

49 Resources

Vendors, Websites, Aps and Cool Tools for Your Small Business

By Meredith Keller of SmallerBox.net



1. Pay with a Tweet

I love this resource because you can get your fans to do your marketing. Simply create some content they want (a PDF, an mp3, a zip file, anything they can download). Then use Pay With a Tweet to have your fans “pay” for the item by Tweeting a message for you. You get links and viral buzz and they get an (almost) free goodie. Win-win

2. CloudFlood

This is like Pay With a Tweet but also allows your fans to pay by Facebook sharing.

3. One Pretty Thing

Love the idea of CloudFlood or Pay With a Tweet, but not sure what to give your fans for free? Browse One Pretty Thing. This aggregator blog exhibits craft projects from all over the web. Many of them are cool downloads like note cards and holiday ornaments. You're sure to get some good ideas perusing through their finds.

4. Smaller Box Legal Directory

Got legal woes? Need a contract reviewed by an expert? Got a thief copying your designs? If you're looking for lawyers who are artist and small business-friendly, check out this directory.

5. Retail Minded

Want to get into wholesale but not sure where to start? Need your buyers packet reviewed? Need help setting terms? Need help preparing for a show? Nicole at Retail Minded was an invaluable resource for my company when we started doing wholesale. Her rates are affordable and she's an expert on all things wholesale. Her blog is also a great read.

6. Your Mailing List Provider

I use this email service provider for all my mailing list needs. The interface is easy to work with and the reporting is great. You can track clicks and opens, you can create custom fields, you can have more than one mailing list. They also have the best pricing I've found for a service this robust.

7. Sidestep

If you've got to travel for your biz and you need to save money, Sidestep is great. It allows you to check pricing on hotels, air travel and more from all the different online travel agencies (Travelocity, Expedia, Hotwire, etc.). Just one click and you can check them all at once and find the best pricing.

8. Google Docs

It's like having your office every place the internet is. I use Google Docs for storing all sorts of files I need at my fingertips. You can use it to store press lists, design ideas, whatever you need to keep track of. It offers the same functionality as desktop applications like MS Word or MS Excel. Just make sure you download back ups regularly.

9. Google Voice

Get a free phone number for your business. You can select a number based on area or get a vanity number. It's free of charge! You can customize a voice mail message and forward calls to any line you want. The only downside is that it's branded by Google, so if you want to avoid that check out a paid service.

10. [Evoice](#)

If you want a service that isn't branded by Google, check out evoice. They have the best pricing I've found and can forward your calls, take messages, etc. Evoice also offers toll free numbers.

11. [FreeConferenceCall.com](#)

If you need to do conference calls, this service is great. It's totally free of charge. Like Google Voice, they do brand their service, but if you don't mind that it's a pretty good deal.

12. [Google Analytics](#)

I'm a huge fan of this product. It's free to use and it gives you a ton of really valuable reporting information on your site traffic and performance. I've written an entire [ebook](#) on how to take advantage of all its rich features.

13. [Slimstat](#)

I love Google Analytics, but it's not perfect. Where it leaves me wanting, Slimstat fills in. This free PHP/MySQL application does a couple of neat things. First, it gives you the paths individual visitors take on your site and the information is in real time. It also gives you the full URLs of referring sites, whereas Google Analytics only gives domain names.

14. [Adroll](#)

This re-marketing service lets you display your ads to people who've visited your site and not made purchases. You can even choose to show ads to people who've abandoned shopping carts. The idea is it reminds them to come back and complete their order. Pricing starts at just \$100/month and their customer service is absolutely top flight!

15. [Google Products](#) and [Bing Products](#)

These are the two shopping engines for the two biggest search engines. They're both free, all you have to do is send them a feed, and they'll be showing your products to people who are looking to buy them.

16. [Stock.XCHNG](#)

100% FREE stock photos for prettying up your website, banner ads, etc. The selection is smaller than you'd find on paid stock photo sites, but it's still got a good amount of options. I use this site quite a bit for adding some color to blog posts.

17. [IstockPhoto](#)

If you can spend a few bucks and want a massive selection, IstockPhoto is the place to go. They have pictures of just about everything and downloads can be as inexpensive as \$1 each, depending on the size photo you need.

18. [Da Font](#)

If you want to add some flair to your design work, you'll need some exciting fonts. Da Font has a massive selection of free fonts organized by theme. If you're using any of them for commercial work, make sure you select fonts that are "free" instead of "free for personal use".

19. [Google Reader](#)

This is my RSS reader of choice. I keep my feeds organized by folder and use this tool to keep track of competitors' blogs, news, business blogs, even Twitter feeds I want to follow. I also keep a folder for design blogs so I can take note of what trends appear to be on the rise or wane.

20. [Website Grader](#)

Get a high level report of how your site is doing. It will even run an analysis compared to a competitor. It evaluates your SEO, links, traffic and more. It also gives you steps you can take to improve.

21. [5 Second Test](#)

Need to know if the right parts of your website are popping? Put it through the 5 second test. Total strangers will tell you what they found most memorable about a web page or design.

22. [Concept Feedback](#)

Doing a website re-design? Get detailed analysis from design, usability, and strategy professionals. Get actionable feedback you can use to improve. There's a free option, which is community based, or you can go with the trained professional route starting at just \$99.

23. [Yslow](#)

Make your website download faster with this free tool. Yslow evaluates your site and finds all the elements that make it load slowly. It gives you actionable tips on what to do to increase speed.

24. [Clue Ap](#)

Like 5 Second Test, allows people to view your site design and tell you what they remember about it.

25. [Cross Browser Testing](#)

Before launching your site to the masses, make sure it looks good in different browsers and on different operating systems. Cross Browser Testing allows you to see your site on a wide variety of browsers and operating systems and includes different browser versions. Pricing starts at \$19.95 per month, but this tool actually enables you to use your site on different browsers so you can test things like Javascript. If you need a free option, try [Browser Shots](#), it's free but only gives you a screen shot, no interactivity.

26. [Keyword Generator](#)

This free tool helps you find keywords you can use in your SEO or Adwords campaigns. Give it some phrases to start with and it'll give you suggestions.

27. [Spyfu](#)

Indulge in a little corporate espionage with this handy tool. Find out what competitors are spending on Adwords, how much organic traffic they're getting and what their best performing keywords are.

28. [Traffic Estimate](#)

This is a nice tool for spying on competitors and working on your press list. You can get an idea of how much traffic a site has, and based on that, decide whether they are worth putting on your press list. A site with a minimal amount of traffic may not be a great use of your PR time.

29. [HARO](#)

This newsletter goes out 3 times a day (on business days) with a list of reporters looking for sources for stories. It might lead you to some press for your business. Be warned, there are some low traffic blogs trolling for free gifts on this list, so if someone says they want “products to review” check their traffic on Traffic Estimate before pitching them or offering them free samples.

30. [Chase's Calendar](#)

This calendar lists every date and occasion on the calendar around the world. It has everything from World AIDS Day to Black History Month to Talk Like a Pirate Day. If you want to tie upcoming PR events to an important holiday or even a wacky event like National Procrastination Week, this is a great resource.

31. [Quantcast](#)

Gives you an idea of how much traffic major sites get and gives you some demographic info about their visitors and a listing of other sites their visitors use. Great for doing target demographic research, checking out the traffic levels of a site you're considering for your media list or finding new sites for your media list.

32. [Similar Web](#)

This tool helps you find sites that are similar to a site you already know about. Like Quantcast, it's great for finding new prospects for your media list and researching your target audience.

33. [Mantis](#)

I use this ticket tracking system to keep tasks organized. It's free software and relatively intuitive. If it's not your style, here's a [list of other tools](#) that perform the same function.

34. [Hootsuite](#)

I like this tool for Tweeting because it has a built in URL shortener, allows you to manage more than one Twitter account at a time, and allows you to schedule posts in advance (perfect for going on vacation). [This article](#) tells you how you can even synch of your Facebook page so it gets updated along with your Twitter feed.

35. [Twitter Verified Accounts](#)

Want to know if you're Tweeting at the real P. Diddy or Paris Hilton? Twitter maintains a list of all verified celeb Twitter accounts, so you know who's who. The lists are organized by themes such as athletes, musicians, etc. so you can find who you're looking for. You can use the list to reach out to celebs and offer them a birthday gift or congrats on their Oscar. Great for getting your brand on a celeb's radar and possibly your products into their hands.

36. [Fiverr](#)

Need someone to hold up a sign in Times Square that says “I Love [insert your company name here]” and take a photo of it? Need someone to sing a song about your brand and post it on YouTube? Fiverr is a marketplace where people share listings of things they're willing to do for \$5.00. Loads of fun ideas for marketing stunts.

37. [Quickbooks Online](#)

I hate bookkeeping, it's tedious and dull but must be done. Quickbooks online edition is great because you can access your books on the go. There's even a mobile ap, so you can enter things from your phone while you're sitting around the airport or other places where you have time to kill.

38. [Cost Helper](#)

This handy site helps you get an idea of how much products and services for your business should cost. It gives you a range based on how fancy or bare bones you need your product or service to be. It's a good tool for getting a quick idea of how much cash you'll need before you try to hire an SEO or get your logo redesigned.

39. [In the Public Domain](#)

Don't get sued for selling drawings of Madonna or Michael Jackson, there are tons of famous icons in the public domain. This handy list shows you all the famous people who have become public domain, so you can avoid legal woes.

40. [Dropbox](#)

Need to get giant files to a vendor or client? Dropbox is a free tool for file sharing and file back up.

41. [Smaller Box's Conversion Calculator](#)

Want an idea of whether an ad you're about to buy will pay off? This nifty calculator tells you how many sales an ad placement is likely to deliver, based on ad click-through rate and your site's average conversion rate. It gives you an idea of what each order will cost you, how much traffic you're likely to get and more.

42. [Friendly Creations](#)

This indie candy company is my go-to place for gifts for clients or vendors who've gone above and beyond. They have vegan and non-vegan treats. They have lots of cute and creative presentation ideas, so you can send treats in the shape of sushi or ladybugs.

43. [Button Arcade](#)

If you need a giant quantity of bottle openers or magnets, this is the best pricing you'll find, plus the finished products look great. I often use Button Arcade to have freebies made that we can mail out with our orders. They also do free shipping!

44. [Postcards.com](#)

This is the best pricing I've found on custom postcards, the quantities start as low as 100 pieces. Perfect for making promotional materials. They even have mailing services, so you can design postcards and have them send them to your customers.

45. [Heather is a Pinhead](#)

This shop has the best pricing I've found for 1" buttons, and the quality of the finished products is very good. Heather is easy to work with, has pretty quick turn around and even includes some free samples.

46. [Discount Mugs](#)

This is the best pricing I've found for custom pens. I often order custom pens to insert into orders that go to customers, since they're likely to keep them around and use them, thus remembering our business. You can get your pens for as little as 9 cents each. Lower quantities are a little more expensive, but even at 500 pens, you only pay 15 cents each.

47. [MGX Copy](#)

This print shop did a lovely job on our look books and their pricing was the best we found. They even allow for pretty low quantities. I recommend this shop if you need catalogs or look books printed.

48. [Got Print](#)

This is our go-to source for business cards. Best pricing and top quality.

49. [123stickers](#)

This is where I turn for promotional vinyl stickers. Their pricing is great and the finished product is high quality.