



This One Thing Still Beats Any Algorithm



You might think your best customers already know everything your business does. After all, they've bought from you before. They follow you on social media. They're on your

There's no shortage of technology available to today's business owners and if you can't find what you need today, wait around a minute and it will undoubtedly appear. (*If not, the tech exists that you could probably create it yourself with some AI coding tool.*)

Artificial intelligence can write marketing copy. Social media platforms can target customers with remarkable precision. Search engines can help people find almost anything they want in seconds. Businesses can automate emails, schedule posts, manage inventory, and even answer customer questions without human intervention.

Yet despite this awesome technology (*and some of it is mind-blowing*), one of the most powerful business growth tools remains surprisingly old-fashioned.

Relationships. In a world increasingly driven by algorithms and screen time, local connections continue to create opportunities that technology alone can't replicate.

The Difference Between Visibility & Trust

Technology can help people discover your business.

Relationships help them choose it.

A potential customer might find ten companies online that offer the same service. They may read reviews, compare websites, and browse social media pages. But when a trusted friend, colleague, neighbor, or fellow business owner makes a recommendation, the decision becomes much easier.

Trust is invaluable and relationships cement that trust when it comes to businesses. Consumers are exposed to thousands of marketing messages daily. Most of us have learned to tune out advertising, skip promotions, and question online claims. Personal recommendations, however, still carry tremendous weight because they come from real people with real experiences. That kind of trust can't be purchased through an ad campaign.

Local Relationships Create Unexpected Opportunities

Networking is more than simply exchanging business cards while attending events. A conversation at a chamber event may lead to a partnership six months later. A fellow member might introduce you to a major client. A volunteer project could connect you with community leaders who become advocates for your business.

The strongest business relationships often develop long before there's an immediate opportunity attached to them. There's generally a give, give, give before a need surfaces. Then relationships create familiarity. Familiarity builds trust. Trust opens doors.

While algorithms are designed to deliver likely matches for searches, community relationships often create opportunities no software could've anticipated.

People Want to Do Business with PEOPLE

Technology has made transactions more efficient, but efficiency isn't always the deciding factor. Customers want to feel valued and know who they're supporting. They want to have confidence that someone will be there if a problem arises.

A local business owner is often more than a vendor. They're a neighbor, community supporter, volunteer, sponsor, mentor, or familiar face at local events. Those human connections create loyalty that extends far beyond price comparisons.

An online retailer may promise next-day delivery and a slightly lower price. But many customers continue supporting businesses they know because relationships provide something that convenience alone cannot.

And no one understands that better than someone who has ordered an item that seemed too good to be true on Facebook. *They'll only do that once.*

Community Involvement Builds Business Strength

Supporting local events, participating in community initiatives, volunteering, and joining organizations like the chamber can increase visibility while strengthening relationships. These activities allow people to see the faces behind the business. They demonstrate commitment to the community and create opportunities for meaningful conversations outside of a sales environment.

People naturally prefer to support businesses that invest in the places where they live and work. Because of that, community engagement should be seen as a long-term business strategy.

The Competitive Advantage That Can't Be Automated

As artificial intelligence and automation continue to evolve, many business processes will become faster and more efficient. Business owners need to embrace tools that help them operate more effectively.

But there is one thing technology cannot fully replace.

It cannot attend a community event and build genuine rapport. It cannot shake hands, listen to concerns, remember personal details, or provide a comforting hug during tough times. And even with all its efficiencies, it can't trump trust that's developed over years of interaction.

Claude will never be a respected member of a local business community.

The businesses that thrive in the years ahead will combine the best of both worlds. They'll use technology to improve efficiency while investing in relationships that strengthen their reputation and expand their opportunities.

Algorithms may help people find your business, but relationships will give them a reason to want to buy from you. And in a competitive market, we all need something that gives us an advantage.

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