

Business News And Notes

Ready, Set, Grow: Four Tips For New Product Success

(NAPS)—You've got a great product—now what? As a small-business owner, you likely get only one opportunity to launch a product successfully and set your brand up for growth. Here are four practical ways to prepare your product for liftoff.

1. Barcode your products (the right way). While selling direct to consumers can be profitable, working with a retailer partner can propel your brand forward and increase sales. Meeting retailer requirements may be daunting, but the rules are in place to help retailers sell products successfully. Small businesses can avoid lost sales opportunities and unnecessary costs associated with relabeling by learning and meeting requirements from the start. Companies working with retailers and online marketplaces need a different UPC for each product they sell and product variations require unique UPCs to distinguish one variation from another, such as different flavors of candy.

GS1 US has been the source for a product UPC, the number that appears under a barcode symbol, for more than 40 years. When used properly, a UPC uniquely identifies a product when scanned at various points in the supply chain—including the checkout counter in a retail store. Each barcode can be printed and attached to a product or incorporated into the package design. Make sure you have proper placement, sizing, and quality printing to help your product sail through the checkout process. GS1 US has solution partners that help small businesses with barcode and package printing. More information is at www.gs1us.org/solutionpartners.

It is important to ensure that the UPCs assigned to your products are authentic and contain numbers that link your brand with your products. The GS1 Company Prefix is a number embedded in a UPC obtained from GS1 US. Purchasing UPCs that do not have a Company Prefix assigned to your brand may hurt your chances of building future key relationships with retailers. For a guide to help businesses get started, see www.gs1us.org/getstarted.

2. Get discovered digitally. Small businesses can reach a much wider audience in today's digital age—an entrepreneur can sell products on Amazon



Many small-business owners feel like they need to crack a code to know what will attract customers.

halfway around the globe in a matter of seconds. Online marketplaces also want to delight consumers with a wide product selection and rely on small businesses for variety.

With proper product identification, the right product can be surfaced in search engine results—consider it your product's global passport to be sold anywhere, anytime. The same numbers in a barcode are also used online, making it easier for your products to be found in Web searches and classified for online marketplaces. On e-commerce platforms, if you want your product to be searchable, random or proprietary numbers won't work—your products need to be identified according to the retailer's requirements or they may be hidden from search results.

3. Provide complete product information. In a store, people use their senses of touch, sight, sound and even smell to help them decide if a product is right for them. But what about online? Imagine how important product information becomes in helping customers decide to buy your product. Remember—you never get a second chance to make a first impression, so launching a product with detailed information can be a great point of differentiation and help sell your product versus the competition's.

First and foremost, keep your audience in mind. For example, parents thinking about buying children's hockey gear need a full scope of the product before deciding if it's right for their child. They may need to know about durability, safety features, whether it's machine



In fact, they do need to know the best ways to go about using a UPC barcode.

washable and more. Think about your own shopping experiences—observe how products surface and are presented in different marketplaces and pay attention to the data.

A network of Certified Content Providers that serve as a resource for small businesses seeking guidance on gathering the right kind of product data to market their products can be found at www.gs1us.org/ccp.

4. Help the consumer picture it. A picture is worth a thousand words, especially online. Clear imagery is necessary to complement product details and more pictures can mean more sales. Professional photos of your product taken at different angles can mean outstanding reviews and increased sales rather than complaints about having to return your product. In today's competitive marketplace, photos are critical to confirm that your product meets the consumer's expectations.

Moving forward, it's important to remember that you're not alone in facing these startup learning curves. The process of launching products can seem complex at first, but understanding consumer behaviors, retailer requirements and how retail has evolved can mean long-term success. The winning combination of your business ambition and retail best practices can help you plot out a new path for the next big growth opportunity.

Learn More

Further information about tools and services to help small businesses achieve their goals can be found at www.gs1us.org/smallbusiness.