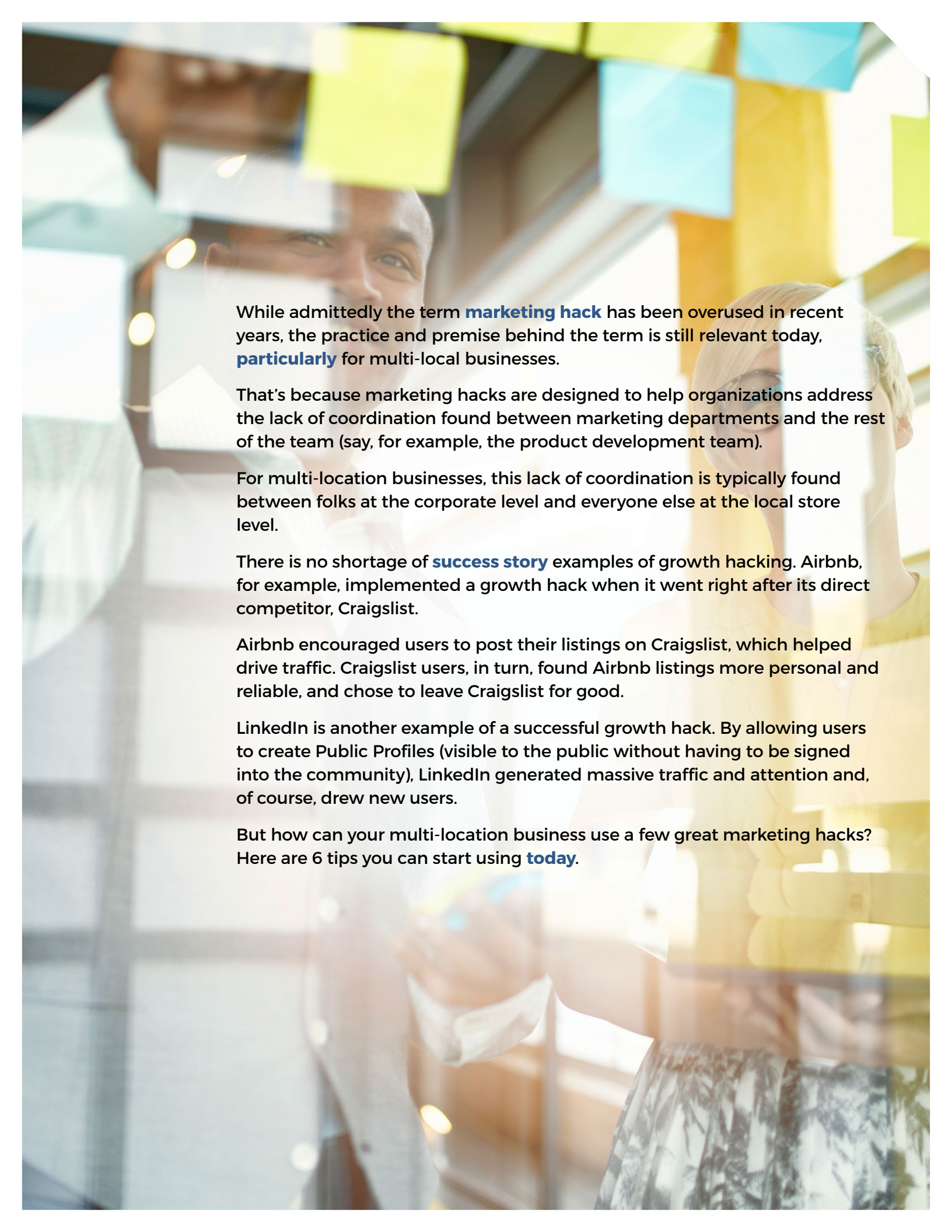


6 MARKETING HACKS FOR MULTI-LOCATION COMPANIES



A man and a woman are in a meeting, looking at a wall covered with yellow and blue sticky notes. The man is on the left, wearing a white shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a yellow top. They are both smiling and looking at the camera. The background is a blurred office setting with warm lighting.

While admittedly the term **marketing hack** has been overused in recent years, the practice and premise behind the term is still relevant today, **particularly** for multi-local businesses.

That's because marketing hacks are designed to help organizations address the lack of coordination found between marketing departments and the rest of the team (say, for example, the product development team).

For multi-location businesses, this lack of coordination is typically found between folks at the corporate level and everyone else at the local store level.

There is no shortage of **success story** examples of growth hacking. Airbnb, for example, implemented a growth hack when it went right after its direct competitor, Craigslist.

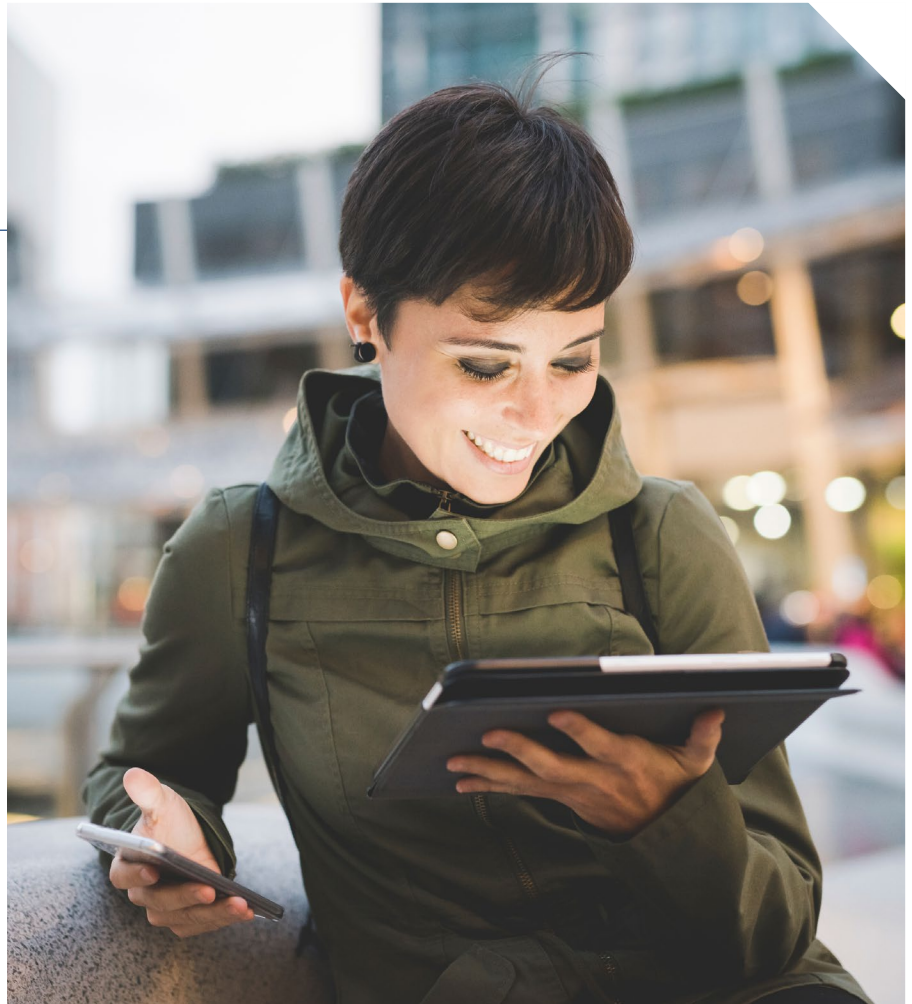
Airbnb encouraged users to post their listings on Craigslist, which helped drive traffic. Craigslist users, in turn, found Airbnb listings more personal and reliable, and chose to leave Craigslist for good.

LinkedIn is another example of a successful growth hack. By allowing users to create Public Profiles (visible to the public without having to be signed into the community), LinkedIn generated massive traffic and attention and, of course, drew new users.

But how can your multi-location business use a few great marketing hacks? Here are 6 tips you can start using **today**.

7

SOCIAL SHARING IS CARING - THE 4-1-1 TRICK



It's probably a safe assumption that you know that social media is a viable marketing tool, **particularly** as you target hyper-local customers and foot traffic.

But all of your social efforts are wasted if you're taking to an empty room. How, then can you

build an organic audience of followers who are interested in what you have to say?

The 4-1-1 hack should do the trick.

With the 4-1-1 hack, for every six pieces of content you share on your social media platforms:

- Four should be pieces of content from related influencers who promote content relevant to your audiences. You'll want to create an **influencer target group** (folks whose radar you'd love to be on) and promote this group's content up to 67% of the time. As a multi-location company, you should consider finding not only company-wide influencers, but local influencers as well (journalists, politicians, local celebrities).
- One piece should be an original, educational piece of content that you produced on your own.
- One piece should be a sales-related push (press release, coupon, etc.)

This approach is likely not what you'd expect. Most times, businesses assume they need to churn out a constant flurry of original content to promote. But few organizations have the resources to create this type of content and, besides, that eliminates the entire concept of being **social**.

By promoting the content produced by folks who matter most in your regions and industry, you're far more likely to gain followers and respect. In turn, more people will be likely to come across your original pieces and sales pushes. ❖



2

ENCOURAGE YOUR LOCAL STORE OWNERS/ MANAGERS TO GUEST POST



When it comes to increasing the rankings of your individual locations, backlinks remain a key ingredient.

Years ago, you could gain backlinks simply by sending out a few emails and asking for some “favors.”

That approach is not only outdated, but generally frowned upon (and penalized) by Google. So what can you do to grow your locations’ online presence?

Believe it or not, guest posting is **still** a viable option that delivers quick results.

Here’s how to make it happen: Identify the leading websites, blogs, and online publications in your niche and area, and pitch them with

a request to provide an article. For example, if you operate an auto-shop franchise, you could write an article focused on 4 ways to prolong the life of your tires.

Within your article, you can add your bio (including your business name) and (hopefully) a link back to your site. However, even if the website doesn’t allow you to include a link, the inclusion of your company name (referred to as a **citation**) on a high-traffic site will help boost your ranking.

And, who knows. If the publication likes the article you write, you might be invited to regularly contribute. The hour or so it might take to craft the article is well worth your while. ❖

3

GET YOUR CUSTOMERS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS!



One of the greatest attributes of running a multi-local business is that you benefit from a local customer base. That means it's far easier to find a way to encourage your existing customers to promote your business to their friends, family, and neighbors.

With this hack, it's all about incentive. What can you do for your existing customers to make it worth their while to promote your brand?

Dropbox, for example, offers customers additional storage space if their friends sign up. These new customers are then encouraged to sign up their friends for increased storage.

Out of all of the people who sign up, a certain percentage will go on to buy additional storage on their own.

These types of strategies typically work when everyone involved gets rewarded. Let's revisit the auto-shop franchise for our example.

A good referral program would be to offer existing customers half-off their next oil change if they get their friends or family to book their own oil change appointment. Then, the auto shop could extend that promotion to these new customers as well.

Not only do the customers win (they get half-off an oil change), but the auto shop does as well, since they're all but guaranteeing repeat customers (who wouldn't want half off their next oil change?). ♦

4

INCENTIVIZE YOUR STAFF TO SEE WHO CAN GET THE MOST CUSTOMERS TO LEAVE REVIEWS



This particular growth hack kills two birds with one stone: it not only helps you grow your customer base, but it also addresses your need to manage your locations' online reputation.

Customer reviews are one of the leading factors that persuade customers to shop at – or avoid – a local company.

People trust the opinions of their peers (even if these peers are strangers) more than they do the marketing spin of a company website. The more positive reviews your locations have, the better

they'll rank and the more likely prospects will be willing to turn into customers.

But how can you build more positive reviews for each of your locations? Turn it into a game for your employees.

Each location manager can introduce his or her staff to an incentive program that rewards the employees who get the most customers to leave reviews. The incentive could be a paid day off, the chance to be “manager for the day”, a gift certificate, or any number of other rewards.

To make this program work, your staff will need to learn some positive ways to encourage customer feedback (you don't want employees to run to customers pleading with them

to leave a review). But so long as you demonstrate positive ways to encourage reviews, this hack is a sure-fire way to grow your brand across all your locations. ♦



5

ACHIEVE COMPLETE SEARCH PAGE DOMINANCE



That sounds great, right? Complete search dominance. Sounds nearly hyperbolic... but it doesn't have to be. It is possible to dominate the search engine results pages for specific key terms; here's how:

- First, perform an audit to determine which keywords you currently rank well for with your organic SEO approaches. Rank these keywords and phrases based on traffic and conversions. That way, you don't waste your time investing in keywords that offer little ROI.
- After determining your best keywords and phrases, run aggressive paid search campaigns on these words. The combination of paid campaigns and your existing organic rankings will help you to dominate the results pages for these terms, and all but guarantee an uptick in clicks and conversions. ❖

6

GET LOCAL WRITERS TO WRITE ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS



In Marketing Hack #2, we suggested you get your local managers/franchisees to contribute to local sites, blogs and publications.

While this is a great way to demonstrate your brand's influencer status and to offer valuable information to readers, not everyone has the time or desire to write these articles.

So why not let the pros do it for you?

Each community where you have a location has its own set of newspapers, blogs, and magazines. It's the job of the writers who work for – or contribute to – these publications to find local stories that their readers will enjoy.

You can increase the likelihood of getting these writers to highlight your local stores by doing something worthy of attention.

When it comes to local communities, that typically means donating time, services or dollars to a cause or event. You could even organize your own event (a 5K race that starts and ends at your location, with proceeds from racers' entry fees going to a good cause).

The free press will offer you great SEO value (in the form of backlinks) but will also help prospects see your brand as a positive influence in the community. ❖



FOR THE MOST BANG SPREAD OUT THESE HACKS OVER THE LONG TERM

The purpose of a growth hack is to be able to expand your business/customer base fairly quickly, without investing an excessive amount of man-hours or dollars to the cause.

That's why your best approach is to pick and choose which of these hacks to focus on first. If you try your hand at each hack all at once, you'll not only exhaust your resources, but you'll lack the time and attention it takes to really capitalize on each strategy.

At the same time, nearly every single business model on the planet could benefit from each of these hacks. While you'll want to prioritize which hacks you'll focus on first, it's well worth your while to plan to incorporate each of these ideas into your long-term marketing strategy. ❖

If you need further elaboration on anything discussed please reach out: www.CardinalWebSolutions.com