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# **Killer Marketing Strategies**

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by Katryna Johnson, J.D.

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# **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this book to all of the women who have a dream of running their own business and have stepped into their power and are making it happen. The world is a better place because of your contribution. Keep pushing and never give up. You can achieve anything you believe.

To all of my members of Mirelli Entrepreneur Training for Women, know that I love and respect each and every one of you and want you all to succeed beyond your wildest imaginations. Your dreams and visions keep me excited and pushing for bigger and better.

Here's To Your Success,

*Katryna Johnson*

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# INTRODUCTION

Congratulations!

You have taken a big step toward success. Any time you can increase your knowledge, especially about marketing, you are moving in the right direction.

I learned many of these fundamental marketing strategies as I worked beside some of the best marketers in the country at one of the largest-circulation magazines in the world, first as the copywriter, then marketing manager, then director of new business development. When I left corporate America to build my own law practice, I took all that knowledge and poured it into my own business. One of the most critical things I did when I launched my practice was to invest several thousand dollars in a 3-day marketing seminar. Best investment I ever made, hands down.

You can never know enough about marketing. The concepts in this book - when implemented with strategy and care - are guaranteed to make you more money with less effort. These are strategies that have helped businesses just like yours make hundreds of thousands of dollars - including your competitors.

As you follow the book and read the principles to follow, remember it does not matter what industry nor type of business you operate. What matters is that you grasp the heart of the principles, the underlying lessons and strategies, that can help grow any operation in any category of business imaginable.

The best time to start is NOW, not tomorrow, not next week or next year.

Here's to your success,

Katryna (Trina) Johnson

PS. If you would like to arrange a meeting or phone call to get a profitable third party perspective on your business and your current marketing strategies and tactics, please send an email to [Trina@TrinasInnerCircle.com](mailto:Trina@TrinasInnerCircle.com) and I will gladly point you in the right direction.

For a Free Test Drive of all my best tips, tricks and marketing resources visit <http://TrinasInnerCircle.com>.

# 1

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## Understanding Profits

Before we get into the topic of marketing your small business, I want to make sure you understand that marketing, despite what you may have heard to the contrary, is NOT what makes or breaks your company – what makes or breaks your company's success is PROFIT. Profit is an essential element of any business. As a small business owner, you are in business for one reason: to make money.

Of course, there are other reasons you started or purchased your company. You may love the product you sell, or service you provide. You may love the challenge of turning a floundering company into a rip-roaring success. You may just love being your own boss. You want to change the world.

But this all means nothing if you are not generating enough income to support yourself and your family, as well as the people who work for you.

Nearly all businesses make money. Unless not a single product or service is sold, there is always money coming in. But there is also always money going out. Supplies, wages, marketing, acquisitions and operations all contribute to the expense of just staying in business.

Simply put, profit is the difference between money in and money out. This is the dollar value of your sales, minus the cost of those sales.

In business, you will find that everyone wants to make more money. They want to increase their sales, get more money coming in. **What often gets overlooked is that the true secret to making more money is not increasing sales, but increasing profit. And you need to understand your profit profile before implementing any new killer marketing strategy. Otherwise, your efforts may be ineffective and not provide the results you were seeking.**

## **What is Profit?**

Before you can take steps to increase the profitability of your business, you have to have a solid understanding of:

- types of profit
- what factors influence profit
- what your profit is *right now*

### **Types of Profit**

There are two main types of profit:

#### **Gross Profit**

Gross profit is the simplest form of calculating profit. It is simply the money that comes through the cash register, minus the cost of acquiring or providing the products or services.

The formula is:

$$\text{Total revenue (sales)} - \text{cost of goods or services sold} = \text{Gross Profit}$$



## **Net Profit**

Net profit is a more accurate reflection of your income. It is calculated by taking your gross profit minus expenses over a specific time period (usually by quarter).

The formula is:

*Gross profit – expenses (cost of running a business) = Net Profit*

## **Factors that Influence Profit**

Profit is your bottom line. It is the number that falls out the bottom when all other costs and expenses have been taken into consideration. Do you know what contributes to the amount of profit your business ends up with?

There are three main factors that influence profit:

### **Sales – Your Conversion Rate**

The first, and most obvious, factor is the money that comes in the door through sales. In theory, the more sales you make, the more money you bring in, the greater your profits.

The ratio of potential customers to sales is called your conversion rate. This is the percentage of customers you have converted from leads to sales. So, a high conversion rate means more sales, and more money coming in the door.

In addition to your conversion rate is the lifetime value of your clients. It costs much less to convince a customer to make repeat purchases than it does to acquire new clients.

### **Costs – Your Product/Service Margins**

The second factor is the cost of your offering – what your product or service costs you to acquire or provide. If you sell a product, this is the wholesale price you pay for the product. If you offer a service, it is the cost of your (or your employee's) time plus any materials used.

Your margin is the difference between the price you pay and the price your customers pay. If you buy toothpaste for \$1 from the wholesaler, and you sell it for \$3, your margin is \$2. If a haircut costs \$20 in materials and service, and the customer pays \$50, your margin is \$30.

### **Expenses – The Cost of Doing Business**

The final factor is the cost of running your business – those not directly related to the specific product or service you offer. Expenses include:

- Office or store lease
- Computer equipment lease
- Employee salaries
- Utilities
- Marketing + advertising

## **Your Profit**

It only makes sense that you need to know where you are to determine how to get to where you want to be. This applies to any plan to create in business.

Before you can increase your profits, you need to have an understanding of where your profits are currently – and if you’re making any at all. Let’s walk through a review of the specific factors that affect your business’s profitability, and ultimately determine how much profit you are currently bringing in.

## **Taking Stock of Your Profits**

Before you devise a strategy to increase your profits, you need to take a good long look at the money your business brings in, and the money you spend to run your business. You may wish to sit down with your accountant or bookkeeper to analyze the financial information that is available to you.

Decide on a specific time period to review – one that makes sense to your business, and one that will give you the most realistic picture of your business performance.

This will depend if your operation is cyclical, or remains steady throughout the year. Usually, the previous quarter or the previous four quarters will give you enough of an indication.

**Here is a general list of items to review:**

- Total revenue
- Total cost of goods or services
- Total cost of operations (overhead), including:
  - Employee wages
  - Recruitment
  - Business development
  - Utilities
  - Rent or mortgage
  - Office supplies
  - Computers
  - Incidentals
  - Total cost of marketing campaigns

Total profit after costs and expenses for this time period:  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**The Five Factors that Eat Your Profits**

It is easy for business owners to compare their organizations to the apparent success of their competitors. Joe’s Pizza may always be teeming with customers and appears to be making money hand over fist, while your pizza shop may have slower, but more steady business.

It is important to remember that a business with extraordinary sales figures is not necessarily a profitable one. Sales are just one element of your profit calculation.

Here are some other elements to think about when reviewing the profitability of your business:

### **Impulse Spending**

How often do you make purchases for your business operations? I'm not talking about acquiring new goods and services, but upgrading computers, taking your team out for lunch, or leasing a new color photocopier.

Do you allow your staff to make purchases on your behalf? Who reviews these decisions? Take a look not only at *what* you buy, but *how* spending is structured in your company.

### **Small Margins**

As we discussed in the previous section, your margins are the difference between your cost and the customer's cost to purchase your goods or services.

Typically, businesses that offer a variety of products will have both products with large margins, and products with small margins. The products with large margins generate the most income, so these are the products that staff should be focused on selling.

What many businesses overlook is that products with small margins will never generate a high level of income, no matter how many you sell. A store stocked with small margin items will never be able to increase their profit because they have so little margin to work with.

## **Your Customers**

This may seem like a backwards way of thinking. Your customers spend money, so they are a positive factor in your profit calculation, right?

This is true for most of your customers. But remember the 80/20 rule of business – 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. These are your top 20%, or ideal customers. What about your bottom 20%? The group of clients who ask for the moon and never stop complaining.

These clients can be a huge drain on both your staff resources and your financial resources. Their true value to your business is minimal – they cost more than they bring in. Fire them!

## **Loan Interest**

How many business loans do you currently have? Credit card debit? Overdraft? The interest you pay on these loans can be a substantial monthly cost to your business.

A loan from a bank is just like any other product. You can shop around for the best deal. Consider consolidating or restructuring your debt to minimize interest payments. Plan to search around for the best rate on a regular basis – every few months or quarter.

## **Vendors**

Do you purchase your goods and services from a wholesaler or retailer? How long have you been in business with this company? What do you pay for

goods and services relative to your competitors?

Ensure that you are dealing with as direct a vendor as possible to minimize your acquisition costs and increase your margins. If you have been doing business with a particular vendor for an extended period of time, consider re-negotiating your business arrangement.

## **The Basics of Increasing Profit**

### **Your Profitability Goal**

Now that you have an understanding of the current profitability of your company, it is time to look at ways to increase your bottom line.

Like all other aspects of your business development, you need to have a clear idea of your intention or purpose before you begin any activity. Assuming you wish to increase the profitability of your business, you need to determine by how much and within what time frame.

Create a profit-related goal for your business, and write it here:

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### **Three Ways to Increase Income**

There are countless strategies for bringing in more income, but ultimately you can only increase income in one of three ways:

### **1. Get More Customers**

Use more and different marketing outreach strategies to generate more leads, and convert those leads into more customers. Introduce a new offer, expand your target audience, or approach a new target audience.

### **2. Get Your Customers to Buy More Often**

Use customer loyalty and retention strategies to get your existing customers to buy from you more often. Make it easy for them to come back and do business with you.

You can do this by adding value to your product or service, keeping in touch on a regular basis, and giving your customers incentive to make repeat purchases. Customer service is also an overlooked component of building a repeat client base.

### **3. Increase How Much Your Customers Buy**

You'll naturally increase your sales when you increase the number of customers and how often they purchase. The final way you can impact your income is by increasing the average dollar value of each sale.

This can be achieved by up-selling every customer, creating package offers, and finding ways to increase the perceived value of your offering to justify increasing the price.

## **Managing Costs**

One important way to impact the profitability of your business is through cost or spending management. Controlling how much money goes out will help



you ensure that a more money stays in your bank account. Two of our mantras when my partner and I opened our law practice was “keep overhead low” and asking each other “do we have to have that right now?” We were bottom line focused and every purchase was analyzed before we pulled the trigger.

Remember, however, that cutting costs can only help increase your profits so much. There is a point where you will no longer be able to reduce expenses, and you will have to focus on increasing sales.

### **Why Cut Costs?**

Cost management may seem like an obvious way of maintaining a healthy business, but it is also one of the primary reasons 80% of small businesses fail. Overspending is a huge problem for most businesses – and they don’t even realize it.

Reducing costs is a great short-term strategy to boost profits. As I mentioned above, there is a limited amount of impact cost management can have on the bottom line, so it is an ineffective long term strategy.

Cost management can also help you to generate more capital. A business that closely monitors and controls its spending is a much more desirable loan candidate than a business that spends freely.

Most importantly, this strategy will help keep your business profitable through high and low periods. It’s easy to spend money when your company is doing well, but this leaves little in the “just in case” account for downturns in the economy or unexpected expenses.

## **Where Can I Cut Costs?**

### **Financing**

As I mentioned, interest rates are a big culprit when it comes to eating profits. Take stock of how much money you are spending on a monthly basis in loan and interest payments. Can this be reduced? Is there another bank that will offer you a lower rate? Is there a way to consolidate these loans into a single, low-interest account?

Alternatively, if your business is doing well and has a large amount of money sitting in the bank; consider investing it or placing it in a high-interest savings account. Let your money make you money instead of spending it on unnecessary business luxuries.

### **Suppliers or Vendors**

Make sure the price you pay for goods and services – for resale of internal use – is the lowest you can find. Try to deal directly with the manufacturer or distributor, and renegotiate discounts and contracts with your vendors every year. You'll never get a lower price if you don't ask for it. Don't be shy. Ask away. Many vendors will be glad to give you a price break if it means keeping you as a loyal customer.

### **Hours of Operation**

Evaluate the hours you are open for business each day, and why you have chosen those specific hours. Is it to compete with the competitors? Is it because you can serve the highest number of customers? Each hour you are open

for business costs you money, so make sure you are operating under the most ideal time-frame.

## **Staffing, Wages, and Compensation**

This can be a sensitive subject for any business owner or employee. It is important to look at staffing redundancies and capacity levels – as well as hiring needs – when evaluating cost management strategies.

Do you need to hire new staff, or can you build capacity within your existing employees? Is there another way to compensate staff, or provide performance incentives that are non-monetary, have a high perceived value, and inexpensive for your business? Remember to take time and care when implementing any changes in this area of cost management.

## **Place of Business**

If you operate an office in a downtown metropolis, you are going to have substantially higher operating costs than a competitor who runs an office just outside the city limits.

Make sure you can justify your location, and the amount of money you spend to be there. Consider the following questions:

- Are my customers impacted by where I do business?
- Do my customers need to visit my office?
- What impression does my business need to present?
- Do I need parking facilities?
- Do I need to be visible?

- Do I have staff to employ?
- Am I near public transit, lunch outlets, and other amenities?
- Do I need access after business hours?
- Should I lease or buy?
- What other costs are specific to this location?

## **Eliminate the invisible!**

What could you and your staff live without? What wouldn't you notice if it just disappeared one day? Take stock of expenses that are not being properly used or appreciated. Think of amenity-based items, or convenience costs, like:

- Morning refreshments (muffins, donuts, etc.)
- Publication Subscriptions
- Designer coffee and tea
- Fancy collateral packaging
- Embossed letterhead, business cards, envelopes

## **Your Pricing Strategy**

The cost of your goods and services have a direct impact on the money you bring in. Your pricing strategy is so important to your business that it can even determine your success.

Deciding how much to charge for your product or service is a challenging task. You need to factor in your own costs, the product or service's perceived value, and the going rate. Ultimately, you want to be able to charge as much as possible for each item, without overpricing yourself out business.

## **Avoid the Lowest Pricing Strategy**

The days of the lowest price guarantee and pricing wars are over – especially for small businesses. The “big players” in the marketplace will quickly put you out of business if you try to compete on price. Their pockets are deeper and they have lower operating costs due to their sheer size. They can afford to – you can’t.

## **Clearly Position Your Company and Your Offering**

How do you want your target market to view your business, and your products? Are you trying to create an image of high quality? High value? Reliable service? Make sure your pricing is consistent with the image you are trying to project. If you are operating a high end spa – you’re not competing with the budget nail salon down the street, so your prices should be considerably higher.

## **Have a Good Working Understanding of Your Margins**

Know how much the product or service costs you to offer before you establish a price. Do these costs remain consistent, or do they fluctuate? Restaurants that offer high quality meat and seafood often price their meals at “market rates” as opposed to fixed rates. Calculate the fixed and variable costs associated with your product or service. You will want to work the cost of the product or service, a percentage of your overhead, and your own profit into the cost of each item.

## **Pay Attention to Factors Beyond Your Control**

Be aware of any government or industry regulations on the price of your product or services. Some laws will actually limit how much you can charge for standard services. For medical and dental services, most insurance companies will put a cap on how much a customer will be compensated for each service. Seek out all external factors that could impact your pricing.

## **Price with a Purpose**

Your pricing strategy should be purpose focused. What exactly are you trying to do by setting your prices at certain levels? Here are some potential reasons for pricing strategies:

- Short-term profit increase
- Long-term profit increase
- Customer generation
- Product positioning
- Revenue maximization
- Increase margins
- Market differentiation
- Survival

## **Pricing Strategies**

Let's look at some of the different pricing strategies you may want to consider for your business.

## **Cost Plus Pricing**

This is the most basic pricing strategy. Set your price at a number that includes:

- Cost of goods or services, based on a specific sales volume
- Percentage of expenses
- Profit margin (markup)

## **Target ROI Pricing**

Set your price at a rate that will achieve a specific Return on Investment target. If you need to make \$20,000 from 1,000 units – or \$20 per unit – then set your price at \$20 more than cost, plus expenses.

## **Value Based Pricing**

This can be a bit of an arbitrary pricing strategy, but it can also be the most profitable. Set your price based on the value or added benefit it brings to a customer. For example, if your product only costs you \$40 to produce, but will save the customer \$2,000 per year in energy costs, a price of \$150 or \$200 would not appear to be unreasonable in the eyes of the customer.

## **Psychological Pricing**

What messages are you trying to send the customer when they're looking at your prices for your products? Do you offer the best deal? The highest value? These are reasons to choose prices that are higher or lower than the competition.

## **Pricing Guidelines**

**Price higher than cost.** This may seem obvious, but ensure that your pricing not only covers your costs, but potential fluctuations in sales volume and in the marketplace. If you sell half of your order, will you still make a profit?

**Include expenses.** If you price to cover your costs, will you also be able to cover your expenses and still see a profit? Your margin needs to pay for your expenses, leave you with something to live on, plus some working capital for the company.

**Consider the ‘fair’ price.** What do your consumers think is ‘fair’ for each service or product? This is impacted by your competitor’s price, your company’s image (high quality or high value, low cost), and the perceived value of your product or service.

## **Strategies to Increase Profit**

Once you have a concrete understanding of where your business stands today in terms of profitability, minimized your operating costs, and restructured your pricing strategy, you can focus on other strategies to increase profit.

There are countless strategies and tactics that will help you to bring in more customers, get those customers to come back, and get those customers to spend more when they do.



Here is a list of ideas:

- Advertise
- Establish an online presence
- Sell more high margin items
- Generate more leads
- Focus on referral business
- Increase customer loyalty and repeat business
- Increase conversion rates
- Reinvent your product

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## **Killer Sales Basics**

Marketing and sales go hand-in-hand, especially for a small business. If you're a business owner, you're also a marketing person and a salesperson. A lot of small business owners like to think that "I'm not good at sales" or "I don't know much about marketing." You are lying to yourself. You've had to sell the bank to get them to loan you your start-up capital. You've had to sell the best employees on why they should work for your business. You've had to convince your business partner, spouse, and friends why your business idea is a good one. Those are all acts of sales and marketing.

Now you have to repeatedly market and sell your product or service to your customers. Your marketing will fail, and often fail miserably, if you do not have a solid understanding of your sales process. You have to understand why your customers are going to buy from you and you've got to be prepared to take them on their buyer's journey to close the sale.

The ability to sell effectively and efficiently is one every successful business owner has cultivated, and continues to develop. It is a task that you have to continually work on throughout your career in order to be – and stay – successful.

Fortunately, making sales is a step-by-step process that can be learned, customized, and continuously improved. There are a wide range of tools available to help and support your sales efforts.

You don't have to be the most outgoing, enthusiastic person to be successful at sales. You don't even have to be a good public speaker. All you need is an understanding of the basic sales process, and a genuine passion for what you are selling.

## **Killer Sales 101**

Making sales is a process. There are clear, step-by-step actions that can be taken and result in a sale.

The sales process varies according to the type of business, type of customers and type of product or service that is offered; however, the core steps are the same. Similarly, sales training varies from individual to individual, but the core skills and abilities remain the same.

Here is a basic seven-step process that you can follow, or fine tune to suit your unique products and services. Remember that each step is important, and builds on the step previous. It is essential to become adept at each step, instead of solely focusing on closing the sale.

### **1. Preparation**

Make sure you have prepared for your meeting, presentation, or day on the phone making calls. You have complete control of this part of the sales

process, so it is important to do everything you can to set the stage for your success.

- Understand your product or service inside and out.
- Thoroughly know your key marketing messages.
- Prepare all the necessary materials, and organize them neatly.
- Keep your place of business tidy and organized.
- Ensure you appear professional and well groomed.
- Do some research on your potential client and brainstorm to find common ground.

## **2. Build a Relationship**

The first few minutes you spend with a potential customer set the stage for the rest of your interaction. First impressions are everything. Your goal in the second step is to relax the customer and begin to develop a relationship with them. Establishing a real relationship with your customer will create trust.

- Make a great first impression: shake hands, make eye contact, and introduce yourself.
- Remain confident and professional, but also personable.
- Mirror their speech and behavior.
- Begin with general questions and small talk.
- Show interest in them and business.
- Notice and comment on positives.
- Find some common ground on which to relate.

### **3. Discuss Needs + Wants**

Once you have spent a few moments getting to know your prospect, start asking open-ended questions to discover some of their needs and wants. If they have responded to a marketing message, ask what part of the message resonated with them. If you are meeting them to present your product or service, ask why they are interested in, or what criteria they have in mind for that product or service.

- If you are making a sales presentation, ask for a few moments at the outset to outline the purpose of your visit, as well as how you have structured the presentation.
- Listen intently, and repeat back information you are not sure you understand.
- Ask open-ended questions to get them talking. The longer they talk, the more insight they are providing you into their needs and purchase motivations.
- Ask clarifying questions about their responses.
- If you become sure the customer is going to buy your product or service, begin to ask questions specific to the offering. i.e., what size/color do you prefer?

### **4. Present the Solution**

Once you have a solid understanding of what they are looking for, or what issue they are looking to resolve, you can begin to present the solution: your product or service.

- Explain how your product or service will solve their problem or meets their needs. If several products apply, begin by presenting the mid-level product.
- Illustrate your points with anecdotes about other happy customers, or awards the product or service has earned.
- Use hypothetical examples featuring your customer. Encourage them to picture a scenario after their purchase.
- Begin by describing the benefits of the product (answer What In It For Me for your prospect), then follow up with features and advantages.
- Watch your customer's behavior as you speak, and ask further qualifying questions in response to body language and verbal comments.
- Give the customer an opportunity to ask you questions or provide feedback about each product or service after you have described or explained it.
- Ask closed-ended questions to gain agreement.

## **5. Overcome Objections**

As you present the product or service, take note of potential objections by asking open-ended questions and monitoring body language. Expect that objections will arise and prepare for it. Consider brainstorming a list of all potential objections, and writing down your responses.

- Repeat the objection back to the customer to ensure you understand them correctly.
- Empathize with what they have said, and then provide a response that overcomes the objection.
- Confirm that the answer you have provided has overcome their objection by repeating yourself.

## **The Eight Most Common Objections**

The product or service does not seem valuable to me.

There is no reason for me to act now. I will wait.

It's safest not to make a decision right away.

There is not enough money for the purchase.

The competitor or another department offers a better product.

There are internal issues between people or departments.

The relationship with the decision maker is strained.

There is an existing contract in place with another business.

## **6. Close**

This is an important part of the sales process that should be handled delicately. Deciding when to close is a judgment call that must be made in the moment during the sale. Ideally, you have presented a solution to their problem, overcome objections, and have the customer in a place where they are ready to buy.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you close the sale:

- Does my prospect agree that there is value in my product or service?
- Does my prospect understand the features and benefits of the product or service?
- Are there any remaining objections that must be handled?
- What other factors could influence my prospect's decision to buy?
- Have I minimized the risk involved in the purchase, and provided some level of urgency?

Once you have determined it is time to make the sale, here are some sample statements you can use to get the process rolling:

- So, should we get started?
- Shall I grab a new one from the back?
- If you just give me your credit card, I can take care of the transaction while you continue browsing.
- When would you like the product delivered?
- We can begin next month if we receive payment by the end of the week.
- Can I email you a draft contract tomorrow?

## **7. Service + Follow-up**

Once you have made the sale, your work is not over. You want to ensure that that customer will become a loyal, repeat customer, and that they will refer their friends to your business.

Ask them to be in your customer database, and keep in touch with regular newsletters. Follow up with a phone call or drop by to ask how they are enjoying the product or service, and if they have any further questions or needs you can assist them with.

This contact opportunity will also allow you ask for a referral, or an up sell. At the very least, it will ensure you are continuing to foster and build a relationship with the client.

## **Up selling**

Up selling is simply inviting your customers to spend more money in your business by purchasing additional products or services. This could include more of the same product, complementary products, or impulse items.



Regardless, up selling is an effective way to increase profits and create loyal clients – without spending any money to acquire the business. These clients are already purchasing from you – which means they perceive value in what you have to offer – so take the information you have gained in the sales process and offer them a little bit more.

You experience up selling on a daily basis. From “do you want fries with that?” to “have you heard about our product protection program?” companies across the globe have tapped into and trained their staff on the value of the up sell.

Up selling is truly rooted in good customer service. If your client purchases a new computer printer, you’ll need to make sure they have the cords required to connect it to the computer, regular and photo paper, and color and black ink.

If you don’t suggest these items, they may arrive home and realize they do not have all the materials needed to use the product. They may choose to purchase those materials somewhere closer, cheaper, or more helpful.

Customer education is another form of up selling. What if your customer doesn’t realize that you sell a variety of printer paper and stationery in addition to computer hardware like printers? Take every opportunity to educate your customer on the products and services you offer that may be of interest to them.

An effective way of implementing an up sell system into your business is simply by creating add-on checklists for the products or services you offer. Each item has a list of related items that your customer may need. This will encourage your staff to develop the habit of asking for the up sell.

Other up sell strategies that can be implemented include:

- **At the point of sale.** This is a great place for impulse items like candy, flashlights, nail scissors, etc.
- **In a newsletter.** This is an effective strategy for customer education.
- **In your merchandising.** Place strips of impulse items near related items. For example, paper clips with paper and pens near binders.
- **Over the phone.** If someone is placing an order for delivery, offer additional items in the same shipment for convenience.
- **With new products.** Feature each new product or service that you offer prominently in your business, and ask your staff to mention it to every customer.

## Sales Team

Employing a team of strong salespeople, or even just one strong closer, is one of the most beneficial steps you can ever take for the success of your business.

## **What Makes a Good Salesperson?**

There are a lot of salespeople out there – but what qualities and skills make a great salesperson? These are the attributes you will want to find or develop in your team:

- Willingness to continuously learn and improve sales skills
- Sincerity in relating to customers and providing solutions to their objectives
- An understanding of the company's big picture
- A communication style that is direct, polite, and professional
- Honesty and respect for other team members, customers, as well as the competition.
- Ability to manage time
- Enthusiastic
- Inquisitive
- A great listener
- Ability to quickly interpret, analyze, and respond to information during the sales process
- Ability to connect and develop relationships of trust with potential clients
- Professional appearance

## **Team Building – Keeping Your Team Together**

In many businesses, sales is a department or a whole team of people who work together to generate leads and convert customers. Effective management of your sales team is a skill every business owner should cultivate. Make sure you understand how the following areas affect your sales.

### **Communication**

- Are sales targets and results regularly reviewed?
- Are opportunities for input regularly provided?
- Do sales staff members have a clear understanding of what is expected?
- Do all staff members know daily, weekly, and quarterly targets?
- Are your targets reasonable and obtainable?

### **Performance Management**

- Are sales staff members motivated to reach targets?
- Are sales staff recognized and rewarded once those targets are reached?
- Are there regular opportunities for skills training and development?
- Do staff members have broad and comprehensive product or industry knowledge?
- Is there opportunity for growth within the company?
- Is performance regularly and fairly reviewed?

### **Operations**

- Do you have a solid understanding of your sales numbers (revenue, profit, margins)?
- Are your sales processes regularly reviewed?
- Do you have a variety of sales scripts prepared?
- Do you measure conversion rates?
- How are your leads generated?

# **Sales Tools**

Every salesperson should have an arsenal of tools on hand to assist them in the sales process. These tools can act as aids while a sale is taking place, or help to foster continual learning and development of the salesperson's skills and approach.

The list below includes some popular sales tools. Add to this list with other resources that are specific to your business or industry.

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Description + Benefit</b>
<b>Scripts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Used for incoming and outgoing telemarketing, cold calls, door-to-door sales, in-store sales</li> <li>➤ Create several different scripts throughout your business</li> <li>➤ Maintains consistency in your sales approach</li> <li>➤ Revise and review your scripts regularly</li> </ul>
<b>Presentation Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ High-quality information about your product or service</li> <li>➤ Forms: PowerPoint presentation, brochure, product sheets, proposal</li> <li>➤ Serves as an outline of your sales presentation, and keeps you on task</li> </ul>
<b>Colleagues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A source of help and advice, especially when you are on the same team or sell similar products</li> <li>➤ Also a source of support</li> </ul>
<b>Customer Databases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ An accurate, up-to-date database of customer contact information and contact history</li> <li>➤ Used to stay in touch with clients</li> <li>➤ Can also be used for direct mail and follow-up telemarketing</li> </ul>
<b>The Internet</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A powerful resource for sales help and advice</li> <li>➤ Information to help improve your sales process</li> <li>➤ Online sales coaching</li> <li>➤ Source for product knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Ongoing Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Constant improvement of your sales skills</li> <li>➤ Constant increase in product knowledge</li> <li>➤ Investment in yourself and your company</li> </ul>

## 8 Tips for Better Sales

- **Dress for the sale.** Dress professionally, appear well put together and maintain good hygiene. Ensure you are not only dressed professionally, but *appropriately*. Would your client feel more comfortable if you wore a suit, or jeans and blazer?
- **Speak their language.** Show you understand their industry or culture, and use phrases your customer understands. This may require researching industry jargon or common phrases. Remember to avoid using words and phrases that are used in the sales process: sold, contract, telemarketing, finance, interest, etc. Doing so will help break down the salesperson/customer barrier.
- **Ooze positivity.** Show up or answer the phone with a smile, and leave your personal or business issues behind. Be enthusiastic about what you have to offer, and how that offering will benefit your customer. Reflect this not only in your voice, but also in your body language.
- **Deliver a strong pitch or presentation.** Be confident and convincing. Leave self-doubt at the door, and walk in assuming the sale. Take time to explain complex concepts, and always connect what you're saying to your audience in a specific way.
- **Be a poster-child for good manners.** Accept any amenity you're offered, listen intently, don't interrupt, don't show up late, have a strong handshake, and give everyone you are speaking to equal attention. Put the cellphone away and focus on the person in front of you.

- **Avoid sensitive subjects.** Politics, religion, swearing, sexual innuendos and racial comments are absolutely off-limits. So are negative comments about other customers or the competition.
- **Create a real relationship.** Icebreakers and small talk are not just to pass the time before your presentation. They are how relationships get established. Show genuine interest in everything your customer has to say. Ask questions about topics you know they are passionate about. Speak person to person, not salesperson to customer. Remember that building a relationship is everything. People rarely buy just a product. They also buy the salesperson.
- **Know more than you need to.** Impress clients with comprehensive knowledge – not only of your product or service – but also of the people who use that product or service, and industry trends. Be seen as an expert in order to build trust and respect.



# 3

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## **Creating Killer Marketing Material**

Your marketing collateral gets sent out in the world to do one thing: act as an ambassador for your product or service, in place of *you*. This may seem like a big job for a piece of paper or a short video, but it's a helpful way to think about the materials you create.

When you meet with a potential or existing client, you do a number of things. You make sure you are well prepared with all the information the customer could need. You dress in clothing that is appropriate. You anticipate their needs, and offer a solution to their problems. You may also cater to how they best like to receive information.

Chances are, you wouldn't meet with clients just for the sake of meeting with a client – say, for instance, to show off your new suit. Likewise, you shouldn't create and distribute collateral that is non-essential.

We all know that the biggest challenge for small businesses is the limited number of zeros attached to their marketing budget. Marketing materials can be expensive, and a single, well-produced piece has the ability to devour the entire budget. Given that billion-dollar marketing campaigns fail every day, how can

you be sure to make the most of, and be successful with, the dollars you're working within?

The answer? Limit yourself to only the essential items for your individual business, and produce them *well* with the resources you have.

## **Your Essential Marketing Materials**

The easiest way to throw away your marketing budget is to create and produce marketing materials *you don't need*. Since many pieces of collateral are paper-based, this not only leaves you with boxes of extra (outdated) materials, but also takes a huge toll on the environment.

Take some time to determine what marketing materials you do need, and stick to your list. It's easy to want to "keep up with the Joneses" when your neighboring business installs a brand-new flashing neon sign, but remember your focus should be on creating profit in your business, not matching the other businesses item for item.

**Know your target market.** Make sure you have a solid understanding of your customer base. From that knowledge, you can easily determine what the best way is to reach out and communicate with them. Are they a paper-based or techno savvy client group? Do they appreciate being contacted by email or mail? Do they watch a lot of videos? Are they impressed by flashy design, or simple pieces? *How* you communicate is often just as or more important than *what* you communicate.

**Pay attention to costs.** Do you really need a die-cut business card? Does your flyer absolutely require ink to the edges? Unique touches to marketing

collateral can grab a customer's attention, but they can also dramatically increase the cost of production. Keep an eye out during the design process and make strategic choices about graphic elements.

**Make mistakes – in small batches.** Not sure if that flyer is going to do the trick? Testing out a limited time offer? Small production runs may cost a little more, but you'll avoid collecting boxes of unusable materials. Or, try a split run with type versions of the same piece and see what works best.

**Keep the environment in mind.** Environmental responsibility is on everyone's mind these days – including your customers. Always question if a particular marketing item can be produced in electronic format. Consider eliminating plastic bags in exchange for cloth ones, printed with your logo; print everything double-sided; send electronic newsletters; use your website to communicate; and, use recycled paper and envelopes when you can.

**Brainstorm your wish list.** Create a list of desired marketing materials, and ignore expenses, clients, or any other constraint. Then, beside each item, indicate realistically if it is a needed, wanted, not needed, or electronic item. The next page includes a checklist to get you started. Once you have finished, re-write your list in priority order. This will keep you focused on the essentials only.

# Marketing Materials Checklist

Item	Need	Want	Don't Need	Electronic
Logo				
Business Cards				
Brochure				
Website				
Newsletter				
Catalog				
Advertisements				
Flyers				
Fridge Magnet				
Branded Swag (pens, etc.)				
Employee Clothing				
Product Labels				
Signage				
Company Introduction Video				
Email Signature				
Blog				
Letterhead + Envelopes				
Thank You Cards				
Notepads				
Seasonal Gifts				
Company Profile				

## **Your USP and Target Client**

Every company needs an identity and something that sets it apart from the competition. This is known as a Unique Selling Proposition (USP). This should be the compelling reason why someone would work with your company instead of a competitor.

Here's one of the easiest ways to come up with your USP. It's called The Five Magic Phrases. Phrase one: Identify "what" you do (primary activity). Phrase two: Identify the "product" or "service." Phrase 3: Identify the "how" you do it that differentiates you from your competitors. Phrase 4: Identify "for whom" you do it (your target audience). And finally, Phrase 5: Identify at least one key benefit. Do this for all of your primary activities and several of your secondary activities to really help you discover that sets you apart.

Here's an example:

My business sells cutting-edge marketing information online and through live events to small business owners to help them avoid costly mistakes, market better than their competitors, and create successful, sustainable businesses.

## **Your Ideal Client**

The next step is to determine your ideal customer. Pull out a piece of paper or get on your computer and make a list of common characteristics of who you believe would be an ideal client or customer.

Write down both positive traits and negative ones. For instance, write down “pays their bills on time.”

Mark the characteristics as #1 through #5. #1 equals all clients need to have; #2 equals most need; #3 some might have; #4 do not need; and #5 must not have. #1s and #2 are attributes of your ideal customer. Customers with attributes #4 and #5 are who you want to avoid. Once you have narrowed your audience down to its common characteristics, you can research how to focus on those attributes, as either inclusions or exclusions.

Once you've identified the characteristics of your target customer, spend some time thinking of how you can get your message in front of them. Are they likely to be online? If they listen to radio, what stations might they listen to? What public places do they frequent? Do they read the newspaper or magazines? It's critical for all of your marketing efforts that you have a good idea of who your target audience is and how you might be able to reach them.

## **Headlines + Sub headlines**

So once you've decided on your USP, who your target client is, and how to reach them, it's time to think about what marketing collateral you absolutely need to reach your target audience and what you are going to say.

Let's start with your headlines. If your headlines were all a potential customer read, how do you think your marketing materials would fare?

Headlines need to be bold, dramatic, shocking and absolutely answer the questions “What’s in it for me?” or “Why should I care?”

Headlines (and sub headlines) are vital in today’s market because we are bombarded with so much information that we scan everything. Readers are skimming your materials to find out why they should bother paying attention to your product or service. Hit their hot buttons, and tell them why they should care, in your headlines!

I often run my headlines through an online headline analyzer to let me know if I am using emotional, intellectual, or spiritual words. There are several free analyzers online. They give you real insight into your word choices and are invaluable in striking the right chord in your messaging.

Remember that headlines and sub headlines are not just for advertisements. They work wonders in newsletters, sales letters, brochures and websites, and even as scripting in a video. Once you have the right words, they can and should be incorporated into all of your essential marketing materials.

## **Design**

The cost of professional design can eat up the majority of your marketing budget in a hurry. Let's be real. Professional graphic designers who are good at what they do are expensive. They are worth it, but it's hard to justify the cost at first. However, the cost of distributing materials that look and feel unprofessional can often be much higher. The key is to find the middle ground.

Unless you have design or desktop publishing experience – or even if you do – your time is probably not best spent designing your own marketing materials. For an occasional flyer or social media post, sure, you don't need to

spend resources on those (get to know online tools like Canva, Stencil, or Postermywall to help you design at least a presentable graphic), but for larger marketing pieces that will represent your brand for a long time to come, you might want to bring in an expert. Depending on the size of your business and your graphic needs (i.e., Do you need frequent photography of your products?) there are a number of options you can choose from:

1. **Hire a design agency.** This is no doubt the most costly of your options. However, if you have a number of items to be designed, you may be able to get a package rate. Another option is to have the design agency create a logo and stationery package for you, then create a “how-to” guide for use of the logo, fonts, and other graphic elements in the rest of your marketing materials.
2. **Hire a freelance designer.** For most small businesses, the benefits of using a freelance designer (aside from cost savings) are convenience and trust. If you are lucky enough to find one you work well with, work hard to establish a seamless working relationship and you’ll never worry about the design of your marketing materials again. Ask colleagues for recommendations of local designers, or post a request in a Facebook group or even run an ad on Craigslist. Plus, there are dozens of sites like Fiverr.com, Freelancer.com, UpWorks.com and others where you can find freelance graphic designers for a fraction of the cost of an agency.
3. **Hire a part-time design employee.** Need to hire someone part-time for a task around the office or shop? Consider recruiting someone with design skills and hiring them for part-time work. This could include graphic design students, or someone with an interest (and talent) in the field.



Whichever option you choose – or if you choose to design your materials yourself - the two most important things to remember about design are:

1. **Keep it consistent.** Your marketing materials must be consistent, or your customers will never learn to recognize your brand.
2. **Keep it simple.** Simple, clean design is the most effective way of communicating. Use “wow” pieces sparingly.

## **Guidelines for the Top 10 Marketing Materials**

### **Professional Headshot**

Invest in professional headshots. You will need them for your social media profiles, your brochures, your business cards, and other marketing collateral. A selfie with your cellphone is not adequate. Hire a professional photographer and have them shoot you in various poses and outfits – standing, sitting, close-up, full body. And have the chosen photos provided as high-resolution and in a couple different sizes. It's an important investment. And plan to have new shots taken no less than every two years.

### **Logo**

- **Use design resources.** If you are going to spend any money on outside design help, this is the time to do it. Your logo is the visual representation of your product or service, and appears on everything that relates to your business. This is the core of your brand image, and needs to be done right the first time.

- **Remember the purpose.** The logo needs to be a unique reflection of your business, your business values, and the industry you work in. Before you commit to your logo, make sure to give careful consideration to color choice, image selection and image recognition – as well as the logos that already exist in the marketplace. Test it out on your family and friends for an outside opinion and use their feedback.
- **Don't get too complicated.** Can it be produced (and seen clearly) in black and white? In a single color? With your company name? Too often businesses design their own logos that include a complex assortment of photos, words, and solid design elements. These do not photocopy well, and can't be clearly read at a small scale. Keep your logo design down to a graphic image and the name of your business.

## **Business Cards**

- **Cover the basics.** A business card needs to communicate your basic contact information to potential clients, including who you are and *what your business does*. Make sure you've covered the basics and made it easy for them to be in touch.
  - **Name**
  - **Title**
  - **Company Name**
  - **Company Slogan / Description / USP**
  - **Best Phone Number**
  - **Email Address**
  - **Fax Number (if used frequently, if not, eliminate)**
  - **Address**
  - **Website**

- **Give them a reason to keep it.** What is going to keep the recipient from throwing it out, or filing it in a 3” binder of other cards? Make the card worth keeping by adding something useful to the backside. For example, coffee shops put frequent buyer incentives on the backside of their cards, encouraging customers to keep them in their wallets. Other examples include pick-up schedules, reminders, calendars, testimonials, or coupons.
- **Produce a high quality card.** Use at least 100lb card stock, and print in color. Choose clear, easy to read fonts that aren’t any smaller than 9pt. And don't get fancy on colors and type. Make it readable! Before you commit to a printing, take a photo of your card. Is all of the information still readable? If not, re-design.

## Brochures

- **Cover the basics.** Each brochure you produce should include your basic marketing message, USP, and detailed company contact information. Product or service features, and customer benefits should be clearly displayed and described.
- **Be purpose-focused.** Why are you producing this brochure? Are you featuring a new product line? Trying to increase awareness? Introducing your service to a new market? Stay closely connected to the purpose behind your brochure, and ensure that all of the information (and images) in the brochure support that purpose.
- **Keep it simple.** Make sure the design and information organization is clean and easy to navigate. Like advertisements, leaving blank spaces

gives the reader a break and makes it easier to narrow in on key messages.

- **Choose high quality production.** If you don't invest in your business, why should anyone else? Produce your brochure on high quality paper, in vivid color, and have it professionally folded. An impressive-looking brochure will travel farther than a homemade one – from one client's hands to another.
- **Keep it fresh.** If you produce brochures on a regular basis, consider giving each a theme to distinguish the information as new and interesting. Keep the overall look and feel consistent, but play with images and content layout to revitalize the design.

## Newsletters

- **Be in touch.** Don't wait until your existing clients walk back into your store. Show them they're important to your business, and keep them updated on new products and services by distributing a personalized newsletter.
- **Use an online distribution service.** Online email marketing tools (CRM tools) have never been easier or cheaper to use, and enable you to personalize your letters without much effort. They will also track for you which clients open their newsletters, and which click through to your website.
- **Provide information, tell a story.** Engage the reader with a short anecdote, or a piece of relevant information. Many people are bombarded by hard-copy and electronic letters on a daily basis, so make sure yours is worthy of their reading time. Include an "experts corner" or "new

product feature” and structure the newsletter like your own business newspaper. Add links to relevant media articles, or special offers.

- **Choose a frequency you can maintain.** Newsletters can be time consuming, so be realistic about how often you promise to distribute them. This depends on your resources, and the needs of your business, but generally once a month to once every three months is a good time frame.

### **Company (or Corporate) Profile**

- **Your ultimate company brochure.** Your company profile includes all pertinent information on your business and your offering, and acts as the base for all other marketing items. These are generally longer pieces – from five to 20 pages in length, allowing you ample room for written and visual content.
- **Tell your story.** The company profile is the place to tell the story of your business. Engage the reader, use anecdotes, and describe how and why your company was created. If you inherited the family business, describe how you’re carrying on tradition and instilling new life. If you created your company from scratch with your college roommate, let the reader know. These real life details are interesting and establish trust with your potential clients and associates.
- **Communicate your values.** Here you have the space to describe your company’s vision, values and approach, or philosophies. Make sure you relate your values to your offering, and keep this section short and succinct.

- **Explain your offering – features, benefits and all.** Just like your brochure, make sure to describe the full features and benefits of your product or service. Sprinkle testimonials throughout the design to back up your statements. This can include your full range of services, or simply an overview of your product types. Use professional images and creative copy to keep readers engaged.
- **Choose high-quality design and production.** Spend time creating a company profile that will last. Then, spend money producing one that will impress. Choose glossy paper, and a high-quality press, and leave the profiles around your store and office for clients to read and admire.

## Signage

- **Get professional advice.** Outdoor signage can be a daunting task for anyone who hasn't designed, produced, or otherwise gone through the process. Since signage is influenced by a variety of factors – one of which is your municipal government signage laws – you may wish to enlist the help of a professional (a signage designer or printer) to guide you through the process and avoid costly errors.
- **Make it visible.** All of your outdoor signage should be easily seen from the street, or within the plaza or complex you are located in. In some cases, you may need more than one sign to do this. Keep in mind how your sign will look at night, as well as during the day, as your company logo and phone number or website needs to be visible at all times.
- **Make it distinct.** When it comes to signage, you can get really creative with materials, lights, and colors. While you need to maintain logo, color, and font consistency, you can add other graphic elements that may

not work on the rest of your collateral, including 3D elements and window treatments. Make it memorable.

- **Remember your indoor signage.** Every business needs indoor signage to continually remind customers where they are. This includes section signage, product signage, way finding systems, and promotion announcements. If your business is located in an office, consider signage with your logo and company name above the reception area. Again, keep this signage consistent with the rest of your company materials, and you will be contributing to brand recognition.

## Advertisements + Flyers

- **Place ads strategically.** Once you have determined who your target market is, you can focus on advertising in the publications they are most likely to read, and distributing flyers in places they are most likely to be. Spend ad dollars strategically, and don't spend them all at once. Take time to test what publications work, and which don't by measuring the response from each placement. And, when you place ads, request placement that is well-forward and in the top right hand corner.
- **Grab their attention.** You have less than half a second to grab the attention of your audience with print advertising, so use it wisely. Spend the bulk of your time crafting the headline and choosing compelling images.
- **Keep their attention.** If you caught their attention, you have another two seconds to keep it. Use subheadings to further entice them to read on for the details of your product or service offer.

- **Tell them why they should buy.** Always include your marketing message or USP in your advertising. Describe the features and benefits of your product or service, but focus on the benefits that will trigger an emotional response from your target audience – love, money, luxury, convenience, and security.
- **Tell them how they can buy.** Include a call to action beside your contact information, and include your phone number, website address, and business address (if applicable). You may wish to include a scarcity or urgency offer to compel your readers to act fast.
- **Know the importance of white space.** If you try to cram too much information into your ad or flyer, your readers will skip it. Clean, clear, easy to read ads and one-page flyers with succinct messages are most effective.

## Website

- **Be purpose-focused.** Like your brochure, your website can serve a number of purposes. To be effective, you need to narrow in on the specific purpose when designing the content structure of the pages. Who is your audience? What do you want them to leave the site knowing? What do you want the site to make them do? Visit your store? Buy your offering? Pick up the phone? Download a free report? Make sure you are clear on this point before you start.
- **Make the address easy to remember (and find!).** A website address that is too long or too complicated will not get remembered, or found. Do a search for available website addresses that relate to your business or



marketing message, and try to secure a site with a .com ending. If your company name is taken, use your USP or guarantee instead.

- **Focus on content.** The overall structure of how you organize the content on your site is like the foundation of your house. You can change the paint color, and the furniture, but the foundation is more or less there for good. Before you work with a designer and create the visual fabric of your website, focus on creating solid copy that is clearly organized. Put together a map of your structure, starting with your homepage and sub-pages, and allocating specific content to each page.
- **Revitalize regularly.** Your company is always changing, and so should your website. This is an important (and relatively inexpensive) way to communicate your company news and achievements, and most likely the easiest source of information for most of your customers. Have areas for easy content updates – like a “news” section – and make sure sections like “employees” and “services” are kept up to date. For larger updates, go back to your purpose and website map, and make sure the content changes still support the original intent of the website.
- **Organize for intuition.** Make key information easy to access – especially your contact information. You can quickly tell if a website is easy to navigate, because the information you are looking for appears in a natural order. For example, when visiting a restaurant website, a link to the reservations page is provided on the menu page. While you’re putting together your website map, do some research online and investigate what does and doesn’t work. A good rule of thumb is to ensure it takes no more than three clicks to access a page. Bury important content too deep, and your audience will get frustrated and leave.

- **Keep consistent with marketing materials.** Your website is an extension of your marketing campaign, and should be treated as such. Use consistent logo placements, fonts, colors and images so that all elements of your collateral and ongoing marketing campaigns are unified. If you are running a new promotion, or featuring a new item in an advertisement, include that information on your website. Customers responding to the ad will be reinforced, and customers who did not see the ad will be aware of the offer.
- **Measure your results.** Your website is a piece of your marketing collateral, just like brochures and advertisements, and should be evaluated for effectiveness on a regular basis. Easy website analysis tools, like Google Analytics, will show you which pages your audience is viewing, how long they're staying on each page, and where and when they leave the site. That is powerful information when it comes to structuring content, and choosing which page to put your most important messages.
- **Sidenote:** If you have a website that is currently working (ie visitors are buying products, are downloading your free reports, are calling your office for appointments), be very cautious in updating to a whole new look. An update can sometimes cause more harm than good. A best practice is to insist that your website designer make a full back-up of your existing site before any changes are made. After a period of 30 to 45 days, if you are not seeing similar or improved results with your new site, ask your designer to re-install your old site. It happens time and time again. Redesigns that do not improve results should not be tolerated.

# 4

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## **Killer Copywriting**

When it comes to marketing, we all know that *what* you say is just as important as *how* you say it.

In fact, I would argue that how you say something is even more important than what you have to say.

Think about it. The whole purpose of communicating is to get a message to its intended audience. In business, this means telling your target market why they should buy your product or service, and why they should buy it from you.

You could have the best, most irresistible offer out there, but if you can't get your audience to pay attention to your ad, it's worthless. You may offer the solution to their biggest frustration, but if you can't get them to read beyond your headline, it means nothing.

Effective copywriting gets your message to your target audience and then leads them to act. **Effective copywriting gets you the sale.**

## **Good Copy, Bad Copy**

There are a number of misconceptions out there when it comes to copywriting for effective marketing.

The first is that good copy must be clever (or witty, funny, dramatic, ironic, etc.). People get wrapped up in the idea that their ads need to compete with the ads on the pages of X magazine. They feel that their campaign needs to be littered with clever words that allude to the pop culture of the day, or position their company as “hip” or sophisticated.

This, in my experience, is rubbish.

The second assumption most business owners make is that good copy is the backbone of a successful ad or marketing campaign. I can't tell you how many good copywriters I've seen take the blame for a bad offer, or poorly positioned product. Copy is very, very, important. But even great copy about a bad product will have very dismal results.

The third misconception is that you need to be a good writer to write good copy. Or, if you're not a good writer, that you need to spend thousands of dollars on a copywriter for each of your marketing pieces.

That's rubbish, too.

So, then, what is good copy? And how do you write it?

# The Purpose of Your Copy

Here are the key points you need to remember when crafting your advertisements:

- a. A good headline *gets your readers to read the first sentence.*
- b. A good first sentence *gets your readers to read the second sentence.*
- c. And so on and on until the end of your marketing piece; or, the close of the sale.

Simple, isn't it?

The copy in your marketing materials is intended to persuade your audience to buy what you have to offer – one sentence at a time. Once you understand that copywriting is persuasive writing, not creative or technical writing, you will have much more success with your copywriting efforts.

Persuasive copy can be written in a number of ways – which we will discuss in a moment – but always includes:

- a compelling, shocking, or gripping headline
- a strong promise
- a heavy focus on benefits, not features
- proof to back up your claims

Compelling writing slowly builds a case, and leads the reader down a specific path to the final destination: the Call to Action. The argument or message is built up over several sentences, or paragraphs, until the reader is primed and ready to take the action required.

For example, if you came right out in your headline and said, “Buy Tommy’s Sprockets to Solve Your Problems,” your highly skeptical audience would not give your ad a second glance. You’ve asked for the sale right up front, before building some trust and slowly persuading your readers.

However, if you took the time to build your case, the ad would read something like this:

***DON’T BUY ANOTHER SPROCKET UNTIL YOU READ THIS***

*Did you know that the average sprocket is made with only 25% authentic materials? To speed up production and reduce costs, sprocket manufacturing over the last decade has begun to rely heavily on artificial materials.*

*Would you trust the safety of your family to a product that reduces quality to preserve profit?*

*At Tommy’s Sprockets, we put the safety of your family first. Our sprockets are stronger and safer, because we still make them the old fashioned way – with 100% authentic materials and a lifetime guarantee.*

*Sure, they cost a little more than the average sprocket, but how much more would you pay for the safety of your family?*

This ad isn’t going to win any Pulitzer Prizes, but it doesn’t need to. It engages the audience, communicates benefits, supports with features, and paints a compelling argument.

## Headlines

Headlines are so crucial to the copywriting in your advertisement, your blog post, your social media blast, or sales letter that they deserve an entire section in this chapter.

Your headline is the first chance you have to make an impression on your target audience. Quite possibly, it is also your only chance. Without a headline that grabs your reader by the neck and focuses their attention on what you have to say, they will never read the rest and will never know what action you were hoping they would take.

That's why even the greatest copywriters spend 50% of their time on the headline, and 50% on the rest of the copy.

With that in mind, it's important to note that your headline needs to do more than simply grab the attention of your potential readers. It also needs to tell them why they should care – your headline needs to send a full message that informs and encourages them to read the rest of the ad.

The most effective way to do this is to make an offer or promise to the reader that makes the time they invest in reading your ad worthwhile. The best headlines stop the reader in their tracks and get them to think “Hey, they are talking to me.”

Seems like a lot for 8 to 10 words, doesn't it?

## **Headline Length**

The general understanding when it comes to headline length is the shorter the better. But this comes from headline creation for newspapers and magazines, where space is crunched and nothing is up for sale.

In fact, based on studies done in the direct mail industry, 40% to 50% of the most effective headlines are more than eight words in length – meaning there are really no hard and fast rules for headline length.

Another marketing example of headline length is in sales letters. I'm sure you've seen headlines in sales letters that actually comprise small paragraphs. This is the opposite way of thinking from newspaper headlines, but in this medium it works.

The point is, if you need more than eight words to get your message across, then use more.

## **Headline Readers: The 80/20 Rule**

According to readership statistics, eight out of 10 people read headlines, but only two of 10 will read the rest of the advertisement or letter. This proves the importance of crafting powerful, meaningful headlines. It also proves that an effective headline is the golden key to getting the rest of the piece read.

So, it would stand to reason that the better your headline, the higher the chances of improving the averages in these statistics.



## Headline Types

**Direct Headlines** simply state the offer or proposition in as clear a manner as possible. *All winter clothing 30% off.*

**News Headlines** typically announce a new product or piece of information and mimic a headline you would read in a newspaper. *Johnny launches new line of improved sprockets.*

**The Question Headline** asks a question that the reader can relate to or would be compelled to read on to find the answer. *Do you want clearer acne-free skin?*

**The ‘How to’ Headline** tells the reader the body copy or product will explain step by step instructions for something of interest to the reader. *How to save \$1,000 in energy costs this year.*

**Command Headline** is one of the strongest headline types, and commands the reader to do something. *Make your dreams come true today.*

**The ‘7 Reasons Why’ Headline** tells the reader the body copy will include 7 (or another number, but odd numbers appear to pull better) points that will either back up a claim or illustrate product benefits. *7 reasons why your teenagers won’t listen to you.*

**Testimonial Headlines** leverages the power of outsider and expert opinion and quotes them directly in the headline. *“Tommy’s sprockets have changed my life” says Brad Pitt.*

### **In summary, your headline should:**

- Be immediately engaging
- Be useful and relevant to the reader
- Convey information
- Trigger an emotional reaction
- Intrigue your audience

## **Strategies for Better Copywriting**

### **Simplify, Simplify, Simplify**

Good copy is written in clear, simple language with short sentence structure. It's conversational and reads like you are speaking to a friend or colleague.

Important points – like benefits – are listed in numbered or bullet format and traditional grammar is sacrificed for brevity.

Always read your copy before you finalize it and take out any unnecessary words. Find the shortest way to communicate the most information.

### **Be More Persuasive**

Persuasion is an important technique for structuring your copy. While there is no clear formula for any type of copywriting, persuasive copy consistently includes the following elements:

- Has a reader focus from the very beginning
- Each paragraph or section supports the main argument
- Is highly specific and provides proof to support claims
- Includes credible proof like statistics and expert opinion
- Returns the focus to the reader as often as possible

Persuasive writing convinces the reader that they should believe what you say and do what you say, and that there is something in it for them if they do. Again, there is no formula for this and no clear content rules, but there are some strategies you can use to make your writing more persuasive.

### **Repeat your point over and over**

Repetition is a powerful and essential tool when crafting persuasive copy. It often will take several attempts at communicating before someone truly understands what you're saying. The benefit is that the more you say it, and the more ways you say it, the more likely your audience will believe it.

Of course, don't literally repeat yourself verbatim in your copy. Use a few different techniques to communicate the same point – for example, state it directly, tell a story, then repeat it again in your summary.

### **Give them reasons why**

Backup your claims and requests with good reasons and leverage the power of the word 'because.' Studies have proven that even if the reason doesn't make any sense, or isn't directly related to the claim, people will be more likely to believe you simply based on the fact you backed up what you had to say.

## **Make comparisons to prove a point**

Use the power of metaphors, analogies, and similes in your writing. This gives you an opportunity to relate the point you are trying to make directly to something the reader can relate to and understands to be true.

This is effective for making comparisons between like subjects, as well as unlike subjects, depending on the point you are trying to make.

## **Answer silent objections**

Show that you understand the reader's point of view and thought process by answering questions you know they will be considering in their minds.

While you will not be able to address all potential objections in a single piece, or think of all potential objections your reader may raise, you can definitely dispute the most common arguments against what you are claiming.

## **Tell a story**

Storytelling is an effective technique to use in all aspects of your copywriting. People relate to the experiences of others, and strive to learn from or compare themselves to the characters in the anecdotes. The story ends up doing the persuading for you.

## **Focus on Benefits**

This is an obvious aspect of your messaging that you will feature in every piece you write, but it's not always easy to do well. Many writers end up featuring a slew of fake benefits instead of real ones.

Real benefits are things the reader actually cares about. For example, if you sold cough syrup you would want to explain how it eases the cold or flu symptoms, and not that it cures the illness. The symptoms are what are bothering the reader – that’s what aspect of the product they care about and will make their purchase based on.

## **Make a Better Offer**

Compel the reader to act with a stronger offer – one that they just can’t possibly refuse. Make one that seems just believable enough to take action and reap the rewards.

A strong offer features a product or service with a high perceived value for a low cost. It could be a package of products offered for a lower price than the sum of the individual products, or a “free gift” with purchase.

## **Use Words that Work**

Another misconception when it comes to copywriting is that it needs to be 100% unique. I’m not saying you should blatantly plagiarize other writer’s work, but you should definitely pay attention to what works.

This includes how an ad is structured, how a point is made, or the hierarchy of the content. It also includes word choice. Certain words in marketing have been proven to have a stronger impact on general consumers than others.

There are tools that are easily available to you, like the headline analyzers I mentioned before, that will provide a list or database of effective

words for use in advertising. Research online or invest in a software programs like Glyphus to use as a resource.

## **Offer a Guarantee**

A guarantee is another technique that will compel a potential customer to take action. A strong guarantee takes the risk involved in purchase decisions away from the customer, and puts it on the seller.

Tell your customer that if your product or service doesn't deliver the performance or results you have promised, you'll give them their money back or compensate them in a way that will make it right.

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## **Killer Marketing Online**

Is your business online? If not, it should be.

The internet is today's primary consumer research tool. If your business does not have an online presence, it is harder for customers to find and choose your business over the competition. With over 73% of North Americans online, it is no wonder that individuals and businesses in all industries are looking to the internet to enhance and support their marketing strategies.

Luckily, it has never been easier to establish and maintain a comprehensive online presence. Internet marketing, also referred to as online marketing, online advertising or e-marketing, is the fastest growing medium for marketing.

But it is not just company websites that users are viewing. Blogs, consumer reviews, chat rooms and a variety of social media are immensely popular.

The internet is a very powerful tool for businesses if used strategically and effectively. It can be a cost saving alternative to traditional marketing approaches, and may be the most effective way to communicate with your target consumer.

A major advantage of the internet is that you are always open. Users can access your business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and depending on your business and the purpose of the website, visitors can also purchase goods at any time, day or night.

## **Internet Marketing for Everyone**

The internet is a great way to create product and brand awareness, develop relationships with consumers and share and exchange information. You can't afford not to be taking advantage of online marketing opportunities because your competition is likely already there.

Internet marketing can take on many different forms. By creating and maintaining a website for your business, you are reaching out to a new consumer base. You can have full control over the messaging that users are receiving and has a global reach.

Internet marketing can be very cost effective. If you have a strong email database of your customers, an e-newsletter may be cheaper and more effective than post mail. You can deliver time sensitive materials immediately and can update your subscribers instantaneously.

### **Top 10 Websites (Globally)**

1. Google
2. Youtube
3. Facebook
4. Baidu (number one Chinese search engine)
5. Yahoo



6. Amazon
7. Wikipedia
8. Google.in (number one search engine in India)
9. Twitter
10. Live.com

You will notice that half of these websites are search engines. Consumers are first researching products, services and companies online, whether it be to compare products, complete a sale, or look for a future employer. Most people in the 18-35 age group obtain all of their information online—including news, weather, product research, etc.

## **Killer Internet Marketing Strategies**

Internet marketing – like all other elements of your marketing campaign – needs to have clear goals and objectives. Creating brand and product awareness will not happen overnight so it is important to budget accordingly, ensuring there is money set aside for maintenance of the website and online tools.

Be flexible with ideas and options—do your research first, try out different options, then test and measure the results. Metrics and evaluations can be updated almost immediately and should be monitored regularly. By keeping an eye out for what online marketing strategies are working and which are not, it will be easier to create a balanced portfolio of marketing techniques. You might find that in certain geographical areas, certain marketing strategies are more effective than others.

This list is by no means the full extent of options available for marketing online, but it is a good place to start when deciding which options are best suited to your company.

## **Create a website**

The primary use for the internet is information seeking, so you should provide consumers with information about your company first hand. You have more control over your branding and messaging and can also collect visitor information to determine what types of internet users are accessing your website.

## **Search Engine Optimization**

Since search engines comprise 50% of the most visited sites globally, you can go through your website to make it more search engine friendly with the aim to increase your organic search listing. An organic search listing refers to listings in search engine results that appear in order of relevance to the entered search terms.

## **Keyword Research**

The first element of good search engine optimization (SEO) you need to understand are keywords. You need to spend some time determining what keywords are most appropriate and relevant for your audience and services. What are they looking for in a search engine that YOUR site would be the perfect response?

The topic is so large that I can't possibly teach you everything you need to know in one simple book. There are literally hundreds of ebooks and courses

on keyword research. There are hundreds of websites and SEO experts who sell software to do keyword research and who will do the research for you.

But I'm going to share with you a fairly quick process that I have found works pretty well for me.

1) Sign in or create an account with Google Adwords. From the top navigation bar under Tools, select the Keyword Planner. In the box that asks where you'd like to start, select Find New Keywords. It will then give you 2 options. I have not found any difference using either one, so just pick one. In the next box, type in a list of words and phrases that are related to your topic. Under targeting, I choose United States and English, though depending on your location and audience, that may be different. Hit search.

2) On the page that pops up, you will see bar graphs and then underneath those you will see two tabs: Ad Group Ideas and Keyword Ideas. Go to the Keyword Ideas tab.

3) There you will get a listing of words and phrases with average monthly search amounts and a column that says "competition." The first box will be the words and phrases that you typed in. Below that will be the words and phrases Google suggests are related to your terms.

4) Review the words and phrases that came up. Go through them and any that are related to your product, and have between 500 and 3,000 searches, hit the arrows in the far right edge of the box that says "add to plan." This will move the term over to the right hand side under My Keyword Ideas. Once you've gone through the first set of words, you want to copy all of the words and phrases in your keyword ideas list and paste the entire list back into the box at the

top of the page and hit “search” again. You'll get more phrases. Go through those and choose the ones that are most relevant to your topic. Repeat this process until very few new keywords come up – usually 3 to 5 times.

Now, what if there are no search terms on your list that get 500 searches? That's okay. Just pick the best ones regardless. You can be very successful online focusing on keywords that only get 50 searches a month. But it's very hard to get noticed on topics that have over 3,000 searches or more a month because there is just too much competition.

5) Now it's time to refine even more. Look at the list on the right hand side in the My Keyword Ideas. Delete any that you could not use easily in a sentence.

6) Copy this list into an excel spreadsheet and type in the number of searches for each phrase.

7) Open up a Google search box.

8) Type the phrase: allintitle: followed by the search term you are interested in within quotes e.g allintitle: "divorce rules Ohio".

9) When the search results come up, look at the top left hand side of the page below the search box. There will be "Results 1 of XXXXXX sites." This is the number of potential competing sites for that particular keyword or phrase. If there are more than 10,000 sites competing with that phrase, I delete it from my list. If there are less than 10,000, I write down the number and move to the next phrase.

Though there is no hard and fast rule, it is a common theory that a term with at least 500 searches per month and fewer than 10,000 sites competing with it are considered to be in a "sweet spot." With targeted promotion, a blog post, Youtube video, press release, or other type of promotion piece can appear on the first page of Google results of a sweet spot term within 72 hours, sometimes less.

Go through your excel spreadsheet and identify the phrases with the best combination of high search volume and low competition. Choose up to 10 terms that you want to focus on.

review

Whenever you are refining your keywords, it is important that you keep in mind that a large portion of searches carried out online contain three words or more. These are called "long tail keywords." So when people are searching for answers on the internet, they will often phrase their search as a question. Therefore, many people will not search for words that describe the solution for their problem (your product). Instead, then search for their problem. So in order to optimize your online activities to their full extent, it is best if you think like the person who is searching online.

Also, because you are going to be using your selected keyword phrases on your website and in articles and in social media posts, make sure you pick phrases that are natural in copy.

Choosing the right keywords is part art, part science. Get this right, and you'll see dramatic results.

## **Using Keywords**

Once you have determined a list of keywords that can be found in the search engines, you have to use them. Have your list of keywords available as you write the copy for your website. Every time you write a blog post, review your keywords. If you use a blog or website built on the Wordpress platform, then I recommend a plugin called SEO Yoast (it changes frequently in response to Google's algorithm changes) which helps you optimize each blog post and each page of your site based on what keyword you use and what Google bots look for when they visit your site.

But optimizing your keyword use on your website or blog will only get you partial results. You should also use your best keywords in your social media profiles, in your online press releases, and any opportunity you have to create text about your business.

## **SEO Beyond Keywords**

Keywords are an essential part of SEO. But they aren't the only consideration. Your headlines, your graphics, your listings in business directories, your internal linking, your links to other authority sites, and your backlinks from other sources, all affect how you appear in search engine results.

## **Pay Per Click Advertising**

If you find that visitors access your website after searching for it first on a search engine, then it may be beneficial to advertise on these websites and bid on keywords associated with your company. These advertisements will appear at the top of the page or along the right side of the search results on a search engine. You can have control over the specific geographic area you wish to target, set a

monthly budget and have the option on only being charged when a user clicks on your link.

But search engines aren't the only players when it comes to Pay Per Click advertising. Have you ever boosted a Facebook post from your business page? Yep, that's Pay Per Click. And it can be highly effective. Almost all of the social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) offer you the opportunity to run ads on a Pay Per Click basis. PPC is absolutely worth a test because you can potentially get massive results with just a little bit of money.

### **Online Directories**

Listing your business in an online directory can be an inexpensive and effective online marketing strategy. It's very useful as a way to create backlinks for SEO purposes.

However, you need to be able to distinguish your company from the plethora of competitors that may exist. Do not be exactly like your competitors. Take the time to create a listing that grabs attention and compels readers to visit your website to learn more about you. Likely, you will need to complement this strategy with other brand awareness campaigns.

### **Online Ads (i.e. banner ads on other websites)**

These advertisements can have positive or negative effects based on the reputation and consumer perception of the website on which you are advertising. These ads should be treated similar to print ads you may place in local newspapers or other publications. Test, test, test and watch your budget.

## **Online Videos**

With the growing popularity of sites such as YouTube, it is evident that people love researching online and being able to find video clips of the information they are seeking. Depending on your small business, you may want to upload informational videos or tutorials about your products or services on your website, on your own YouTube channel, and on your social media feeds. In my opinion, a well-done video is an investment in your company well worth the cost.

And don't forget about the live-streaming capabilities now available through Periscope or Facebook Live. These applications allow you to be real and authentic and your audience will feel they really get to know the real you. These videos can go a long way in creating building that know, like, and trust factor.

## **Blogging**

Blogging can be a fun and interactive way to communicate with users. I absolutely love blogging. A blog is traditionally a website maintained by an individual user that has regular entries, similar to a diary. These entries can be commentary, descriptions of events, pictures, videos, and more. Companies can use blogging as a way to keep users updated on current information and allow them to post comments on your blog. If blogging is something you wish to invest in, make sure that it is regularly updated and monitored.

If you are going to blog for your business, make sure you occasionally create what is known as a “money post.” This is a straight-forward sales pitch for your product and services. So many bloggers get caught up in providing information or commentary, that they forget to give their audience a chance to purchase from them! You don't want to have a blog filled with money posts, but



at least once a month or so, it's okay to remind your readers that you are in a business and have products and services for sale.

## **Lead Capture and List Building**

Have you heard the phrase “The money is in the list?” Well, it's true. Every business should make it a priority to create a list of people who know about their business and may at some point in time have a need for the company's goods or services. Did you know that only 1% of people are in a “need to buy that now” mode, while the other 99% are in “maybe I'll buy in the future” mode? Yet so much of marketing is aimed at the buy-it-now crowd.

A much better strategy, a killer marketing strategy in fact, is to build a list of people who have characteristics of your buyers but are not YET ready to buy. But you want to become the go-to source for when they are ready to buy. You want to start to develop a relationship.

A very effective online marketing strategy is to create a special offer, a free report, or an invitation to a special training and send potential customers to a landing page to take advantage of that offer instead of to your entire website. Also called squeeze pages, these one-page, specific-purpose sites are most definitely a killer marketing strategy.

The purpose of your landing page is to capture the visitor's email address and perhaps other contact information so that you can begin to educate them on why your business is right for them.

To do a landing page right you will need a landing page service provider like Leadpages, Instapages, Inbound, or other services. They will charge a monthly fee (or an annual charge). There are also plug-ins for blogs that can

work. You will also need an email autoresponder, like aWeber, GetResponse, ConstantComment or MailChimp. There are various charges for these services, too. But these are marketing costs that should be easily paid for by the service they provide.

## **Social Media**

If you are not involved in social media in some aspect for your business, you are missing out on a huge opportunity to connect with buyers and prospects. But I understand. Social media can suck away huge chunks of time and effort and sometimes it's hard to see what benefit you are getting. But if you are being consistent on one or more social media platforms, let me assure you: people are paying attention and are watching.

There are so many platforms available, and all have their own pros and cons. The big three are typically thought to be Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. But Instagram is fast overtaking all of them for adults under 30 and teens. Pinterest has a huge, engaged following and for the right kind of visual businesses, Pinterest can deliver new customers in unparalleled numbers in lightening speed.

## **Hashtags**

And now, there's a new twist -- HASHTAG research. Yes, that's right. Hashtags. Look at the keyword terms you have selected to focus on for your promotion. Which ones would make good hashtags?

You can check if one of more of your phrases are already "hot" hashtags by checking either Hashtags.org, Twubs. Com, or Ritetag.com. If your phrase is already being used frequently, then you'll be found in searches when someone

else is looking for that hashtag. Depending on your business, it might really help you to be lumped in with other businesses who are keying on similar topics.

Choose one or two hashtags and use them consistently at the end of all of your social media posts (except on LinkedIn, where they have no search value at all) so that they become associated with your business.

## **Tips for Social Media Success**

While I can't give you a tip by tip for every social media platform, there are some things that you can do, no matter what platform you choose to explore, to be more successful.

- Create a business page for your business instead of mixing your personal and business posts.
- Keep your personal opinions to a minimum on your business pages, and your business sales and offers to a minimum on your personal page.
- Make sure your profile is complete and up-to-date. If you are on multiple platforms, make sure your profile information is consistent over all platforms.
- Use a high quality professional photo on your business profile.
- Be consistent. Post frequently and show up in the same places over and over.
- Comment on other posts.
- Respond to comments your posts and messages to your page. Thanks visitors for “likes” and comments.
- Be sure to post links to your blog posts on your pages.
- Join groups and interact with others.
- Do not spam. Do not post on another person's page without permission.
- Do not steal their intellectual property and pass it off as your own.

- Meet people outside of social media. Use social media as an introduction, but your best connections will be made when you meet your social media contacts for lunch, or get them on the phone or have a Skype conference with them. Create a real relationship, not just a virtual one.

## **Creating a Killer Online Campaign**

A strategy that many small business owners overlook is the idea of a coordinated, concentrated marketing campaign online. Basically, the idea is to strategically flood the marketplace with a well-crafted, multi-layered marketing campaign so that your target audience can't help but take notice.

### **Lay the Groundwork**

Before you begin any online campaign or other concentrated marketing effort, you need to have a solid foundation already in place.

Your foundation should include:

- A product, service, or event to be promoted.
- A website, blog, or other piece of internet real estate where YOU

control and manage the content, preferably indexed in search engines. You can be using Wordpress, Weebly, Wix, Tumblr, HubPages, Blogger,

YouTube, Etsy, or other service. NOTE: While you can use your Facebook business page or other social media, it's not always recommended.

Facebook in particular has been known to take down business pages without warning if they feel they are getting too much traffic sent to them.

Use FB or other social media as your base at your own risk.

- Have the ability to track, monitor, and record traffic to your website or blog. You should be able to see where traffic is coming from, what keywords were searched, and how many clicks, opt-ins and sales are generated. I recommend Google Analytics, but there are other programs.
- You should have accounts and profiles set up in at least 3 social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, or Instagram. You do not need to be with all of them to be successful, but at least three will give you a wide enough audience to gain massive visibility.
- Though not required, it is highly suggested that you have an account with a social media planner service like Hootsuite or Buffer.
- Though not required, it is highly suggested that you have an account set up with an email autoresponder with aWeber, MailChimp, or GetResponse. I personally use and endorse aWeber and an affiliate of their service. If you decide to try aWeber and purchase through this website: <http://aweber.com/?419820>, I may earn a commission.

## **Choosing Your Offer**

Look at your available products and services. What needs to be promoted now? Do you have all the pieces in place to begin promotions now? If not, what still needs to be accomplished before you can start promoting? Your product doesn't have to be 100% ready for prime-time to begin creating a buzz, but you don't want to start advertising something that you can't deliver.

Maybe you can start promoting to get people to opt-in to an advance notice list or an invitation-only pre-sale sneak peek. Start with what you've got and figure out what you can be promoting starting in the next few days.

## **Defining Your Target Audience**

This is such a critical step. Know who you want to talk to. I can't tell you how many times I have worked with small business owners who are spending tons of energy and tons of money marketing a product or service to the WRONG audience. Their product is ideal for stay-at-home moms but they are promoting to business owners because “a lot of business owners are also moms.” No, no, no. Your messaging needs to be targeted. And once you've determined who your audience should be, spend some time brainstorming on how to get in front of them. What are their common interests? What are their common problems? How do you solve their problems? What is it that they need to hear from you?

Depending on your audience and what social media platforms you want to use, do a search for groups where your target audience hangs out. Join 4 or 5 of them today and introduce yourself. Observe, make helpful comments. DO NOT PROMOTE ANYTHING. You want to find groups that have an active membership – where people are liking and commenting and sharing content. Don't waste your time on the “post and run” groups. They will not get you to where you want to go.

## **Determine Your Desired Outcome**

Spend time figuring out what very specific action you want your target audience to take with you. This is where you need to have your strategic-thinking cap on. For a really effective online marketing campaign, you really only want one, maybe two possible actions from your audience. The idea is to be very focused. You don't want to give them too many options. Select the end-result you want to see and make notes on what action flow will get them there.

## **Putting It All Together**

Now that you've determined the what, who, and how of your online marketing campaign, write it out as an Intention:

*"As a result of my Online Marketing Campaign promoting X (describe your offer), people (describe your target audience) will (describe their action.)"*

## **The Sales Funnel**

Once you've determined your desired outcome, you can start to create your sales or interaction funnel and how you can assemble the pieces to make sure your audience can get from a promotion to take the action you desire.

Here are examples of the most common desired outcomes and the typical funnels people use to get their audience to the end result:

*Desired Outcome: Opt-In to Mailing List or Request for More Information*

Typical Funnel would be: Promotion has a Link to a Landing Page, blog post, or other piece of internet real estate. The Landing Page offers an incentive (free or low-cost report or webinar with a strong benefit) in exchange for Opt-In to receive further information. When the visitor completes the opt-in form, they receive a confirmation email and either a Thank You page that has a link to download the Free Report or link to watch the webinar or a follow-up email that has the required links.



Typically you can then send these subscribers regular emails to create a relationship with them and cultivate future sales.

*Desired Outcome: Purchase of a Product or Service*

Typical Funnel would be: Promotion has Link to Sales Page. The Sales Page describes features and benefits of product and has either an on-page shopping cart or a link to a third-party shopping cart, or if you are fulfilling the order yourself, it may just be a Sales Button from PayPal. Once the buyer clicks on the Buy Now, you or your order processor will fulfill the order and get the product to the buyer. You'll want to have a system in place to send a Thank You to the buyer. Often you can capture the buyer's email address during the sales process and then add that address to a newsletter or other informative email list. Just make sure you disclose to the buyer that you will be sending periodic information. And make sure each email you send gives the recipient the right to opt-out of future mailings.

*Desired Outcome: Attendance at an Event*

Typical Funnel would be: Promotion has link to an Event Description page or directly to a Purchase-ticket page (like Eventbrite or other event ticketing service). Once the visitor registers for event/buys ticket,

their email is captured in an email mailing system so that reminder emails can be sent as the event approaches. These emails can also then be used to follow-up after the event to send Thank Yous and additional information.

*Desired Outcome: Set Up a Telephone (or in person) Appointment*

Typical Funnel would be: Promotion has a link to a Sales Page with more information and a link to an Appointment Scheduling system like TimeTrade or Acuity or Appointy (I have used all of them -- TimeTrade is easy and is very good for simple promotions). You can include the link directly to the scheduling software from the promotion, but people typically need more information than what they can get in a promotion to set up an appointment. But it never hurts to test.

## **Setting Up the Funnel**

Once you determine the pieces of your funnel, you need to create them. Remember those keywords you researched? Make sure you have your list handy and use keywords in your headlines, copy, and calls to action if you can.

If you are offering a free report, it needs to be written now. Again, if you can use a Keyword in the title, that would be terrific. It's not make-or-break, but if you can, you should. If you are having people opt-in to a mailing list, you should have at least three of the follow-up emails written before you begin a promotion. You can certainly have more. There is a lot of controversy around how often you should email someone once they have opted-in to a mailing list. Some marketers absolutely believe that a daily email is the way to go. Others send emails only once a week or once a month. There is no right or wrong answer. Pick the frequency that feels right to you.

Next, make a list of what social media platforms you are going to use for your campaign. You should use a minimum of three, but you can use as many as you can handle.

Pull up your profile on each of the platforms you are going to use and read what you have written. Rewrite as appropriate to position yourself as a premier provider of your product or service. Add a couple sentences even a headline/subhead or two that include some of your keyword phrases. On all profiles (except possibly LinkedIn), add your hashtags.

## Create Your Messages

For each social media platform, you can now work on creating your marketing messages that contain your keyword phrases and will work within the parameters of the platform. For Twitter, you will want to work within 140 characters (minus the hashtag and shortened link) -- aim for 110 to 120 characters typically. Facebook posts can be as short or as long as you wish. LinkedIn needs to be business-related. Pinterest and Instagram should have an image element to it.

You'll want to create 3 types of messages for each platform:

- 1) Messages that Educate, Entertain, Entice, or Inspire
- 2) Soft-sell messages that focus on the benefits of your product or service
- 3) Hard-sell messages that feature strong calls to action

Examples of messages that educates, entertains, entices, or inspires: (keyword: self-awareness)

*Socrates once said "Know thyself." Do you? Self-awareness is the first step in becoming the person you want to, and were put on this earth to, become. #self-awareness LINK*

or

*Self-awareness and leadership go together like cake and ice cream, and beaches and sunshine, and teenagers and cellphones. It's hard to imagine one without the other. #self-awareness LINK*

You get the idea.

An example of a Soft Sell message could be:

*Three steps you can take today to strengthen your self-awareness.*

*1) Learn how to meditate. Frequently take time to sit down, relax, get quiet and check in with yourself. Ask yourself questions like:*

*“What is important right now?” “What am I working toward?” “What is not working in my life right now?” “What issues in my life am I avoiding dealing with?” The more you contemplate where you are and what you want, the more self-aware you will become 2) Set goals for yourself and hold yourself accountable for achieving them. Nothing is more powerful in creating self-awareness than holding yourself accountable and discovering how truly powerful you can be 3) Read this new book LINK #self-awareness*

An example of a Hard Sell message could be:

*Discover the 5 steps you can take immediately to improve your self-awareness and step into your power as a leader. Click here now. #self-awareness*

As you work on your messages, refer to your keyword list. I recommend that you create at least 5 messages using each keyword or keyword phrase. I typically try to generate about 20 messages under the Educate/Entertain category, at least 5 soft-sell messages, and at least 5 hard-sell messages. And remember, depending on your social media mix, you may have to have more shorter, quick-hits for Twitter.

For many of your posts and Tweets, your headline is critical in making your message stand out from the crowd. There are also two websites that I use a lot when crafting marketing messages: the headline analyzer from the Advanced Marketing Institute [m/headline/](#) and the headline analyzer from Coschedule.

They rank different parts of your headlines so both are valuable. You'll find that a good headline will rank well on both sites. Now, if you love a message but it doesn't rank well on these sites, it's okay. These are just tools to help you craft stronger messages and to help you understand the power of the words you choose.

## **Create Your Campaign**

Once you have all the elements of your funnel created and your marketing messages written, now it's time to create the campaign. You'll want to post your messages on your various social media platforms several times a day, mixing up your different messages and times. And it's okay to post the same message on Facebook and on Google+ – you'll be reaching different people. Post heavily for 10 to 14 days, then take a break for 3 or 4 days. If you are getting the results you want, post heavily for another 10 to 14 days. Then take another break. Be watching your results and feel free to make tweaks as you go.

Have fun with this! Let your mind run wild. Get creative.

## **Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid Online**

Being online can have its pitfalls. Here are some things to think about as you work on increasing and enhancing your online presence:

### **Failure to Measure ROI**

As with any aspect of your business, you need to have a return on investment, even when it comes to the time you spend on social media. Which metrics are you going to use? Are your visitors actually motivated to purchase or sign up? If the benefits of your online campaign are not greater than the costs incurred, then you may wish to re-evaluate your strategy.

## **Poor Web Design**

This can leave a poor impression of your company on the visitor. A poor design could result in frustration on the visitors' part if they are not able to easily find what they went on your site to search for and also does not build trust. If consumers do not trust your company or your website, you will not be able to complete the sale and develop a longer relationship with that customer. You also need to include privacy protection and security when building trust.

This also includes ensuring all information on the website is current and having customer service available if users are experiencing difficulty or cannot find the information they are seeking. This could be as simple as providing a 'Contact Us' email or phone number for support.

## **Becoming Locked into a Marketing Strategy Early**

Remember your marketing mix when creating a marketing strategy and avoid putting all of your eggs in one basket. Online marketing is a very valuable tool, but depending on your business and your target markets, other marketing campaigns may be the best option for you. Especially if this is your first time making a significant investment into your online sector, you want to remain flexible and able to adapt your strategy based off feedback received by researching and analyzing different options.

## **Acting Without Researching**

Similar to becoming locked into an advertising strategy early, this mistake implies not dutifully testing and researching different online marketing options. For example, if your target consumer is aged 65+ and you are spending



all of your marketing efforts into creating a blogging website (where the average ages of bloggers are 18-35), then you are likely not going to have a successful campaign.

### **Assuming More Visitors Means More Sales**

You have to go back to your original goals and the purpose of your company. More visitors may not mean more sales if your website is used primarily for information and consumers purchase their products elsewhere. This is also vice versa. You could have an increase in sales without an increase in unique visitors if your current consumer base is very loyal and willing to spend their money with you.

Often people will collect information online about products they wish to purchase because it is easier to compare options, but they purchase in person. Even though shopping online is becoming quite popular, people still prefer to see and feel the physical product before purchasing.

### **Failing to Follow Up with Customers that Purchase**

Return sales can account for up to 60% of total revenue. It's no wonder that organizations are always trying to maintain loyal customers and may have customer relationship management systems in place. It is easier to get a happy customer to purchase again than it is to get a new customer to purchase once.

## **Not Incorporating Online Marketing into the Business Plan**

By ensuring that your online marketing plan is fully integrated and accurately represents your organization's overall goals and objectives, the business plan will be more comprehensive and encompassing.

## **Ignoring Industry Best Practices**

It is very beneficial to use trial and error to determine the best online strategy from your company, but do not be afraid to do your research and learn from what other have already figured out. There will be many cases where someone was in a very similar position as you and they may have some suggestions and secrets that they wish to share. Researching in advance can save a great deal of time and money.

## **Spending Too Much Too Fast**

Although it may be cheaper than traditional marketing approaches, internet marketing does have its costs. You have to consider the software and hardware designs, maintenance, distribution, supply chain management, and the time that will be required. You don't want to spend your entire marketing budget all at once.

## **Getting Distracted by Metrics that are not Relevant**

There are endless reports and measurables that you can analyze to determine the effectiveness of your campaign. You will need to establish which measurables are actually relevant to your marketing and ignore the rest.

## Testing and Measuring Online

As with any element of your marketing campaign, you will need to track your results and measure them against your investment. Otherwise, how will you know if your online marketing is successful?

These results - or metrics – need to be recorded and analyzed as to how they impact your overall return on investment.

Some examples of metrics are:

- New account setups
- Conversion rates
- Page stickiness
- Contact us form completion

Due to the popularity of online marketing and the importance of having a strong web presence, companies have demanded more sophisticated tracking tools and metrics for their online activities. It can be very difficult to not only know what to measure, but also HOW to measure.

Thankfully, it is easier than ever to get the information you need with the many types of software and services available, including Google Analytics, which are free and relatively accurate.

## **8 Metrics to Track**

The following are the key measurables to watch for when testing and measuring your internet marketing efforts:

### **Conversions**

How many leads has your online presence generated, and of those leads, how many were turned into sales? Ultimately, your campaign needs to have a positive impact on your business.

Regardless of the specific purpose of the campaign – from lead generation and service sign-up, to blog entries – you need to know how many customers are taking the desired action in response to your efforts. Your tracking tool will be able to provide you with this information

### **Spend**

If you are not making a profit – or at least breaking even – from your internet marketing efforts, then you need to change your strategy. Redistribute your financial resources and reconsider your motives and objectives for your online campaign.

An easy way to do this analysis is to divide your total spend by conversions. This could also be broken down by product. You could also use tracking tool and view reports on the 'per visit value of every click,' from every type of source. Your sources can include organic/search engine referrals, direct visit (i.e. person typed your web address into their address bar), or email/newsletter.

## **Attention**

You need to keep a close eye on how much attention you are getting on your website. One of the best ways to analyze this would be to compare unique visitors to page views per visit to time on site. How many people are visiting, how many pages they are viewing, what pages they are viewing, and how much time they are spending on the site.

A unique visitor is any one person who visits the website in a given amount of time. For example, if Evelyn visits her online banking website daily for an entire month, over that one month period, she is considered to be one unique visitor (not 30 visitors).

You may also want to pay attention to the referring source as well – the places online that refer customers to your website. You'll be able to determine what referring sources offer the 'best' visitors.

## **Top Referrals**

Know who is doing the best job of referring clients to your website – and note how they are doing this. Is it the prominence of the link? Positioning? Reputation of the referring company?

Understanding where the majority of your visitors are coming from will allow you focus on those types of sources when you increase your referral sites. They also allow you to gain a better understanding of your online market – and target audience.

## **Bounce Rate**

The bounce rate is the number of people who visit the homepage of your website, but do not visit other pages. If you have a high bounce rate, you either have all the necessary information on your homepage, or you are not giving your customers a reason to click further.

In Google Analytics, view the 'content' or 'pages' report and view the column stating bounce rate.

## **Errors**

It is very important to track the errors that visitors receive while trying to access or view your website. For example, if someone links to your website, but makes a spelling error in typing the link, your users will see an error page in their browser, and will not ultimately make it to your website.

You can also receive reports on errors that customer's make when trying to type in your website address in their browser. You may wish to buy the domains with common spelling mistakes, and link those addresses to you true homepage. This will increase overall traffic and potential conversions.

## **Onsite Search Terms**

If you have a 'search website' function on your website, it is useful to monitor which terms users are most frequently searching. This can provide valuable insight into the user friendliness of your site and your website's navigation system. This information will be included in the traffic reporting tool.

## **Bailout Rates**

If you provide users with the option to purchase something on your website (i.e. shopping cart), then you can track where along the purchasing process people decided not to go through with the sale.

This could be at the first step of receiving the order summary and total, or further when stating shipping options. By obtaining this information, a company can reorganize or revamp their website to make the sales process more fluid and possibly encourage more purchases.

# 6

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## Using Press Releases for Increasing Profit

### Make Your Business News

While online marketing is a great way to reach customers in today's business environment, there is so much emphasis on online marketing these days, many small business neglect other basic marketing strategies that make for killer profits. One of those strategies is issuing press releases.

The best kind of free advertising is an article in the newspaper or magazine, or a story on the radio or TV, shining positive light on your business. Just like a testimonial, the printed words of a journalist are worth at least ten times more than the words in your advertising. Likewise, negative articles and reviews can cause just as much impact on your business – the kind of impact you don't want.

So how do you get your business news into the press? Better still, how do you make sure the press gets positive, accurate information about your business?



The simplest way to communicate with the media is through press releases. Press releases are a standard form of communication with the media, used to announce, communicate, and correct *newsworthy* information.

Press releases are not sales letters, or even newsletters. Their purpose is not to make a sale – although they may lead to sales – because they are not written for your customer. Their purpose is to communicate news to the people that write the news, in a way that makes them take notice and care about what you have to say.

## **What are Effective Press Releases?**

Effective press releases get your story covered. They hook editors on your angle, and encourage journalists to write about your news. They are concise, engaging, and written *with the media in mind*.

It's a good idea to sit down with your colleagues, family, and friends to test your story idea for newsworthiness. They'll be able to help you brainstorm angles and strategically plan your release.

Before you sit down to write your press release, ask yourself the following questions:

### **Is your story newsworthy?**

If you're not used to writing press releases, spend some time thinking about this question. Of course your story is newsworthy to *you*, but why should other people care? Why does this story *matter* to the newspaper's readers? Newsworthy items are relevant, current, useful, and of importance to the

community. They provide answers to the five “W’s” (who, what, where, when and why).

### **Do you have an angle?**

So your item is newsy, but what’s the *angle*? Sure your company has had a record year for revenue, but what makes it unique? What makes your news an engaging story that is relevant to people outside your office? A press release should have at least one solid angle, or story idea, for the journalist. If the media have to spend time finding the story buried in your press release, you have an unlikely chance of getting covered.

### **Is now the right time to tell your story?**

You may have a newsy story and an interesting angle, but is now the best time to tell your story? Be strategic about timing – for the benefit of your business, and for the likelihood of getting coverage. If you’re a retailer featuring a new product line in October, is there benefit in waiting until November to announce your news, when consumers are shopping for the holidays? Did the newspaper you’re targeting just run a big feature on the competition? Are you waiting on other potential news that you could announce at the same time?

### **Is your story true?**

Reporting inaccurate or exaggerated facts is bad form, and can wreak havoc on your reputation. While you wouldn’t do this intentionally, check to make sure you’re not embellishing the facts to create a more interesting story. Journalists are always trying to suss out the real scoop, so if you feed them garbage, they’ll smell it.

## Who needs to know your story?

When you craft a press release, you need to be clear on who you want to read your story. Once you know exactly who your target audience is, you can narrow your focus down to the media that reach that audience. From there, you can cater your press release to the journalists who work for those outlets.

## Writing Effective Press Releases

Here are some general rules and guidelines for crafting the perfect press release. Be prepared to write a few different versions, and make substantial edits; it takes a while to get it right. If writing is not your strongest skill, consider hiring a freelance writer to describe your news. Some online press release distribution services also offer writing services, so consider your options.

- **Craft a killer headline.** Just like advertisements, you have seconds to grab the media's attention with your headline. The headline should tell the story and answer the question *why does it matter?* Or, *why should I care?*
- **Spend time on the lead.** The lead is the first paragraph of your press release. It answers the five "W's" and provides enough detail to make the journalist or editor read on. Write a few different leads, each with a different story angle, and see which one has the most impact. If you haven't hooked them by now, consider your press release in the recycle bin.
- **Write for the newspaper.** Make your release easy to read, and easy for the journalist to work with. Occasionally, especially in communities with

limited reporting resources, press releases are run with only some slight rewriting. In the best case, your release becomes the base for a feature article. Spend some time reading the publication you're targeting, and noticing the style in which it is written.

- **Notice newspaper style.** Generally, articles (and press releases) are written in an inverse pyramid format, where the most important information is at the top, and less important information follows in decreasing order of importance.
- **Use simple language.** Sentences written in simple style, with minimal description, embellishment, and flowery style are all that should appear in the release. Make sure each word has a purpose, and keep it tight. Only use the space you need to tell the story, no more.
- **Use examples to support your facts.** If you're sending a press release highlighting an achievement or accomplishment, prove it. Show the media that there are events and facts to back up your claims – cause and effect. This illustrates and tells a story, which is always more interesting and engaging than proud statements and quotes.
- **Skip industry jargon.** While industry phrases and terms may mean something to your colleagues and clients, they mean nothing to the media and the general public. Limit the amount of jargon you include in your release, and provide succinct explanations for uncommon terms you must use. Keep the language simple and easy to understand.
- **Use quotes sparingly.** Quotes are great ways to back up facts, add personality to your news, and include a new voice in the release. When

writing quotes, keep them authentic, concise, and limited to two sources. Quotes from more than two sources in one release becomes cluttered and confusing.

- **Tell them who you are!** At the end of the release, be sure to include a short paragraph about your company that describes who you are, what you do, and a brief history.
- **Include as much contact information as possible.** Include one or two contact names, their titles, phone numbers, email addresses, website address and cell phone numbers (if necessary). Make it as easy as possible for media to contact you.

## **Distribution**

### **Media Target List**

A database of local of media is a key tool for any small business. Whether this list is used for an ad campaign, or media relations, it is important to know the players in your local media market.

Depending on your needs – and the size of your desired reach – there are a number of ways to create this list. If you are sticking to local and regional daily media, you and your employees can easily create and maintain your database.

If you're looking to have a broader reach, there are a number of online services that provide access to customer media lists on a one-time or subscriber basis. These services typically have the most up to date information, as well as

more detailed information about media contacts that you would not find on the internet.

This list should include the name of the publication, the type of publication, the publication's frequency, a contact name, phone number and email address. In most outlets, journalists are assigned to "beats" or subjects to cover, like business, crime, health, and community. If you know that you are targeting the business section of the newspaper, make sure your release ends up in the hands of the business editor or reporter. Just like your marketing materials, you need to make sure your message ends up in the right hands.

**Draft Media List**

<b>Outlet</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<i>Daily News</i>	<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Jill Smith</i>	<i><u><a href="mailto:jsmith@dailynews.com">jsmith@dailynews.com</a></u></i>	<i>222.555.9878</i>

## Email Distribution

The easiest and most common form of press release distribution is by email. However, journalists are bombarded by emails and it is easy for yours to get lost in the pile. Here are some tips to make sure it gets read, and not immediately deleted.

- **Don't send attachments.** Put your news release in text format in the body of the email with simple formatting to make sure it gets read. Attachments get stuck in junk mail filters, and emails from unknown sources with attachments get deleted.
- **Put the headline in the subject line.** Make sure you grab the attention of your recipient with the subject line to entice them to open the email. Don't assume that everything you send will be opened. Generic subject lines get buried in inboxes, or deleted.
- **Include a personal introduction or pitch.** While this can be time consuming, this is a nice strategy to implement when sending your release to your top ten media targets. Write a personal greeting before the release that hooks them on the story angle immediately. Keep it short, and if possible, include an acknowledgment of one of their recent stories that relates to your news.

## Distribution Services

There are also a number of reputable press release distribution networks that will distribute your release to a broad audience. Sites like prnewswire.com PRWeb.com and others allow you to send your release to state, province, country, or international markets. These services also often provide writing or



editing assistance, and can be valuable one-stop-shops. Bonus: many are FREE and Google loves to rank well-written press releases high in their search results (so don't forget your keywords if you are going to submit press releases to the online services).

## **Top 10 Press Release Mistakes**

**1. Errors in Grammar.** Journalists are professional writers with a solid understanding of grammar and punctuation. Don't distract them from your news with spelling mistakes and poorly composed sentences. If writing isn't your strong suit, hire someone to write or proofread your release before you send it.

**2. Too much content.** The press release is intended to hook the editor, communicate the facts, and reek of newsworthiness. Once the editor or journalist is pursuing your story, you can provide them with more information and people to talk to. Stick to two pages double-spaced, max.

**3. Too little content.** You want to keep your release short and simple, but make sure you include all the necessary facts to support and illustrate the story. Make sure the five "W's" are answered, and all the correct contact information has been provided.

**4. Not BCC'ing recipients.** Before you send your release, double check that you haven't put all recipients in the "To" field of your email. Doing so announces who you're sending the information to, when all the recipients are competitors looking to break a story. Use the BCC field, and address the release to yourself.

**5. Sending first thing Monday morning.** A journalist's inbox is the most overloaded first thing in the morning – especially on Mondays. Typically,

journalists will meet with editors in the morning to review editorial assignments, then work to a mid-afternoon deadline. The best time to call and email a reporter is mid-to-late afternoon, when their deadline has passed and their inbox has been sorted through.

**6. Releases that read like ads.** Your press release is not an advertisement, so don't write it like one. A journalist's job is to communicate pertinent, relevant, newsworthy information to their audience, not convince them to buy your product. Avoid overused advertising catch phrases like "limited time offer" and "this won't last long!" Your job here is to communicate, not to sell.

**7. Not securing permission.** Make sure you have permission to mention companies other than yours, to quote sources, and to submit images of your clients and employees to the press. Not having permission for these items can result in your story getting pulled at the last minute.

**8. Sending to multiple editors at one outlet.** Pick the editor who will be most interested in your news at each target news organization, and send your release to them only. This will avoid duplication of efforts at the outlet. Often, if an editor is not interested in your news, but knows an associate editor who will be, they will give you another contact name or pass the news on directly.

**9. Sending to every outlet in town.** The local motorbike magazine doesn't care about news from a baby clothing business. Make sure the media on your list are the media who would realistically cover your news. Sending information that does not align with the publication's subject matter will show you haven't done your research.

**10. Following up the day you send the release.** It may take a few days for an editor to respond to – or even read – your release. Be patient, and wait at

least a week before following up. Even then, don't assume that your release has been read or remembered. Use the opportunity to pitch the editor over the phone on your story idea, or try a new angle.

## **Press Release Template**

### **For Immediate Release Date**

**SMART, CATCHY HEADLINE IN BOLD, CAPITAL LETTERS, CENTERED AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE**  
Sub headline, If Some Description is Required, In Title Case Beneath Headline

*City, Province OR Neighborhood, City in italics* – This is the “Lead” paragraph. This paragraph should include the pertinent information – *who, what, where, and why it matters to the editor's audience*. Put yourself in the editor or journalist's shoes – why should they cover this story? Why does it matter to their readers? Is it newsworthy?

The second paragraph should elaborate on the content from the lead paragraph, and usually includes a quote from a key person (principal, president, etc.) that communicates a feeling, belief, or general view of the issue.

The third paragraph is a brief history of the event, achievement or subject of the news release. How did the company get there? What did they do to achieve this? How long have they been working to get here?

The fourth paragraph can be another quote – share another perspective or a rationale behind any controversial issues. It can also elaborate or continue from the first quote.

The fifth paragraph is about the audience – how will they benefit? What does this mean to them? What are the next steps? *The audience can include a residential community, business community, industry, etc.*

The sixth paragraph can highlight key points in bullet format – deadlines, dates, milestones, report highlights, key features, event details, etc.

The last paragraphs are used to explain more about the company – what have they done that is related to this or newsworthy? Explain more about the process – how do you achieve this? Include any other pertinent information that the audience will need to know about next steps, what to watch for etc. Include more quotes from key sources.

High resolution images of (xxx) are available upon request

## End. *This shows to the reader that the news release is over.*

**Media Contact** *no more than two contacts, these people must be available as soon as the release is sent out*

Name, Position

Organization

Phone

Email

## **Press Release Sample – New Product**

For Immediate Release

August 23, 2010

### **MOMS ON WHEELS TO DELIVER NUTRITIOUS MEALS AT SCHOOL THIS SEPTEMBER**

New lunchtime service to provide kids with balanced snacks and meals

*Cartwright, California* – Attention busy moms: scratch lunches off your list. Moms on Wheels is expanding this September, providing daily lunch service for elementary school students with busy families. Parents can now subscribe to daily or weekly deliveries, and trust that convenient, healthy bag lunches are arriving at their children’s classroom.

“As a mother, one of my biggest challenges is making sure my two sons go to school with a healthy and balanced lunch,” says Moms on Wheels co-founder and dietitian Barbara Jones. “Between grocery shopping, preparing meals, packing lunch, and making sure it winds up in their backpacks, it was taking up a lot of my time.”

Moms on Wheels prepares lunches fresh every morning, then delivers to 20 elementary schools by 12:30pm. Lunch menus vary from wraps and sandwiches, to cheese and crackers, with an assortment of seasonal vegetables, fruit and a cookie.

Moms on Wheels offers daily and weekly meal options, and caters to dietary and allergy requirements. Starting at just \$3 a day, the service is affordable for every family and can be customized to a specific budget. Family rates are also available for parents with multiple children in school.

The innovative service is the brainchild of Barbara Jones and Lindsay Lee who established the meal service last year to deliver lunches once a week to local elementary schools. Jones and Lee plan to expand the service to hot items next year, when they move to an expanded kitchen facility.

To register, contact Moms on Wheels at 555.325.9872 or [www.healthylunchesforkidswebsite.com](http://www.healthylunchesforkidswebsite.com). All elementary students will be bringing home an information form during the first week of school this year.

##

**Media Contact**

Barbara Jones, Co-Founder

Moms on Wheels

555.325.9872

[bjones@healthylunchesforkidswebsite.com](mailto:bjones@healthylunchesforkidswebsite.com)

## **Press Release Sample – Accomplishment**

For Immediate Release

November 12, 2009

### **CARR’S CARPET CLEANING SWEEPS UP WITH BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD**

Local business wins four accolades at annual Chamber of Commerce event

*Bend, Oregon* – You could say that Carr’s Carpet Cleaning Services truly ‘cleaned up’ this year; the local business was honored with an award in four categories at the annual Chamber of Commerce Business Awards. Carr’s Carpet Cleaning earned Employer of the Year Award, Story of the Year Award, Fastest Growing Business, and the prestigious Business of the Year Award.

“We are thrilled and amazed at the generous recognition we received as a company last night,” said owner Jerry Owens. “These awards were earned by every member of our staff, and the terrific job they do servicing our clients.”

Carr’s Carpet Cleaning was established by local Bend resident Jerry Owens just three years ago at the age of 22. Starting out with a small business loan from his grandfather, Gerald Carr, Owens has built the company into a thriving business of 25 employees, serving five communities in the region. This year, Owens introduced three new services: furniture cleaning, duct cleaning, and stain protection treatment.

“It is always such a challenge to decide on a single recipient in each of the award categories, especially since there are so many reputable businesses in our community that deserve recognition,” says Peter Smith, President of the Bend Chamber of Commerce. “However, we were very impressed with Mr. Owen’s story, and the incredible growth of Carr’s Carpet Cleaning over the last year.”

Carr’s Carpet Cleaning provides regular cleaning services to customers across the region, and offers free custom quotations, and a full satisfaction, money-back guarantee. Carr’s uses a premium steam method for stain removal that eliminates marks and odors in a single treatment. With two brand new cleaning units, Carr’s also now offers complete stain prevention treatments – an ideal worry-free service for families with young children.

The Chamber of Commerce Business Awards are held annually to recognize business achievement in the Bend area. For a complete list of award recipients, please contact the Chamber directly at 555.333.7659. Deadline for nominations for next year’s awards is August 31, 2010.

High resolution images of the awards presentations are available upon request

##

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## **Press Release Sample – Controversy**

*\*Note: When faced with a controversy that may affect the reputation of your business, consider hiring professional public relations counsel. These professionals are trained to handle challenging media relations scenarios, and can help to determine the best strategy for information disclosure.*

For Immediate Release

December 15, 2009

### **HOLIDAY SPRUCE OFFERS FREE CHRISTMAS TREE REPLACEMENT TO ALL RESIDENTS**

Trees sprayed with dangerous chemical to be removed and replaced at no charge

*Hallie, North Carolina* – Holiday Spruce announced today that 75 per cent of the Christmas Trees for sale at their Bend Street farm have been mistreated with a chemical component that may be dangerous if repeatedly inhaled or accidentally ingested. The Christmas tree farm is offering free removal and replacements for all families affected.

“We at Holiday Spruce are appalled by the circumstances that allowed our customers and families to take home mistreated Christmas trees,” says Spruce Manager Tim Smith. “We sincerely apologize to the families affected by these events, and are committed to removing and replacing every single tree within the next four days.”

Holiday Spruce is currently investigating the cause of the chemical mistreatment, and has closed their Bend Street farm for the season. All customers who have purchased their holiday trees at Spruce are asked to contact their replacement line at 555.342.9020.

“We have maintained a record of each purchase made this year, and are currently in the process of contacting customers and arranging for immediate removal,” says Smith. “Holiday Spruce will be purchasing trees from our associates, and delivering them to clients within the next four days.”

Holiday Spruce is a seasonal tree farm on Bend Road that has been in operation for nearly 15 years. A family favorite for Christmas tree purchases, the farm offers school group tours, hot apple cider, hot dogs, and roasted chestnuts.

##

**Media Contact:**

**Tim Smith, Manager**

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[tsmith@holidaysprucetrees.com](mailto:tsmith@holidaysprucetrees.com)

# 7

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## **How to Create Newsletters for Your Business, Easily and Quickly**

It's no secret that newsletters are a great way to maintain contact with your customer base, and to communicate offers, news, ideas, and expertise to potential clients. But how many email newsletters do you receive each week? Each day? And of those emails, how many do you open? How many do you read? I bet it's only a small fraction of those that land in your inbox.

The work involved with writing, producing, and distributing a newsletter for your business can be a time-consuming task. This is especially true when you are faced with having to compete with all the other information that your customers are bombarded with on a daily basis.

However, a regular company newsletter can be an important part of your killer marketing strategy, allowing you to build a stronger relationship with your clients and increase customer retention and the strength of your business.

So what is the difference between newsletters that get opened, and ones that get junked? How do you make sure that the time and money you invest in this communication tool provides a measurable return?

## Why Send Newsletters?

- **To build trust.** Newsletters are an effective way to forge stronger, trust-based relationships with your customers. They are an informal, newsy type of communication that can be highly personalized for individual recipients.
- **To update your customers.** Newsletters let your customers know about changes and developments in your business, including the comings of new employees and products or services.
- **To promote your products or services.** A strong newsletter will repeatedly reinforce your marketing message, and keep your offering at the top of your customer's minds.
- **To stay in touch (and top of mind!).** Newsletters help you show your customers that they're important to your business, and that you haven't forgotten about them since they left your store.
- **To build a community around your business.** Regular newsletters that feature useful information and community events create a community of people with a common interest: your knowledge, expertise, and offering.

## Writing an Effective Newsletter

An effective newsletter should be easy to read, contain interesting and relevant information, and be visually engaging. When you send information to

your customer's inbox, you are asking them to invest their time in reading what you have to say. Make sure they finish feeling that their time was well spent.

## **Know Who You are Talking to**

As with every other piece of marketing collateral, you must establish who you are trying to reach before you put your content together. Don't make the mistake of assuming everyone will be interested in what you have to say. Who are your readers? Are they internal (employees) or external (customers) to your organization? What are their interests? Do they like to be entertained or do they just want information? How much time do they have to read your newsletters?

Use language that that they can easily read and understand. Are you talking to computer programmers or teenagers? Would you spend time reading a book that wasn't interesting or was written in a language you didn't understand? Speak to the readers using language and references that they will relate to.

Here are some helpful tips to consider when writing for your audience:

- Keep the tone informal and conversational
- Write in first person to establish a relationship
- Be direct – use as few words as possible and keep it simple
- Avoid flowery or overly descriptive language
- Stay away from salesy or advertising language

## Provide Relevant and Interesting Content

The backbone of your newsletter is the content. Without solid, valuable content, even the most attractive and well-formatted newsletters are virtually ineffective.

With so many other things competing for your customer's attention, it is crucial to make your newsletter interesting and relevant. How does it add value to their lives? Why does it deserve their attention?

**Keep it purpose-focused.** Like every other piece of your marketing collateral, your newsletter must serve a clear purpose, and stick to it. The content should all support this overarching purpose, which will ensure the newsletter is a strong communication tool. Is your goal to:

- Provide information?
- Fundraise?
- Recruit new staff?
- Maintain contact with customer base?
- Promote offers and services?
- Drive sales?

**Entertain.** Make use of a newsletter's informal tone, and entertain your reader. Add content from external sources, including humorous stories and cartoons that are related to the purpose of your newsletter and the product or service you are offering. This will break up the more serious content.

**Write well.** If writing is not your strong point, hire a writer to draft your newsletter. This may also be a good idea for busy business owners that struggle to find the time to complete a monthly outreach piece. Make sure you avoid industry jargon, and if you have to use it, make sure to define it for your reader.

**Deliver Information.** It will be clear to the reader if you are sending a newsletter just for the sake of getting your log into their inbox. Make sure that your newsletter provides information that is relevant and useful to the reader. Have something to say that will benefit the reader, even if it is external content like media clips, events, or website links.

**Keep it sweet.** Short and sweet, that is. No one has time to read exhaustive amounts of copy, no matter how relevant it may seem. Keep the newsletter tight and limited to a few short news items and some information on your offering. Here are a few tips for managing content length:

- Include a summary of the newsletter content at the top
- Provide short summaries of each article, with a link to “read more”
- Make generous use of headlines and sub headlines
- Put concise information in bullet form

**Ask them to act.** Always provide a call to action, even if it is a subtle one. You are spending time and money to produce a newsletter in efforts to ultimately increase your business. Ask for the sale – just like you would in a brochure or sales letter. Get readers to visit your website, pick up the phone, fill out the registration form, or lend their support.

**Let others speak for you.** After you spent all that time gathering great testimonials, make sure you put them to use! If you choose not to dedicate an entire section of your newsletter to customer testimonials, make sure you include them in the header, footer, or margins of the page. They also work well to break up sections of text.

**Give it a name.** Just like a newspaper, give your newsletter a title that readers will remember and connect to your business.

### **Make it Attractive and Easy to Read**

While content is the backbone of your newsletter, appearance has the ability to engage readers and attract new subscribers. It is also a key factor in the readability of your content, which can make or break a solid readership. Stick to these guidelines for success.

**Avoid clutter.** Keep the layout clean and free of clutter. Overuse of bright colors and images will distract the reader from your well-crafted content. Use design to enhance your words, not detract from them. Simple design also makes template creation easy.

**Make use of headlines and bullets.** Make your newsletter easy to scan. Give each column a headline, and use bullets to highlight important points. Use sub headlines for important paragraphs, and important testimonials to break up lengthy copy.



**Maintain brand consistency.** Your newsletter should follow your brand guidelines for elements like color, font, and logo placement. Even if your newsletter is electronic, it is important for each piece of marketing collateral to have a consistent look and feel.

**Maintain overall consistency.** Once you have designed a newsletter template, stick with it. Each issue should have the same overall look and feel, with only minor modifications if required for image placement, etc. This ensures the newsletter looks professional and readers will learn to recognize it when they receive it.

**Use images generously.** Images are a powerful way to communicate with an audience, and illustrate the words on the page. Pictures, graphs, sidebars or callouts, charts and other graphic elements should be used wherever possible in the newsletter.

### **Commit to a Timeframe You can Maintain**

Choose a frequency you can maintain. Newsletters can be time consuming, so be realistic about how often you promise to distribute them. This depends on your resources, and the needs of your business, but generally once a month to once every three months is a good time frame. Sending out a newsletter too often can be just as detrimental as not sending them often enough.

When you determine the frequency of your newsletters establish a publishing schedule and stick to it. Work your way into your customer's routine so they are expecting and looking forward to receiving your newsletter.

Develop a publication plan in advance, planning the general themes and giving yourself a deadline so you have time to gather information and ideas

## **Newsletter Content Ideas**

### **Company News**

You may not think so, but your clients and customers are interested in short bits of news about your company and its people. They want to hear about your accolades and successes, since they have helped you achieve them. They are equally interested in reading about the expansion and development of your business, as they have contributed to that growth.

### **Feature Product**

A feature product or service column is a great way to profile new products or shine a light on existing products that you sell. Use this space to provide an image of the product, and list both benefits and features. Ensure that your feature product is reduced in price to encourage customers to visit your store and purchase it.

### **Employee Profile**

Just as readers are interested in your company, they are equally interested in the people who work at your company. Profiles of new or recognized employees help to build relationships, and establish trust. Your customers will connect the face on the newsletter, to the face that is helping them find what they are looking for, and ultimately close the sale.

### **Cartoons**

Cartoons in good humor that relate to your business or service can go a long way – literally. If readers find the image funny, there's a good

chance they'll forward the newsletter to their friends and family, which means your message has a further reach. Using humor in your newsletter also helps to keep the tone light and informal, showing that you don't take yourself too seriously.

### **Testimonials / Stories**

A box or column featuring testimonials of the month or a customer story can be an engaging element of your newsletter. People are naturally curious to read about others' experiences and thoughts about consumer products and services. Testimonials are a great way for customers to hear the benefits and praises of your product from someone else.

### **Events**

If your business hosts regular customer events and seminars, include the pertinent information in your newsletter in a prominently featured events section. Alternately, if your business is an active community participant, consider featuring upcoming community events that you are either sponsoring or attending. Including this kind of information can encourage readers to hang on to the newsletter as a "save the date" piece. If you choose to feature community events, do so strategically. If you cannot include *all* community events, you may create a problem for yourself.

### **Expert Corner (Internal or External)**

This is one of the greatest added value components of your newsletter: your knowledge and expertise. If relevant to your business, include a column that provides information to your readers from an expert source: either you, or someone you have asked to contribute their knowledge. Doing so will position your company as an expert in your industry, and give your reader another reason to hang on to the newsletter. Keep the content relevant – both to your business and current events.

### **Special Offers**

A newsletter is a great way to inform your readers of special offers and sales. Always include the regular price, or total cost of a package, as well as a high quality image. If you do not regularly offer discounts, ensure the reader is aware that this is a rare event.

## **Distributing Your Newsletter**

There are essentially two ways to produce your newsletter: print (hard-copy) or electronic (online or email based). Each feature a variety of distribution options.

Take some time to consider your target market, and how they prefer to be communicated with. For example, if your market is teenagers and young adults, electronic newsletters distributed over email may be the most effective. If you focus on reaching seniors, then printed newsletters with large type are best sent through the post.

### **Print**

Printed newsletters are becoming more and more rare as the popularity of email communication increases. Consumers are also becoming more environmentally conscious, and are not interested in receiving stacks of paper in the mail.

Of course, there are plenty of opportunities to use printed newsletters in your businesses. Generally, it is a good idea to produce a printed newsletter and have it available in your business, and when you are on the road, to distribute to potential clients and customers who may not be on your mailing list.

Create a list of the places you will likely wish to distribute your newsletter, and produce just enough to satisfy that requirement. The worksheet on the next page will get you started.

# Print Newsletter Distribution List

Location	Quantity
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales Calls	
<input type="checkbox"/> Presentations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Meetings	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trade Shows	
<input type="checkbox"/> Media Kits	
<input type="checkbox"/> In-Store	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Online or Email Newsletters

The most popular newsletters are sent online using Customer Relations Management (CRM) tools in HTML format. There are several CRM tools available online, which charge a monthly subscription fee that is customized to the size of your distribution list, and the frequency of your distribution.

Some common programs are:

- aWeber
- i-contact
- Constant Contact

These email marketing programs provide easy to use templates that allow you to design a clean professional email and send it out to your entire contact list.

The benefit of using online tools is that they automatically manage and track the success of each newsletter campaign, including:

- Tracking who opens the email
- Recording what links readers click on
- Tracking how many forward it to friends
- Unsubscribing those who request it

These tools can also be integrated into your website, so visitors can sign up directly at your site, and begin receiving newsletters immediately.

If you choose not to use a CRM tool, here are a few tips for emailing customers directly:

- **Use the BCC field.** Respect the privacy of your customers, and ensure all email addresses are typed into the “BCC” field of your email, not the “To” field. Failing to do so means that everyone on your list will be able to see which email addresses you have on your list. If competitors have subscribed to your newsletter, they will be able to grab the email addresses of your valued customers.
- **No attachments.** Emails from unknown or commercial sources that have attachments are rarely opened. If you create your newsletter on your website in HTML format, you can send a brief note with the website address link to point readers in the right direction.
- **Use plain text.** Make it easy for the reader to open and read your newsletter. Depending on the email program, your formatting may or may not be preserved on the reader’s end. If visuals are important to you, the best way to preserve formatting is to use an HTML-based template.
- **Keep the old ones!** Remember to post archived newsletters on your site, so readers can catch up on what you’ve published before they signed up.



# 8

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## **How to Use Testimonials and Profit from Social Proof**

### **The Power of Testimonials**

Testimonials are simply the single most powerful asset you can have in your killer marketing toolkit. When your customers tell others about the benefits of choosing your business, it is a thousand times more powerful than the same words from your mouth.

The words and opinions of others motivate people to spend money every day. From celebrity endorsements on TV and in magazines, to casual conversations with friends, decisions about what product or service to buy – and what brand or provider – are heavily influenced by those who have purchased before.

Why? There are several reasons. Many people have an inherent distrust of salespeople, and a skepticism toward marketing materials. Others are bombarded with choice, and are looking for some sense of security in their purchase decision.

Testimonials build the credibility of your business, break down natural barriers, and create a sense of trust for the consumer. They have an incredible ability to persuade customers to buy, and to buy from you. Think about the last time someone recommended a brand of laundry detergent, a bottle of wine, or a plumber to you. Their positive experience had more of an impact on your decision to buy than any advertisement or discount.

When it comes to spending money, people want a sure bet. They want to know that someone else has bought before, and they want to know that the product or service has delivered the promised results. A testimonial for your business is worth more than any copywriter, clever ad slogan, or sales pitch.

## **Customers Who Give Testimonials**

When people put their name and reputation on paper to endorse something, it creates a sense of loyalty; if questioned, they will back their decision, even if they find later their decision was wrong.

When someone is willing to endorse your product or service in writing, they have likely already started a word-of-mouth chain of verbal testimonials about their positive experience. Remember the last time you discovered a chiropractic miracle worker? Or the fastest and cheapest drycleaner? Didn't you tell every one of your friends who could use the service?

By asking a customer for a testimonial, you are asking for their assistance in the growth of your business. When they feel they are truly helping and participating in the development of your company, their sense of pride will mean continuous loyalty to your product or service.

# 11 Ways to Get Great Testimonials

Testimonials are powerful – no question. But how do you make sure that the quotes you get from your customers will bring you the most value? How do you ensure that your client will articulate your product’s merits in a clear and easy to understand way? How do you make sure you can actually use their testimonials in your marketing materials?

Asking for testimonials requires more effort than merely soliciting general comments and praise. You want to ensure that your customer feels a sense of pride and loyalty in providing their opinion, and that their opinion will have an impact on potential buyers.

How? Glad you asked. Here are 11 proven ways to get great testimonials from your customers.

## 1. Don’t wait!

Your customers are the happiest and most willing to help you within a day to a week of their purchase, so aim to secure the testimonial in this time period. Ask for the testimonial before they leave, and make sure you have all their contact details to follow up with. This also ensures you stay on top of your testimonial recruitment!

## **2. Get specific**

Specific testimonials are more believable. The more specific you can have your customer be, the stronger and more impactful the testimonial will be. Meaningful details get remembered. Ask for mention of things like time, dates, extraordinary customer service, and personal observations.

## **3. If you were the solution – what was the problem?**

Testimonials that tell stories are more engaging. Ask client to not only describe their experience with your company, but also the negative experience that led them to your door. If they can describe the struggles and challenges they were facing before receiving your service, the reader will likely be able to sympathize and resonate with similar struggles. This will motivate them to solve their problems with your solution.

## **4. Write the first draft**

Make it easy for your clients. This technique is something you can offer someone who is hesitant to commit to writing a testimonial due to time constraints, or is procrastinating. Ask them to brainstorm a few notes they would like to include in their feedback, write them down, and string them into a concise testimonial for their review. All they have to do is review, print on their letterhead, sign, and mail back to you!

## **5. Include your marketing message or USP**

Always ask your customers to include your unique selling proposition (USP) in the testimonial. For instance, if your USP includes exceptional customer service, same-day installation, and a money-back guarantee then ask your customer to attest to those qualities.

## **6. A picture says...**

Yes, you know the saying. But it's true. When readers attach an image of the speaker to words, the words are enlivened and have twice as much validity and impact. When readers see an image of a previous client using your product or service, their words and opinions are even more believable. You can take these simple pictures yourself – and take many so you have a selection to choose from.

## **7. Credentials equal trust**

As we mentioned, testimonials from credible sources will have the most believability and impact. When you ask for a testimonial, make sure your customer states their expertise and credentials. If you sell custom orthotics, and can secure a solid testimonial from a doctor, their words will be golden in your marketing materials.

## **8. Don't forget to ask permission**

When you ask for testimonials, make sure you are clear that their words may be used in your marketing materials, including advertisements, website and in-store displays. This is a good time to thank them for their time and sincerity, and show your appreciation for their words.

## **9. Location, location...**

Depending on the market reach of your business, the location of your customers is an important part of the believability of your testimonial. If you own a community-based business, when potential clients see you've made others happy just down their street they'll be motivated to use your service, too. If you own a regional business, then the cities and addresses of other happy customers can help communicate the reach of your service.

## **10. Testimonials are not surveys**

Keep the purpose of your request in mind when you're asking for testimonials. Testimonials should be positive fodder for your advertising materials. Surveys are used to solicit meaningful (and often confidential) customer information to refine and improve your service. Testimonials are public statements, while surveys are often anonymous and can produce less-than-positive results.

## **11. Say thank you!**

Thanking a customer for their time and effort creating your testimonial is just plain good manners. It also increases loyalty and goodwill. This can be done via email, but sending a formal letter on your letterhead is a more meaningful approach.

## Using Testimonials Strategically

So now you have a pile of glowing customer testimonials. What's next?

### Choose the most powerful piece of the testimonial

What is the most convincing aspect of the testimonial? Is it the author? Where they are from? A specific sentence or paragraph they wrote? Be strategic about the aspect of the testimonial that you feature, and select what will have the most impact.

For example, you can compile a list titled *What Customers are Saying*, and list only the phrases that support your specific marketing message. Or you can feature the unique credentials or story of your customer, before you even include their testimonial. You can also summarize the testimonial with a powerful headline.

### Put them on your website

Adding a page of testimonials to your website is a great start, especially when you're beginning to solicit customer responses. However, the most powerful way to ensure site visitors actually see your testimonials is to include them on every page – especially the ones with the highest traffic.

A testimonial should be placed wherever you make a strong statement about your service or product, and wherever the service or product is described. This is a great way to break up your sales copy with some “proof”. As they read about your offering, your credibility will be validated by someone other than you.

## **Compile your best 25 to 50 letters in a display book**

Like a proud grandparent, keep a book of testimonials in the waiting area of your office, your boardroom, and in your desk. Or, put one at the service counter, cash register and anywhere else people may have a moment to flip through.

I've seen this done in recruiting firm, a hardware store, and a physiotherapist's office. When clients have a chance to read the positive experiences of others, they will be more open to hearing your sales pitch less guarded when responding to your unique offering.

## **Hang your favorite testimonials in your store or office**

Testimonials as art! Frame your favorite testimonials – preferably the ones written on client letterhead – and post them on the wall in your business. Even if clients don't read them up close, the volume and visual recognition of client logos will have impact. Plus – your next satisfied clients will want to see their company names on the wall too.

## **Put them in your advertisements**

Use short, clear, concise testimonials in your advertising. When was the last time you saw a prescription drug advertisement without a testimonial? Can't remember? That's because you haven't. The best advertisers know that testimonials are the fastest and most effective way to overcome skepticism and get clients thinking that your product or service is the solution to their problem.



## **Include a page of testimonials in your direct mail**

When sending your marketing materials directly to a mass list of potential clients, let the words of others speak to the merits of your product or service. Put together a page or two of testimonials, and attach it to your mailing. The credibility of your company will be instantly established, encouraging clients to act – and buy – faster.

## **Partner with an associate for joint mailing**

If you have an associate or colleague who has a similar customer base of new prospects for your business, try a joint-endorsed mailing. Each of you will send a letter to your own clients, endorsing the other's products and services. Your service or solution is offered to a potential client by a trusted source, and you are offering your existing clients the added value of an associate's service to complement your own.

## **Allow and Encourage Customers to Leave Online Reviews**

When customers are considering purchasing for the first time from a company, they often look for reviews online at sites like Yelp. If they see a string of outstanding reviews, and even one or two less-flattering comments, it makes your company seem real and reliable. Turn on the reviews section on your Facebook business page, ask customers to write recommendations on LinkedIn.

# Testimonial Request Letter

Here is an example of a basic testimonial request letter that can be customized and made into a template for your unique business. This can also be sent over email if that is how your clients prefer to be contacted.

*Mr. John Smith  
1234 Main Street  
Anytown, Anyplace 90210*

*January 2, 2016*

*Dear Mr. Smith,*

*Thank you for visiting our store this week. It was a pleasure helping you select a new laptop for your daughter to use at university this fall – they just grow up too fast! Your research and clear idea of the product you were searching for truly made our job easy. We love the back to school season, because it means working with clients like yourself.*

*We know there are a lot of choices when it comes to purchasing a laptop in Anytown, so thank you for choosing ABC Company. If there is anything else we can assist you with, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.*

*We occasionally ask select customers for their feedback in the form of a testimonial. Because we are so proud of the feedback we receive, we often use our customer's quotes in our marketing materials – specifically our website and sales brochures. The real life experiences of our customers at ABC Company are stories that we are proud of.*

*Could I ask you to write down some of your feedback? A few words about your experience with ABC Company, and how we helped you and your daughter would be greatly appreciated. We encourage you to print this on your company letterhead, so we can provide your own company with some exposure as well.*

*You may want to include the names of the associates who helped you, and how your daughter is enjoying her laptop. Again, we would like to feature your name and experience in our marketing materials. For your convenience, I've included a prepaid envelope with which to mail your testimonial back to us.*

*Thank you very much for your assistance.*

*Kind regards,*

*Your name here*

# Testimonial Thank You Letter

Here is an example of a short thank you letter for a testimonial that can also be customized and made into a template for your unique business. You may wish to write your thank you letters on company note cards, but try to avoid sending these thank you's via email.

*Mr. John Smith  
1234 Main Street  
Anytown, Anyplace 90210*

*January 10, 2006*

*Dear Mr. Smith,*

*We received your glowing testimonial in the mail today, and I wanted to thank you personally for your kind words. Your comments about our store and our people are important to us, and I will make sure my staff takes a moment to read your letter.*

*We are thrilled that your daughter is enjoying her laptop, and using it to keep in touch with you while she studies abroad. When we sold it to you, we truly believed it would provide the most long-lasting value for her student budget. I hope it serves her for the rest of her time at school.*

*Thank you again for taking the time to write us. We are all proud to have been of service to you and your daughter, and look forward to seeing you both again soon.*

*Warm regards,  
Your Name Here*

# Testimonial Examples

Below you will find a series of sample testimonials, and excerpts from testimonial letters. Read these over, and take a moment to notice why each is a powerful statement. We have also summarized each testimonial with a headline.

## **24% Response Rate from a Single Direct Mailing!**

*We were skeptical about direct mail campaigns, and unsure about the return on investment. Your strategic advice and logistical help made the project run smoothly and easily – we received over 200 leads from this single effort!*

John and Betty McFee

Scottsdale, AZ

## **Best Sleep in 20 Years!**

*I can't tell you how much I appreciated Craig's patience and assistance in my mattress selection. He is so knowledgeable of each mattress' design and features, and helped us find a financing solution that worked with our budget. I haven't slept this well in over two decades. Promote him!*

Jason Carmichael

## **Gentle and effective approach**

*I have always been reluctant to visit a chiropractor for my lower back pain because I am not comfortable with physical adjustments. Sarah took the time to clearly explain the cause of my pain, and gave me easy exercises to help*

*correct the problem. She respected my comfort level, and treated me without uncomfortable cracks and snaps!*

Wally Orton

# Testimonial Worksheet

Start today! Brainstorm a list of recent customers and clients who you will approach for testimonials. Post this worksheet in your office, and track your progress. Aim for 50 testimonials in two months. You can never have too many.

Name + Phone	Request Letter Sent	Follow Up Call Made	Testimonial Received	Thank-you Letter Sent
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## **How to Create Repeat Business and Have Clients that Pay, Stay and Refer**

When it comes to marketing and generating more income, most business owners are focused outward.

They've carefully established and segmented their target market, and created specific offers and messages for each market segment. They spend thousands of dollars in advertising and direct mail campaigns in hot pursuit of more leads, more customers, and more foot traffic.

While this is an effective way to build a business, it is costly and time consuming. It requires constant and consistent effort, and while this approach does generate results, those results quickly disappear when the effort stops or becomes less intense.

Successful businesses that see sustained growth have a double-edged marketing strategy. They focus their efforts *outward* – on new potential customers and marketing – as well as *inward* – on existing customers and referral business. This is a winning killer marketing strategy.



These successful businesses have leveraged their existing efforts to generate more revenue. Simply put, their customers buy from them over and over again.

For most businesses, this is the easiest way to increase their revenues. Simple customer loyalty strategies and outstanding customer service are often all you need to dramatically increase your sales – from the customers you already have.

## **The Cost of Your Customers**

Do you know how much it costs your business to buy new customers?

Each new customer that walks through your door – with the exception of referrals – has cost you money to acquire. You have spent money on advertising and promotions to generate leads and turn those leads into customers.

For example, if you have placed an ad in your local newspaper for \$1,000, and the ad brings in 10 customers, you have paid \$100 to acquire each customer. You would need to ensure each of those customers spent at least \$200 to cover your margin and break even.

Alternately, if you spent two hours of your time and \$10 per month on an email marketing program to send a newsletter to your existing database of customers, and you bring in 10 customers as a result – each customer has cost you \$1.

Generating more repeat business means focusing on the marketing strategies that aim to keep your existing customers instead of purchase new ones – effectively reducing the cost of attracting new customers to your business.

These strategies are simple to implement, and don't require much time investment. Just a solid understanding of how to make customers want to come back and spend more of their money

## **Keeping Your Customers**

Marketing strategies that focus on keeping your current customer base are easy and enjoyable to implement. They allow you to build real relationships with the people you do business with, instead of dealing with a revolving door of people on the other end of your sales process.

Repeat customers create a community of people around your business that presumably share the same needs, desires and frustrations. The information you gain from these customers (market research) can help you strengthen your understanding of your target audience, and more accurately segment it.

Remember – 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. Always focus on these customers. They are ideal customers that you want to recruit, and hold on to.

## **Customer Service: Make them love buying from you**

Every business – even those with excellent service standards can improve the service they provide their customers. Customer service seems to be a dying concept in most businesses; more focus seems to be placed on the speed of the transaction. These days you can even go to the grocery store now and not speak to a single sales associate thanks to self-serve checkouts.

To improve your company's customer service standards, take a survey of your customers and your employees to brainstorm ways you can improve the experience of buying from your business.

Successful customer service standards – those that make your customers *buy* – are:

**Consistent.** The standards are up kept by every person in your organization. Expectations are clear and followed through. Customers know what to expect, and choose your business because of those expectations.

**Convenient.** It is nearly effortless for the customer to spend money at your place of business. Convenience can take many forms – location, product selection, value-added services like delivery – and it is also consistent.

**Customer-driven.** The service the customer receives is exactly how they would like to be treated when buying your product or service. It is reflective of your target market, and appropriate to their lifestyle. Customers would probably not appreciate white linen tablecloths at a fast food restaurant, but they would appreciate a 2-minutes or less guarantee.

## **Value Added Service: Give them happy surprises**

Adding value to your business is an effective way of getting your customers back. Every person I know would choose a mattress store that offered free delivery over one that did not. It's that simple.

There are many ways to add value to your business, including:

**Feature your expertise.** Use your knowledge to provide additional value to your customers. Offer a free consumer guide or report with every purchase.

**Add convenience services.** Offer a service that makes their purchase easier, or more convenient. The best example of this is free shipping or delivery.

**Package complementary services.** Packaging like items together creates an increase in perceived value. This is great for start-up kits.

**Offer new products or services.** Feature top of the line or exclusive products, available only at your business. Offer a new service or profile a new staff member with niche expertise.

Value added services generate repeat customers in one of two ways:

**1. Impress them on their first visit.** Impress your customer with great service, a product that meets their needs, and then wow them with something extra that they weren't expecting. Get them to associate the experience of

dealing with your business with happy surprises, and create a perception of higher value.

**2. Entice them to come back.** The introduction of a new value-added service can be enough to convince a customer to buy from you again. Their initial purchase established a trust and knowledge of your business and its processes. They will want to “be included” in anything new you have to offer – especially if there is exclusivity. It is easier to attract clients that have purchased from you than potential clients who have not.

### **Customer Loyalty Programs: Give them incentives**

Another simple way to keep in touch with existing customers and keep them coming back to you is to create a customer loyalty program.

These programs do not have to be complicated or costly, and are relatively easy to maintain once they have been implemented. These programs help you gain more information on your customers and their purchasing habits.

Here are some examples of simple loyalty programs that you can implement:

**Free product or service.** Give them every 10th (or 6th) product or service free. Produce stamp cards with your logo and contact information on it.

**Reward dollars.** Give them a certain percentage of their purchase back in money that can only be spent in-store. Produce “funny money” with your logo and brand.

**Rewards points.** Give them a certain number of points for every dollar they spend. These points can be spent in-store, or on special items you bring in for points only.

**Membership amenities.** Give members access to VIP amenities that are not available to other customers. Produce member cards or give out member numbers.

Remember that in order for this strategy to work, you and your team have to understand and promote it. The program in itself becomes a product that you sell.

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## **Create Added Value in Your Business and Make 1 + 1 = 3**

The majority of small businesses, like yours, are established in response to market demand for a product or service. Many build their businesses by serving that demand, and enjoy growing profits without putting much effort into long-term planning or marketing.

However, what happens when that demand slows or stops? What happens when the competition sets up shop with a “new and improved” version of your product down the road? How do you keep your offering fresh, while growing and maintaining your client base? The answer is by adding value to your product or service.

Added value is a killer marketing or customer relations strategy that can take the form of a product, service, which is added to the original offering for free, or as part of a discounted package. It, like all other elements in your marketing toolkit, is designed to attract new customers and retain existing ones. A simple example of added value would be if you owned a gift shop, and offered complimentary gift wrapping with every purchase.

If you don't refresh and renew your offering over time, your customers will get bored and be drawn to your competitor. Your employees, too, may

become disinterested, and find work elsewhere. Ultimately, both clients and employees will demand additional value to remain loyal – and aren't they the keystones for your business growth?

## **Can You Add Value to Your Business?**

Everyone can add value to their business. Better yet, everyone can *afford* to add value to their business. Adding value doesn't have to blow your marketing budget, or take up hours of your time. There are many ways – big and small – to enhance your business in the eyes of your clients.

The key to adding value is determining what your customers and target market perceive as valuable. You must understand their needs, wants, troubles and inconveniences in order to entice them with solutions through added value products or services. Adding value will add to your profits, but if you don't focus on genuinely helping your clients, you'll have a difficult time attracting them.

Added value works for both product- and service-based businesses. If you offer a service, like hairstyling, try treating your customers with products like a latte while they wait, shampoo samples, or a free conditioning treatment with every sixth visit. If you sell a product, consider offering convenience services – like free shipping or delivery – to make the customer's experience a seamless one. The customer will feel appreciated and their needs will have been taken care of.



## **Ways to Add Value to Your Business**

There are many ways to enhance your offer, depending on your budget and the resources you have access to. You may wish to hold a brainstorming session with your staff to come up with ideas for your business; if your employees are on the front lines, they'll likely have firsthand information about what clients would like to see more of.

### **Feature Your Expertise**

Your intellectual property is a free resource that you have at your disposal to share with your clients. This will make them feel as though they have an inside track. You might want to consider adding it to your business, making it a value-added service.

**Expert corner:** Supplement your website and newsletter with columns on topics of interest to your customers and of relevance to your service. This will position you as an expert in the marketplace, and give your clients helpful information they won't receive from the competition.

**Do It Yourself Tips:** This is a great tool for seasonal marketing. Provide your clients with this information on your website, in your newsletters, or on take away note cards in your store or office. Ideas include recipes, craft ideas, gift ideas – all of which are branded with your company logo and contact information, and include your product as an ingredient.

**What to Expect Tips:** Take your customer through what they should expect in the first few days (weeks) of using your service or product, and how they can make the most of it. This can include assembly instructions, product

care and cleaning, or service results (like a 25% increase in business – guaranteed!).

**Related + Community Events:** Own a store that sells athletic equipment? Post information on your website, in store, and in your newsletter about upcoming races, games, or consumer trade shows. Or simply keep a bulletin in your office of community events and offers that will draw your clients in, and establish itself as a hub in the neighborhood for information.

### **Offer Convenience Services**

Customer service is a dying practice in our high paced culture – use it to your advantage. When done well, it can be the difference between you and the competition, or the deciding factor for a potential repeat client.

Envision the steps involved for a customer to arrive at your store, purchase your offering, and use your product or service. Can you eliminate any of those steps for them? Can you shorten waiting times, or make them more pleasurable? Stepping into your clients' shoes will allow you to determine the most powerful value add for your company. Here are a few ideas:

**Free Delivery + Shipping:** With clearly established parameters (will you ship your product free to India?), this is a solid value added service that many businesses offer. Free delivery (usually with a purchase over a set amount) is a huge convenience for many people who do not have access to a vehicle, or need help moving large items.

**Follow up Services:** This works great for computers, appliances and other mechanical or technology-based products. Offer maintenance and service

contracts for three time periods; instead of dealing with the manufacturer, customers will rely on you for assistance which brings them back into the store and establishes a relationship of trust.

**Gift-Wrapping:** A great service to provide – especially for seasonal gifts. This service costs very little, and can have a big impact on your customer’s experience.

**“While You Wait” Amenities:** If you could make your customer feel like a VIP for minimal cost, why wouldn’t you? Offering amenities like coffee and treats, free samples and services (wireless internet is a big one) will go a long way.

**Comparison-Shopping Tools:** Show your customers that you are so sure your product will measure up against the competition, that you’ll help them compare.

## **Establish Complementary Partnerships**

Complementary partnerships with other businesses can take you a long way toward adding value for your customer, and generating new business. Just like a joint testimonial mailing, the power (and convenience) of referral business is immense.

**Build a web of associates:** If you’re a yoga instructor, carry the cards of your treatment providers (physiotherapists, massage therapists, etc.) to refer your students to. In exchange, your brochure or card is posted in their offices. This works for automotive repair, consultants and just about any other service

providers. Customers will trust referrals received by their existing service providers, and feel taken care of by a reputable community of experts.

**Establish partnerships with financial incentives:** This is one that has your interests in mind as well as your customers'. In addition to establishing a complementary partnership with a related associate, establish an incentive structure where each of you are compensated for your referrals. For example, if you refer a client to a furniture store after they've purchased a mattress from you, and they buy a bed frame, your associate will pay you a portion of the sale – and vice versa.

**Location-based partnerships:** Consider creating partnerships with the businesses around you – even if your products and services don't appear to be related. Shopping malls do this all the time with value coupon books that customers must purchase for \$5 to \$20 dollars. These partnerships and incentives will keep the customer spending money in the area, which is good for everyone's bottom line.

## **Packages + Bundles**

Packaging and bundling products and services is one of the most popular methods of adding value. Clients perceive the bundles as having a higher value than the sum of the individual items – or as receiving something for free.

Cleverly packaged and named bundles can spark interest and revive your products in the eyes of your customers. Remember to always give the offers an end date or provide a limited number to create a sense of scarcity and urgency and to prevent this strategy from going stale.

**Intuitive product bundles:** Package independent related products together, and give them a reduced price or name. For example, this could be selling an extra pair of running socks with new running shoes. Remember the convenience of starter kits – package everything your customer will need to begin a new activity – painting, camping, running, etc. – in a bundle for simple buying decisions.

**Package your upsell:** This can also be called a chain of purchasing. It includes the products or services your client will need to use your product or service. Won't they need leather protector for their new boots? If they've run out of oil paints, how's their supply of brushes, acrylics or canvases? By packaging these clearly related products together, you are making their shopping experience faster and more convenient.

### **Offer a Customer Loyalty Program**

There are a number of ways to structure your rewards and loyalty program, depending on the type of business and level of technological resources available to you. Customer loyalty programs have a huge advantage – they help build your database of customer information and in most cases allow you to view and analyze purchasing patterns. Here are the most popular:

**Every 6th (or 10th) Visit on Us:** This works well for business that rely on repeat visits from their customers – like hair salons, coffee shops, auto maintenance, etc. Customers receive a card with store information on the front, and space for stamps or initials on the back. Remember that while 10 is a nice even number, it may be too far in the future for some customers (especially for services that are three to six weeks apart). The idea of six visits is more manageable.

**Rewards Dollars:** For every dollar your customer spends in store, they receive a small portion back in store credit (i.e., Your Store currency). The store credit is in the form of printed dollars, branded with your company logo and contact information, and serves as a reminder each time a client opens their wallet.

**Rewards Points:** Another common value-add strategy is a rewards points system. Most grocery stores use this incentive, as well as credit card companies. This works the same as rewards dollars, where a certain number of points are accumulated based on each dollar spent in store. Points can then be spent in store, or on products you have brought in for “rewards points holders” only. This strategy also allows you to feature products with “extra points value” instead of discounting prices.

**Membership Amenities:** Instead of points or dollars, you can offer VIP treatment for members, when they sign up for or purchase a membership. This may include occasional discounts, but is primarily centered around perks like “while you wait” amenities, skipping the line, free delivery, etc. You can also produce membership cards.

# So What Do You Do From Here?

From Katryna Johnson

So you've read the book. What do you do next?

Take Action! Pick a couple strategies and implement them. Now! Today!

Do everything you can to LEARN and the EARN will follow! If you are serious about your success, then go to work on yourself, study all aspects of marketing and become a sponge. The amazing thing about the game of business is that when you put proven processes to work and continue to follow them, success has to follow. Much like baking a cake, when you follow the recipe, you'll get a good result. The biggest mistake is to start a process and then fall into old habits or abandon the fundamental strategy before it has had a chance to work. Develop patience and persistence.

Above all, get the knowledge you need before you step onto the field. It is amazing to me how many new small business people start the game of business against seasoned professionals (the competition) without first developing the necessary knowledge to be successful. Then they fail and blame the market, the economy, their location, etc.

If you have a business and have not yet managed to start to create wealth and systems that allow you to take time off, build retirement accounts or pay for your child's college education, then learn and master the marketing strategies outlined in my book. Then find a good coach or mentor. You won't even recognize your life once you get the right information and find someone who knows how to walk

you through the implementation and provide you with support and encouragement.

For a Free Test Drive of all my best tips, tricks and marketing resources, visit <http://TrinasInnerCircle.com>.

Best of luck to you. I look forward to seeing your killer marketing strategies.