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5 tips for Foursquare success

By Sandra Fathi

The social media site is already radically changing the way customers interact with businesses

The burgeoning social media network [Foursquare](#) is a location-based platform that allows users to alert friends in real-time of their exact whereabouts by “checking in” to businesses on mobile phones. While this tool provides plenty of perks and fun for users, many businesses are also finding value in Foursquare. The convergence of online social networks with real-life networking provides a tantalizing opportunity for marketers.

Not only is Foursquare effective in building connections between people and places, but it can also be a powerful business tool, allowing companies to increase their brand awareness, drive traffic to locations and expand their customer base.

Here are five simple ways that businesses can leverage Foursquare as part of their marketing efforts:

1. **Offer incentives and giveaways.** One of the most effective ways to increase brand awareness on any platform is by offering free, discounted or value-added products or services through promotions and giveaways. Foursquare is the perfect platform for this type of engagement, allowing businesses to attract a large number of visitors to their physical locations by awarding users with “badges” or free products based on how often a customer visits. For example, [Starbucks](#) awards the “Barista badge” to any customer who visits five separate locations.
2. **Reward loyal customers.** A little healthy Foursquare competition drives users to achieve the status of mayor of a location through frequent visits. This competition provides businesses with the opportunity to recognize their most loyal customers by awarding special privileges and discounts or on-site recognition. (Imagine a mayor plaque on the wall instead of one featuring the employee of the month.)
3. **Attract new customers.** In addition to rewarding existing customers, Foursquare can be a key tactic for introducing your brand or product to new faces and audiences. Every time a user checks in at your location, this is broadcast to his or her Foursquare network. Foursquare also enables users to announce their location status through other social networks, such as Twitter or Facebook. This further increases the scope of its reach. Users can include short messages recognizing great products or services, sharing tips or just shouting out to friends to come join them. This word-of-mouth marketing has a viral effect.

4. **Make a personal connection.** Foursquare encourages both online and offline engagement, allowing customers to get to know a brand up close and in person. Whether users are checking in at an event, tradeshow booth, retail location or office, these are unique opportunities for businesses to engage with customers. Foursquare allows marketers to identify those customers and engage with them both online and face-to-face. For example, [Harvard University](#) uses Foursquare to encourage campus visitors to explore the university's historical grounds and connect with students and professors.
5. **Marketing intelligence.** Foursquare offers a free analytics tool and real-time dashboard, giving businesses the opportunity to track behavior and capture valuable data about their customers. Knowing information such as who has checked in, what time they arrived and who they were with, and what comments they shared with their networks allows companies to evaluate and adjust their marketing and promotional efforts on a regular basis.

By incorporating Foursquare into marketing campaigns, businesses can bridge the gap between online and in-person engagement. Although the Foursquare phenomenon is only in its nascent stage, this social media platform is already changing—and will continue to change—the way businesses market themselves and the way customers interact with business.

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