These 3 Growth Levers Will Separate Winning SMBs in 2025 — Are You Using Them?



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Small and midsize business owners and decision makers will have a strong focus on growth in 2025. Nearly 50% of SMB owners and nonprofit decision-makers plan to increase their investments in sales and marketing this year, according to a recent Walmart Business survey fielded by Morning Consult. This investment signals clear priorities: expanding their customer base and strengthening their competitive edge.

But achieving these growth goals isn’t always straightforward. Many small businesses struggle with operational challenges that consume valuable time and resources. Streamlining administrative tasks and optimizing procurement strategies are

key to allowing business owners to focus more on growth initiatives.

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Time to focus on growth

Sales and marketing are at the top of the list for small business investments in 2025. The survey of nearly 500 respondents found that close to half of SMBs plan to boost spending in these areas, aiming to capture new customers and build brand strength. However, the same business leaders report that they anticipate spending nearly 40% of their work week on administrative tasks. Managing spending, inventory and payroll is the biggest time drain

Among respondents, 79% identified spending and cash flow management as particularly time-consuming. Inventory management followed closely at 65%, and payroll management was a significant challenge for 51%. These tasks often prevent leaders from focusing on strategic initiatives to drive growth.

The survey also revealed that many small businesses take a reactive approach to inventory tracking. Almost one in three respondents rely on “out of stock” triggers instead of structured tracking or automation. This method may lead to inefficiencies and missed revenue opportunities. Implementing more proactive task management and inventory solutions saves time and supports growth strategies.

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Proactive strategies for

operational efficiency

Finding ways to reduce the time spent on administrative work will create new opportunities for growth for small business leaders. This often involves adopting digital tools and software that automate repetitive tasks like inventory management, payroll processing and expense tracking.

Many businesses are also turning to buying platforms and suppliers that offer both essential goods and procurement tools to simplify purchasing and inventory management. These solutions help businesses streamline purchasing processes, manage supplier relationships and automate the reordering of essential supplies. By reducing manual intervention, business owners can devote more time to their strategic priorities, such as refining their sales approach or exploring new market opportunities.

Embracing online marketplaces

As small businesses seek greater efficiency, many are rethinking how they source products and seeking alternatives to managing multiple direct supplier relationships. The survey shows that 38% of SMBs plan to increase their purchases from online marketplaces in 2025, while only 3% expect to reduce their marketplace use. This trend points to the growing appeal of online marketplaces for convenience, cost savings and access to a broader assortment of products.

Trust is crucial when choosing an online marketplace. Business owners need assurance that products are offered at a fair price, meet quality expectations and will arrive as promised. Reliable marketplaces provide not only a wide selection of products but also the peace of mind that comes with a large, capable vendor standing behind the offering and ensuring dependable fulfillment and transparent purchasing experiences.

These platforms also offer SMBs the flexibility to scale purchases according to their needs, avoiding the pitfalls of overstocking or understocking. By having access to diverse suppliers and bulk purchasing options, small businesses can better manage their budgets and ensure they are always prepared to meet customer demands.

Seeking cost-efficient solutions

With growth ambitions come cost pressures. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents prioritize membership rewards and discounts when making routine purchases. Cost-saving strategies help businesses maximize budgets and maintain profitability in a competitive landscape.

Leveraging bulk purchasing, choosing vendors that provide consistently affordable prices and participating in rewards programs significantly impact the bottom line. Small business owners who prioritize cost-efficient solutions will be better positioned to invest savings back into growth initiatives.

An evolving purchasing model

Small businesses’ purchasing habits are evolving. They increasingly expect B2B purchasing experiences to be as easy and flexible as consumer shopping. Features like mobile-friendly ordering, flexible delivery options and seamless transactions are becoming table stakes.

Finding new operational efficiencies will be critical as SMBs prepare for growth in 2025. Adopting smarter procurement strategies and reducing time spent on administrative tasks empowers business owners to dedicate more time and energy to expanding their customer base and boosting their competitive position.

The key takeaway for small business leaders is that investing

in growth-driving initiatives and operational efficiencies can lead to long-term success. By balancing these priorities, businesses can build a strong foundation to thrive in today’s dynamic market environment.

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