhere? No. So why would someone want to rent equipment, and trust their lives, with a company who doesn't have their proverbial *stuff* together?

Pennsylvania kayak company River Town Programs published a startup guide to starting a successful kayak rental business, offering the following tips:

- Most customers will prefer sit-in kayaks, rather than sit-on-top. Be sure to offer a variety of lengths and widths for both kayaks and canoes.
- Personal Flotation Devices will need to be occasionally cleaned to prevent odor and mold or mildew. They should be displayed in an organized area, preferably with a floor drain, for cleaning and a space to hang the PFDs to dry.

While these examples pertain specifically to the kayak rental industry, the principles ring true industrywide. Equipment and products should be displayed in an organized manner, with proper and regular cleaning and care. What does your business do to keep things presentable? Is there a solid end-of-day or early morning routine devoted to cleanliness? Implement these tactics to make sure no stone is left unturned by the time your business opens its doors every day.



Organization

In today's age, one surefire way to cut down on clutter is by going paperless. By taking a majority of your processes offline, you can cut down on your need for storage space, thus opening room for more product placement and reducing waste. Square readers offer business owners a credit payment solution that's free of paper receipts.

Outsourcing your company's management and reservation user experience can also be a huge boost to your organizational prowess. [Indexic](#) provides online management solutions that allow business owners to manage their business anytime, anywhere. Developed by Tour Operators, their reservation management software, Event Book Manager works seamlessly on mobile/tablets/web.

By choosing AWAiver for your liability needs, you can turn your paper waivers digital, thus offering your customers a way to sign their forms onsite, using the device of their choosing. Michael Byers, the owner of Fly Key Largo in Florida, has seen fantastic customer feedback since adopting the AWAiver technology. "People seem to be really liking the new waiver system, and the shop likes it better than [the competitor's software]," he said.

After leaving his corporate job in 2003, Phillip Kempton, known affectionately as "Captain Phillip," decided to take the tourism industry by storm. He began working with (and now co-owns) Jekyll Island Boat Tours off the coast of southern Georgia in the town of the same name. And after taking over operations in 2014, he knew that he needed a digital solution for online booking and staffing needs. After striking out with a few vendors, he landed with Indexic and hasn't looked back. "It doesn't matter what time of day or night I call, I get someone there that will help me out," Kempton said. And with a projected \$500,000 in annual business, Kempton was looking for someone to help shoulder the more than 90% of business he books online.

"I don't see Indexic as a vendor – I feel like they're my business partner," he said.



Reviews

The Internet's cardinal rule is simple – don't read the comments. But the reviews? Those are some quality reading material. Small Business Trends reports that positive comments from customers or clients result in an average increase in sales of about 18%, with the average spend rising 31% due to positive reviews.

However, not all reviews are created equal. In recent years, the regulation on what the industry refers to as "astroturfing" has changed the ways that companies seek reviews. Rather than relying on grassroots and viral content, many companies believe that by purchasing positive reviews, they will be able to increase their brand's online profile. According to the Small Business Trends respondents, 27 percent of consumers only trust reviews, and that's if they believe they are legitimate. Falling into the trap of false content may damage your reputation irreparably.

Reviews, either positive or negative, can have great impact on your business. Lack of information may make a customer feel unsure – like they are becoming a test case, or "guinea pig," if you will. Additionally, it is important to respond to all reviews – especially the negative ones. Do your best to make things right. If nothing else, you'll appear engaged and involved.

Use this checklist when reviewing your best practices, and you'll be on your way to a better business:

1. **Competition:** Are you staying competitive? How are you using your business' competition to motivate your organization?
2. **Digital:** What are you doing to keep your company relevant in the digital age? Is your website up to date? Are you maintaining an active social media presence? Have you planned social marketing initiatives?
3. **Presentation:** Keeping things presentable is key. Are you ensuring that your business is practicing high standards of cleanliness and customer service? Is your business tidy? Think white glove treatment, here.
4. **Organization:** How are you keeping things organized at your business? What are you doing to cut down on a paper trail? How can you maximize efficiency by using something like AWAiver to take things out of the analog space? Could eliminate overbooking with a more intuitive system like Event Book Manager?
5. **Reviews:** Love 'em or hate 'em, reviews are part of the game. Are you responding to both positive and negative reviews? Are you making sure that you're mentioning to customers that you're seeking reviews? Keep that in mind when you hear about a satisfied customer.

There you have it – our guide to getting your business to the next level. For more information on reservation management software Event Book Manager, visit www.awaiver.com. For more information on what AWAiver can do to help you organize your liability paperwork, visit www.indexic.net.