

## Chris's Corner: Free and effective advertising

I would hope most of my customers believe in advertising their businesses to get their name and message front of brain for potential customers. In the competitive world of food service and food retailing it is a no brainer.

I just want to let you know that in my opinion one of the most effective and free, if done properly, is through Facebook.

Now I might understand some business owners may have personally tried Facebook and found it annoying or whatever and don't personally use it. Typically those who have had negative experiences aren't managing their notification settings and Facebook ends up running them, instead of them running Facebook.

But the point here isn't whether you like Facebook or not. Probably half the population with a smart device or computer and internet access are typically on the application or site once a week.

My advice to you is simple. Set up a personal Facebook page. Create a Facebook page for your business. Research local or regional groups in your area that are community oriented and allow businesses to advertise. Join these groups through your personal page.

Post advertisements on your business page. These could be about daily lunch or dinner specials. They could promote items on sale for the week. If you are having special events or entertainment you would want to advertise about them. Use your personal page to like your business page and then personally share the business posts to these groups. Make sure your privacy setting are set to public so that everyone in the group can view them, plus group members can share to their own pages and other groups. By sharing the business posts personally you don't have to pay and there is no limit on shares. Free advertising.

Let me share what I know from running a group on Facebook. I run a group on Facebook that I started 4 years ago. It is called Ligonier Unpolished. It is a community oriented group focused on the Ligonier Valley School District. We

have over 10,500 members of which 8,000 are active in a given month. Active means they posted, commented or reacted to a post at least once in 30 days. The school district itself has only a population of about 15,500 residents according to the latest census data. Our membership is larger than the Ligonier and Latrobe paper's circulation combined.

The group allows advertising from businesses that are physically located within the district. Those businesses that advertise regularly are always busy. Those businesses that don't are hit or miss. I have restaurants tell me they've doubled their business since the group started and they started advertising. Best of all, it's free.

If you don't explore this avenue and make an effort, but pay for print or any other means of promotion you may be wasting a lot of money.