

UNCOVERING HIDDEN OPPORTUNITIES TO **MAXIMIZE PROFITS**

**TOP TIPS FOR
SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS**



DARON J. STENVOLD

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Small business success**

by Daron J Stenvold

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to my loving wife Lori. You have supported my decision to move forward with my passion for helping other small businesses. A huge Thank You for spending the additional time taking care of our beautiful children Lexi & Dylan, understanding the time it takes to grow businesses and for believing in me. I hope I make you and our children proud.

To learn the three biggest mistakes all business owners make and how to avoid them, visit www.impelBusinessAcademy.com.

Semper Fi,

Daron Stenvold

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INTRODUCTION

This is the first page, but by opening this book, you have already taken an essential step towards impelling your business to success. Congratulations on your quest to enhance your business and marketing skills.

When I put pen to paper or keyboard to a word document, I found myself with an enormous amount of useful marketing material I've used in the past. The discipline from my time in the Marine Corps and as a Gulf War Veteran gave me the drive and determination I needed to succeed in the business world. My experience is drawn from many different business entities, starting with my "Rookie of the Year" award for "Prospecting Diamonds in the rough" from a young call center management company. My time in the field has included sales and sales management for a couple of startup technology companies and sales manager to the director for a startup division of a Fortune 500 company. My business ownership began with a resort in northcentral Minnesota. I started a consulting company providing fractional sales management, sales-specific assessments and evaluations, coaching, and marketing solutions to small businesses while developing several E-Commerce websites along the way. The strategies I talk about in this book are still in place at the companies I own today.

Even though I genuinely believe we are all one or two great marketing ideas away from more sales opportunities than we can fully imagine, I think the first two chapters are as crucial as the following eight. The strategies 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.

This is the reason I have now dedicated my life to Business Coaching. Since starting my company to provide direction for small business operators, I have been literally overwhelmed with the demand for marketing, clarity, structure, accountability, and for the need to have small business operators surrounding themselves with someone that cares and to provide a proper and profitable third-party perspective.

As you follow the book and read the principles to follow, remember it does not matter what industry nor type of business you operate (I've been part of many). 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.

Yours in success,
Daron J Stenvold

PS. If you would like to arrange a meeting to get a profitable third-party perspective on your business, please send an email to Daron@impelProfits.com, and we will gladly point you in the right direction.

To learn how to avoid the three key mistakes all small business owners make, visit www.impelBusinessAcademy.com.

1

Define Your Target Market

What is a Target Market?

Many businesses can't answer the question: *Who is your target market?* They have often made the fatal assumption that *everyone* will want to purchase their product or service with the right marketing strategy.

A target market is simply a group of customers or clients who will purchase a specific product or service. This group of people all have something in common, often age, gender, hobbies, or location.

Your target market, then, are the people who will buy your offering. This includes both existing and potential customers, all of whom are motivated to do one of three things:

- Fulfill a need
- Solve a problem
- Satisfy a desire

To build, maintain, and grow your business, you need to know who your customers are, what they do, what they like, and why they would buy

your product or service. Getting this wrong – or not taking the time to get it right – will cost you time, money, and potentially the success of your business.

The Importance of Knowing Your Target Market

Knowledge and understanding of your target market is the keystone in the arch of your business. Without it, your product or service positioning, pricing, marketing strategy, and eventually, your business could very quickly fall apart.

If you don't intimately know your target market, you run the risk of making mistakes when it comes to establishing pricing, product mix, or service packages. Your marketing strategy will lack direction and produce mediocre results at best. Even if your marketing message and unique selling proposition (USP) are clear, and your brochure is perfectly designed, it means nothing unless it arrives in the hands (or ears) of the right people.

Determining your target market takes time and careful diligence. While it often starts with a best guess, assumptions cannot be relied on, and research is required to confirm original ideas. Your target market is not always your ideal market.

Once you build an understanding of who your target market is, keep up with your market research. Having your finger on the pulse of their motivations and drivers – which naturally change – will help you to anticipate needs or wants and evolve your business.

Types of Markets

Consumer

The Consumer Market includes those general consumers who buy products and services for personal use, or for use by family and friends. This is the market category you or I fall into when we're shopping for groceries or clothes, seeing a movie in the theatre, or going out for lunch. Retailers focus on this market category when marketing their goods or services.

Institutional

The Institutional Market serves society and provides products or services for the benefit of society. This includes hospitals, non-profit organizations, government organizations, schools, and universities. Members of the Institutional Market purchase products to use in the provision of services to people in their care.

Business to Business (B2B)

The B2B Market is just what it seems to be: businesses that purchase the products and services of other businesses to run their operations. These purchases can include products that are used to manufacture other products (raw or technical), products that are needed for daily operations (such as office supplies), or services (such as accounting, shredding, and legal).

Reseller

This market can also be called the "Intermediary Market" because it consists of businesses that act as channels for goods and services between other

markets. Goods are purchased and sold for a profit – without any alterations. Members of this market include wholesalers, retailers, resellers, and distributors.

Determining Your Target Market

Product / Service Investigation

The process for determining your target market starts by examining exactly what your offering is, and what the average customer’s motivation for purchasing it is. Start by answering the following questions:

Does your offering meet a basic need?	
Does your offering serve a particular want?	
Does your offering fulfill a desire?	
What is the lifecycle of your product/service?	
What is the availability of your offering?	
What is the cost of the average customer’s purchase?	
What is the lifecycle of your offering?	

How many times or how often will customers purchase your offering?	
Do you foresee any upcoming changes in your industry or region that may affect the sale of your offering (positive/negative)?	

Market Investigation

- **On the ground.** Spend some time on the ground researching who your target market might be. If you're thinking about opening a coffee shop, hang out in the neighborhood at different times of the day to get a sense of the people who live, work, and play in the community. Notice their age, gender, clothing, and any other indications of income and activities.
- **At the competition.** Who is your direct competitor targeting? Is there a small niche that is being missed? Observing clientele of your competition can help build an understanding of your target market, regardless of whether it is the same or opposite. For example, if you own a children's clothing boutique and the majority of middle-class mothers shop at the local department store, you may wish to focus on higher-income families as your target market.
- **Online.** Many cities and towns – or at least regions – have demographic information available online. Research the ages, incomes, occupations, and other vital pieces of information about the people who live in the area you operate your business. From this data, you will gain an understanding of the size of your total potential market.

- **With existing customers.** Talk to your existing customers through focus groups or surveys. This is a great way to gather demographic and behavioral information, as well as genuine feedback about product or service quality and other information that will be useful in a business or marketing strategy.

Who is Your Market?

Based on your product/service and market investigations, you will be able to piece together a primary picture of your target market, and some of their general characteristics. Record some notes here. At this point, you may wish to be as specific as possible, or maintain some generalities. You can further segment your market in the next section.

Consumer Target Market Framework

Market Type:	Consumer
Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age Range:	
Purchase Motivation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet a Need <input type="checkbox"/> Serve a Want <input type="checkbox"/> Fulfill a Desire
Activities:	
Income Range:	
Marital Status:	
Location:	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country
Other Notes:	

Institutional Target Market Framework

Market Type:	Institutional
Institution Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Charity <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Church
Purchase Motivation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Operational Need <input type="checkbox"/> Client Want <input type="checkbox"/> Client Desire
Purpose of Institution:	
Institution's Client Base:	
Size:	
Location:	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country
Other Notes:	

B2B Target Market Framework

Market Type:	Business to Business (B2B)
Company Size:	
Number of Employees:	
Purchase Motivation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Operations Need <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Functionality

Annual Revenue:	
Industry:	
Location(s):	
Purpose of Business:	
People, Culture & Values:	
Other Notes:	

Reseller Target Market Framework

Market Type:	Reseller
Industry:	
Client Base:	
Purchase Motivation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Operations Need <input type="checkbox"/> Client Wants <input type="checkbox"/> Functionality
Annual Revenue:	

Age:	
Location:	<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood <input type="checkbox"/> City <input type="checkbox"/> Region <input type="checkbox"/> Country
Other Notes:	

Your Target Market: Putting It Together

Based on the information you gather from your product/service and market investigations, you should have a clear vision of your realistic target market. Here are a few examples of how this information is put together and how conclusions are drawn:

Target Market Sample 1: Consumer Market

Business: Baby Clothing Boutique	Business Purpose: <i>Meet a need</i> (provide clothing for infants and children aged 0 to 5 years) <i>Serve a want</i> (clothing is brand name only, and has a higher price point than the competition)
Market Type: Consumer	
Gender: Women	
Marital Status: Married	
Market Observations: located on Main Street of Anytown, a street that is seeing many new boutiques open up, proximate to the main shopping mall two blocks from popular mid-range restaurant that is busy at lunch	Industry Predictions: a large number of new housing developments in the city and surrounding areas two new schools in construction expect to see an influx of new families move to town from Anycity

<p>Competition Observations: baby clothing also available at two local department stores, and one second-hand shop on the opposite side of town</p>	<p>Online Research: half of Anytown’s population is female, and 25% have children under the age of 15 years Anytown’s population is expected to increase by 32% within three years The average household income for Anytown is \$75,000 annually</p>
<p>TARGET MARKET:</p> <p>The target market can then be described as married mothers with children under five years old, between the ages of 25 and 45, who have recently moved to Anytown from Anycity, and have a household income of at least \$100K annually.</p>	

Target Market Sample 2: B2B Market

<p>Business: Confidential Paper Shredding</p>	<p>Target Business Size: Small to medium</p>
<p>Market Type: B2B (Business to Business)</p>	<p>Target Business Revenue: \$500K to \$1M</p>
<p>Business Purpose: <i>Meet an operations need</i> (provide confidential on-site shredding services for business documents)</p>	<p>Target Business Type: produce or handle a variety of sensitive paper documentation accountants, lawyers, real estate agents, etc.</p>
<p>Market Observations: there are two main areas of office buildings and industrial warehouses in Anycity three more office towers are being constructed and will be completed this year</p>	<p>Industry Predictions: the professional sector is seeing revenue growth of 24% over last year, which indicates increased client billing and staff recruitment</p>

<p>Competition Observations: One confidential shredding company serves the region, covering Anycity and the surrounding towns provide regular (weekly or biweekly) service, but does not have the capacity to handle large volumes at one time</p>	<p>Online Research: Anycity’s biggest employment sectors are: manufacturing, tourism, food services, and professional services</p>
<p>TARGET MARKET:</p> <p>The target market can then be described as small to medium-sized businesses in the professional sector with annual revenue of \$500K to \$1M who require both regular and infrequent large volume paper shredding services.</p>	

Segmenting Your Market

Your market segments are the groups within your target market – broken down by a determinant in one of the following four categories:

- Demographics
- Psychographics
- Geographics
- Behaviors

Segmenting your target market into several more specific groups allows you to tailor your marketing campaign further, and more specifically, position your product or service. You may wish to divide your ad campaign into four sections and target four specific markets with messages that will most resonate with the audience.

For example, the baby clothing store may choose to segment its target market by psychographics or lifestyle. If the larger target market is *married females with children under five, between the ages of 25 and 45, who have a household income of at least \$100K annually*, it can be broken down into the following lifestyle segments:

- Fitness-oriented mothers
- Career-oriented mothers
- New mothers

With these three categories, unique marketing messages can be created that speaks to the hot buttons of each segment. The more accurate and specific you can make communications with your target market, the more significant impact you will have on your revenues.

Market Segmentation Variables

Demographic	Psychographic	Geographic	Behavioristic
Age	Personality	Region	Brand Loyalty
Income	Lifestyle	Country	Product Usage
Gender	Values	City	Purchase
Generation	Attitude	Area	Frequency
Nationality	Motivation	Neighborhood	Profitability
Ethnicity	Activities	Density	Readiness to Buy
Marital Status	Interests	Climate	User Status
Family Size			
Occupation			
Religion			
Language			
Education			
Employment			
Type			
Housing Type			
Housing			
Ownership			
Political			
Affiliation			

Understanding Your Target Market

Once you have determined who your market is, make a point of learning everything you can about them. You need to have a strong understanding of who they are, what they like, where they shop, why they buy, and how they spend their time. Remind yourself that you may *think* you know your market, but until you have verified the information, you'll be driving your marketing strategy blind.

Also be aware that markets change, just like people. Just because you knew your market when you started your business ten years ago, doesn't mean you know it now. Regular market research is part of any successful business plan, and a great habit to start.

Types of Market Research

Surveys

The simplest way to gather information from your clients or target market is through a survey. You can craft a questionnaire full of questions about your product, service, market demographics, buyer motivations, and so on. Plus, anonymous surveys will produce the most accurate information since names are not attached to the results or specific comments.

Depending on the purpose—whether it is to gather demographic information, product or service feedback, or other data—there are several ways to administer a survey.

1. Telephone

Telephone surveys are a more time-consuming option but have the benefit of live communication with your target market. Generally, it is best to have a third party conduct this type of survey to gather the most honest feedback. This is the method that market researchers use for polling, which is highly reliable.

2. Online

Online surveys are the easiest to administer yourself. There are many web-based services that quickly and easily allow you to custom create your survey and send it to your email marketing list. These services can also analyze, summarize, and interpret the results on your behalf. Keep in mind that the results include only those who are motivated to respond, which may slant your results.

3. Paper-based.

Paper surveys are seldom used and can prove to be an inefficient method. Like online surveys, your results are based on the feedback of those who were motivated for one reason or another to respond. However, the time and effort involved in taking the survey, filling it out, and returning it to your place of business may deter people from participating.

Keep in mind that surveys can be complex to administer and consume more time and resources than you have planned. If you have the budget, consider hiring a professional market research firm to lead or assist with the process. This will also ensure that the methodology is standard practice and will garner the most accurate results.

Website Analysis

Tracking your website traffic is an excellent way to research your existing and potential customer's interests and behavior. From this information, you can ensure the design, structure, and content of your website is catering to the people who use it – and the people you want to use it.

User-friendly website traffic analytics programs can easily show you who is visiting your site, where they are from, and what pages of your site they are viewing. Services like Google Analytics can tell you what page they arrive at, where they click to, how much time they spend on each page, and on which page they leave the site.

This is powerful (and free!) information to have in your market research, and easy to monitor monthly or weekly, depending on the needs of your business.

Customer Purchase Data (Consumer Behavior)

If you do not have the budget to conduct your own professional market research, you can use existing resources on consumer behavior. While this data may not be specific to your region or city, general consumer research is actual data that can help confirm assumptions you may have made about your target market.

Your customer loyalty program or Point of Sale system may also be of help in tracking customer purchases and identifying trends in purchase behavior. If you can track who is buying, what they're buying, and how often

they're buying, you'll have an arsenal of powerful insight into your existing client base.

Focus Groups

Focus groups look at the psychographic and behavioristic aspects of your target market. Groups of six to 12 people are gathered and asked general and specific questions about their purchase motivations and behaviors. These questions could relate to your business in particular, or to the general industry.

Focus group sessions can also be time-consuming to organize and facilitate, so consider hiring the services of a professional market research firm. You may also receive more honest information if a third party is asking the questions and receiving the responses from focus group participants.

For cost savings, consider partnering with an associate in the same industry who is not a direct competitor, and who would benefit from the same market data.

2

Creating Effective 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, 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 can 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 competition comes out with a new piece, but remember your focus should be on attracting and retaining a customer base, not matching the competition item for item.

Know your target market. Make sure you have a solid understanding of your customer base. From that knowledge, you can quickly 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? 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 an 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				
Internal Templates (Fax Cover, Memo, etc.)				
Email Signature				
Blog				
Letterhead + Envelopes				
Thank You Cards				
Notepads				
Seasonal Gifts				
Company Profile				

Headlines + Sub 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!

Remember that headlines and sub-headlines are not just for advertisements. They work wonders in newsletters, sales letters, brochures, and websites, and can 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. 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. Depending on the size of your business and your graphic needs (i.e.,

Do you need frequent photography of your products?) there are several options you can choose from:

1. **Hire a design agency.** This is, no doubt, the costliest of your options. However, if you have several 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 the 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 an ad on craigslist.
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 full-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

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**
 - **Phone Number**
 - **Email Address**
 - **Fax Number**
 - **Address**
 - **Cell Number (if applicable)**
 - **Website**
- **Make it memorable. Be creative.** Choose exciting shapes, die-cuts, orientation (vertical vs. horizontal), bright colors, and unique materials (wood, plastic, magnet, aluminum, or foam). You don't have to go crazy or spend lots of money to do this – simple, clever twists on basic design make an impact. Just keep it relevant to your product or service.
- **Give them a reason to keep it.** What is going to keep them 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.

Letterhead

- **Ensure a professional quality.** Letterhead that is simple, clean, and well-produced allows the reader to focus on the critical part: the content. Have your letterhead professionally printed on 32lb paper or choose a textured stock. Show that you are invested in the professionalism of your company.
- **Pay attention to design choices.** The design of your marketing collateral should reflect your corporate values and the personality of your organization. If you are environmentally conscious, choose recycled paper and write it in small print at the bottom of the page. Letterhead can also be a place for subtle graphic elements, like watermarks, in addition to your logo.
- **Keep consistent with other materials.** Your letterhead is part of your stationery package and should look and feel the same as the rest of your pieces. For example, if your business cards have been printed with rounded corners, so should your letterhead. Use consistent fonts, colors, and logo placement on your letterhead, business cards, fax cover sheets, and other internal documents to ensure recognition and ease of readability.

Brochures

- **Cover the basics.** Each brochure you produce should include your underlying 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's.
- **Keep it fresh.** If you produce brochures regularly, consider giving each a theme to distinguish the information as new and exciting. 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 essential to your business and keep them updated on new products and services by keeping 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 daily, 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 reasonable 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 a 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 exciting 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 concise.
- **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 entire range of services or only 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 a variety of factors influences signage – one of which is your municipal government signage bylaw – 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, wayfinding 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 need to 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 several purposes. To be effective, you need to narrow in on a 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? 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 be remembered or found. 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 subpages, 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 accessed source of information. Have areas for easy content updates – like a “news” section – and make individual sections like “employees” and “services” are kept up to date. For more significant 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 essential 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 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 are unified, likewise, with marketing campaigns. 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 regularly. 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.

3

Creating a Powerful Offer

I'm not going to beat around the bush on this one:

Your offer is the granite foundation of your marketing campaign.

Get it right, and everything else will fall into place. Your headline will grab readers, your copy will sing, your ad layout will hardly matter, and you will have customers running to your door.

Get it wrong, and even the best looking, best-written campaign will sink like the Titanic.

A powerful offer is an irresistible offer. It's an offer that gets your audience frothing at the mouth and clamoring over each other all the way to your door. An offer that makes your readers pick up the phone and open their wallets.

Irresistible offers make your potential customers think, "I'd be crazy not to take him up on that," or "An offer like this doesn't come around very often." They instill a sense of emotion, of desire, and ultimately, urgency.

Make it easy for customers to purchase from you the first time, and spend your time keeping them coming back.

I'll say it again: **get it right, and everything else will fall into place.**

The Crux of Your Marketing Campaign

As you work your way through this program, you will find that nearly every chapter discusses the importance of a powerful offer as related to your marketing strategy or promotional campaign.

There's a reason for this. The powerful offer is, more often than not, the reason a customer will open their wallets. It is how you generate leads and then convert them into loyal customers. The more dramatic, unbelievable, and valuable the offer is, the more dramatic and unbelievable the response will be.

Many companies spend thousands of dollars on impressive marketing campaigns in glossy magazines and big-city newspapers. They send massive direct mail campaigns regularly, yet don't receive an impressive or massive response rate.

These companies do not yet understand that merely providing information on their company and the benefits of their product is not enough to get customers to act. There is no reason to pick up the phone or visit the store, *right now*.

Your powerful, irresistible offer can:

- Increase leads

- Drive traffic to your website or business
- Move old product
- Convert leads into customers
- Build your customer database

What Makes a Powerful Offer?

A powerful offer is one that makes the most people respond and take action. It gets people running to spend money on your product or service.

Powerful offers nearly always have an element of *urgency* and of *scarcity*. They give your audience a reason to act immediately, instead of putting it off until a later date.

Urgency relates to time. The offer is only available until a specific date, during a certain period of the day, or if you act within a few hours of seeing the ad. The customer needs to act now to take advantage of the offer.

Scarcity related to quantity. There are only a certain number of customers who will be able to take advantage of the offer. There may be a limited number of spaces, a limited number of products, or merely a limited number of people the business will provide the offer to. Again, this requires that customer acts immediately to reap the high value for a low cost.

Powerful offers also:

Offer great value. Customers perceive the offer as having great value – more than a single product on its own, or the product at its regular price. It is clear that the offer takes the reader's needs and wants into consideration.

Make sense to the reader. They are simple and easy to understand if read quickly. Avoid percentages – use half off or 2 for 1 instead of 50% off. There are no “catches” or requirements; no fine print.

Seem logical. The offer doesn’t come out of thin air. There is a logical reason behind it – a holiday, end of season, anniversary celebration, or new product. People can get suspicious of offers that seem “too good to be true” and have no apparent purpose.

Provide a premium. The offer provides something extra to the customer, like a free gift, or free product or service. They feel they are getting something extra for no additional cost. Premiums are perceived to have more value than discounts.

Remember that when your target market reads your offer, they will be asking the following questions:

1. What are you offering me?
2. What’s in it for me?
3. What makes me sure I can believe you?
4. How much do I have to pay for it?

The Most Powerful Types of Offers

Decide what kind of offer will most effectively achieve your objectives. Are you trying to generate leads, convert customers, build a database, move old product off the shelves, or increase sales?

Consider what type of offer will be of most value to your ideal customers – what offer will make them act quickly.

Free Offer

This type of offer asks customers to act immediately in exchange for something free. This is an excellent strategy to use to build a customer database or mailing list. Offer a free consultation, free consumer report, or other item of low cost to you but of high perceived value.

You can also advertise the value of the item you are offering for free. For example, act now and you'll receive a free consultation, worth \$75 dollars. This will dramatically increase your lead generation and allow you to focus on conversion when the customer comes through the door or picks up the phone.

The Value-Added Offer

Add additional services or products that cost you very little and combine them with other items to increase their attractiveness. This increases the perception of value in the customer's mind, which will justify increasing the price of a product or service without incurring extra hard costs to your business.

Package Offer

Package your products or services together in a logical way to increase the perceived value as a whole. Discount the value of the package by a small margin and position it as a “start-up kit” or “special package.” By packaging goods of mixed values, you will be able to close more high-value sales. For example: including a free desk-jet printer with every computer purchase.

Premium Offer

Offer a bonus product or service with the purchase of another. This strategy will serve your bottom line much better than discounting. This includes 2 for 1 offers, offers that include free gifts, and in-store credit with purchases over a specific dollar amount.

Urgency Offer

As I mentioned above, offers that include an element of urgency enjoy a better response rate, as there is a reason for your customers to act immediately. Give the offer a deadline or limit the number of spots available.

Guarantee Offer

Offer to take the risk of making a purchase away from your customers. Guarantee the performance or results of your product or service and offer to compensate the customer with their money back if they are not satisfied. This will help overcome any fear or reservations about your product and make it more likely for your leads to become customers.

Create Your Powerful Offer

1. Pick a single product or service.

Focus on only one product or service – or one product or service *type* – at a time. This will keep your offer clear, simple, and easy to understand. This can be an area of your business you wish to grow, or old product that you need to move off the shelves.

2. Decide what you want your customers to do.

What are you looking to achieve from your offer? If it is to generate more leads, then you'll need your customer to contact you. If it is to quickly sell old product, you'll need your customer to come into the store and buy it. Do you want them to visit your website? Sign up for your newsletter? How long do they have to act? Be clear about your call to action, and state it clearly in your offer.

3. Dream up the biggest, best offer.

First, think of the biggest, best things you could offer your customers – regardless of cost and ability. Don't limit yourself to a single type of offer, combine several types of offers to increase value. Offer a premium, plus a guarantee, with a package offer. Then take a look at what you've created and make the necessary changes so it is realistic.

4. Run the numbers.

Finally, make sure the offer will leave you with some profit – or at least allow you to break even. You don't want to publish an outrageous offer

that will generate a tremendous number of leads, but leave you broke. Remember that each customer has an acquisition cost, as well as a lifetime value. The amount of their first purchase may allow you to break even, but the amount of their subsequent purchases may make you a lovely profit.

4

Risk Reversal to Increase Sales

What is the biggest objection you need to overcome when closing a sale? Is it cost? Belief in what you have to say? Confidence in your product or service?

While it is a different answer for every business, every business has to deal with some element of customer fear or hesitation before a monetary transaction.

The reality is that even if you overcome these objections and close the sale, your customer walks away carrying 99% of the risk associated with the purchase. If the product doesn't work, breaks down, or doesn't perform to expectations, your customer has parted with their dollars in exchange for disappointment.

In marketing, your objective is to generate as many leads as possible, then to convert each lead into a customer, or sale. The ratio of leads to closed sales is called your conversion rate.

What if you could eliminate the risk involved in a transaction? Would you turn more leads into customers? The answer is absolutely.

Introducing a risk reversal element into your marketing message or unique offer is a powerful way to give yourself an edge on the competition and close more sales. But how exactly are you going to do this?

It's easy – just give them a guarantee.

The Power of Guarantees

What is Risk Reversal?

Risk reversal simply refers to reversing the risk associated with a transaction – transferring it from the customer to the vendor.

Everyone can think of a handful of times they have purchased a product or service that did not deliver on their expectations. A time where a salesperson made them a promise and did not deliver. A time where they *lost money* on a faulty product or bogus service.

Fear of being burned or taken advantage of prevents many people from spending their money. Customers can also be very wary of buying a product or service for the first time.

Providing a strong guarantee eliminates the majority of risk involved in the purchase and breaks down natural barriers in the sales process. Guarantees will often shorten the sales process altogether – skipping any

discussion of objections – because the customer does not see any risk in “trying the product out.”

There is also a growing consumer expectation when it comes to guarantees. Many stores will take back anything the customer has not been happy with and return money or store credit. Popular health food stores encourage customers to try new or unfamiliar products by promising a hassle-free, no questions asked return process. A guarantee or easy return policy can be the difference between choosing one business over its competition.

Your customers buy results, not products or services

The strongest guarantee you can make is on *results*, not products or services.

If you guarantee that your customer will receive the benefits or results they are looking for, the specific product or service they’ll need to achieve those results becomes irrelevant.

People buy benefits and results. For example, they don’t buy water purifiers; they buy the benefit of enjoying clean, fresh-tasting water. They don’t buy lawn sprinkler systems; they buy a healthy green lawn.

Once you understand what specific benefit or solution your customers are seeking, find a way to guarantee they’ll receive or experience that solution. If they don’t, you’ll compensate them for it.

Remember what you have guaranteed

While guarantees will increase sales for most businesses, they can also be the fast track to business failure if their product or service isn't a quality one. Take the time to ensure you have a strong offering before you implement a guarantee.

Guarantees are most effective when you are selling someone something they need or want – not when you are trying to convince someone to purchase something they have no use for.

Increasing Conversion Rates with a Guarantee

Guarantees can help your business turn more qualified leads into repeat customers. Strong guarantees are big and bold, but also realistic. They're just a little bit better than your competition, but consistent with the industry's standards.

Your conversion rate

Your conversion rate is the percentage of clients you convert from leads into customers. The higher your conversion rate, the more revenue you will generate.

To figure out your conversion rate, divide the number of people who purchase from you by the number of people who inquired about your product or service. This will generate a percentage value of your conversion rate.

Guarantees encourage and increase conversion. They motivate potential customers to buy – and to buy from you – because you stand behind what you sell in a big way. There is no risk involved in purchasing what you have to offer.

Creating your guarantee

So, you're convinced your business – and your customers – would benefit from a strong guarantee. Now what? What are you going to guarantee? How are you going to position it?

Once again, this goes back to your target audience and your product or service. What are some of the major objections your potential customers raise during the sales process? What kind of risk do they take on when they make a purchase? How much time will they need to test or experience your product or service?

Brainstorm a list of things about your industry that really frustrate your customers. They could be service-based (contractors that don't show up, employees who don't perform) or product-based (products that break, do not perform). Then, take a look at your list and decide how you can make sure these things do not happen. Think big – you can do a lot more than you think – then determine if you can actually make good on your promise. If you can't guarantee the first frustration, then move on to the second.

Here are some tips on writing your guarantee:

- **Be specific.** Explain exactly what you are guaranteeing. Don't make vague guarantees that a product will "work" or a service will make you "happy." These words mean different things to different people. Guarantee specific performance or results.
- **Include a clear timeframe.** Put a realistic timeframe on your guarantee. Very few products or services are good forever. Offer a 30-day or 90-day free trial; guarantee results within a set number of days or weeks. This can protect your company and sets out clear expectations for your clients.
- **Be bold.** Unbelievable guarantees get a customer's attention, so go as far as you realistically can with your claim. Find a way to stand out over the competition – which may also have a guarantee.
- **Tell them what you'll do.** Explain what you'll do – how you'll compensate them – if your product or service doesn't deliver. Be specific, talk money, and go above and beyond.

Implementing guarantees

Tell your clients!

Put your guarantee everywhere – your website, brochures, receipt tape, in-store signage, advertisements, and other promotional materials. It will only help attract customers if they know about it.

Send a newsletter to your existing client base informing them of your new guarantees – you never know how many customers you can convince to come back and spend more in your business.

Train your Staff

Once you have decided to offer your clients a guarantee, you need to ensure your staff are adequately trained on the specific policies and procedures associated with that guarantee. If you offer different guarantees for different products and services, ensure this is made clear as well.

Presumably, your staff will be communicating the details of your guarantee, and fielding customer questions. They will have to know how to sell the product using the guarantee as a benefit and understand every application of the guarantee in your business. Every scenario a customer may need to use it.

To ensure your staff is not making any false claims or promises, create a guarantee script for them to use and stick to. This will prevent customers from returning with false hopes for their money back, or other compensation.

Returns + Claims

So, by now you must be thinking, “Great, I can convert more customers with a strong guarantee, and increase my sales. But what about the added risk I have taken on from my customers? Won’t I start to see a ton of returns and service claims?” This is a valid question. Making a strong guarantee means standing by it and delivering on your promise. Inevitably,

when you guarantee something, someone is going to take you up on that guarantee and make a claim. I'm going to answer this question in two parts:

1. Stand behind your product or service. You're not in business to scam customers. If you sell a product or service, and you believe in it enough to offer it to your customers, it is likely a quality product or genuine service.

If this is a concern to you, consider implementing strong quality controls or stronger criteria for your merchandising. Companies that offer products and services that deliver results can offer the strongest guarantees.

Of course, you will get returns. You will have customers come in to take advantage of you. Just remember that as long as the increase in sales outweighs the claims, your guarantee strategy has been successful.

2. Understand your customer's likely behavior. The truth is that most customers will never take advantage of your guarantee – regardless of their satisfaction level. There are a number of reasons for this.

The first is that most people can't be bothered to drive, mail, or otherwise seek a refund on an item under \$50. Many let the timeframe slip by and have an "oh well" attitude.

The second is that most people don't like confrontation. There is usually an element of confrontation involved in telling someone you didn't like a product or service, and many people do not have the confidence to do so. They'd rather eat the cost than go through the process of asking for a refund.

Handling claims and returns:

If you do have your product returned, it is in your company's best interest to create a system for handling these customer interactions.

Create a claim form

Ensure that each customer who makes a claim about your product or service fills out a standard form. Doing so will help you prevent fraud, gather essential information about the customer and their reasoning, and create a "hoop" for the customer to jump through if they want their money back.

Name

Date

Contact Information

Salesperson

Product

Reason for claim:

Comments

Follow-up

Keep a claim or return log

Create a log or filing system for your claims. This will give you a snapshot of your guarantee program, a record-keeping system, and a wealth of information about each customer's experience and motivations.

Use the information

Take the claim forms your customers have filled out and review them regularly. While some of the claims won't be genuine, there will be some real feedback you can use to improve your product or service, or to modify your guarantee. You may need to make it more realistic or change the specifics.

5

Profiting from Internet Marketing

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 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 growing rapidly in popularity.

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.

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 postal mail. You can deliver time-sensitive materials immediately and can update your subscribers instantaneously.

Top 12 Websites Ranking (Globally May 1, 2020)

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|-----|-------------|
| 1. | Google | 7. | Wikipedia |
| 2. | YouTube | 8. | Xvideos.com |
| 3. | Facebook | 9. | Pornhub.com |
| 4. | Twitter | 10. | Xnxx.com |
| 5. | Instagram | 11. | Yahoo.com |
| 6. | Baidu.com | 12. | Amazon.com |

You will notice that half of these websites are social sites and search engines. An increasing number of consumers are first researching products, services and companies online, whether it be to compare products, complete a sale, or look for a future employer. These searches are being done with search engines as well as on social sites. Most people in the 18-35 age group obtain all of their information online—including news, weather, product research, etc. The remaining sites are purchase and entertainment sites where users can make purchases, research, or find entertainment.

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 analytics.

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 some geographical regions, 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 firsthand. 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 or relevance to the entered search terms.

You may wish to repeat key words multiple times throughout your website and write the copy on your site not only with the end reader in mind, but also search engines.

Remember when you design your website that search engines do not recognize any text that appears in Flash format. If your entire website is built on a Flash platform, then you will have a poor organic search listing.

Price 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 left 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.

Online Directories

Listing your business in an online directory can be an inexpensive and effective online marketing strategy.

However, you need to be able to distinguish your company from the plethora of competitors that may exist. 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.

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.

Blogging

Blogging can be a fun and interactive way to communicate with users. 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.

Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid

Failure to measure ROI

Which metrics are you using? 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 an advertising 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 lots of money.

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.

Trying to discover your own 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 others 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 must 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

As discussed in the following section, 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.

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 in 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 tough 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 a 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 incorporate referring sources 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 to 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 the bounce rate.

Errors

It is imperative 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 customers 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 your 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.

Here are the three main questions you should be asking yourself when evaluating your website presence:

- Who visits my website?
- Where do visitors come from?
- Which pages are viewed?

6

How to Profit from Direct Mail

Every time you mail an existing or potential customer a letter and ask them to respond or take action, you are running a direct-mail campaign.

Direct mail is a marketing strategy that can help you achieve a number of business objectives. From lead generation to customer retention, direct mail campaigns are a highly versatile and relatively cost-effective choice for business promotion.

What you probably don't realize is that direct mail is one of the most targeted marketing strategies you can implement, and one of the easiest to track, measure, and analyze results.

It is also one of the most personal. Instead of an advertisement, flyer, newspaper insert, or catalog, you are sending each customer a personalized letter that is tailored to their unique needs and desires.

Getting the most out of your direct mail campaign is easy. With a laser-sharp mailing list and irresistible offer, your direct mail campaign can quickly flood your business with qualified leads.

Let's get started!

A List of Ideal Customers

Unless you spend time carefully crafting a mailing list of ideal customers, you may as well pack and up go home. The success of a direct mail campaign largely rests on the pinpoint accuracy of your mailing list.

The only people you want on your list are your potential “ideal customers.” The people who are most likely to buy from you – often and in large volumes – and who are a delight to deal with. They are the type of people who will account for 80% of your revenue, and just 20% of your total customer base.

You have a number of options when you are creating your mailing list:

- **Existing customer database.** This is a list of all of the people who have previously purchased from you. It is important to gather their full contact information at the time of sale so you will be able to contact them again.
- **Existing leads database.** This is a list of all of the leads that have come through your door but have not purchased from you. This may include those who responded to your last direct mail campaign but have not yet become customers.
- **Outsourced list.** This is a list that has been purchased from a market research firm, the government, or the post office. These lists are pulled based on demographic information – age, sex, location, income, family structure, etc.

Putting the mailing list together

Once you have determined the source(s) for your mailing list, you will have to spend some time assembling it and preparing it for your mailing.

1. Make sure all contacts are up to date. Phone old contacts to confirm their mailing address. An out-of-date list will cost you money in printing and postage.

2. Ensure all contacts are accurate to the list criteria. Take a read through your list to make sure there are no contacts that shouldn't be on the list.

3. Use a database management program to manage your mailing. This will allow you to keep a master list and create custom lists for each mailing. Remember to save the file name as something that describes the mailing so you can easily find it.

Writing Effective Direct Mail Pieces

Now that you have a laser-sharp mailing list, you will want to do everything you can to target your message to the recipients on your list.

An effective direct mail piece:

- **Has a clear structure.** The piece is clearly a letter – there is an engaging headline, clear message, a point-form list of benefits, and postscript.

- **Features an irresistible offer.** The purchase opportunity is too good for the target audience to refuse. It includes an element of scarcity and urgency.
- **Focuses on customer benefits.** The customer clearly understands “what’s in it for me?” The product or service is clearly positioned as something of value and a solution to a need, problem, or desire.
- **Is personal and conversational.** The letter is personally addressed and reads as though it was composed specifically for the recipient. It is written in a conversational tone, with short sentences and limited description.
- **Is short.** The letter communicates what it needs to, and closes. It does not go on for pages in length. The messages are clear, succinct, and simple.
- **Is urgent.** The piece gets the reader to act immediately. There is a time limit or a quantity limit to the offer that requires an urgent response.
- **Includes a Postscript.** The offer or urgency is repeated after the signature at the bottom of the letter. Like a headline, everyone will read the P.S.

The Five-Step Direct Mail Campaign

1. Determine Your Target Audience

As we discussed above, you will want to ensure that you have the most accurate, targeted list possible for your direct mail campaign.

Be clear about the purpose for your direct mail campaign – this will help you decide if you want to send your letters to your entire target market, a segment of that market, existing customers, or potentially a referring business’s customers. Then you can determine how you craft your offer, how you structure your letter, and when you choose to send it.

2. Choose what you want to say

What is the message you want to communicate to your target list? What can you offer them that will entice them to act immediately?

Create a specific offer for each direct mail campaign to ensure each time you communicate with your target list you have something new to say. Tailor this offer to each mailing list.

Decide what product or service benefits will be most compelling to your target audience and include those benefits prominently in your letter.

3. Develop a compelling direct mail piece

You are in control of how you format your message. Are you sending a letter? A brochure and a letter? A postcard? The format of your direct mail

piece needs to be tailored to your target list and reflect your product or service. A younger audience may respond to a postcard, but an older audience may appreciate a formalized letter.

Ensure that whatever format you choose, the piece is professionally designed, prominently includes your logo and company branding, and is professionally produced.

This piece of paper has to act as an ambassador of your company – you absolutely need it to appear impressive and professional.

4. Pick your timing

Some products and purchase decisions are best made at certain times of the year or the month. If your business or service is seasonal, then there are good times and bad times to try to generate leads. Consider the best purchase windows for the people in your target marketing. When do they get paid? When do they have the money to spend on your product/service? When do they spend the most money?

Anticipate these windows, and time your direct mail campaign accordingly. If you run a lawn sprinkler installation system and summer is your peak season, run a direct mail campaign mid-way through spring, and at the beginning of summer.

Some common time windows include:

- The holiday season (November – December)
- Fridays (paydays)
- The 15th and 30th of every month (also paydays)
- Seasons (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
- Financial cycles (year-end, tax time)
- Sports seasons (hockey, football, baseball, etc.)

5. Follow up

Comprehensive follow up to a direct mail campaign means two things:

1. Following up on your letter with a phone call or second letter

Often it takes more than a letter to get a potential customer to take action. This can be a result of the accuracy of your mailing list, your offer, the time of the year, or the quality of the marketing material (brochure). If you are certain that your mailing list is accurate and up to date, follow up the piece with a phone call, or send another letter.

2. Recording, measuring, and analyzing your results.

It is essential that you evaluate each direct mail campaign based on your time and financial investment and your rate of response. How else will you be able to tell if it was a successful or effective strategy?

For each campaign, record and analyze the following information:

- Number of letters sent
- Number of responses as a percentage
- Number of sales directly resulting from the campaign
- Number of inquiries
- The total value of sales directly resulting from the campaign

Based on this information, determine if the campaign was successful (did it make you money?) or not. Consider making some changes to your list, your offer, or the piece itself, and try again.

7

Systemizing Your Business and Developing Effective Processes

One of the biggest mistakes a business owner can make is to create a company that is dependent on the owner's involvement for the success of its daily operations. This is called working "in" your business. You're writing basic sales letters, licking stamps, and guiding staff step-by-step through each task.

There are several problems with this approach. One is redundancy. You're paying your staff to carry out tasks that you eventually complete. The second is poor time management. You're spending your day – at your high hourly rate – on tasks as they arise, leaving little room for the tasks you need to be focused on.

However, the biggest issue I have with this approach is that countless intelligent business owners are spending the majority of their time operating their business, instead of *growing* it.

A good test of this is to ask yourself what would happen if you took off to a hot sunny destination for three weeks and left your cell phone, PDA and laptop at home. Would your business be able to continue operating?

If you said no, then this chapter is for you.

Systemizing your business is about putting policies and procedures in place to make your business operations run smoother – and, more importantly – without your constant involvement. With your newfound free time, **you will be able to focus your efforts on the bigger picture: strategically growing your business.**

Why Systemize?

For most small business owners, systems simply mean freedom from the day-to-day functioning of their organization. The company runs smoothly, makes a profit, and provides a high level of service – regardless of the owner’s involvement.

Systemizing your business is also a healthy way to plan for the future. You’re not going to be working forever – what happens when you retire? How will you transition your business to new ownership or management? How will you take that vacation you’ve been dreaming of?

Businesses that function without their ownership are also highly valuable to investors. Systemizing your business can position it in a favorable light for purchase and merit a high price tag.

A system is any process, policy, or procedure that consistently achieves the same result, regardless of who is completing the task.

Any task that is performed in your business more than once can be systemized. Ideally, the tasks that are completed on a cyclical basis – daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly – should be systemized so much so that anyone can perform them.

Systems can take many forms – from manuals and instruction sheets to signs, banners, and audio or video recordings. They don't have to be elaborate or extensive, just provide enough information in step-by-step form to guide the person performing the task.

Benefits of Business Systems

There are unlimited benefits available to you and your business through systemization. The more systems you can successfully implement, the more benefits you'll see.

- Better cost management
- Improved time management
- Clearer expectations of staff
- More effective staff training and orientation
- Increased productivity (and potentially profits)
- Happier customers (consistent service)
- Maximized conversion rates
- Increased staff respect for your time
- Increased level of individual initiative
- Greater focus on long-term business growth

Taking Stock of Your Existing Systems

The first step in systemizing your business is taking a long look at the existing systems (if any) in your business. At this point, you can look for any systems that have simply emerged as “the way we do things here.”

How do your staff answer the phone? What is the process customers go through when dealing with your business? How are employees hired? Trained? How is performance reviewed and rewarded?

Some of your systems may be highly effective and not require any changes. Others may be ineffective and require some reworking. If you have previously established some systems, now is a good time to check-in and evaluate how well they are functioning.

Use the following chart to record what systems currently exist in your business.

Existing Systems	
Administration	
Financials	

Communication	
Customer Relations	
Employees	
Marketing	
Data	

Seven Areas to Systemize

There is no doubt that system creation – especially when none exist to begin with – is a daunting and time-consuming task. For many businesses, it can be difficult to determine where to start to make the best use of their time from the onset.

Here are seven main areas of your business you can to systemize. Begin with one area and move to the other areas as you are ready. Alternately,

start with one or two systems within each area, and evaluate how those new systems affect your business. Each business will require its own unique set of systems.

1. Administration

This is an important area of your business to systemize because administrative roles tend to see high turnover. A series of systems will reduce training time and keep you from explaining how the phones are to be answered each time a new receptionist joins your team.

Administrative Systems	
Opening and closing procedures	Filing and paper management
Phone greeting	Workflow
Mail processing	Document production
Sending couriers	Inventory management
Office maintenance (watering plants, emptying recycle bins, etc.)	Order processing
	Making orders

2. Financials

This is one area of systems that you will need to keep a close eye on – but that doesn't mean you have to do the work yourself. Financial management systems are everything from tracking credit card purchases to invoicing clients and following up on overdue accounts.

These systems will help to prevent employee theft and allow you to always have a clear picture of your numbers. It will allow you to control purchasing and ensure that each decision is signed-off on.

Financial Systems	
Purchasing	Profit / loss statements
Credit card purchase tracking	Invoicing
Accounts payable	Daily cash out
Accounts receivable	Petty cash
Bank deposits	Employee expenses
Cutting checks	Payroll
Tax payments	Commission payments

3. Communications

The area of communication is essential and time consuming for any business. Fax cover letters, sales letters, internal memos, reports, and newsletters are items that need to be created regularly by different people in your organization.

Most of the time, these communications aren't much different from one to the next, yet each are created from scratch by a different person. There is a huge opportunity for systemization in this area of your business. Systemized communication ensures consistency and company differentiation.

Communication Systems	
Internal memo template	Newsletter template
Fax cover template	Sales letter template(s)
Letterhead template	Meeting minutes template

Team meeting agenda	Report template
Sending faxes	Internal meetings
Internal emails	Scheduling

4. Customer Relations

Another crucial area for systemization is customer relations. This includes everything the customer sees or touches in your company, as well as any interaction they might have with you or your staff members.

Establishing a customer relations system will also ensure that new staff members understand how customers are handled in *your* business. It will allow you to maintain a high level of customer service, without continually reminding staff of your policies. It will also ensure that the success of your customer relations and retention does not hinge on you or any other individual salesperson.

Customer Relations Systems	
Incoming phone call script	Sales process
Outgoing phone call script	Sales script
Customer service standards	Newsletter templates
Customer retention strategy	Ongoing customer communication strategy
Customer communications templates	Customer liaison policy

5. Employees

Create systems in your business for hiring, training, and developing your employees. This will establish clear expectations for the employee and streamline time-consuming activities like recruitment.

Employees with clear expectations who work within clear structures are happier and more productive. They are motivated to achieve ‘A’ when they know they will receive ‘B’ if they do. Establishing a clear training manual will also save you and your staff the time and hassle of training each new staff member on the fly.

Employee Systems	
Employee recruitment	Staff uniforms or dress code
Employee retention	Employee training
Incentive and rewards program	Ongoing training and professional development
Regular employee reviews	Job descriptions and role profiles
Employee feedback structure	

6. Marketing

This is likely an area in which you spend a large part of your time. You focus on generating new leads and getting more people to call you or walk through your doors. These efforts can be systemized and delegated to other staff members.

Use the information in this program to create simple systems for your basic promotional efforts. Any one of your staff should be able to pick up a marketing manual and implement a successful direct mail campaign or place a purposeful advertisement.

Marketing Systems	
Referral program	Regular advertisements
Customer retention program	Advertisement creation system
Regular promotions	Direct mail system
Marketing calendar	Sales procedures
Inquiries management	Lead management

7. Data

While we like to think we operate a paperless office, often the opposite is true. Your business needs to have clear systems for managing paper and electronic information to ensure that information is protected, easily accessed, and only kept when necessary.

Data management systems help you keep your office organized. Everyone knows where information is to be stored, and how it is to be handled, which prevents big stacks of paper with no place to go.

Ensure that within your data management systems, you include a data backup system. That way, if anything happens to your server or computer software, your data – and potentially your business – is protected.

Data Management Systems	
IT Management	Client file system
Data backup	Project file system
Computer repairs	Point of sale system
Electronic information storage	Financial data management

Implementing New Systems

If you completed the exercise earlier in this chapter, you will have a good idea of the systems that are currently in place in your business. The next step is to determine what systems you need to create in your business.

To do this, you will need to get a better understanding of the tasks that you and your employees complete on a daily and weekly basis. If you operate a timesheet program, this can be a good source of information. Alternately, ask staff to keep a daily log for a week of all the tasks they contribute to or complete. Doing so will not only give you valuable insight into how they spend their time daily but also involve them in the systemizing process.

Review all task logs or timesheet records at the end of the week, remove duplicates, and group like tasks together. From here, you can categorize the tasks into business areas like the seven listed above or create your own categories.

Then, you will need to prioritize and plan your system creation and implementation efforts. Choose one from each category, or one category to focus on at a time. The amount you can take on will depend on your business needs, and the staff resources you have available to you for this process.

Remember that system creation is a long-term process – not something that will transform your business overnight. Be patient and focus on the items that hold the highest priority.

Creating Your Systems

There is a wide variety of ways you can create systems for your business – depending on the type of system you need and the type of business you operate. Some systems will be short and straightforward – i.e., a laminated sign in the kitchen that outlines step-by-step how to make the coffee – while others will be more complex – i.e., your sales scripts or letter templates.

One thing all of your systems have in common is steps. There is a linear process involved from start to finish. Begin by writing out each of the steps involved in completing the task and provide as much detail as you can.

Then, review your step-by-step guide with the employee(s) who regularly complete the task and gather their feedback. Once you have incorporated their input, decide what format the system needs to be in: manual, laminated instruction sheet, sign, office memo, etc.

Testing Your Systems

Now that you have created a system, you will need to make sure that it works. More specifically, you need to make sure that it works without your involvement.

Implement the new system for an appropriate period of time – a week or month – then ask for input from staff, suppliers and vendors, and customers. Evaluate if it is informative enough for your team, seamless enough for your suppliers, and whether or not it meets or exceeds your customer’s needs.

Take that feedback and revise the system accordingly. You will rarely get the system right the first time – so be patient.

Systems will also need to be evaluated and revised regularly to ensure your business processes are kept up to date. Structure an annual or bi-annual review of systems and stick to it.

Employee Buy-In

It will be nearly impossible for you to develop effective systems without the involvement and input of your employees. These are the people who will be using the systems, and who are completing the tasks regularly without systems. They have a wealth of knowledge to assist you in this process.

Employees can also draft the systems for you to review and finalize. This will make the systemization process a much faster and more efficient one.

It is also important to note that when you introduce new systems into your company, there may be a natural resistance to the change. People – including your employees – are habitual people who can become set in the way they are used to doing things.

Delegation

The final step to systemizing your business is delegation. What is the point of creating systems unless someone other than you can use them to perform tasks?

This doesn't have to mean completely removing your involvement from the process, but it does mean giving your employees enough freedom to complete the task within the structure of the systems you have spent time and considerable thought creating.

After that, allow yourself the freedom of focusing on the tasks that you most enjoy, and most deserve your time – like creating big picture strategies to grow your business and increase your profits.

8

Generating an Unlimited Amount of Leads for Your Business

Where do your customers come from?

Most people would probably choose advertising as an answer. Or referrals. Or direct mail campaigns. This may seem true, but it's not really accurate.

Your customers come from leads that have been turned into sales. Each customer goes through a two-step process before they arrive with their wallets open. They have been converted from a member of a target market, to a lead, then to a customer.

So, would it not stand to reason then, that when you advertise or send any marketing material out to your target market, that you're not really trying to generate customers? That instead, you're trying to generate leads.

When you look at your marketing campaign from this perspective, the idea of generating leads as compared to customers seems a lot less daunting.

The pressure of closing sales is no longer placed on advertisements or brochures.

From this perspective, the **general purpose of your advertising and marketing efforts is then to generate leads from qualified customers.** Seems easy enough, doesn't it?

Where Are Your Leads Coming From?

If I asked you to tell me the top three ways you generate new sales leads, what would you say?

- Advertising?
- Word of mouth?
- Networking?
- ...don't know?

The first step toward increasing your leads is in understanding how many leads you currently get regularly, as well as where they come from. Otherwise, how will you know when you're getting more phone calls or walk-in customers?

If you don't know where your leads come from, start *today*. Start asking every customer that comes through your door, "how did you hear about us?" or "what brought you in today?" Ask every customer that calls where they found your telephone number or email address. Then, *record the information for at least an entire week*.

When you're finished, take a look at your spreadsheet and write your

top three lead generators here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

From Lead to Customer: Conversion Rates

Leads mean nothing to your business unless you convert them into customers. You could get hundreds of leads from a single advertisement, but unless those leads result in purchases, it's been a largely unsuccessful (and costly) campaign.

The ratio of leads (potential customers) to transactions (actual customers) is called your conversion rate. Simply divide the number of customers who actually purchased something by the number of customers who inquired about your product or service and multiply by 100.

transactions / # leads x 100 = % conversion rate

If, in a given week, I have 879 customers come into my store, and 143 of them purchase something, the formula would look like this:

[143 (customers) / 879 (leads)] x 100 = 16.25% conversion rate

What's Your Conversion Rate?

Based on the formula above, you can see that the higher your conversion rate, the more profitable the business.

Your next step is to determine your own current conversion rate. Add up the number of leads you sourced in the last section and divide that number into the total transactions that took place in the same week.

Write your conversion rate here:

_____.

Quality (or Qualified) Leads

Based on our review of conversion rates, we can see that the number of leads you generate means nothing unless those leads are being converted into customers.

So, what affects your ability (and the ability of your team) to turn leads into customers? Do you need to improve your scripts? Your product or service? Find a more competitive edge in the marketplace?

Maybe. But the first step toward increasing conversion rates is to evaluate the leads you are currently generating, and make sure those leads are the right ones.

What are Quality Leads?

Potential customers are potential customers, right? Anyone who walks into your store or picks up the phone to call your business could be convinced to purchase from you, right? Not necessarily, but this is a common assumption most business owners make.

Quality leads are the people who are the most likely to buy your product or service. They are the qualified buyers who comprise your target market. Anyone might walk in off the street to browse a furniture store – regardless of whether or not they are in the market for a new couch or bed frame. This lead is solely interested in browsing and is not likely to be converted to a customer.

A quality lead would be someone looking for a new kitchen table, and who specifically drove to that same furniture because a friend had raved about the service they received that month. **These are the kinds of leads you need to focus on generating.**

How Do You Get Quality Leads?

- **Know your target market.** Get a handle on who your customers are – the people who are most likely to buy your product or service. Know their age, sex, income, and purchase motivations. From that information, you can determine how best to reach your specific audience.
- **Focus on the 80/20 rule.** A common statistic in business is that 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your customers. These are your

star clients, or your ideal clients. These are the clients you should focus your efforts on recruiting. This is the easiest way to grow your business and your income.

- **Get specific.** Focus not only on who you want to attract, but how you're going to attract them. If you're trying to generate leads from a specific market segment, craft a unique offer to get their attention.
- **Be proactive.** Once you've generated a slew of leads, make sure you have the resources to follow up on them. Be diligent and aggressive and follow up in a timely manner. You've done to work to get them, now reel them in.

Get More Leads from Your Existing Strategies

Increasing your lead generation doesn't necessarily mean diving in and implementing an expensive array of new marketing strategies. Marketing and customer outreach for the purpose of lead generation can be inexpensive and bring a high return on investment.

You are likely already implementing many of these strategies. With a little tweaking or refinement, you can easily double your leads, and ensure they are more qualified.

Here are some popular ways to generate quality leads:

Direct Mail to Your Ideal Customers

Direct mail is one of the fastest and most effective ways to generate leads that will build your business. It's a simple strategy – in fact, you're probably already reaching out to potential clients through direct mail letters with enticing offers.

The secret to doubling your results is to craft your direct mail campaigns specifically for a highly targeted audience of your *ideal* customers.

Your ideal customers are the people who will buy the most of your products or services. They are the customers who will buy from you over and over again and refer your business to their friends. They are the group of 20% of your clients who make up 80% of your revenue.

Identify your ideal customers

Who are your ideal customers? What is their age, sex, income, location, and purchase motivation? Where do they live? How do they spend their money? Be as specific as possible.

Once you have identified who your ideal customers are, you can begin to determine how you can go about reaching them. Will you mail to households or apartment buildings? Families or retirees? Direct mail lists are available for purchase from a wide range of companies and can be segregated into a variety of demographic and sociographic categories.

Craft a special offer

Create an offer that's too good to refuse – not for your entire target market, but your ideal customer. How can you cater to their unique needs and wants? What will be irresistible for them?

For example, if you operate a furniture store, your target market is a broad range of people. However, if you are targeting young families, your offer will be much different than the one you may craft for empty nesters.

Court them for their business

Don't stop at a single mail-out. Sometimes people will throw your letter away two or three times before they are motivated to act. Treat your direct mail campaign like a courtship and understand that it will happen over time.

First, send a letter introducing yourself and your irresistible offer. Then follow up on a monthly basis with additional letters, newsletters, offers, or flyers. Repetition and reinforcement of your presence is how your customer will go from saying, "who is this company" to "I buy from this company."

Advertise for lead generation

Statistics show that nearly 50% of all purchase decisions are motivated by advertising. It can also be a relatively cost-effective way of generating leads.

We've already discussed the importance of ensuring your advertisements are purpose-focused. The general purpose of most

advertisements is to increase sales – which starts with leads. However, ads that are created solely for lead generation – that is, to get the customers to pick up the phone or walk in the store – are a category of their own.

Lead generation ads are simply designed and create a sense of curiosity or mystery. Often, they feature an almost unbelievable offer. Their purpose is not to convince the customer to buy, but to contact the business for more information.

As always, when you are targeting your ideal audience, you'll need to ensure that your ads are placed prominently in publications that the audience reads. This doesn't mean you have to fork over the cash for expensive display ads. Inexpensive advertising in e-mail newsletters, classifieds, and digital billboards are very effective for lead generation.

Here are some tips for lead generation advertising:

Leverage low-cost advertising

Place ads in the digital billboards, classifieds section, e-mail newsletters, and online. If your target audience is technology savvy, consider forms of advertising like Facebook and Google AdWords.

Spark curiosity

Don't give them all the information they need to make a decision. Ask them to contact you for the full story, or the complete details of the seemingly outrageous offer.

Grab them with a killer headline

Like all advertising, a compelling headline is essential. Focus on the greatest benefits to the customer or feature an unbelievable offer.

Referrals and host beneficiary relationships

A referral system is one of the most profitable systems you can create in your business. The beauty is once it's set up, it often runs itself.

Customers that come to you through referrals are often your "ideal customers." They are already trusting and willing to buy. This is one of the most cost-effective methods of generating new business and is often the most profitable. These referral clients will buy more, faster, and refer further business to your company.

Referrals naturally happen without much effort for reputable businesses, but with a proactive referral strategy, you'll undoubtedly double or triple your referrals. Sometimes, you just need to ask!

Here are some easy strategies you can begin to implement today:

Referral incentives

Give your customers a reason to refer business to you. Reward them with discounts, gifts, or free service in exchange for a successful referral.

Referral program

Offer new customers a free product or service to get them in the door. Then, at the end of the transaction, give them three more ‘coupons’ for the same free product or service that they can give to their friends. Do the same with their friends. This ongoing program will bring you more business than you can imagine.

Host-beneficiary relationships

Forge alliances with non-competitive companies that target your ideal customers. Create cross-promotion and cross-referral direct mail campaigns that benefit both businesses.

Lead Management Systems

Once your lead generation strategies are in place, you’ll also need a system to manage incoming inquiries. You’ll need to ensure you receive enough information from each lead to follow up on at a later date. You’ll also need to create a system to organize that information and track the lead as it is converted into a sale.

Gathering Information from Your Leads

Here is a list of information you should gather from your leads. This list can be customized to the needs of your business, and the type of information you can realistically ask for from your potential customers.

- Company Name
 - Name of Contact
 - Alternate Contact Person
 - Mailing Address
 - Phone Number
 - Fax Number
 - Cell Phone
 - Email Address
 - Website Address
 - Product of Interest
 - Other Competitors
- Engaged

Lead List Management Methods:

Once you have gathered information from your lead, you'll need a system to organize their information and keep a detailed contact history.

The simplest way to do this is with a database program, but you can also use a variety of hard copy methods.

Electronic Database Programs

- High level of organization available
- Unlimited space for notes and record-keeping
- Data-entry required
- Examples include: MS Outlook, MS Excel, Maximizer
- Customer Relationship Management Software (CRM)

Index Cards

- Variety of sizes: 3x5, 4X6 or 5X8
- Basic contact information on one side
- Notes on the other side
- Easy to organize and sort

Rolodex System

- Maintain more contacts than an index card system
- Easily organized and compact
- Basic contact information on one side

- Notes on the other side
- Can keep phone conversation and purchase details

Notebook

- Best if leads are managed by a single person
- Lots of room for notes
- Inexpensive
- Difficult to re-organize
- Best for smaller lists

Business Card Organizer

- Best for small lists – under 100
- Limited space for notes
- No data entry required
- Rolodex-style, or clear binder pages

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Immediate Sales

If you're a business owner, you're also a salesperson.

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.

Now you have to repeatedly sell your product or service to your customers.

The ability to sell effectively and efficiently is one every successful business owner has cultivated and continues to develop. It can be a complicated and time-consuming task; one that you will 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.

Sales 101

As I said before, 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 previous step. 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 sales floor. You have complete control of this part of the sales process, so it is essential to do everything you can to set the stage for your success.

- Understand your product or service inside and out.
- Prepare all the necessary materials and organize them neatly.
- Keep your place of business tidy and organized. Reface products on shelves.

- 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 their place of 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 come to you on the sales floor, ask what brought them in the store. 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 meeting 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, 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 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 to ask for a referral or an upsell. At the very least, it will ensure you are continuing to foster and build a relationship with the client.

Upselling

Upselling is merely 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, upselling 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 upselling daily. From “do you want fries with that?” to “have you heard about our product protect program?” Companies across the globe have tapped into and trained their staff on the value of the upsell.

Upselling 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 and white 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 from someone more helpful.

Customer education is another form of upselling. 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 upsell 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 upsell.

Other upsell strategies can be implemented:

- **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

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.

Teambuilding, recruitment, and training will be discussed in later sections, but take some time to consider the following aspects of managing a sales team:

Communication

- Are 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?

Performance Management

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

Tool	Description + Benefit
Scripts	<p>Used for incoming and outgoing telemarketing, cold calls, door-to-door sales, in-store sales</p> <p>Create several different scripts throughout your business</p> <p>Maintains consistency in your sales approach</p> <p>Revise and renew your scripts regularly</p>
Presentation Materials	<p>High-quality information about your product or service</p> <p>Forms: PowerPoint presentation, brochure, product sheets, proposal</p> <p>Serves as an outline of your sales presentation, and keeps you on task</p>
Colleagues	<p>A source of help and advice, especially when you are on the same team or sell similar products</p> <p>Also a source of support</p>
Customer Databases	<p>An accurate, up-to-date database of customer contact information and contact history</p> <p>Used to stay in touch with clients</p> <p>Can also be used for direct mail and follow-up telemarketing</p>
The Internet	<p>A powerful resource for sales help and advice</p> <p>Information to help improve your sales process</p> <p>Online sales coaching</p> <p>Source for product knowledge</p>
Ongoing Training	<p>Constant improvement of your sales skills</p> <p>Constant increase in product knowledge</p> <p>Investment in yourself and your company</p>

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 everyday 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 firm handshake, and give everyone you are speaking to equal attention.

- **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 everything.
- **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 to build trust and respect.

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Staff Recruitment Training and Development

The people you hire to work for your business can be your most significant assets and your biggest headaches. They can support and help you to achieve the vision you have for your company – but they can also prevent you from reaching that vision.

Too many businesses overlook the role of employee recruitment and retention when planning for the success of their organization. Staffing is an important exercise that needs to be purpose-driven and strategic, just like marketing.

It is vital to understand in today's market that the relationship between employee and employer is a two-way street. Now, more than ever, employees have a “what's in it for me?” attitude that extends beyond salary and benefits expectations into incentive and rewards programs. The days of simple compensation structures are over.

Now, this may sound like a big headache, but it's actually a good thing! With some simple systems and open dialogue, you will be able to create – and keep – your dream team effectively.

The Power of Your Dream Team

How much of your own personal time has human resources – staff hiring, firing, issues management, etc. – taken this year? No doubt staff recruitment and retention is one of the biggest challenges facing any business owner today.

The truth is, if you spent half as much time on human resources as you do on marketing, I guarantee your sales would increase dramatically.

Customers know the difference between happy employees and disgruntled ones, and it makes a difference when it comes to purchasing decisions. Would you rather have your car serviced by a grumpy mechanic who doesn't feel his good work is rewarded, or a pleasant one who just stepped out a weekly team meeting?

A successful business owner has confidence in the people who work for him or her because he or she believes they are the best people for the job. Employees who know their employer believes in their skills and abilities will go over and above to get the job done, to make the sale.

Successful business owners invest time and money in finding and keeping the right people. These are the people who share and support the collective vision for the company.

I'm not talking about a complicated formula or magic concoction. I'm talking about some careful thought and a proactive strategy that will make your business shine from the inside out.

Finding Your Dream Employees

Building a dream team starts by finding and hiring the right people for the job. Sounds simple enough. You post an ad, find someone who has the necessary qualifications, and hire them on.

Not so fast. Recruitment is a complex process that can dramatically impact your business operations, just like finding and securing the right customers, finding and hiring the right candidates requires pro-active planning and careful evaluation.

If you currently work with a recruiting agency to build to your team, now may be a good time to stop and evaluate the effectiveness of their service. While a recruiting agency can save you the time and hassle of working through the hiring process, it can also cost more money in the long run.

I always recommend creating an internal recruitment system, not because recruiting agencies do a bad job, but because no one knows your business as you do.

An internal recruitment system ensures that the true essence of your business culture is communicated – from advertisement to interview. You also have the opportunity to express expectations from the outset, instead of relying on the recruiter to relay this information. The middleman's thoughts and impressions are eliminated, leaving you to make decisions based on your impression of the candidate and no one else's.

Step One: Advertise the Opportunity

The first step in recruiting candidates is obviously letting potential candidates know about the opportunity with your company.

But before you pick up the phone to place a classified ad, remember that advertising for potential employees requires just as much consideration and planning as general advertising for your business.

You need to ask yourself:

- Who is your ideal candidate?
- What are their skills and qualifications?
- What is their personality or demeanor?
- What are they passionate about?
- What are they looking for in a job?

Once you have a mental picture of your candidate, then you can begin to write an ad that will not only reach them, but also inspire them to act (and submit an application).

When writing this ad, be as specific as possible and focus on the benefits of the job. Remember that potential candidates screen job postings with an eye for “what’s in it for me.” Tell them exactly that.

Here are a few sample job postings:

Are you the Marketing Assistant we need?

About You

You're fun, friendly, and have a keen eye for detail. You're always two steps ahead of your colleagues, and eager to take on new and exciting challenges.

You'll be the glue that keeps the marketing team operating seamlessly, responsible for website updates, copywriting, event coordination, and client relations. You'll be punctual, responsible, and well put together.

You'll ideally have an undergraduate degree in marketing or English, and some previous office experience, but a fast learner with a great attitude will also get our attention.

About Us

We are a collaborative team of young professionals. We offer a competitive salary, excellent benefits, and performance incentives.

Think you fit the bill? Email your resume and cover letter to John Smith at jsmith@email.com by Friday at 4 pm.

Are Computers Your Life?

About You

You are smart, outgoing, and a wiz when it comes to computer programming. You're on your friend's speed dial for computer emergencies, large and small. Helping people understand the complex digital world is your passion.

You'll be our Lead Computer Technician, managing our computer repair counter and five Junior Technicians. You'll have great people skills, mounds of patience, and enjoy working as part of a dynamic team.

About Us

We operate Anytown's leading computer repair store and are known across the region for our customer service. We work hard, play hard, and offer a competitive benefits package to our employees.

Tell us why this job is for you. Email your resume and cover letter to info@computerworld.com by Thursday, September 23.

Both of these job postings speak directly to a very targeted audience. They're friendly, conversational, and informally communicate the job requirements.

Every job posting should:

- Be colloquial (written in the way that you talk)
- Be specific
- Describe benefits
- Include skills, qualifications, duties and job title
- Be written in the present tense
- Have a great headline
- Call the reader to action
- Be simple – in word choice and sentence structure
- Be more exciting than the competition

Now that you have a great ad to post, you need to decide where you are going to publish it. Where you publish depends on the level of the job (junior to management) and on the specific type of candidate you are looking to recruit.

Here are the five major places to advertise your opportunity:

Government Employment Center

These are great places to find blue-collar or junior level employees. Candidates register with the center, which keeps their resumes on file. Be cautious with this route – it can produce a wide variety of candidates who are not qualified.

Local Newspaper

This is a great place to post junior to mid-level employment opportunities. You're looking for basic qualifications from local applicants, perhaps even for part-time positions, with minimal cost.

Regional or City Newspaper

Senior employment opportunities that require specific high-level qualifications are best advertised with a broad scope. This incurs a higher cost but will return a greater variety of candidates.

Online

This is a cheap way to tap into a massive database of job seekers. Post your ad online on sites like www.indeed.com or www.ziprecruiter.com and watch the resumes come flooding in. A large number of highly qualified job seekers who do not wish to register with a recruitment agency will use these services.

Referrals

An ideal way to find candidates is through your existing network – including associates, colleagues, employees, friends, and family. These candidates come to you already vetted by a trusted source. You may also wish to consider giving your staff an incentive to refer their qualified friends and associates to you.

You should also brainstorm a list of any other niche areas that your target market may look for a job. Consider industry publications, industry associations, small publications, etc.

Once you've posted your ad, your next step is to manage the inquiries that come flooding in.

Step Two: Screen Candidates

This is one of the most time-consuming aspects of the recruitment process, so you will need to work out a system to manage the response to your job posting.

A system will also allow you to ensure you ask all potential candidates the same questions and provide them with the same information about the role as well as about your company.

1. Decide whether all inquiries will be handled by one person or several. This will depend on your staff resources and capacity. A system will allow multiple employees to assist in the process.

For example, if your candidates have been instructed to submit their resume and cover letter to you through email, designate a single email address and inbox to receiving and responding. This way, you or another staff member will not be bombarded by emails and can assign an hour each day to managing the inquiries. If your candidates are calling in, designate a unique phone number or answering machine to this purpose.

2. Decide how inquiries will be responded to. This can be as simple as an email acknowledging receipt of the resume, or specific instructions on an answering machine. Ensure everyone receives the same information and that you receive the same level of data from all candidates (resume, cover letter, portfolio, references, and other relevant information.).

If you have asked candidates to call you instead of submitting their resumes through email, create a standard checklist of questions to ask them, as well as of information to provide them with. You may wish to create a script. Some questions might include:

- What kind of job are you looking for?
- Why do you think you would be well suited to this position?
- Tell me a bit about yourself.
- What makes you interested in our company?

Use this opportunity to get a feel for the applicant's personality and trust your initial impression. Create a form on which to record this information, and file it with their resume when you receive it.

3. Devise a process for reviewing resumes or applications. The easiest and most time-efficient way to do this is in a single session, after the stated deadline, and not as you receive them. You may wish to enlist the assistance of a senior colleague to provide a second opinion.

Review the resumes and application materials, and divide the applications into three piles: interview, no interview, and maybe. From here, you can begin to call candidates and set up the first interview.

It is also a good idea to be in touch with unsuccessful candidates, and politely let them know that you will not be asking them in for an interview. If you anticipate your response rate will be overwhelming, you may wish to consider stating in your advertisement that only successful applicants will be called.

Step Three: First Interview

The first interview is also a screening interview; your objective is to develop a first impression of the candidate as a person and to determine if they are qualified for the position. If you feel you have found an ideal candidate, this is also your opportunity to convince them to choose your company over any others they may be considering. Good people don't stay in the market long.

Interview Structure

You will need to decide on a structure or system for the interview process as well. Will you be conducting the first interviews, or will another manager? Will the interviews be conducted one on one, or will several employees participate? If you are replacing an employee, you may want to consider inviting that employee into the interview to provide insight into the role.

Interview Materials

Just as you are asking the potential candidate to come prepared for the interview, you must be as well.

- Have an outline prepared for what you would like to cover. Topics include: company history, job description, interview questions, compensation structure, availability, and room for advancement.
- Bring two copies of a typed job description. Include all tasks the candidate will be responsible for completing or assisting with.
- A company profile or overview document (other marketing collateral will also work here).

Interview Attitude

Begin to build a relationship with each applicant. The purpose of the interview is not just to discuss the job description, or for the applicant to get all the interview questions “right.” It is to determine if this person has the right attitude for the job, and whether or not they will fit in with the company’s culture and its employees.

Keep the interview professional, but make sure the applicant is comfortable. Interviews test our ability to perform under pressure, but you will want to gain an understanding of the applicant’s true nature. Remember that even if the applicant is not well suited to the role they have applied for, they may be suited to a future opportunity with the company.

Interview Questions

The questions you decide to ask the candidate are highly specific to your company and the role you are hiring for. Take some time to brainstorm what you really need to know about each person, and what questions you can ask to get that information.

Keep in mind that part of the objective of the first interview is to get a sense of the candidate’s personality. You will want to ask questions about their responses and begin to establish a real relationship with them.

Here are some starter interview questions to get you going:

- Tell me a little bit about your background.
- What's your first impression of our company/product/services?
- Tell me about a time when... [insert a likely scenario they will encounter in the position]. How did it make you feel? How did you handle the situation?
- What advantages do you feel you have over the other candidates?
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- Tell me about an achievement you're proud of.
- Why did you leave your last position?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- ...and so on.

Make sure you take good notes or ask a junior member of your team to take notes for you. Also, record your impression of the candidate after each interview. You will want to be able to reflect on each interview before inviting the candidate to the next phase of the selection process.

When the first interviews have been completed, review your notes and discuss your first impressions with other employees involved in the process. Then, decide who you would like to invite back for a second interview, and let the unsuccessful candidates know they are not right for this particular role.

Step Four: Second Interview + Reference Check

The second interview is used to confirm your impressions of the applicants you believe are well suited to the job. It can also be used to get more information or to compare two strong candidates more closely.

Make sure you only offer a second interview to those you are considering hiring. If you are on the fence about a candidate, chances are your instincts are right, and bringing them in for a second interview is a waste of their time and yours.

Callbacks

When you call a candidate to invite them to come in for a second interview, remain professional and don't make any allusions to a job offer. If your impression of them changes during the second interview, you do not want to have to go back on something you said. Let them know what you thought of them based on the first interview and ask if they would be interested in meeting with you a second time.

Give yourself and the candidate at day or two between interviews to reflect on the first interview and prepare for the second.

Interviewer

You may wish to change the person or team of people who conducted the first interview. Usually, the second interview is conducted with more senior team members at the table.

Interview Questions

While the second interview is often less structured than the first – a relationship has already begun to be established – you should still prepare a list of questions for the candidate.

These questions should focus on the specific tasks related to the job, and on providing more information about the culture, systems, and values of the company. You can also use the second interview to ask questions you may not have had the chance to in the first interview.

Office Tour + Introductions

Once you have determined that you have found the candidate for the job, take them on a tour of your office or business, and introduce them to your staff members. This is an excellent way to gain an initial understanding of how the candidate might interact with your existing staff members.

Calling References

This is the final – arguably most important – step to make before offering the job to the candidate. You should ask your candidate for at least three employment references, and perhaps one-character reference.

Call each reference contact and explain who you are and why you are calling. Then ask if they have a few moments to answer some questions about the candidate. You will want to find out information about punctuality, professionalism, skills, and their reason for leaving. Cross-reference this information with your interview notes to ensure consistency between the candidate and their reference.

Step Five: Hire Your Employee

Provided their references are solid, now is the time to make them an offer of employment.

Call the candidate personally to offer them the job. Make sure you congratulate them and express your enthusiasm in welcoming them into your team. You will also need to follow up your conversation with a letter or email that includes the job offer document or contract.

In the case a candidate declines the job offer, you may wish to do a reference check on your second pick candidate and make them an offer.

Good luck!

Training Your Dream Employees

Once you have landed your dream employees through a rigorous recruitment process, you must continue to invest in your decision by putting them through a thorough training process.

Training is actually an element of recruitment. A new employee's orientation and training sets the tone for their entire employment; this includes their impression of your business, its systems, and respect for its leaders. This has an impact on your ability to retain good people and avoid unnecessary or redundant recruitment processes.

Too often, businesses rely on junior employees to train new ones without any guidelines or 'curriculum.' New employees are thrown into the

deep end without clear expectations or an understanding of ‘how things are done around here.’

These elements affect how an employee perceives their own required level of effort or performance. A business that doesn’t give much thought to planning, expectations, and preparation will end up showing a new employee that the same lack of attention is expected from them.

Here are some things to ensure you implement when you create your comprehensive training system:

Prior Learning / Existing Knowledge

Acknowledge your new employee’s prior learning, and don’t overestimate or underestimate their existing knowledge.

Choice of Trainer

Make sure the person or people who will be training the new employee are sufficiently qualified and experienced. If an administrator is leading a salesperson’s training and orientation, consider asking another salesperson or more senior team member to assist on specific days or sessions.

Training Materials

Have all the required training materials handy. This includes company manuals, industry guidebooks, common reference materials, work samples, and anything else that will aid in the training efforts.

Training Tools

Also, ensure you have the tools available to train your new recruit. Will the training be held at their workstation or another workstation? Do you have all the software you need? All the equipment required? Doing so will ensure the training runs smoothly, and the time provided will be used effectively.

Time

Provide more than ample time for training – including time for questions and elaboration – rushing training benefits no one, including your profits.

Testing

Consider including some ‘tests’ or checks to ensure the new recruit understands each component of the training. Ask the trainer and the trainee to sign-off on each section.

The Big Picture

Each team member’s role is part of a larger picture: the company as a whole. Ensure that the trainee understands how their role contributes to the big picture on each level. If they are a junior member of a department, they should understand how their job contributes to the department, as well as how the department contributes to the entire company.

Feedback

The trainee should be able to ask questions and review information at any time – including after the training process. Create an environment that encourages open dialogue and encourages employees to ask questions when they are unsure of a task.

The other common mistake that many companies make is ending training after the first few weeks of a new recruit's employment.

Training is an ongoing process for every single member of your team, and there should be a system or structure in place to ensure that staff training and development happens regularly. This can include cross-training, employee development, and new systems orientation. Regular training not only benefits your staff and improves their performance, but it allows you – the business owner – to:

- Implement new policies + procedures
- Invest in your staff, thereby improving confidence and morale
- Evaluate staff performance at an individual and team level
- Reward staff based on performance improvements
- Provide a regular arena for feedback and discussion, including positive and negative experiences and issues

One-on-One Training + Evaluation

An effective system of ongoing training is weekly, monthly, or quarterly staff reviews. When conducted one-on-one, this provides a forum for regular communication with employees to review performance and identify

areas for improvement. A one-on-one environment will encourage more open and honest dialogue than if the session were conducted as part of a team.

As a business owner, these sessions are valuable sources of information and insight into the strengths, weaknesses, and motivations of your team.

If you have a large staff, consider pairing junior staff with senior staff and establishing mentorship relationships. This is a powerful way to build the synergy of your team and frees you up from weekly meetings with each staff member. Instead, each senior staff member can report back to you on the results of their regular training sessions, and you only need to conduct these sessions with your senior staff.

Team Training

Team training events are great team builders and provide insight into how your team interacts as a whole. These can take the form of “lunch and learns,” where senior staff or guest speakers conduct an hour-long session with staff members or more social team-building exercises with a less formal program.

Team training exercises will shed light on the leaders and followers in an organization and bring together employees who may work outside of the office. These can be especially helpful if you and your senior staff do not see the team ‘in action’ daily.

Keeping Your Dream Employees

Now that you have spent hours and potentially hundreds or thousands of dollars recruiting and training your staff, your human resource job is done, right?

I suppose you've done what you've set out to do: get the right people working for you. But what happens when those people get bored? Or they are stolen by another company? Or feel they've "done all they can do" at your company?

The final step in the overall recruitment process is employee retention. This includes keeping your employees happy, supporting their development, and giving them an incentive to improve their performance continuously.

Environment

The environment you create for your staff has a significant impact on your employee retention rates. This includes the interior design and layout of your office or business, the lighting, plants, and kitchen amenities available. It also includes the culture of the company – what is the general working atmosphere? Are most people loud? Quiet? Is there a buzz or hum to the office space?

The bottom line is that employees should enjoy and feel comfortable coming to their workplace – they do spend most of their waking hours there.

Spending a little more on comfortable office furniture and amenities like coffee, tea, snacks, and social spaces will go a long way toward keeping your employees happy at work.

Recognition, Rewards, and Incentive Programs

Did you know that many employees place more value on positive public recognition for a job well done than they do on salary?

Recognition and rewards are powerful tools when it comes to keeping employees happy. Positive feedback from those in more senior positions has a higher perceived value than a 3-5% salary increase – and it costs the business little to nothing to implement.

Incentive programs are a formalized way of rewarding employees for their achievements and successes. Clear targets and milestones are identified, and when an individual or team reaches those milestones, they are rewarded with bonuses or prizes.

Recognition, rewards, and incentive programs are an essential part of employee retention, as well as team building. They will be discussed in further detail in the Team Building chapter.

Professional Development Programs

Another common reason employees choose to leave their positions is professional development. Many feel they need to move to another company to develop their careers or gain more responsibility. They may not necessarily dislike their current role but become bored or stagnated and believe they have ‘done all they can do’ at that particular company.

Keeping good people means providing opportunities for growth and advancement within your company. This benefits the company because you can hire from within and save money and time on recruiting and training new staff. It also benefits your employee and increases their loyalty toward your business.

Professional development programs are an essential part of staff retention – but they are also a necessary part of business growth and development. A company with staff who are always increasing their knowledge and improving their skills will stay on the ‘cutting edge’ of their industry and have an advantage over the competition.

Ongoing training and development should be a primary focus for any growing business. Here’s why:

- Increases productivity
- Increases staff retention
- Increases workplace safety and morale
- Increases customer service
- Increases sales

Professional development programs typically focus on the big picture, ambitions of the company, and its staff members. The longer-term goals and career ambitions are recorded and taken into consideration.

Professional development can be easily worked into your ongoing one-on-one training systems. Keep a folder or binder for each staff member that outlines current role responsibilities, short- and long-term goals, and areas for improvement, and review it during your weekly or monthly meetings. Identify specific areas for growth and develop plans of action for that growth.

For example, if your marketing assistant wants to grow into a marketing coordinator or manager role, and needs to improve her people management skills, consider putting her through a management course.

Maintaining this program doesn't have to be a time-consuming task. With some simple system tools and a commitment to regularly scheduled meetings, you can have a clear and effective program for your staff.

- Evolving job description document to monitor role responsibilities and tasks
- Regular performance evaluations
- Goal planning worksheets
- Continuing education programs at local business schools
- Regular meetings between staff and supervisors
- Rewards and incentives

So What Do You Do From Here?

Take Action! If you're already an accomplished business owner and earning over \$250,000.00 per year (rich according to the Federal Government), use this book as direction to enhance the speed of your business success. If you are not as accomplished as you would like to be, then the smartest thing to do is...

- A. Excited about what you read in the book and looking for more? Check out my Free "Everything You've Ever Learned About Generating Leads And Growing Your Business Is Wrong" Video at <https://impelbusinessacademy.com/wrong>. This short presentation will teach you a system for successfully marketing your business ... to a point where it becomes instantly apparent to your prospects that they would be an idiot to do business with anyone other than you... at any time, anywhere or at any price. This presentation contains NO sales pitch. All you'll find here are "proven and tested" marketing secrets that work! It is free just for reading my book!

- B. Ready to talk? Book a call with me at https://daron.agilecrm.com/calendar/daron_stenvold. Whether you want to discuss any of the information in my book or if you would like to find out how I can find you \$10k or 5% of your current revenue in 45 minutes, let's chat.

- C. Are you a do-it-yourselfer? Are you ready to Impel Your Business to the next level and feel you could do it "Coach Free?" Go to <https://impelbusinessacademy.com/guidedtour> and check out my E-Learning Marketing System that was created to give every small business owner unrestricted access to the tools, resources, and support they need to build whatever size business they want.
- D. Are you looking for Marketing sources? Low Cost, DFY, and Guaranteed Services are available for: Facebook Advertising, Results-Based SEO, Online Presence Solutions, Cost Per Revenue Promotions, Enhanced Email Marketing, or Artificial Intelligent Super Bots for your Website or Facebook page. Go to <https://www.impelumbrella.com/> to find out what is available to promote your business today!

Concentrate on strategies to LEARN, and the EARN will follow! If you are serious about taking the next step, then go to work on yourself, study other business successes, understand marketing strategies, and become a sponge for new (proven) material. The amazing thing about the game of business is that when you put proven processes to work and continue to follow them, an abundance of success will follow. The biggest mistake is to start a process and then fall back into your old habits after a short time.

Above all, get the knowledge you need before you step onto the field. Think about it... if you were going to challenge Michael Jordan to a game of H O R S E for money, wouldn't it make sense to learn the game and practice before you stepped on the court to play him? It is incredible to me how many new small businesspeople 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 children's college, then learn and master the steps outlined in my book. I am a huge advocate of education and mentorships. Get the right information, find someone that knows how to walk you through them, and watch your quality of life take a new shape.

To learn how to avoid the three key mistakes all small business owners make, visit www.impelBusinessAcademy.com today.

“Improvise, Adapt, and Overcome”

Semper Fi!

The Same Wall that Protects You... Stops You. Not making enough money in your small business and feel like you are completely confusing 'being busy with being successful'? Find out how to make your small business more profitable from a Marine and experienced Business Coach. Daron Stenvold is a recognized leader of a new generation in strategic sales, marketing success, and leadership. In this book, he outlines proven strategies for you to uncover hidden opportunities and small business profit potential through his simple and proven business-building strategies.

He has an extensive business background ranging from numerous start-up companies, all-season resort, full-service restaurant, small business consulting, fractional sales management, sales assessments and evaluations, and online marketing. He currently owns and operates several diverse organizations utilizing his marketing process. Daron's unique ability to 'think outside the box' makes him a popular resource for many small to medium-sized corporations. The strategies outlined in this book have helped small business owners and sales professionals with the same result - established proven sales strategies and more business profits!

Follow the advice and easy to implement strategies outlined, and you too will benefit by making more money with your small business.

To learn how to avoid the three key mistakes all small business owners make, visit www.impelBusinessAcademy.com

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