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How to Drive Word of Mouth in B2B Online Marketing

By Erika Penzer Kerekes

What's the best way for B2B companies who market to small businesses to drive word of mouth? Here are some tips from marketing experts [Anita Campbell](#) of [Small Business Trends](#) and [John Jantsch](#) of [Duct Tape Marketing](#), who spoke at the Corporate Executive Board's [Enterprise Council on Small Businesses Summit](#) last June:

- **Be human.** Corporatespeak and heavy-duty marketing pitches turn [small business](#) owners off, says Campbell: "They love to see people's faces." Put employees' pictures and individual voices on your website and other marketing materials, she suggested.
- **Cultivate your cheerleaders.** Your business has enthusiastic advocates out there, counseled Campbell – find them, encourage them, support them. These folks are valuable assets in the world of word-of-mouth marketing: They'll defend you to critics and praise you to anyone who asks.
- **Do your homework.** Your customers are probably using social media, advised Jantsch – so friend them, follow them, and engage with them. Know what your targets have done on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn before you pitch them anything.
- **Add value.** You'll get more word-of-mouth power by using social media to educate your audience rather than selling to them, said Campbell.
- **Get it on video.** Jantsch suggested interviewing customers on video about their experiences with your products and services. It's great content that's easily shareable on your site or theirs, or through other marketing channels – and customers love it.
- **Engage with unhappy customers.** When you find disgruntled customers airing their grievances in public – for example, in online reviews of your company's products or services – jump in and try to make it right, said Jantsch. And do so in public, where the rest of your target market can see you being responsive: That's how you establish trust with your audience.
- **Take turns.** Give different functions within your company a chance to respond directly to online comments and inquiries, right up to the CEO, said Jantsch. When top management understands the kind of conversation that's already happening online with your customers and target market, they'll really see the value in devoting resources to cultivating word of mouth.

Erika Penzer Kerekes heads product strategy and social media for [Business.com](#).