

Today in Small Business: From the Web to Bricks and Mortar

By Gene Marks

March 24, 2014 1:08 pm

Dashboard

A daily roundup of small-business developments.

What's affecting me, my clients and other small-business owners today.

The Economy

- Many business economists see an interest rate hike coming.
- Gas prices have gone up \$4 a tank over the last six weeks.
- In March, growth in factory activity slowed slightly.
- Eswar S. Prasad explains why the dollar endures: “The supply of safe assets has shrunk. Bonds issued by most euro-zone countries look shaky in the aftermath of the euro-zone debt crisis, especially since many of these countries face weak growth prospects. Countries like Japan and Switzerland have taken steps to weaken their currencies (thereby shoring up their exports) and are intervening in foreign exchange markets to prevent their currencies from appreciating in value. Thus they are adding to the demand for safe assets.”

Sales and Marketing

- Another Web retailer, Birchbox, decides to open a bricks-and-mortar store.
- How a small maker of snacks became a cult favorite.

- Developers are using custom scents to get buyers to warm up to a home.
- Here are four steps to get people to read your emails.
- There's no magic that gets a small business a deal with big companies – it takes good old-fashioned pavement pounding.

Social Media

- How General Motors is using social media to try to manage its online reputation.
- Jimmy Kimmel and the Clintons do a selfie.

Productivity

- A new book says you're not as busy as you say you are.

Ideas

- Delta introduces "Innovation Class," which connects the airline's LinkedIn community with industry leaders at 35,000 feet.
- A new wearable tech product tracks when cows are in heat.

Health Care

- Robert Reich says, "Obamacare is working."
- The health insurance law is providing a business opportunity for this personalized medicine start-up.

Entrepreneurship

- In August, a father and his eighth-grade son started a toy company selling kits to create hours of fantasy fun with cardboard boxes, and they have now expanded to nearly all 50 states and three countries.

Bitcoin

- Mt. Gox finds 200,000 Bitcoins “down the back of the couch.”
- Marc Andreessen says he is going to invest hundreds of millions of dollars more in the digital currency.

Around the Country

- Many Montana businesses are absorbing student interns.
- Changes in overtime pay rules could have a big effect on employers, especially in the Midwest.
- About 150 small-business owners across California are urging Sacramento lawmakers to pass legislation that would stop lawsuit abuse.
- Food retailers are grabbing for bigger shares of the food dollar with a new round of expansions in the Indianapolis area.

Around the World

- China’s factory activity shrinks for the fifth straight month.
- After a government-imposed Twitter ban, Turkey sets a tweet record.
- Why French entrepreneurs are leaving France and heading to London.

Taxes

- Accountants say that the biggest mistake small businesses can make is talking to them only at tax time.
- Here are a few strategies for when you can’t pay your taxes.
- These are the best and worst states for taxpayers.
- Tax expert Robert Wood uses the analogy of lost a Bitcoin to remind you that under United States tax law, if you find something, it is generally considered income unless you can show it was yours all along.

Technology

- Hewlett-Packard will unveil plans for 3-D printing in June.
- Investor Almario Alexej Alcaraz says that Intel's plans might get derailed by the rumored release of the Microsoft Office app for the iPad.
- Here are eight features to look for when choosing workforce management software.

Gene Marks owns the Marks Group, a Bala Cynwyd, Pa., consulting firm that helps clients with customer relationship management. You can follow him on Twitter.