



The Small Business Marketing Guide (North America)

A plain-English marketing guide for US & Canadian small businesses — channels, budgets in US\$, local SEO, reviews and seasonality, no jargon.

North America isn't one market — it's thousands of them. A coffee shop in Brooklyn, a contractor outside Calgary and a dental practice in suburban Dallas all sell to different people, on different budgets, through different channels. This guide cuts through the noise and walks you through what actually moves the needle for a small business, in order, without the agency jargon.

You don't need a big budget or a marketing degree to get started. You need to know who you're selling to, show up where they're already looking, give them a reason to choose you, and keep the customers you win. We'll cover each of those, with rough US\$ numbers to anchor your planning (Canadian readers, budget in CAD — the logic is the same, the dollar figures land close enough to start).

1. Get the basics right before you spend a dollar

Before you buy a single ad, nail down three things: who your best customer is, what makes you the obvious choice over the shop down the street, and how people can actually reach you. That means a fast, mobile-friendly website (more than half of local searches happen on a phone), a working contact method, and clear hours and location.

For most local businesses, the single highest-return move costs nothing: claim and fully fill out your **Google Business Profile**. It's what shows up in Google Maps and the local "near me" results, and an incomplete listing quietly loses you customers every week.

2. Show up where people are already looking

People in the US and Canada research almost everything before they buy. Two habits dominate: they Google it, and they ask their networks. So your first efforts should meet that intent. **Local SEO** (your Google Business Profile, consistent name/address/phone across directories, and reviews) captures people searching for what you offer right now.

Google Search ads let you appear at the top for those searches the moment you turn them on — you pay only when someone clicks, and you can start with US\$300–US\$800 a month and scale what works. For discovery, **Meta (Facebook and Instagram)** reaches an enormous, well-targeted audience cheaply. B2B sellers should look at **LinkedIn**; visual and younger-skewing brands can test **TikTok or YouTube**.

3. Earn trust — reviews are your storefront

In North America, online reviews are often the deciding factor. Most shoppers read **Google reviews** before calling, and in many categories (restaurants, home services, auto) **Yelp** still carries weight. A steady stream of recent, genuine reviews beats a pile of old five-stars.

Make asking part of your routine: a quick text or email with a direct review link right after a good interaction. Reply to every review. Never buy or fake reviews; platforms detect and penalize it, and it's the fastest way to lose the trust you're trying to build.

4. Plan around the calendar and keep the customers you win

The North American year has predictable peaks. **Back-to-school** (late July through Labor Day) drives spending well beyond school supplies. **Black Friday and Cyber Monday** in late November kick off the biggest retail stretch of the year, running through **December**. Plan campaigns and budgets weeks ahead of

each, not during.

Winning a customer costs far more than keeping one, so don't stop at the sale. **Email** remains the cheapest, highest-return channel for repeat business. Collect addresses from day one — that list is an asset no platform can take away from you.

Rough starting points for a local US small business — Canadian readers, budget the same figures in CAD.

Channel	Good for	Rough monthly US\$ to start
Google Search ads	Capturing people actively searching for what you sell	US\$300–US\$800
Local SEO / Google Business Profile	Showing up in Maps and “near me” results — mostly free	US\$0–US\$200
Meta (Facebook/Instagram)	Discovery, local awareness and retargeting on a small budget	US\$200–US\$600
Email & retention	Repeat business and loyalty — the highest return per dollar	US\$0–US\$50

Common questions

How much should a small business spend on marketing?

A common rule of thumb in North America is 5–10% of revenue for an established business, and more if you're new and need to build awareness. In practice many small businesses start with a few hundred US dollars a month and scale up the channels that prove they work. Start small, measure, and reinvest in what pays off.

Which marketing channel should I start with?

For most local US and Canadian businesses, start with your Google Business Profile and local SEO — it's free and captures people searching for you right now. Once that's solid, add Google Search ads to appear instantly for those searches, then layer in Meta for discovery.

Should I do my marketing myself or hire help?

Early on, doing it yourself is fine and teaches you what works. Consider hiring help when ad budgets grow past roughly US\$1,000–US\$2,000 a month, or when the time you spend would be better used running the business.

How long until I see results?

It varies by channel. Search ads can bring calls and clicks within days. Local SEO and reviews build over weeks to a few months. Brand-building on social is the slowest to pay off but compounds. Give any channel at least 60–90 days before judging it.

How do I measure whether my marketing is working (ROI)?

Track a few simple numbers: how people found you, what a customer is worth to you, and what you spent to get them. If you spend US\$400 on ads and win three jobs worth US\$500 each, that's working. Free tools like Google Analytics and the reporting in Google and Meta ads cover most of what a small business needs.

Do I need to be on every social platform?

No — and trying to be usually means doing all of them badly. Pick the one or two where your customers actually spend time and do those well. A local service business may need nothing beyond Google and Facebook; a B2B firm leans on LinkedIn.

[Read the full interactive guide, with a free tool, at cmbeyer.com](#) — or ask Bea to build a package for your business.