




THE ULTIMATE GUIDE — TO — FOOD TRUCK MARKETING



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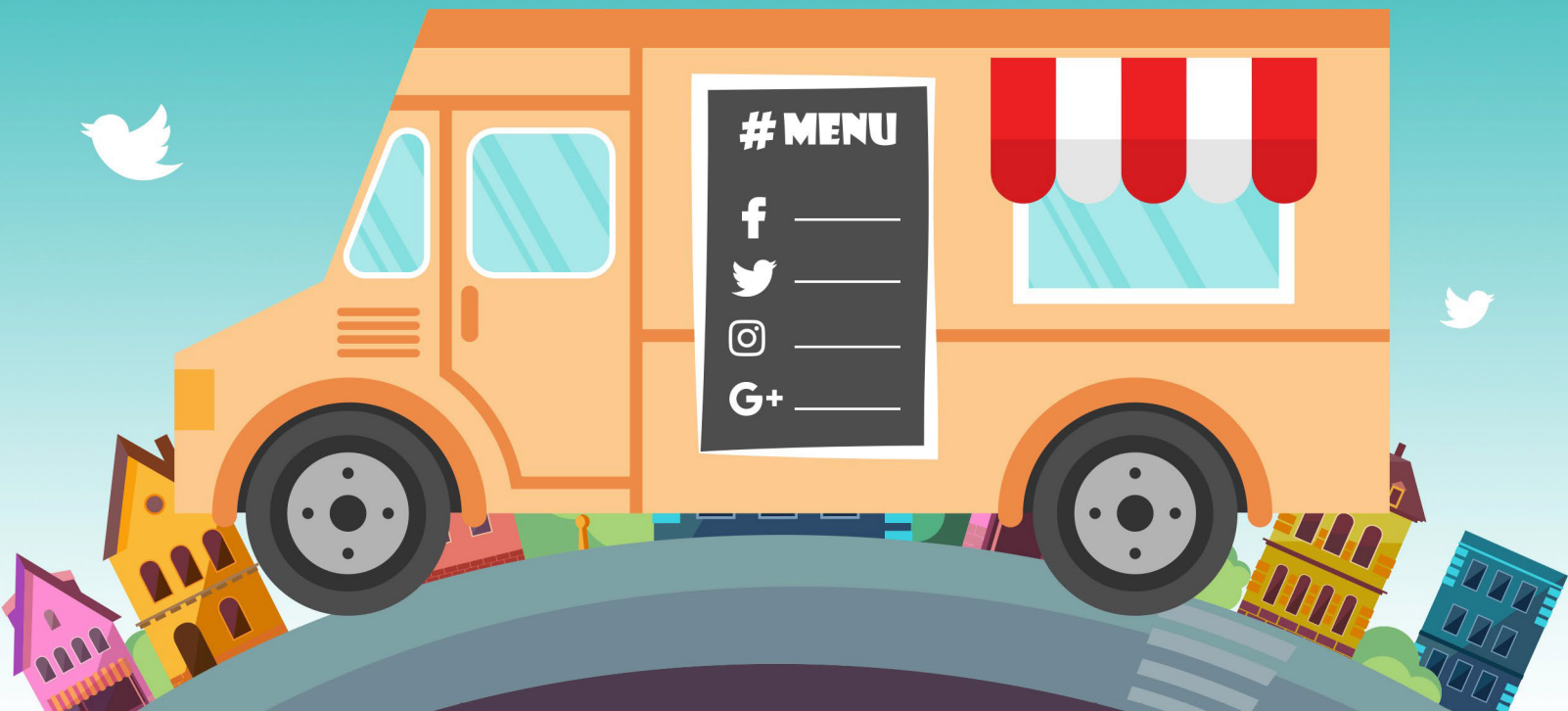


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INTRODUCTION

You had grand visions of rolling up to a curb next to an office building while hungry workers streamed out of the office and gathered around your order window, all clamouring for your food truck's crave-worthy eats. But a couple of oil changes later and you feel like your food truck is stuck in the mud, spinning your tires. It's time to call Triple A: Enter Marketing.

There's no point in putting all of your time and effort into your food truck business only to drive around town searching for crowds. Simply showing up with the intention to give your guests a good feed is not enough – you've got to let them know you exist and build their anticipation to get them up to your window.

This guide will steer you through the main streets of food truck marketing so you can stay fresh in the minds of customers and make your mark on the marketplace.



BRANDING


Let's begin with one question: **Who are you?**

It might seem simple, but before you start marketing your food truck, you need to know your brand inside and out – as if it were a person.

To get to know your restaurant, ask and answer these questions:

- **What are your core values?** Are you homegrown, humble and healthy? Or deep-fried, rowdy and risky?
- **What do you want to be known for?** Great service, creative presentation, or a specialty dish?
- **Who are you up against?** Know thy competition to know thyself!
- And most importantly, **who would enjoy your company?** Identify your ideal customer.





Everything from your name to your logo to the design on your truck should revolve around these answers, and appeal to your prospective patrons.

Critical to defining yourself is knowing who your ideal customer is and exactly what they want. For example, a [Morgan Stanley study](#) found that while generations of days past counted calories, today's Millennials care more about food that is "fresh, less processed and with fewer artificial ingredients". Information like this is key to determining what you should emphasize.

Once you've determined who you are, here are three essential components to creating your brand:

- 1. Think About Your Name:** In a few short words, your food truck's name is tasked with conveying the type of food you cook, the clientele you serve, and your place in the market. Think about what your name conveys. For example: Carolina Smokehouse vs. Fidel Gastros. The former brings to mind smoked meat and Southern barbeque, while the latter sounds like the spot to find fun takes on Cuban sandwiches.
- 2. Develop Your Personality:** Does your logo match the style of your truck, your menu, website, and social media profiles? The look and feel of your key marketing materials, like your truck signage and menu, should match your online presence and all your digital efforts. Too much branding inconsistency can result in a confusing message and reduces brand affection and loyalty. To learn more about creating your brand story read this [great article](#).
- 3. Embrace Your Differentiator:** Find out what makes you different and make it a cornerstone of your brand. There might be a ton of taco trucks in town, but if you're the only one with a breakfast waffle taco, make it known! One study showed that [75% of your brand's uniqueness](#) is attributed to the experience – so reflecting that experience within your branding upfront gets prospective patrons curious and excited to try your unique fare.

DIGITAL MARKETING

You may have heard the phrase, “Pics or it didn’t happen”. It’s a common Millennial mantra, meaning that if a photo of an activity wasn’t uploaded to social media, then it’s as if it never happened. While this mentality is great for your social media efforts because it guarantees some Millennials will engage, the same mentality can be applied to digital marketing as a whole:

- If you don’t have a website, you don’t exist.
- If you don’t have a social media presence, you don’t exist.
- If your patrons aren’t interacting with you, you don’t exist.

But you do exist! You just need to sharpen these strategies to make your digital presence more effective.

YOU VS. GOOGLE

[Fifty-one percent of people turn to the Internet](#) when they’re looking for a place to eat and 31% rely on search engines to get them there. That’s a huge audience – and means your digital presence must be optimized for search engines.

Digitally lead people to your restaurant with the following two ways:

An Updated Website: Your restaurant is constantly changing – your menu, your promotions, your daily features – and these days, having a website that is easy to update is easier than ever. If you choose the right provider, websites are really easy to manage and cost-effective too.

Wordpress and Squarespace are two viable options. Both offer templated websites and the flexibility within those templates to customize and highlight your brand. Check out [The Ultimate Guide to Creating a Restaurant Website](#) to learn how to make your own website.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): SEO is the process of driving organic search engine traffic to your website. The goal of SEO is to appear as one of the top search results in Google. While it may sound like an engineer's task, it's a lot easier than you think.

To "SEO" your website means to include keywords in the text that someone might put into a search engine. To determine where to direct searchers, Google sends bots to web pages. These bots scan websites looking for keywords so that they send searchers to the right place. This way, when someone searches for "Best Taco Truck in Brooklyn", they don't get a taco truck in Miami in their top results. Google's ranking algorithms also take into consideration the amount of views your website gets and the amount of time people spend on your website.

But here's the thing: there's no exact science to mastering SEO or getting on the first page of Google. The algorithms that rank websites are under lock, key, and likely armed guards, somewhere deep within the fortified walls of the Google headquarters. That said, there are various, proven strategies you can use that will improve your SEO and help customers make their way to you.



HOT TIPS FOR RAISING YOUR WEBSITE'S SEO

Title Tags: Displayed on top of each website page, and as the title when you Google your food truck, these tags should be between 20 and 60 characters and straight to the point.

Example: Your home page would be called “Your Food Truck’s” name with its location. Other pages might be named, “Menu” or “Contact.”

Meta Descriptions: This is the brief description of text below the Title Tag. They should be unique to each page and shorter than 150 characters.

Link Juice: Also known as link building, these are internal links within your website and external links from other websites. If you link to your homepage in a company blog post or an external food blogger links back to your website, this bodes well for your SEO. When Google sees that others are talking about your site, it increases your relevancy.

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "carolina firehouse food truck". The search results are filtered to "All" and show approximately 86,300 results in 0.69 seconds. Three search results are highlighted with red circles and arrows pointing to labels: "Title Tag", "Meta Description", and "Link Juice".

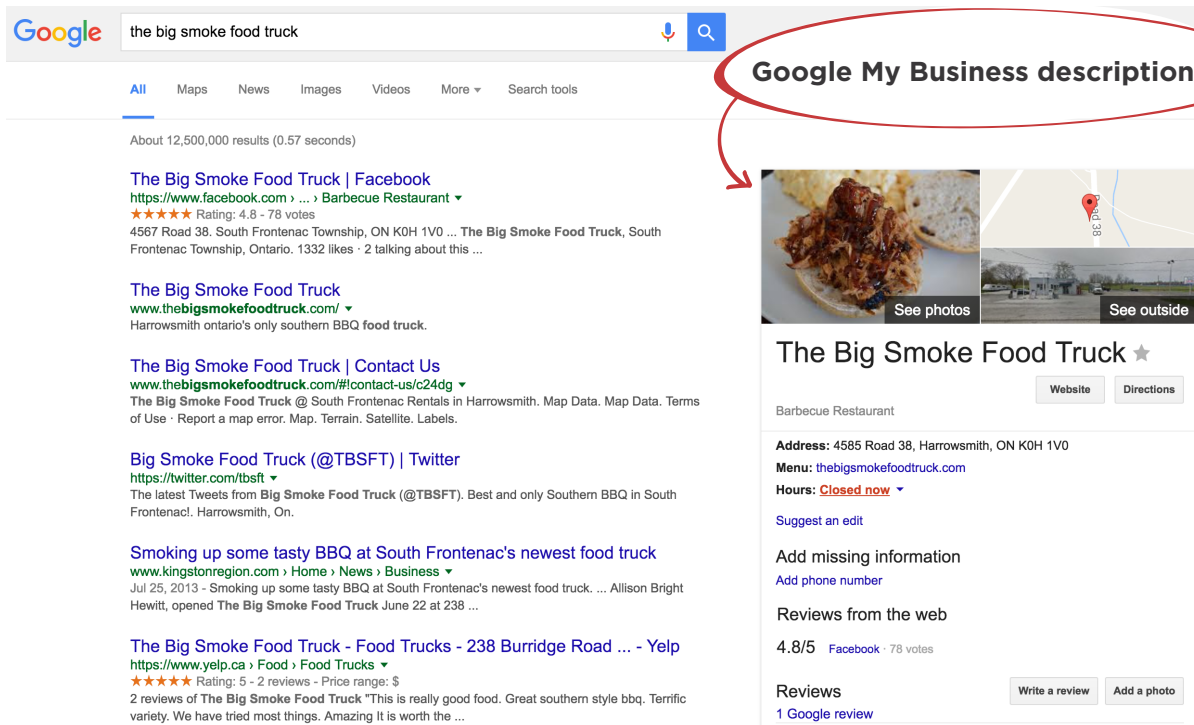
- Title Tag:** Points to the first search result: "Mobile Food - Food Truck Menu - Carolina Firehouse" with URL "carolinafirehouse.com/menu-1/".
- Meta Description:** Points to the second search result: "Carolina Firehouse" with URL "carolinafirehouse.com/".
- Link Juice:** Points to the third search result: "Food Trucks Rejoice! Carolina Firehouse Shares a Secret Weapon ..." with URL "culinationmagazine.com".

Other search results visible include a PDF document from TouchBistro: "carolina firehouse - TouchBistro" with URL "go.touchbistro.com/rs/609-GRA-876/images/Carolina_Firehouse_final.pdf".

For more detailed information on SEO, check out this great blog post by menu.ca.

GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

[Google My Business](#) is the most important page next to your website because you can create and control your own profile and how you appear in Google Search and on Google Maps for free. It links to your website, reviews, hours, and other essential information for customers. Taking care of this page is important: it's the most searchable place beyond your website, people trust that it is accurate, and it is home to a star-rated review summary.



The screenshot shows a Google search for "the big smoke food truck". The search results include several links to social media and the business's website. A red circle highlights the "Google My Business description" section on the right, which displays the business name, address, menu, hours, and a review.

Google My Business description

The Big Smoke Food Truck ★

Barbecue Restaurant

[Website](#) [Directions](#)

Address: 4585 Road 38, Harrowsmith, ON K0H 1V0

Menu: [thebigsmokefoodtruck.com](#)

Hours: **Closed now** ▾

[Suggest an edit](#)

[Add missing information](#)

[Add phone number](#)

Reviews from the web

4.8/5 [Facebook](#) · 78 votes

Reviews

1 [Google review](#) [Write a review](#) [Add a photo](#)



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Word of mouth used to sound something like this: “I went to this new food truck I found – the fries were so good! You have to try it!”

But today, word of mouth is something more like a tweet:



Social media is extremely important for food trucks, because you need an accessible way to let your customers know where you are and where you'll be, which is especially important if your food truck changes locations regularly. By using a platform like Instagram or Twitter, your customers know where to go to find out where you are, they can also get status updates from you.

Some food trucks choose to build their following on either Instagram or Twitter – two platforms which work really well to get real-time information to your customers.

For more details on using specific social media applications, check out our [Snapchat](#) how-to and our tips for getting [Instafamous](#).



HOT TIPS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

POSTING YOUR LOCATION

Updating your Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or Snapchat (or all 4!) regularly with your current and upcoming locations means that your food truck fans know where to find you and can plan accordingly.

GEO-TAGGING AND CHECK-INS

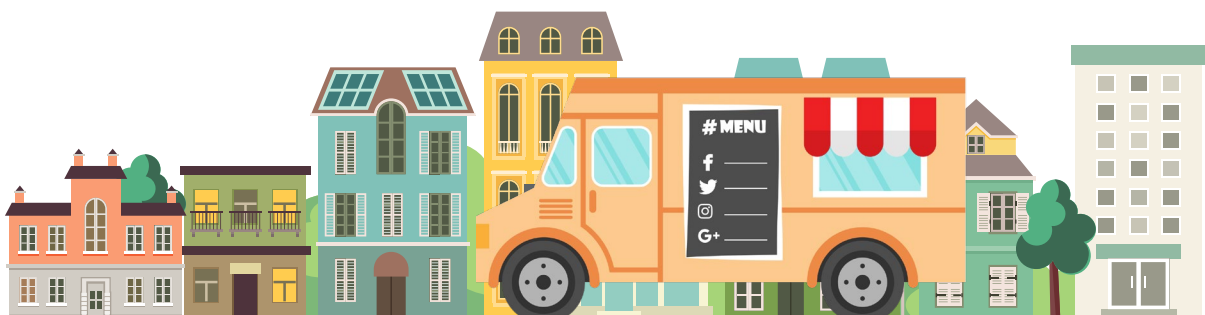
Checking-in on Facebook appears on home feeds and it's essentially free advertising. Similarly, geo-tagging (adding a location to posts) on Instagram compiles all posts under one map point. So followers can check out other people's posts of your food from the area you're in.

SOCIAL ADS

Facebook for Business allows you to advertise promotional content in two ways. The first is that you can market to "friends of friends", or connections of people who like your page. The second is by marketing to those who fit a predefined set of demographics or interests that you set. You can also promote your posts on Instagram as long as you have Instagram Business Insights set up and connected to your Facebook Business page.

CONTENT THAT MAKES YOU DROOL

Photos are the new open-ended question. While guides of social media's past might have stipulated that asking questions was the way to stimulate engagement, photos are the best way to get the attention of the masses. A mouthwatering ice cream sandwich has the power to tease the palate like a carrot on a stick. It can entice followers - and their bellies - to indulge in your eats.



HASHTAG (BUT DO SO EFFECTIVELY!)

Hashtags keep track of conversations. When someone says, “create a hashtag”, there’s no special tool you use or process to follow. Type in # and the word you wish to track. #Simple. Make sure to check out our [Quick Tips for Using Hashtags for Restaurants](#) for quick and easy tips to maximize your posts.

There are two types of hashtags you should use on your social media pages: unique and niche.

Unique hashtags are those that you create. For example, the name of your food truck or the name of a contest or promotion you’re running. **Niche hashtags** are those that already exist. They might be geographical, industry related, or event-driven. Avoid excessive hashtagging or hashtagging frivolously. Your prospective customers won’t be looking for #food #truck or #yummy, but they might be looking for #truckspotting, #foodtruckbrooklyn, and #tacotruckdenver.

Niche & Unique Hashtags Example: The Peached Tortilla (@peachedtortilla) used the niche hashtag #porkbuns so that their photo will show up when food lovers look at #porkbuns. And they also used their unique hashtag #getpeached so that all photos tagged by them or others will show up in that stream.



SOCIAL CONTESTS

Contests open up a dialogue, give customers and prospective customers a chance to engage, and can increase the reach and awareness of your food trucks. You can run contests on your own, or partner with a blogger or influencer to help spread the word and manage submissions. The number one thing to remember to run a successful contest? Make the payoff well worth the effort. If you're asking for 500 social shares in exchange for a single taco, the deck is stacked in your favor, and likely won't be worth it for most potential entrants. But free tacos for a year? You'll have a much better chance at engagement.

Try these three contests to drive interest and traffic to your food truck:

- 1. Recipe or Flavor Contest:** Ask customers to come up with inventive new flavor profiles, or their ideal ingredient combination. For example, the top 3 toppings for a Cuban sandwich, plus a catchy name for their creation. The winner gets to see their item on the menu for a month, and enjoy 10 free sandwiches on the house.
- 2. Social Shares Contest:** Create your own hashtag, for example, #happysnowconecontest and encourage your customers to use it when they purchase something from your food truck. Every share gets an entry. After a limited time, like a week or two, a winner is picked randomly.
- 3. Forever Free Fan Contest:** This is a fun contest that can drive a lot of engagement because the payoff is so great. Customers use an Instagram image to enter to get free food for life. You choose a round of finalists and then put it to a vote via social media. Entrants can use their social accounts to generate votes, and the pic with the most votes wins!

For a deep dive into all things social media, including how to run contests, how to engage on the best platforms, and how to use your social media pages to extend your customer service, see our [Ultimate Guide to Social Media Marketing](#).

MOBILE APPS

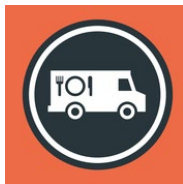
[Ninety percent of Millennials and sixty percent of baby boomers](#) own smart phones so naturally, they're using this technology to make their decision processes easier.

Getting on board with the latest in mobile app technology keeps your food truck in your customers' back pocket. If you're not searchable on a commonly used app, then you've immediately lost prospective business. While every app follows the beat of their own drum, mobile apps bring the most highly-qualified prospects to you: the hungry and the close-by.

HOT APPS FOR FOOD TRUCKS



[RH Vendor:](#) The vendor side of the Roaming Hunger Food Truck Finder. Upload your details to broadcast your location to local patrons. You can also be booked for parties and events through the app, further expanding your reach.



[Food Trucks:](#) A listing of food trucks in Canada, customers can find your food truck via location, and can check out and upload photos of your menu and food items. A great way to get your truck in front of potential patrons.



[Truckily:](#) Created to make the life of a food trucker easier, this app updates your social media automatically whenever your location changes. You can schedule in advance, and send your customers push notifications when you're in their area. Truckily puts you on their map, so you can reach new customers.

TRADITIONAL MARKETING

While digital is the way of the future, there is something refreshing about good old-fashioned boots-on-the-ground marketing. Traditional marketing has gone from being the only way to market your food truck, to something that resembles chivalry. For prospective customers, old school marketing often feels above and beyond.

Here are a few traditional marketing tactics to keep up:

Daily Deal: Day of the week specials, BOGOs, and free gift with purchase – everyone is looking for an excuse to have a treat on the cheap. When mixed with your differentiator, daily deals are still incredibly effective, especially when buffered through your other marketing channels, like email and social media.

Sponsorships: A little goodwill goes a long way. Sponsoring a local sports team, event or charity gets your logo out there and creates positive brand association and goodwill. This might also lead to more opportunities for you to get your product into the mouths of like-minded supporters.

Generate Buzz: Food bloggers, local media, industry publications; whether online or in print, the more trusted media you can introduce your food to, the more prospects will be likely to try you on for size. When you get a write up or an endorsement, the credibility of that individual rubs off on you.



CONCLUSION

While the consumer has always faced the dilemma of choice, there has simply never been so many ways to discover new food options. The task of the Food Trucker is not just to provide a unique offering, but to communicate that offering in a way that both engages consumers in the moment and keeps them top of mind in the future. It's only then that you'll have a lineup in the window. Managing a strong digital presence and honing in on the tools that dominate the way consumers make choices isn't optional - it's a necessity.



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