**Can Customer Engagement Increase Your Profits?**

Thank you for joining us for this SCORE webinar. I am here today to talk about customer engagement and how it can help boost your bottom line. To kick it off, I will just share a little bit of information about who I am. As Alexa said, I am currently the entrepreneur in residence at the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council which is known as SBE counsel. I am also a business owner. I have owned a gourmet popcorn company with my husband for oval -- over six years in the Alexander Virginia area. Current -- previously I worked with a lot of small business organizations like the national Association for the self-employed. So I have been working with business owners for two decades now. A little bit about the counsel, we are a nonprofit organization and we focus on advocacy research and education dedicated to protect small businesses, and especially to print out -- promote small business ship. We have several members like all of you and we work with Google business organizations and corporate partners and other associations with the goal of creating a favorable economic and regulatory climate so that businesses like yours can succeed. So I encourage you to take some time out and take a look at SBE Council. You can find us at the website on your screen.

Today, we will talk a little bit about customer engagement. A few of the items we will go over are about the changing face of customer engagement. As you know, customers are truly the lifeblood of any small business , whether it is customers or clients depending on your business type. We want to really talk today about how you can boost your bottom line by improving customer engagement and what technology tools in this day and age of social media, of the Internet, what can you do to really create a digital presence for your business to help with that customer engagement. Of course, how do we turn those interactions into money in the bank. We all know that is a business owner, your time is limited and your money is limited and depending upon what stages of your business you are in, your expertise may be limited. It may be just you and you are self-employed and you are kicking things off so how can you do this and scale it in a way that is effective for you. Maybe your business has been around a little bit longer and you have staff and how can you take advantage of that and put in customer engagement tools that can help your business. We will go over all of those items today in this webinar.

So the first thing we will discuss is again that our environment is changing. I always say the catch phrase of our time is Google it. We communicate now using 140 characters or even emojis. So how can small businesses be effective at communicating and connecting with customers in this type of quick communication environment and in this world of technology? Although technology has made businesses have a little bit harder time communicating with customers, it really can also improve your interactions. So it can track your interactions. It can be helpful in terms of helping you improve how you are interacting with your customers and clients in building your business. I wanted to share a few statistics with you that I thought were interesting.

It shows a little bit of the tension between what small businesses are doing as business owners and what you may do in your personal life. We know that 97% of all consumers search online for products and services. 70% have compared prices or read reviews online. 91% visited a store because of an online experience. I am sure all of you, personally, when you are running a business, when you're looking for services, supplies, expertise, you go online and do some research. Yet that is compared to the statistic that only 51% of small businesses have websites. So even though 97% of people are searching online for products and services, only 51% of businesses actually have a website that customers can find them on. Basically in this Internet age, if your business does not have a digital presence, you are essentially invisible. Your business is invisible. So what we really need to focus on is what we can do to create that digital presence for your business.

So when we talk about and looked at how we create a successful digital presence for your business and how you can leverage it to increase your revenue, there are five key areas we want to focus on. We want to focus on the website, social media, content marketing, and online listings. And finally, which we'll talk later on about how we want to look at e-commerce if it is a good fit for your type of business. What is interesting is only 90% of marketers say they put some time and effort into social marketing efforts. And those who do, they say it has increased their business by 75%. So doing

 a digital presence and doing social media and marketing and online marketing can help businesses. However, only 25% of small businesses are actually investing in online marketing. Again, we had a real disparity there about the benefits and what is this owners are putting their time in energy on moving forward. We want to look at ways that we can afford and create a digital presence that will help your business grow.

Let's start with the website. I always like to say, and we heard this phrase often, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. And we want to try and change that statistic only 51% of small businesses having a website. A lot of people who don't have a website, they cite cost as a reason why. They say they feel their operations are too small to warrant a website. Regardless of whether your retail business in the service sector

 or self-employed consultant, if it is just you, having a website will bring your business out from the shadows. It would allow you to reach new customers and also create an era of legitimacy by having that web presence. Technology today, it is really not much of an overwhelming burden or cost burden as it was to create a website. There are a lot of website builders out there that let you create your own site with ease, or if you do have money in your budget that you can work within your budget, there are plenty of website design companies or individual consultants out there that will be able to assist you in getting a very simple, easy to update website for you. Ready for you so you can create that digital presence for your business.

Just a note, your website, as mentioned, with 97% of people searching online for goods and services, your website is often the first interaction that people have with your business. You want to make sure you are making a good first impression. At minimum your website should highlight either your products or services and you should share nerve -- news about you and your company and its mission. You want to include contact and location information. And also links to ways that other ways that customers can engage with you like social media accounts if you have those. One really important tip is you want to make sure your website is mobile friendly. Over 51% of smart phone users have discovered a new company while searching online. You want to make sure that any software you use or any website builders you use, their websites are mobile friendly. I put on the slide a few recommendations that you can take a look at for low cost website builders that are literally like plug in and play and they have templates you can choose and you type in your content and you have the site up and running you can look at using Wix, Weebly, square space , WordPress, and all of those are builders you can take a look at that can help you start the process of creating a digital presence for your business.

Again, another key area in terms of creating your digital presence is social media. I am sure all of you are on some sort of social media channel personally interview have Facebook or Twitter and maybe you are an Instagram sharing pictures with your family and friends and it is very important in this day and age for your business to have social media. 65% of adults now use social networking sites in the United States. It is nearly a tenfold jump in the past decade. With that number being over 90% for those between the ages of 18 and 29. If you are not engaging on social media, you're losing revenue generating opportunities. Again, I know that the world of social media can be a little bit intimidating for small business. It seems like if you plan forms are joining every year that it is a great tool to connect with your customers to get feedback and market your business and your products and services and two of the most effective platforms are Facebook and Twitter they are the most popular as well. They will have the largest number of users. For retail and product based businesses, Instagram can be a great tool as well to show your products and services. For professional service companies, making sure you have a company page on LinkedIn is a great way to promote your business as well. So one of the things that I recommend is when you are considering which platform you should use, figure out which two are the most relevant for your business. And you need to commit to using those on a regular basis. There are a whole range of technology tools that will help you do that. You can look at using tools like Sprout Social and Hootsuite. They are free to use. They allow you to manage all of your social media accounts from one dashboard. You can schedule your posts and schedule Instagram posts and this way you can spend an hour or two at the beginning of the week scheduling out all of your social media and this way it saves you on both time and money. Again, making sure that you are really going to where your customers are and they are on social media and making sure you have a presence for your business there.

 Content marketing. We talk a lot about blogging and other types of ways that you can create some value and creating interesting and valuable content for your customers on items relevant to your business or your product or service. It is really a must in this digital age. And if you have ever clicked on the how-to videos are top 10 tips or articles or even graphics and motivational quotes, they are content marketing pieces. It is a way to engage with the particular company or brand. Through quality content you can really establish value to your brand or products that you are offering and also attracting new customers to your business. Here are some ways that I have to do that. You can create a blog or new section on your website or how to our tips articles and let's say you are marketing professional or an accountant or lawyer or in some sort of professional service like plumbing or heating and cooling and by creating how to support tips or little videos, those are great ways to attract customers and post them up on YouTube and they will get hits through social media and it will attract new clients and you can send them out to your customers as well and they are email marketing to get helpful information throughout the year and just remind them you are there to help them with whatever their needs are. You can do a frequently asked question sheet and share that. The goal is to push all of that out for your social media channels. Really, it is figuring out a schedule that works best for your business and to make sure you are being consistent. Consistency is king here. And that you're pushing out the new content across all of the communication channels you have, your website and social media moving forward. Again, this brings people in and attracts attention for your business. It provides a value add for your current customers and also piques the interest of prospective customers.

Another item you want to consider is keeping tabs on your local and industry listings. In addition to social media sites, you don't want to forget your -- claim your Google listing or any industry-specific online directories. For example, like

 at C or trip advisor or Angie's list, relevant to your business. These online local listings are often very highly visible in search results and if you want to make sure that there is accurate information on your business on those sites. In particular, it is really important that you monitor your business listings that have a ratings component to allow you to stay on top of customer comments. In a recent study, 67% of people cited that online reviews have an impact on their purchasing decisions. So you always want to be on top of what people are saying about you online. You also want to encourage current customers that have a positive experience with your business to go online and post reviews or ratings that can help drive traffic to you and attract customers. Again, when you claim your listing, you are able to reply to any negative feedback in a timely manner and that negative feedback is posted publicly so it helps you get to any issues and makes sure you are taking control of your business reputation moving forward. There is no cost to doing any of these. You can go on Google my business and Yelp and claim your listing and take control of the content information related to your business on those listings moving forward. This all goes back to creating a positive digital presence for your business.

So we are going to talk a little bit about now how can we turn customer engagement into money in the bank. After you have put in all the hard work and time to create a digital presence that helps you better connect with your customer base, attracting new customers, the most important metric is does this translate to money in the bank. Until you consider the following to help you should consider the following to help boost revenue. Once you have developed that digital presence cannot be proactive at collecting customer contact information. Data is king. Whether it is from your website, you want to put in a little plug-in or tool that allows customers to give you their name and email so you can send them information or if you do a little newsletter or when you're doing your content marketing, you want to send articles out and on your website put a place where you can collect those names and e-mails and any time you get a contact form from a customer interested in services, you want to make sure that all of that data is going into a database that you can utilize to communicate with prospective customers or current customers and one thing you can do is look at a customer relationship management system and these are things like if any of you have heard of Salesforce as a perfect example. It is essentially a database system that allows you to track different communications with your customers . As a look at doing that and you can even use Excel quite frankly just to keep track and create a list of customers and contact information to allow you to communicate effectively. Again, employee technology tools, that you can use, there is email marketing tools that are free for customers, for businesses, under a certain amount of names. You can send out little e-mails directly to your list. There are HTML e-mails designed to help you communicate effectively. I also recommend investing in digital marketing. Things like social media marketing. We will go through some of these in the next slide to get some more information. But look at Facebook marketing. Marketing on Google and add words and different ways to drive traffic to your new digital presence, your website and social media channels to help attract customers.

Let's talk about customer data. The key here is you want to be proactive with your customer contact info. As I said, put in a little email capture tool on your website and also on your social media pages you can allow them to sign up for listserv or newsletter right off of your Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter pages. The type of data you want to collect his contact information especially email. But also things you may be interested in is transaction history. If you are selling a product online or via phone tracking those transactions I customer, their profile, what is the company they work for or what is their age or interest. And of course any kind of communications you have with that customer and any responses, tracking those. We will talk about how to do that with the CRM system shortly. Again, other ways than just putting in email capture or asking people to sign up for list. You can run promotions and contests which help you collect data and you can do surveys about your business and product which will help you collect customer data. Of course, depending upon your business style, if you are ever going to trade shows or events with your product or service, you can make sure you collect the names of attendees and put that all into your system as potential customers down the line for communication.

As I mentioned, you collected all this data, and so now what you do with it? Again, utilizing a customer relationship management system can help you track communications and improve business with your customers. This technology tool helps you know your customers. You know who they are, what they buy, how they respond to your marketing efforts and any communications they have had with your company. When you are looking to select a CRM, you really are looking for these five key components. The first is simplicity. You want to choose one that you and your team can understand and use and you don't want something that is overly complex that you are never going to figure out and put into practice. You want to look for one that is compatible. You want something that can integrate with your website and your marketing tools and even if you are just starting your business. You think big picture. Where you are looking to grow. So making sure it is compatible with what you might want to do in the future. Obviously flexibility, again, you want something that can scale with your growing business. You want something budget friendly. There are CRM tools free to use up to an initial amount of data that goes on. And then we will have a monthly fee. You want to make sure you learn all about that prior to moving forward with the one particular technology solution and you want to understand any kind of upgrade costs that you may need to do in the future based on your growth and then of course support. If you are a business owner, you don't have time to be dealing with a lot of challenges on the technology side, especially if you have limited staff. Make sure that a company you choose has a robust product selected or support team so you can call them any time. I highly recommend a company that has an actual 800-number where you can talk to a live person and not just to chat feature to help you walk through any kind of setup or assistance you need when you're using a new technology tool. Here are some tips in -- as far as implementing a new CRM system.

Again, another big component you want to look at is e-commerce. I found this statistic interesting. In 2013 36% of American shoppers did their holiday shopping online, last Christmas it was over 61%. So in just a few years, it has doubled. We can expect that number to grow year-over-year. We have seen it with the growth of Amazon. So how can you leverage for your business and e-commerce component that might help you sell your products or even your services as well. So similar to when you are creating your website, there are a number of e-commerce platforms that allow you to very easily implement and e-commerce component to your business. It allows you to leverage your digital presence to reach customers outside your region. You can expand revenue within this component. Again, taking advantage of this growing trend in online shopping. One thing to look at, a few affordable solutions are software plug-ins like Shopify or Square, Volusion. They have components that plug into websites with ease. They are easy to set up and use for those were technologically challenged like I am at times. So I would encourage you to take a look at those companies. Once you have chosen your platform, there are great ways to attract people to your e-commerce solution. You can offer promotions and specials to generate interest and you can push those out through your social media channel and you can take a look at your cash flow over the years and decide what products you want to highlight during times of the year or specials you want to run. Again, the key here is providing a way for your customers to purchase your products or services in a way that they are shopping and more and more people are shopping online. So for professional services, a great way to utilize e-commerce if you do things like consulting or accounting services, those type of things, you can sell those hours or time with you and your expertise all online. We will go into that in a little bit further next slide.

So here are great ways for professional or personal service injured -- industries to use personal tools to help attract and serve customers. Number one, the key here is embracing new technologies with a focus on improving delivery, efficiency, and developing new services. One of the biggest challenges with professional service firms is they need to maximize billable time and use your assets, and how do you also integrate your team in-house. The key here is automation tools. There are a whole host of online scheduling software you can utilize to help online reservation systems and project management software and if you are a hair salon, you can do all of your scheduling online. If you are an accountant, you can do the same. If you are a consultant, you can have them literally purchase blocks, hours of your services online and these are always you can provide on demand services to your clients, all through your website or digital presence. Again, face-to-face interaction in these types of businesses are critically important. But all of these technology tools again they help with efficiency and they also help with your customers. More and more people want to book their appointment online and you don't want to have to call and figure out a schedule with someone and to be able to go online and see availability and the costs and that helps in this type of business so just because you are not selling a product it doesn't mean and e-commerce tool is not for you. There are all of these other tools that can be of help in terms of attracting your customers. So we will talk about now social media marketing and digital marketing and what we can do in terms of maximizing our benefit with that. Again, 32% of small businesses invest in social media, marketing only. And 25% are investing in online marketing like search engine marketing and Google ad words and as mentioned more and more people are utilizing social media and more and more people are going online to search for products and services and digital marketing really gives your business a chance to compete with larger companies and it allows you to be visible where your customers are. Looking at tools like Facebook marketing, they can be very low-cost. Social media marketing like Facebook advertising and Instagram for business and Twitter for business, it helps strengthen and expand your customer base and it encourages repeat sales. It really gets your face out there to get people.

Local search marketing and things like where your company comes up on search listings, it helps you be more visible in search engines when people are looking at products and services and you will definitely want to check out Google ad and Yelp for that. It will help drive traffic to your site and of course there are go to for email marketing and this is where customer data becomes in handy -- comes in handy. You have a built-in marketing list you can send out information on new products and services and highlight sales and promotions and these are all marketing tools and strategies that can be used to help turn customer engagement into profit and revenue for your business. I think it is important as a small business to look at these as options to expand your bottom line.

Now, I know, one of the big topics are one of the big questions is that I am self-employed. Or it is just me or I am growing my business or I don't have the money or the expertise to manage this and create that digital presence, to put this in place and to do all of this marketing. And I know it can be challenging for a business owner and really her time is best spent on growing your business. One of the things you can consider doing moving forward is look at what funds you have and consider outsourcing your marketing if you think you have the budget to do that and you can bring on a consultant or firm to help you create your digital presence and also outline customer engagement strategy for your business. This will help take the pressure off you doing that in-house. However, if you don't have that option, a great idea is look at hiring a marketing intern. You can leverage your local universities and their programs to find someone that is focused on marketing or in a marketing program that can come in and set all of this up for you and do it for college credit or course credit. Reach out to your local universities

 if you don't have the budget to bring on somebody or designate somebody on staff to take on this role and get the help you need to implement a marketing plan and a digital presence moving forward. Another recommendation is to take advantage of online and local business education and for example what we are doing now at SCORE. They have a whole bunch of resources that can help you create your digital presence and also give you marketing tools and tips and get help. In addition, I highly recommend small business development centers. These are in your local region and they are typically affiliated with her local university and they offer free small business counseling as well as free training. You can go in and talk to them about needing help with their marketing. And setting up your business digital presence and they can connect you with resources that can help you do that and they can give you guidance. Really get help from the resources that are free to you in your area. I also always recommend a leveraging network. Reach out to your friends and family and say I have this business. I really need to create it that are digital presence , website, social media, e-commerce. Do you know anyone or does anybody have the skills that can help me? Leverage your network and ask around for the help you need. You may be surprised about who is willing to help you free of charge and get you set up and situated with your marketing. Again, I always say be strategic. You want to be strategic with your marketing and budget but you should plan for it. You really should plan for what you are going to do to communicate with your current customers and expand your customer base. How will you do outreach. What will you do to continuously engage your customer base. You always want to encourage retention and repeat sales and you always want to be expanding your base to potential new customers in order to move your business forward. I think one of the most important aspects of being a business owner is to be nimble. As you develop and expand your digital pressman -- presents with your customers it is important that you track your efforts. That is where the customer, the CRM system, custom -- customer relationship management system, comes in place. It helps you analyze the data and see what is working and not. And then make the necessary corrections so that you are always adjusting based on the business environment and your business needs and what is working for your specific business. Of course, you always want to make sure you are providing your customers with value, a good experience, a quality product and service. This will help with customer retention and also positive word-of-mouth that can help you increase your profits.

 The key here is what you can do to make your business a success. As we said at the beginning, customers are the lifeblood of any business. You want to make sure their experiences good and they are happy with your service and that they are spreading the word so you can again boost your bottom line.

I want to thank you all again and I am looking forward to your questions. If you have any additional follow-up sky you can reach me at that email address -- website.

It sounds great. Thank you so much, Kristie. We have been receiving a lot of really good questions. So we will go ahead and address those during this QA segment. We do our very best to address as many questions as we possibly can in the time remaining. Typically we do have more questions asked than time allows us to answer. So if we don't get a chance to address your question, during this webinar today, I want to encourage you to connect if you are not already connected with a score mentor. I encourage you to connect with a mentor after today's webinar who can assist you further with your business needs and help you with the strategies that were presented on here today as well. With that, we will jump into these questions.

This one comes to us from Douglas. Douglas says he has clients from 10 or 15 years ago but they have not kept in good touch. He has developed a new website. He wants to request them to review, to post on it. What would you say would be the best way forward Douglas to reengage with them.

I think a great way to engage with customers you have not talked with in a while, you have the perfect future of launching a new site. I would do an email blast. I would ask them for feedback . As a loyal customer and somebody who has worked with our business over the years, we would love for you to get your feedback on the launch of our new site and we would also welcome the opportunity to work with you for content on this site and see what information he can get back from them and it is a good way to reengage. In addition to eating good feedback from them on what needs to be fixed on the site or what he might want to change, and also re-engaging with them for potential content, it is a great way to reengage with communication. You can do that by a free survey tool or survey manqué -- monkey or do an email blast and do one-on-one follow-ups after and if you don't hear you wait for some responses. I would definitely put in a deadline date for responses, and then also schedule a reminder email to the group and at the end of the day, depending on who responded, it is a good excuse to follow up one on one with each of these clients that he has not engaged with in a while.

This question came in from a few folks attending today. Asking if you could comment on personal versus social media profiles and how does a personal social media account affect your business social media brand?

That is a great question. I do think it depends on the type of is this you have . In this day and age, many times the owner of the business becomes part of the brand. I think it is even more important when it is a professional services type business where you have some key expertise that you are imparting to customers, whether you are an accountant or marketing, whatever. Your personal -- professional expertise is what you are selling to clients.

 Then you actually are the brand. Your personal social media will come into play. You want to leverage that to promote your business. If you have a particular -- let's say you have a large social media following and then you launch a product. You will want to leverage your personal social media presence to promote that product as well. I think it depends on what kind of business you are in and whether you think your personal brand can really help launch your business brand or be of value. You will want to push things out on both. I think a great example is I work with a lot of the heads of business organizations and often times they will leverage what they are doing. Let's say a they -- they are meeting with the policymaker or attending a big conference. They will highlight it on their personal social media channel and also on the company, organizations social media channel. I think it -- can be beneficial to have both. The key is to have both. What is your time commitment. Do you have the time to leverage both and manage both because you do have to be consistent. Take a look at your type of business and see if it provides value to promote your personal brand and has a beneficial impact on your business's bottom line.

Okay, our next question comes from Lori. She wants to know if you can offer suggestions for how to deal with sour grapes reviews. So customers who are getting -- giving mean spirited reviews that a disproportionate to the issue.

The sure is always respond publicly, meaning, Yelp is a perfect example and I have had personal experience in the personal business. When somebody leaves an unpleasant review on Yelp, you have the opportunity to respond publicly and you can post a response, and it will go public so everybody can see how you handle that. I think it is important. Whenever you are dealing with a difficult customer, the phrase the customer is always right, you want to be deferential and you always want to be helpful. It is important that that information is out there public so you can see and they can see you are dealing with a customer complaint and a professional and polite manner and doing everything you can to try and address those customer needs. So my tip is make sure you respond to that customer, but then you also posted public response to that customer on the platform that they posted that review.

Okay. This question comes from Tracy. Tracy asks if you end up sending out e-mails to your list, how do you make sure they are not marked as spam, and if one of your email addresses is marked as spam, does that make the other addresses at your domain more likely to be automatically marked as well?

That is a great question. That is why I utilize lot of these contact management systems. Typically, when you have a CRM relationship management system it allows you to send e-mails from those systems. These companies who manage the software, they are up to speed on the most important -- all of the tools and tips around spam and the rules of emailing. So they would not be successful if businesses like us couldn't get our messages to the customer. They know the rules around spam. And so when you are using a system, you should be fine with being able to get your communication to your customer. If you are sending e-mails out via your Outlook email, then there is no guarantee. It really depends on the recipient's spam filter. Whether you show up on spam or not, which is I -- why I recommend using some contact management system to send out customer communications. If you have one email that is bad or bounces or is marked as spam, it doesn't flag your whole list it is just that email. The benefit of using the system is after you send out a male blast, you will get a report with a whole host of data and some of those items on that data would be things like angst e-mails and e-mails that were flagged as spam and who opened your email and what links were clicked on.

 You will have information down to that level to be able to see how effective your communications are so it won't throw out your whole list if you happen to have one bad email or one is listed as spam from a larger list. This is if you are using a system to send out your mail bless. -- Blasts.

In this day and age when cyber security is important, do you have suggestions or strategies and practices and products for how to protect the customer information that you are suggesting be collected.

One of the components when you are setting up your website is that security component. The reason why I recommend using off-the-shelf products is because companies like e-commerce companies like the ones I mentioned like shop if I or -- Shopify or Volusion, they have whole hint -- in-house teams devoted to that. They want to make sure your platforms are safe. They want to make sure you're not going to have any issues and that you're able to go with them into them if there are any problems. I always recommend using a third-party platform plug-in for those types of items because as a business owner you can't hire in-house I.T. cyber security experts to help you with that and it is the same thing with your website. When you use a platform to help develop your website like those I recommended, they all have cyber security features and they all have options on how to secure your website to make sure that any of the data you collect or any of the transactions that are going through your site will be protected. Trying to do it yourself and trying to get the website up from scratch and trying to get an e-commerce store from scratch will put a lot of undue burden on your small business as well as cost pressure. You want to have solutions that will change with the times and as the cyber threats change and evolve, any platform you are using will have to evolve with that as well. So something to think about as you are establishing your digital presence and looking at the tools you want to use to help with that customer engagement.

Our next question is from Samuel who would like to know what is the best way, and what is the best way to assess the customer needs in advance. Would you say that would be on the initial contact survey and the request for profile or answer to key questions?

It depends on how that customer comes to you. If you are doing outreach for the customer, it depends on how they come to. If they come to you through social media, let's say you posted some pain and they came and looked at your site or signed up for something, I always recommend doing, like if somebody signs up for your newsletter, or a contest or something along those lines, I always recommend doing a brief five question survey that can be sent to them automatically that gives a good sense of what their needs are and what is your interest in our company. Depending on what your business or product or services. A quick poll will give a good sense of what those needs are. If they are submitting a contact form you would respond directly to them about what they need and what they're looking for. But again, I think it depends on the way they come to you. I think surveys, you can use a free system like survey monkey and anytime anybody signs up for anything whether it be a newsletter or information from your company you send out a quick poll and no more than five questions to get some good insight about their interests and needs. That can all be tracked and your customer relation management system so you know exactly what they need and as you further communicate with that customer, you are essentially building their profile. You can add a quick poll or one question on anything you send out to a customer and all of that data can be collected and housed in the record to get a full picture of that customer.

Our next question comes to us from Elizabeth and it says that she is curious about listing companies that she supports on her website and social media. Doesn't help make her business more visible ? Would listing competitors make sense are would that be a bad move?

I would not list competitors on your website. Again, you want to drive the traffic to you. I wouldn't list competitors but I would list educational resources. Depending on your type of business, if you are doing marketing or bookkeeping or something along those lines, you can share on your website, educational resources. So links to videos and articles that are helpful for business owners or your customers when making decisions about services or understanding , to help them understand what their needs are. It is the same thing for a product. Let's say you're offering some sort of product. You can offer health information if it is a food product or tips about stacks or whatever the case may be but that kind of information is helpful. If you are part of a local organization, you can always list that as well to show you are an engaged business owner and let's say you are a member of your local chamber or there is a particular professional society that if you are in a professional services industry, that you are engaged in, you should list that because it all goes to the credibility of your business and the credibility of you as a business owner and the way you operate your business. You can list and link to those professional organizations. I would not list competitors on your site.

Our next question comes from Tracy who says she wants to create a Facebook and Instagram profile, but will it look bad if she has no likes yet? Do you recommend her buying likes until she gets the ball rolling?

When you are first starting, it does not look bad -- you won't have a lot of likes as of yet. You can do things on Facebook like promote your post. One of the things about Facebook that is pretty amazing is there targeting. You can actually promote post and target the exact demographic you're looking for depending on your product or service. You can target your region. You can do -- essentially, promote your posts to a certain radius around a certain ZIP Code in your business. Those are always to get in front of new customers. I would look at doing, when you launch a new Facebook page or Instagram, look at doing some promoted posts. And that starts attracting people to your site and starts getting you the likes and you control the budget and you can do Instagram promoted posts and you can say I want to spend $25 for one week. It is all about the people who like those links and that is essentially how it works. You can spend $50 and you can control that budget based on your needs and I also recommend sending an email out to either current clients or your network of family and friends to say, why company just launched their Facebook and Instagram pages. Please take a look at like us and follow us. There is nothing wrong with doing that. It is really important that you leverage your personal networks in your launching your new business to get off the ground and people want to support you and want to be successful. I recommend doing that as well.

Next question is Jennifer who says we need to launch our social media presence and it will be a do-it-yourself project. What would be the best way they can attract the effectiveness of their effort?

In the presentation I mentioned, there are some great tools that help aggregate your social media platform. I mentioned Hootsuite and Sprout Social. They are platforms you can go in and link all of your social media accounts. You can link Facebook and Twitter and LinkedIn and Instagram and you can manage all of your accounts from one platform, one dashboard. The benefit of that is you have one place to go and you can do all of your posting from their and as was mentioned those platforms allow you to schedule your social media so if you're designating a certain time of week we can get them all in one time period without having to go to different sites but they also have analytics tools and it allows you to track the analytics on the social media site so how many people are seeing your posts or your pictures on Instagram or looking at your tweets or liking things? It can track all of your analytics on your social media post so you can be more effective. The even give you tools and tips on what times of day are working better for you and if you post between these hours, you get more views. So it gives you all of that information. I do recommend if you're doing it yourself you look at some of those platforms and options they have there and it will help you with efficiency and also allow you to track your effectiveness.

The next question comes in from several people who are attending today. Are you able to find the email addresses for those folks that click directly on your site? Can you get those email addresses specifically? Also, what would you recommend is the best way to collect e-mails from prospects to build your marketing list?

If somebody is just visiting your site, you can't essentially grab their email. They actually have to provide it. So that is why he mentioned having something on your site that encourages them to sign up with an email, whether it be if your product, give us your name and email for our specials and deals or if you are a professional services guy give us your name and email to get tools and tips and those types of things that draw people in. Hold a contest, some sort of contest like to free product or get free service or one hour of free consulting and to enter they have to give their name and email. Those are all ways to do that. In addition, you can collect e-mails on social media channels. You can do it on Facebook or Twitter and different ways to collect e-mails. You can do surveys that attract people or pull people in and require they give their email when they respond to the survey. These are all ways for you to start collecting that data from prospective customers down the line. There is a whole host of technology tools that can help you do this that are quick and easy plug-ins. Again, you will be able to see, when you set up a website with any of these services, they will allow you to look at the analytics of the number of people come into your site, the region, the type of browser, but it will let you just pull their email just from them visiting. They have to actually opt in to provide their email in some way.

We have time for one more. The sun comes to us from Robert. He would like to know what do you suggest as far as not running out of content to publish? He said he does not want to keep posting the same material over and over again.

One of the things is with content marketing, you can be creative. It does not have to be these link the articles or tools and tips all the time. You could post a picture. You could post a motivational quote. These are all things that you can do and all part of content marketing. And so expand your mindset of what content is and can be in terms of the engagement. It could be social media and it can be a survey you are doing. It could be an article. If you see an article on a new site or an industry publication that you are interested in, you can link or post to that. You can do in the news or those types of things. It does not have to be just content that you create yourself. That you take the time to create. That really expands your possibilities in terms of content that you can post and share to engage customers moving forward.

Those are all the questions we have time for today. If we did not have a chance to address your question during this webinar, we encourage you to connect with your SCORE mentor to help you further with your business needs and help you apply certain strategies that have been presented on today. If you are not already working with a score mentor, you can request one. You can click on the SCORE resources tab at the top of your screen and there is a link that you can go in and make a request for a SCORE mentor or you can go directly to the SCORE website and go to find a mentor and get connected and they can assist you with your business needs. As a reminder, a link to the recording of this session and the presentation slide deck will be sent in a post event email and we will send that out in a few hours. So expect that later on this afternoon. If you have not already, we hope you will register for the small business success virtual conference that is being held on November 8. For those of you who have not attended before, this is a half day free event consisting of nine webinars, one-on-one mentoring sessions. There will be exhibitor booths, networking chat rooms and resources and much more. We hope that you will sign up and join us for that. On behalf of SCORE and the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council , I would like to thank you all for attending today and I want to give a big thank you to Kristie Arslan for presenting with us as well. Thank you so much, Kristie.

Thank you.

Thank you again, everyone. We hope you have a great rest of your day. Take care. >>

 [Event concluded]