Evolving a Small Business With Online Marketing



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Venturing into the unknown can be difficult, but for business owners, taking a risk to try something new can pay off big time. Wade Dickinson, owner of Heirloom Engravers, had found great success as an engraver, with the endorsement of Tiffany's and many other large corporations, but he was hesitant to change his traditional business strategy to embrace online marketing. Luckily, customer and reviewer Sarah R. made an important recommendation that would help Wade triple his business: to claim his Yelp Page, something he had been avoiding.

"I realized the world has changed and I have not, and I need to change with it," Wade said. "So I claimed my business, started posting pictures, running ads, and marketing directly

to the people that are gonna walk right in and pay us retail pricing rather than the wholesale pricing. So that has worked out extremely well."

In the past, Wade revealed he was nervous about using online platforms for his business because he didn't know a lot about them. But after familiarizing himself with the digital marketing landscape, he's been able to capitalize on all the benefits.

"I have to admit that before I actually got online, when emails came in from Yelp or Google, I simply ignored them. I just thought, if they don't have the wherewithal to pick up the phone, I don't have time for them, you know? And I'm dating myself, I know. My daughter and my niece, I gotta credit them. They just said, 'You've got it backwards. You're throwing away money. You're throwing away customers, alienating your public, and you have always loved working with your customers,'" Wade said.

These types of hesitations can be common for entrepreneurs who are not accustomed to incorporating a digital side to their business. However, doing so expands customer reach and makes communicating with customers and leads easier. Since claiming his Yelp Page, Wade actively responds to reviews and customer requests, something that not only boosts his business of creating high quality engravings but also helps him align with his philosophy of taking care of customers emotionally.

While some customers visit the shop for happy reasons, like weddings and other special occasions, some are mourning the passing of a loved one and could use a genuine human connection in their difficult time.

"They need us to reach out to them and take care of them for that little bit of time, and they need to walk away feeling like, 'Okay, I can get through this,'" Wade said. "If we can give that little bit of light to somebody that's in that

position, that’s what we ought to be doing. They’ve called us, and the bottom line is they wanna pay me for something I love to do, so I’m gonna do it.”

Because he holds his products and customer service to a high standard, Wade keeps his staff small and only hires engravers who are able to create top quality products and provide kind customer service.

“For years, we couldn’t really hire other engravers. We had to hire people and grow them from the seed into good engravers because when we tried to hire someone who was a talented engraver, along with it came bad habits and attitude that were unacceptable to us,” Wade said. “The main thing was it was always high standard. We will deliver on time, and it is going to look good, and there are no ifs, ands, or buts. And if it isn’t right, we will fix it. We will take care of it. We’re not gonna make excuses. We’re gonna do it with a smile, and we’re not gonna give you any attitude,”

Other businesses can learn from Heirloom Engravers’ journey, including the following tips:

- **Always be kind.** Leading with empathy and kindness will create a positive space for owners, staff, and customers.
- **You might have to train your own experts.** Wade is very careful with who he hires and regularly trains staff with promise (not necessarily experience) to produce quality work and represent his business’ values.
- **Online marketing can be a boon for your business.** Wade was unfamiliar with online platforms, but claiming his Yelp Page helped him improve the customer experience and earn more business.
- **Learn from your mistakes.** Making mistakes is part of being human. As an entrepreneur, evaluating where things went wrong and making changes can help you grow into a better business owner and retain customers.

Listen to the episode below to hear directly from Wade and Sarah, and subscribe to *Behind the Review* for more from new business owners and reviewers every Thursday.

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