



Millennials Want to Shop Local: How to Make Them Loyal Fans of Your Small Business

Description

Surprise: millennials *love* small businesses. Not surprisingly, however, millennials are not exactly the easiest cohort to reach through traditional marketing efforts. All the old ways of attracting new customers to your business — newspaper and print ads, coupons, word-of-mouth — have almost no effect on millennials, with many seeing them as too intrusive and “salesy.”

So how *do* you attract the largest generational cohort (roughly 10 million) into your small business? It can be tough, even if you are a millennial. But with these four tips, you can start making them loyal fans of your brand and business.

1. Keep up with payment trends

I'll be real with you. Most of my millennial friends prefer *not* to carry a wallet or purse full of debit or credit cards, or, heaven forbid, *cash*.

Rather, they prefer alternative methods of payment, such as touch-and-go, in-app payments, prepaid vouchers, and online cash. Many have mobile wallets on their smartphones, and they'll sometimes skip over retailers and businesses that don't offer flexible payment options.

These days, most POS systems come with alternative payment methods built into them. But still, keep your eyes and ears open, as new payment trends can emerge faster than most small businesses are able to adapt. By adopting your customers' preferred payment method, you'll show that you care, helping you win them over.

If you *really* want to stand out, you can accept cryptocurrencies, too. The transaction fees will be lower, and, if you have an online store, you might even appeal to an international audience, too, as crypto can transcend borders.

2. Beef up your social media accounts...but don't overdo it

Millennials use social media, so, of course, you'll want to engage them on different social channels.

But don't go overboard, either. Be cautious about how much you self-advertise your social media platforms. I can't tell you how many times I've been asked to follow or like a small business's Insta or Facebook while I'm at checkout. While I know the intentions are good, it can come off as desperate, not to mention awkward if I don't pull out my phone and like the page right there.

Instead, softly advertise your social channels in-store. Put social media stickers on your storefront or next to wherever you display your WiFi password. Truthfully, if you can make your page worth following, people will follow it naturally.

3. Offer self-service

Millennials *hate* phone calls. Shoot, I'm willing to bet every generation hates phone calls. But, with the recent proliferation of self-service options, millennials especially hate getting on the phone and talking to customer service or, really, anyone.

To make the customer experience as seamless as possible, amp up your self-service options, such as online booking, request forms, and payment portals. The fewer steps between wanting something and getting it, the more loyal your millennial customers will be.

4. Just be yourself

Millennials value authenticity, which is literally why they value small businesses: unlike major retailers and wholesale warehouses, which must make their local brand consistent with the national one, small businesses can uniquely express themselves, whether that's a cafe that rescues cats or a hardware store that donates unused tools to underprivileged neighbourhoods.

So, at the end of the day, don't hold back. Great businesses, small or not, attract customers in the same way leaders do: by exuding a one-of-a-kind aura. You have some kind of business proposition, which, when matched with your own personality and interests, can evolve into something unique.

Bottom line

Millennials are becoming the largest generational cohort in Canada. But here's the thing: the same trends that are emerging with millennials are also emerging with younger generations, too. By adapting to new payment trends, as well as offering self-service options, you'll attract even younger customers, helping your small business achieve a legacy in your town.

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