

THE ESSENTIAL MARKETING GUIDE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS





HOPE IS A BAD MARKETING STRATEGY

Relying on hope as a marketing strategy is never a good idea, but particularly in a business environment where a successful restart will require more than just re-opening the doors, it is essential to have a strategy in place. The already highly competitive environment will be even busier and businesses will have to really stand out to reach and attract their returning and new customers' attention. Uncertainty is high and cash is low but keeping existing clients and fighting for the share of a smaller consumer base is more important than ever.

Even during challenging times, it is worth asking what this time is best for and as we all stand still, there lies an opportunity to reflect on and rethink current marketing strategies. This is the time to consider key marketing objectives and plans, so that when the crisis is over, the business is in a better position to bounce back and grow.

Steering from panic and looking at this time as an opportunity for innovation and reactivation of brand purpose might be challenging, but it will benefit the business in the long term.

Your business is not static, and neither should be your marketing strategy. Reflect on your previous strategy and plan and evaluate what worked and what needs to change; and most importantly, do not assume that things will be the same as they were pre-Covid.

Whilst businesses cannot manage the crisis, they can manage their response. And even during these uncertain times, it is important to focus on the bigger picture – the innovation and new business models that are likely to emerge as people and businesses adapt. Your business will most likely not be the same when we come out on the other side, but it will certainly be more resilient.



You wouldn't start building a house without a plan, budget and setting your expectations. Building your brand works on the same principles and before you dive in and start doing what everyone else is doing, focus on the basic principles:

1. DEFINE THE MARKETING STRATEGY

- Identify key user personas - how they communicate and what do they value?
- Set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives
- Define your unique value proposition and key performance indicators

2. CREATE A MARKETING PLAN

- Define marketing tactics most likely to generate return on investment
- Create a plan with specific marketing channels and content
- Design content and research topic ideas for marketing campaigns

3. MEASURE RESULTS AND ADAPT

- Review activities based on your pre-defined objectives and measure success
- Adapt the marketing plan based on results to improve performance
- Look for innovative ways to communicate with your target audience





1. DEFINE THE STRATEGY

To define your marketing strategy, the key is to start with the end goal and work backwards, hand in hand with your business goals.

Customers buy products and services that make their life easier or better. But with the volume of choice we currently have, customers are likely to turn to brands that they like and trust – and for those who never worked with or bought from the business, these decisions will be based on the impression the brand makes on their potential customers.

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH

Work with what you know. Look at what your potential customers are looking for and how they communicate. Web traffic is a good starting point to understand your audience's interests and behaviour. Depending on the data available, look at the return on investment on your previous marketing activities. Look at what worked in the past and what didn't – in case you don't have the information, talk to your peers to learn what works for them and do your online research. Different things work for different businesses so be objective and pick the ones you feel most comfortable with.

2. DEFINE YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

Your unique value proposition is what identifies your business, without it your clients have no reason to choose you over your competitors. A value proposition is much more than a tagline or business description – it's about articulating the issues you solve and what makes you the best choice for your potential customers. A good value proposition is easy to understand, communicates specific results your clients should expect and explains how your business is different. As a general rule, your unique value proposition should be clear enough to be read and understood in 5 seconds.



3. SEGMENT YOUR AUDIENCE

First of all, be clear on who are you marketing to. Demographics are key, but that doesn't mean you should exclude those who are not on your top list. Create your potential buyer personas and analyse how they buy – what are their key pain points, how do they communicate and what drives them. Once you know who your audience is, focus on why should they care about your business. Buying behaviours are driven by trust, so look at success stories you can share and results you can show. Once you have their attention, it's all about building credibility.

4. TELL A STORY

Storytelling in business creates a competitive advantage – helps to create an effective marketing communication strategy, triggers interest with potential clients and strengthens loyalty with your existing ones. Sharing stories allows us to connect with people in real life, create emotional connections and trigger our listeners' attention. We all know how to tell a story, but what makes a difference is being able to tell a good story and tell the story well, making it relevant to the audience. And marketing is just about that – telling a good story, so it is remembered and shared for a long time.

5. TAILOR YOUR MESSAGING

One message doesn't fit all, so be clear on who you are communicating with. Define the key demographic criteria and the interests of your target audience. Analyse their key pain points, look at what motivates them and how do they communicate. These factors will impact the messaging you use and the way you distribute the message. Equally important is the stage of their buying journey as it impacts the level of education required about your products and services. Defining your key buyer personas and their standard behaviours will enable you to create targeted communication strategies that deliver results.





2. CREATE A PLAN

Fail to plan. Plan to fail.

Once you have a strategy in place, work on a tactical plan that will help you achieve your goals.

1. SET CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Set some realistic goals that you will work towards. Keep them simple and focused around specific areas. A good way to start is to set the overall end goal focused on new business opportunities and then setting individual objectives that will support that goal. You could look at your marketing ROI, number of incoming enquiries, number of leads generated, social media engagement, website traffic volume or any other indicator that you think will help your business grow.

2. CREATE A CALENDAR

Create a simple table with as many weeks as you need and list all the activities you have planned. The visual demonstration will make it easier to spot gaps and errors. Have your plan visible and easily accessible and always be reminded about what is next. It might be difficult to commit to a specific date, especially if you are planning a few months ahead, so for some, creating a weekly or even monthly schedule might work better. It is important that your marketing activities are regular, even if not too frequent, so spread your activities evenly.

3. TRACK PROGRESS

Mark activities that are completed, delayed or are likely to never happen. Review and track the success of various activities to get an idea about what works best for your audience. Schedule a couple minutes each week to review and reflect on where you are compared to where you have planned to be. Have a look at your campaign results and edit your marketing plan if needed. Focus on the activities that are having a positive impact and look at improvements for those that do not.





3. MEASURE AND ADAPT

Your ultimate measure of success is the number of new business opportunities and sales, But it's important to know if you are on the right track.

MARKETING CHECKLIST

- How many visitors do you get on your website ?
- How many of your website visitors follow up on your calls to action?
- Is your social media following growing month-on-month?
- How engaged are your social media followers?
- How many of your email campaigns get opened and clicked?
- How many recipients unsubscribe from your mailing list each month?
- How many new email subscribers do you get each month?
- What is your keywords position in search engine results?
- How many downloads do you get on your gated content?
- What's the ratio between your event invitations and RSVPs?
- How many referrals do you receive from social media?
- Does your content get shared by your readers?





At Squirrels&Bears we help businesses to look and grow bigger through flexible and bespoke marketing services that deliver measurable return on investment. Whether you are looking for fully outsourced marketing support or help with specific projects, we work alongside you to achieve your marketing objectives.

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