

25 Ways to Promote Your Coffee Shop on a Shoestring Budget



Introduction

One of the most fun and important challenges you'll face as a coffee shop owner is to get paying customers into your business. Thankfully, there are many low-cost ways to develop a customer base and thus help ensure you create a profitable business.

Below are 25 ways to promote your coffee shop on a shoestring budget. As you read through this guide, you will quickly discover that you don't have to spend a lot of money on marketing and promotions. You just need to be creative and persistent in your efforts to develop a loyal following for your coffee shop.

1. Use Playful Signage to Draw Attention to Your Coffee Shop

You've probably noticed clever signs in front of businesses — signs that use funny sayings that make you smile while inviting you into their shops. Using playful messages to draw attention to your coffee shop is an attention-grabbing tactic that can boost business significantly.

You don't have to spend a lot on signage; simple chalkboard signs work just fine. Just make sure to switch your messages frequently so passers-by start to make a habit of looking at what you'll say next. This will create a welcoming and friendly image for your brand, as well as ensure your coffee shop is memorable.



Attention-grabbing, playful signage outside of Victor's Espresso Bar

2. Draw Attention to Your Shop With Live Promotions

If your coffee shop depends on people who regularly drive by your business, then you need to find a way to make your shop stand out from all the other buildings around you. An easy and low-cost way to do this is to have an employee stand outside your business at peak traffic times with a sign announcing you're open — and that you serve amazing coffee.



When it first opened, [Awakenings Coffeehouse](#) had an employee stand on the sidewalk with a sign letting passers-by know it offered the best coffee on State Street

3. Create Deals for Your Online Followers

When people know they might get a deal by following a business online, they're far more likely to engage with that business through its social media channels and its website. A low-cost way to advertise your business is to offer limited-time deals to your online followers. Even better, suggest your followers share those deals with their network, so you can expand your promotional reach and generate even more sales.

4. Advertise on Groupon

[Groupon is a popular advertising platform](#), especially for new businesses. Groupon has more than 49 million users, which means it's a terrific place for getting attention for your business. Groupon suggests that you post a discount offer between 40% to 90% on whatever you choose to advertise. Groupon then manages the advertising, customer payment collection, and payout to you, less its 50% advertising fee.

5. Host Coffee Education Talks & Coffee Tastings

Wine shops have been holding wine tastings for years, and now coffee shops are getting in on this customer-generating tactic. You can host coffee tastings — also known as coffee cuppings -

— to educate customers and build loyalty. You may also want to charge a nominal fee for your coffee tastings, which makes it a potential new revenue stream for your business.




Undercurrent Coffee in Charlotte, North Carolina holds coffee tastings to educate customers about coffee

6. Ask Customers to Review Your Shop on Google & Yelp




When people are searching online for a coffee shop, many will decide where to go based on the reviews they see on Google or on Yelp. To attract new clientele, online reviews need to be overwhelmingly positive. You also need lots of reviews. For example, if you have 100+ reviews while your local competitors have 50 or less, it demonstrates that you're the favored coffee shop in your area.


Be sure to ask your customers to review you on Google and Yelp. You can do this in many different ways, including having your service staff make this request in person, placing signage around your shop encouraging people to leave online reviews, or by adding a review request message to all receipts.

About 5,810,000 results (1.20 seconds)



4.0+ rating ▾ Price ▾ Hours ▾

<p>Boxcar Coffee Roasters</p> <p>4.7 ★★★★★ (644) · \$\$ · Coffee shop</p> <p>1825 Pearl St B</p> <p>Custom-brewed coffee in a quaint setting</p> 
<p>The Laughing Goat</p> <p>4.6 ★★★★★ (986) · \$ · Coffee shop</p> <p>1709 Pearl St</p> <p>Modern coffeehouse serving organic brews</p> 
<p>Trident Booksellers and Cafe</p> <p>4.6 ★★★★★ (571) · \$ · Coffee shop</p> <p>940 Pearl St</p> <p>Community spot for books & coffee</p> 

 More places

Positive Google & Yelp reviews are important for attracting new customers

7. Create a Drawings Jar to Collect Emails

Create a “card drop” jar and place it in a prominent location on your counter. Tell people that all who drop their business cards in the jar will be entered to win this week’s, or this month’s, special prize. For those who don’t have cards, make sure you have blank cards available they can use to write their names and emails.

Collect those cards and enter the names and emails in your customer email database. You can then email these customers periodically to attract them back to your coffee shop.

8. Partner With a Nonprofit to Promote a Cause

When you partner with a nonprofit to promote a good cause, your business benefits in multiple ways. First, the nonprofit shares your promotion with its donor base, so more people become familiar with your coffee shop. Second, your existing customers see you're doing a good thing, which builds your brand's reputation. Third, both new and existing customers like to support worthy causes, and that means they might spend more money at your shop or come back more often.



WASTE LESS, SAVE CENTS

BRING IN YOUR OWN CERAMIC MUG OR TRAVEL MUG AND GET 10 CENTS OFF YOUR PURCHASE! FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY-SEPTEMBER, ALL PROCEEDS WILL BE DONATED TO **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FIRST.**

*Celebrating 135 years of,
PREVENTION. INTERVENTION. HEALING.*

OUR STAFF:
PREVENT: Support expectant parents to successfully nurture their children's development
INTERVENE: Establish stability, ensure safety and keep families together
HEAL: Help guide and nurture youth towards independence

We believe every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential! By offering free and immediate access to our programs and services statewide, Children & Families First has made our name, our promise.

We build communities where children are nurtured and safe; individuals are valued; and families are strong and self-sufficient. We're proud of the lives and futures we transform. And we could not do it without your support. THANK YOU!

Hockessin * Wilmington * Dover * Georgetown * Seaford
CFFDE.org * 800-220-3092

BREW HA HA!

children & FAMILIES first Celebrating **135** years
Building On The Past. Investing In The Future.

Brew Ha Ha in Delaware partnered with Children & Families First for this promotion

9. Send Letters Introducing Your Shop to Area Business Owners

If your coffee shop relies on local businesses and workplaces for customers, then personally write to those businesses and introduce yourself and your coffee shop. In your letter, invite both owners and employees to visit your shop, providing them with a coupon for a gift — such as a free cookie with the purchase of a cup of coffee.

10. Visit Area Business Owners

For a more personalized introduction to your shop, visit area businesses. You can do this yourself or delegate it to an employee who you know will make a friendly, positive impression.

If you want to spark excitement for your coffee shop, then bring something with you to offer as a gift. You could offer a free single-serving sample of coffee beans from your shop or a free cookie, or if you want to go bold — offer a free coffee mug with your shop's brand on it. Be sure to offer some coupons too; the better the deal on the coupon, the more likely you'll generate some new customers from using this promotional technique.

11. Create Branded Shirts for Giveaways & Promotions

Create attractive t-shirts or sweatshirts that people want to wear and then offer them as prizes or gifts to regular customers. Or, sell them at cost — don't think of these as revenue-producers, but rather as vehicles for promoting your coffee shop. Whenever others wear your branded shirts, it's akin to having walking billboard endorsements roaming throughout your community.



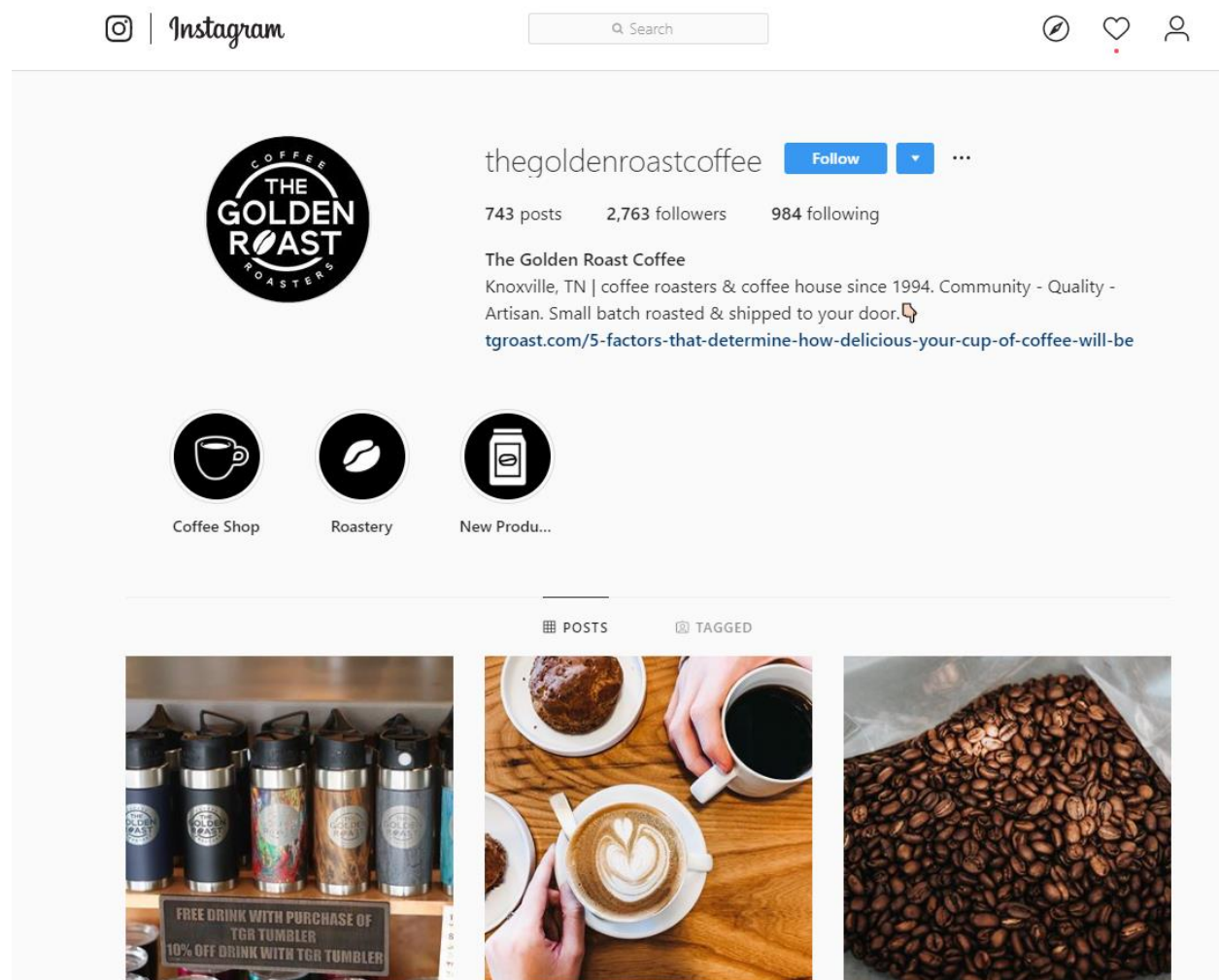
[Emy J's Coffee House](#) in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, created several fun t-shirt designs

12. Build Your Following on Social Media

Enhancing your online presence via social media channels is another way to extend the customer experience. It's also a great way to build customer loyalty.

People won't follow you on social media if you don't ask for the follow or like. That means you have to prominently post your social media channels around your shop, in your advertising, and everywhere else that makes sense.

Make sure you post on your social media profiles regularly, employing creative content that's visually stunning and entertaining. People won't continue to follow you online if your posts are dull.



The Golden Roast's Instagram page is an example of a beautiful Instagram profile with a growing following

13. Write an Article for a Local Magazine or Newspaper

There are a lot of people who are eager to learn more about coffee. They want to understand more about coffee bean growing regions, how beans are roasted, and how to make a better cup of coffee at home. Your deep knowledge in all these areas can pay off with free publicity when you get a local newspaper or magazine to interview you or publish an article that you wrote.

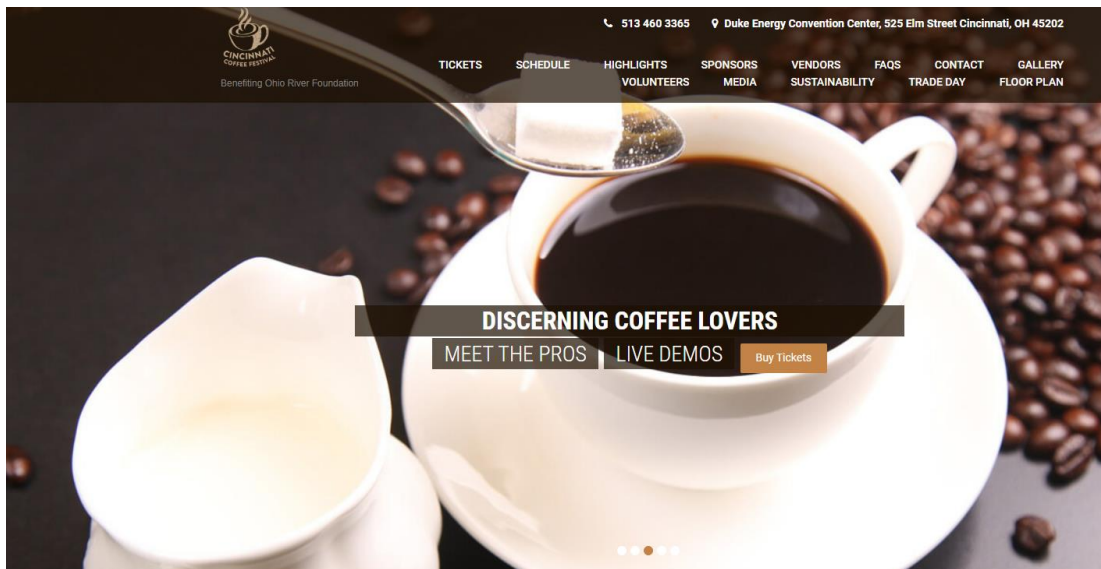
14. Place a Promotional Wrap or Sign on Your Vehicle

If you're opening a coffee shop, you're committed to its success. That means you need to be committed to promoting your shop in a variety of ways. [Placing a promotional wrap on your car](#)

is a simple yet effective way to boost awareness for your business. A full car wrap will cost a few thousand dollars or more, but a partial wrap on the hood or side of your car can cost as little as a few hundred dollars.

15. Participate in Local Coffee Festivals

Coffee festivals are growing in popularity. If there's one in your area, be sure to participate. It lets people know that you're serious about the art of coffee and it's a chance to introduce your brand to coffee lovers in your community.



Participating in local coffee festivals — such as the [Cincinnati Coffee Festival](#) — can help you raise awareness for your coffee shop

16. Promote Your Coffee Shop at Farmer's Markets

Setting up a booth or table at local farmer's markets is another way to get exposure for your coffee shop. You can offer free coffee samples so people can experience the quality of your offerings. You can also hand out flyers with enticing coupons to encourage people to come to your coffee shop.

17. Place Attention-Grabbing Flags Outside Your Shop

People won't visit your coffee shop if they never see it. To grab their attention, consider placing an eye-catching element outside your business. For less than \$50, you can place a few tasteful flags around your shop that helps you stand out from all the other buildings around your business.



Strategically placed flags, like the hot coffee flag above from [Best of Signs](#), can be used as a low-cost, attention-grabbing promotional technique

18. Advertise in Local Church Bulletins

Most churches need financial support to print their bulletins, so many offer ads in exchange for a modest donation. If you're an active member of a church that's near your coffee shop, consider building awareness for your business through church bulletin ads.

19. Create a Reservable Community Space in Your Coffee Shop

Set aside some space in your coffee shop that people can reserve for meetings or community gatherings. Advertise the availability of this space on your website, through social media, on take-out menus, and through prominent signage in your shop. This small community space can be available during business hours or you could make your entire shop available for larger group meetings after regular business hours.

The benefit of creating this gathering space for groups is that it demonstrates that you care about your community's needs. The upside to you is that it will attract new visitors to your coffee shop and generate more sales as people enter your shop in groups instead of one by one.

20. Create Special Offers for Special Days

Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Veteran's Day are all special days that are worthy of special celebration. So, offer free coffee to customers celebrating these special days.



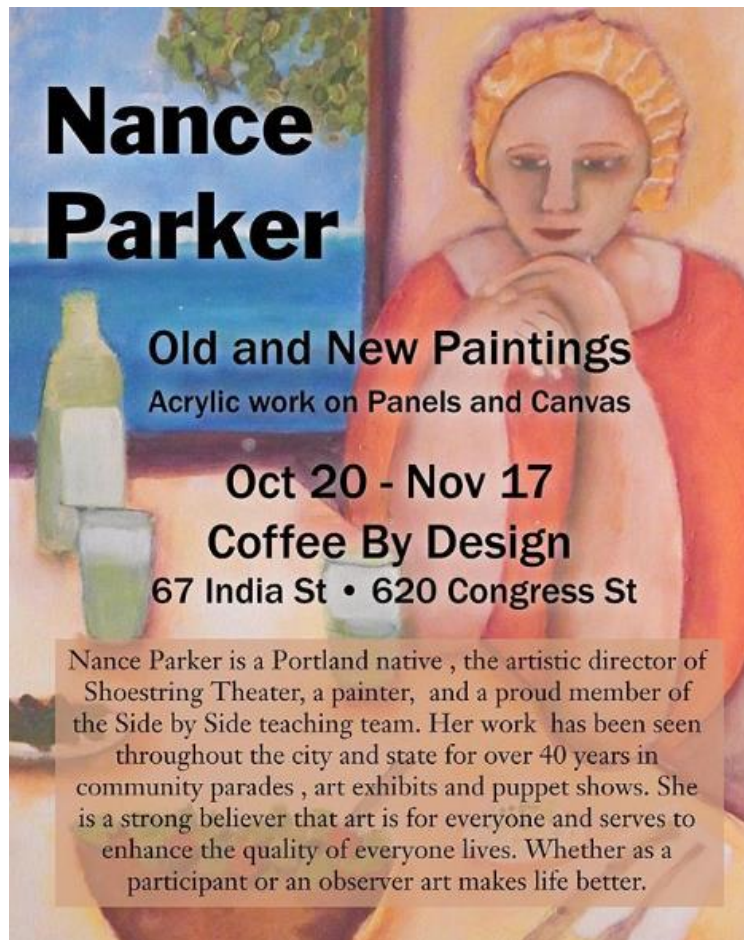
[Loma Coffee](#) offers current and retired servicemen and women free coffee on Veteran's Day

21. Sponsor School Programs & Events

Consider sponsoring a local school's sports team or a school play, in exchange for some signage or advertisements in printed programs. Even better, ask to participate in these events by sponsoring a small booth that sells your coffee, with all proceeds going to the school. You get added exposure for your coffee shop and the school benefits from your generous support. It's a win-win for everyone.

22. Host Music Events, Poetry Readings, or Art Exhibits

You can attract more people into your coffee shop by giving them a reason to visit beyond just offering the best coffee in town. Consider hosting a rotating art exhibit, music nights, or poetry readings to attract new visitors to your coffee shop.



Nance Parker

Old and New Paintings
Acrylic work on Panels and Canvas

Oct 20 - Nov 17
Coffee By Design
67 India St • 620 Congress St

Nance Parker is a Portland native, the artistic director of Shoestring Theater, a painter, and a proud member of the Side by Side teaching team. Her work has been seen throughout the city and state for over 40 years in community parades, art exhibits and puppet shows. She is a strong believer that art is for everyone and serves to enhance the quality of everyone lives. Whether as a participant or an observer art makes life better.

[Coffee By Design](#) in Portland, Maine hosts art exhibits at its cafe

23. Offer Game-Day Specials

Many cities have professional or college sports teams that are supported by the entire community. To capitalize on that team spirit, try offering a free gift — such as a free muffin with the purchase of a coffee — to anyone who comes in wearing an item with that team's logo on opening day or special days, such as playoff or bowl games.

24. Host a Latte Art Contest

Baristas from around the world are going to great lengths to create beautiful designs in specialty coffee drinks. It's called latte art, and its popularity is soaring — which means latte art contests are becoming popular, too. It's fun for baristas and observers, too.



This Latte Art Throwdown was hosted by [Time & Tide Coffee](#) in Biddeford, Maine

25. Encourage Customer-Generated Content

When your customers share pictures of themselves at your coffee shop and tag your business in their posts, the result is phenomenal exposure for your business. Even better, this customer-generated content is infinitely more trustworthy and better received than any high-priced advertising you can buy.

If you want to ramp up word-of-mouth promotion for your coffee shop — and, let's face it, you do — then find creative ways to get your customers involved in promoting your shop. The trick to do this effectively is to make it easy and fun for your customers.

Here are a few ways to encourage customers to post about their experiences at your coffee shop on social channels:

- Do something so amazing they want to share it online — like having your barista's become skilled at serving latte art that wows.

- Create an irresistible photo opportunity at your coffee shop. In that space, post playful signage that directs people to take pictures to share on social channels. Be sure to suggest specific hashtags you want customers to use so you can track posts later.
- Hold regular contests on social media where the winners win fabulous prizes.



A [Moore Coffee Shop](#) customer is so wowed by her pumpkin latte art that she posts her experience on Instagram