

## Growing A Small Business Online

(NAPSA)—There could be big news for small business owners, especially women, looking to enhance their business.

According to a survey by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and Web.com, women business owners (WBOs) are investing more in online marketing and customer service to get their business where they want it to be.

WBOs are putting more of their money where it really counts, the study suggests, to attract new customers and make a lasting personal connection with them at the same time. Online and mobile marketing in particular have risen in importance lately, with more WBOs planning to invest in a mobile presence (up 13 percentage points over last year), as well as in their business' social media presence (up 8 percentage points).

While 85 percent of WBOs say social media is important for building customer relationships, only 67 percent are currently using social media to connect with customers. What's more, just half of these women are confident in their own ability to build a social media presence for their business, and only a quarter of WBOs post on social media on a daily basis.

So, what steps can a small business take to flourish online?

**1. Get in the game.** Only four out of 10 small businesses have a dedicated business website, according to a past Web.com survey. This means 60 percent of small businesses are missing out on a tremendous opportunity to connect and engage with potential customers at the most basic online level—through a simple business-focused, strategic website.

**2. Local is where it's at.** The percentage of online search queries focused on local businesses continues to accelerate, with an even greater growth in local search via mobile devices. It is important for small businesses to stake their claim now on such basic local channels as Google Places and populate those sites with the types of information con-



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sumers are most likely to search for—products and services, hours of operation, contact phone number, physical address and so on.

**3. Partner up.** A small business owner's focus should be on the business side of things—not IT and online marketing. To better increase business results, small business owners must look for a partner that understands their digital needs, provides resources to save time and helps achieve success online—all within a tightly prescribed budget. By finding an online marketing partner with a broad range of expertise, small business owners can focus on what should be their primary goal—a successful business.

Getting started is probably the hardest part of expanding your business online. Business owners who prioritize the web and social media in their marketing mix—or find a partner to help them gain this expertise—can reap the benefits of increased customer engagement and satisfaction as the economy improves and consumers increase spending on products and services.

To view and share the 2014 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report infographic, please visit <http://graphics.web.com/2014StateInfographic.jpg>.