

Position Your Business for Summer Success

With spring nearing its end, it's time to look ahead to warm summer days and the opportunity to increase your seasonal business. By starting your summer marketing campaign early and focusing on what makes your business unique, you can build current customer loyalty and position your business to attract new customers all summer long. Constant Contact shares proven marketing tips to help you attract more customers this summer.

No Time Like the Present

The lazy days of summer don't exist in the food service business. And they certainly don't exist in marketing, either. Whether you're trying to reach local residents on a relaxed summer schedule or tourists on the go, it's up to you to market your business effectively if you hope to stay close to your regulars and bring in new diners during this unpredictable season. Starting your summer marketing campaign while spring is on the rise will help you breeze through the dog days of summer.

Start your summer marketing campaign by planning your communications and key messages in advance. With a calendar in hand, plot out every email newsletter you'll send. Take into account warm weather holidays (Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day), special events (parades, festivals), and any special events or activities your establishment will host (warm weather wine and food pairings, beer dinners, al fresco dining).

As you plan out your communications, think about the timing of each newsletter and how you'll build on each one as the season progresses. For example, a newsletter sent this month could focus on upcoming activities or hint at a new summer menu to be revealed in June. If your business offers outdoor seating, be sure to include the date when you expect to open those tables for the season. This type of forecasting gets people thinking about summer and looking forward to visiting your restaurant to try new menu items or special summer cocktails.



This is also the time to gather feedback from your customers. Ask them to choose between two new promotions, or let them vote on the menu for a summer dinner series or a seafood entree they'd most enjoy on the warm-weather menu. Questions can also touch on overall satisfaction with the menu, food quality, quality of service, and patrons' willingness to recommend your establishment to a friend. Whether you use a quick poll in each newsletter or a longer online survey, the feedback you get will help to ensure your business offers the summertime experience your customers are looking for. Visit Constant Contact's online [Learning Center](#) for free tutorials, articles and webinars on using online polls and surveys.

Highlight Your Best Assets for Great Content

At Constant Contact, we are often asked what restaurants should include in their newsletters. The answer is to include content that is of interest to your customers. That content must still relate to your business and convey the important messages you're trying to communicate about your business. If this seems contradictory, it's not. The people who subscribe to your emails are interested in your business or they wouldn't have signed up. That interest does not mean you should blast them with every promotion you can think of, however.

After a long, cold winter, people clamor for the chance to dine outside. Businesses that offer al fresco

dining have a natural advantage in luring customers to their tables, but even those establishments limited to indoor-only seating can attract summer hungry diners to their door. In both cases, by playing to your strengths and highlighting the features that make your restaurant unique, you can bring in diners eager for your specific offering.

When sharing what's great about your restaurant or deli or sports bar, focus on how these unique features of your business will benefit your customers. For example, if your restaurant offers a great view, include a photo and write about the relaxing outdoor view diners can enjoy from the air-conditioned comfort of your dining room. Do you have the coldest beer on tap or a wide selection of tropical cocktails? Or perhaps your restaurant is known for great surf and turf. Whatever your unique selling points are, be sure to highlight them in the way that your summer customers will most enjoy.

Current Customers: The Butter on Your Bread

Particularly for restaurants in tourist destinations, the influx of visiting customers can be a boon to your business. But don't forget which side your bread is buttered on. Your current, local customers will still be there when out-of-town diners have gone. The question is: will they still be customers of your establishment? Yes, of course they will be, because (as every Constant Contact user knows) building strong, customer relationships leads to business success.

You can ensure loyal customers and repeat business with consistent, targeted marketing communications to your existing customer base all year round. Consider the following methods for boosting customer loyalty:

- **Get Social** – Social media tools like Twitter and Facebook can be very effective for geographic marketing. Consider the type of location-specific content you can share on these channels such as daily specials, the catch of the day, wine tastings and promotions. Your local

customers can monitor your updates for opportunities to vote on the evening's specials or to see what's fresh that day. This is a very compelling and easy method of connecting to your local customer base with valuable content.

- **Resident discounts/promotions** – Taking the social media content idea further you could implement a resident-only program that offers special discounts or privileges for local customers. These can be anything from a summertime discount (especially for heavy tourist areas), to reservationless seating for local customers who call in advance and arrive within 15 minutes. You can even segment your email list to share a resident-only newsletter including content and promotions just for local customers.
- **Special events** – Particularly in tourist towns, the local residents can feel some resentment that they can't get into their favorite restaurant, or their normally relaxing lunch spot is loud and busy with out-of-towners. Why not offer these loyal customers a special thank you for their patronage? In addition to any local customer promotions you offer, consider hosting an event at the end of the summer season perhaps coinciding with your new fall menu or when school is back in session. Using [Event Marketing](#) from Constant Contact makes the management and marketing of any event a breeze and your local customers will appreciate the attention and opportunity to re-connect with your business.

Focusing on your local customer-base is smart, but there are still opportunities to acquire new subscribers and repeat customers from summer diners. Many restaurateurs add summer tourists to their email lists to keep them apprised of special events and off-season promotions. This simple relationship-building effort boosts loyalty and referrals and encourages visitors to return year after year.

Of course, the summer's just beginning and you have several months of unpredictable business ahead of you. By kicking off your summer marketing campaigns now, highlighting the best features of your establishment, and remembering your loyal customers (both local and out-of-town), you just might get to enjoy a little R&R yourself this year.

For more effective marketing tips, please visit the Sysco-Constant Contact website:

<http://sysco.constantcontact.com/index.jsp>