



Lisa Thompson, president and creative director at BRD | Brand Revival & Design Inc., also known as BRD Agency.

Leveling up your business

The importance of having and expanding your digital presence

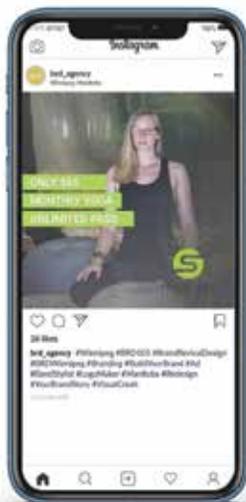
By Shayna Wiwierski

The business world is always changing. In a time where everything and everyone is online, it's important to have a digital marketing strategy to promote your business and help it succeed.

According to Go Gulf, 46 per cent of all searches on Google are seeking local information, and 97 per cent of search engine users searched online to find a local business. In today's day and age, having an online presence is just as important as having a phone number, and businesses need to have one to keep up with the competition.

Now, being online doesn't mean just having a website. There are a variety of low-cost options out there for creating a basic website (such as WordPress or Wix), but the easiest way to get online is to sign up for a Google My Business account, which is a free service by Google - the most-used search engine online - that allows businesses to create a profile.

"The bare minimum is getting your Google My Business listing profile created and making sure that you have the correct phone number, address, and website URL," says Lisa Thompson, president & creative director at BRD | Brand Revival & Design Inc., also known



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as BRD Agency. The Winnipeg-based boutique marketing agency specializes in websites, branding, and social media, supporting entrepreneurs, marketing managers, and non-profits as their go-to for all things digital and marketing.

Google My Business allows your business to pop up when consumers search for your company directly. You can add essential information, such as your full address, phone number, website, etc., as well as photos, logos, and more. It also allows your customers to leave reviews, which can help translate into higher search engine optimization (SEO), allowing your business to rank higher in Google when people search for key words within your industry.

From there, even if you don't want to create a website right away (or don't know how to), getting your business on social media should be the next




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step in boosting your online presence. According to HubSpot's Not Another State of Marketing Report 2021, which collected data and trends from over 1,500 marketers around the world, social media was the number-one channel used in marketing campaigns. Don't know which social media channel to start with? Thompson says to look at your customers (whether that's existing ones or ideal ones) and where they are consuming content online.

"If you are [business to business] and you know your ideal person isn't on Instagram but they're on LinkedIn reading articles at 7 a.m., then you should probably put your focus and resources into your LinkedIn profile and blogging on LinkedIn," says Thompson. "You really do need a website, but if you don't have [one yet],

then start a business Facebook page and start talking about your products and services. Share testimonials and build a following, that sort of thing, to get your online presence started."

According to Hubspot, as of Q1 2020, there are 2.6 billion monthly active Facebook users, and roughly two-thirds of U.S. adults report they are Facebook users. Facebook is also a great way to target your key audience using Facebook Ads, which allows businesses to customize their ad campaigns to fit their business goals. Additionally, since Facebook owns Instagram, businesses can run ads through multiple apps, thus targeting a wider net of potential customers (according to HubSpot, Instagram is the second-best social channel for ROI).

Of course, with social media you want to post valuable information, not just business promotion. Thompson says that companies should follow an 80/20 rule, in that there should be 80 per cent value, which includes the three Es – entertain, education, and engage – and 20 per cent self-promotion. You should also be posting regularly to social media and testing content, as in post what people want and what they engage with the most.

To level up your digital marketing game, try focusing on SEO and creating all different kinds of content, such as blogs and video. You should also be updating your website regularly and focusing on the customer journey.

"Always think like your customer and put people first," says Thompson. "Marketing and business are all about people – they're the most important 'P' in the marketing mix."

Now if you are totally lost in the digital marketing game and need some help, there are tons of social media/digital marketing agencies out there, many of them local like BRD Agency. Hiring an agency is beneficial since it gives you access to their talent, expertise, and experience. It will also modernize and elevate your brand and accelerate what your internal team can accomplish, while giving you a needed outside perspective.

"If you hire someone to help you, it frees up your time so you can focus on your business. It gives you a needed outside perspective and can inspire and invigorate your sales team and help to better connect you to your true ideal client," says Thompson. "It can also help to keep your payroll costs down in not having to hire an entire marketing

Still don't know where to start when it comes to levelling up your digital presence in 2022? Here are some BRD tips on where to focus as we head into a new year.

- Organic + user generated growth – stay true to your brand.
- Provide value over fancy content (value vs. quality).
- Content alignment and consistency across all platforms/marketing efforts.
- Better customer journey/UX and connecting people to true brand values.
- Community and doing better for the planet – Local and non-profit involvement that aligns/takes a stand for something good!
- AI – Automate as much as possible while always remembering to stay human and 1:1 where it counts – People is the most important "P" in the marketing mix. (Your people, team, the people your services and products are for and your community).

To learn more about digital marketing and BRD | Brand Revival and Design Inc., visit them at brdagency.ca and follow them on Instagram at [@brdagency.ca](https://www.instagram.com/brdagency.ca), Facebook at www.facebook.com/brandrevivaldesign, Twitter [@brd_agency](https://twitter.com/brd_agency), and LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/company/brandrevivaldesign.

department and can give your internal team the support they need to level up marketing efforts and fill any gaps they have in-house. Today business owners must think about full stack marketing [well-rounded and expertise in all areas of marketing: SEO, UX, web, social, online sales funnels, etc.] and it is rare that in-house full stack marketing can be realized without a large team”

In many cases, internal marketing employees don't have all the experience and expertise needed for the things they are tasked with, especially if you are a small business and you have one marketing person. That person might be doing the website, writing blogs, managing social media, doing event photography, etc., and they might not be a professional in all those areas.

Whether you're doing it in-house or hiring professionals, one thing is for certain: you need to have an online presence. According to Statista, there are 4.66 billion active Internet users worldwide, which is 59.9 per cent of the global population. Of this total, 92.6 per cent (4.32 billion) accessed the Internet through their mobile phone.

It's also important to note that companies should be investing in things they can own. For example, you don't own the content on social media platforms, but you can own your website and the blogs and content you put on it.

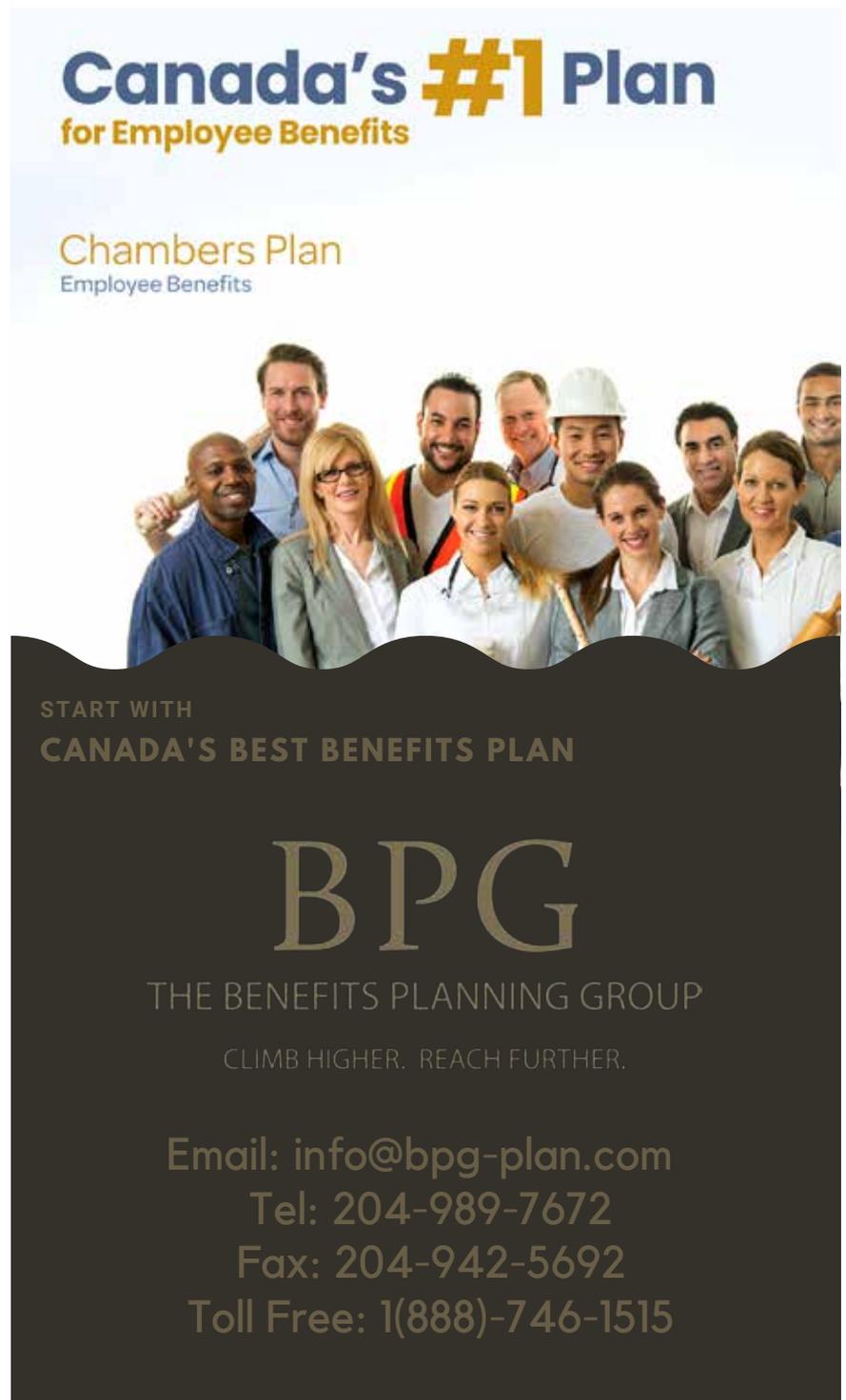
Thompson says, “Invest in email marketing and creating a good list (fans, prospects, customers, etc.), as well as take the time to create a content bank with all of your articles, social copy, and photos. We also recommend doing a custom website, using a CMS like Wordpress, and taking daily backups over using self-builders that you won't ever own, like Wix or Squarespace.”

Companies must show up where

their customers are and keep up with current trends and tactics to stay relevant to not only to increase sales, but to expand their presence as well, especially in a post-pandemic world.

“I think people have understood for some time that they need some sort of digital presence, but the pandemic

put the spotlight on things,” says Thompson. “Businesses who weren't online now must be, and others have had to dive deep into creating efficiencies and better customer experiences to improve, as well as level up their game online overall to compete.” 📈



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