



**50 MARKETING
LESSONS FROM
50 SMALL BUSINESS
OWNERS**



ABOUT NICK BENDEL

Want to grow your business? If so, Nick will teach you how to:

- Differentiate yourself from your rivals
- Attract more customers
- Produce more enticing marketing
- Write and speak persuasively
- Build your personal brand

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Nick is the co-host of [3MinuteMarketing](#), the video series that provides marketing tips for entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Nick is also an author and speaker, and an expert in marketing, writing and communications.

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INTRODUCTION

Every small business owner has a marketing lesson they can share.

So I contacted people in my network and asked them this question: "What's an important marketing lesson you've learned during your time as a business owner?"

I was blown away by the quality of the responses.

The lessons cover a lot of ground, but one thing they have in common is that they were learned through actual business practice, not from reading business textbooks.

Want to improve your marketing? Implement the lessons you're about to learn...

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

For me, the greatest lesson I have learnt about marketing is that you always need to 'know your audience'.

This is critical to be able to understand what makes them tick, know what they're looking for and what their pain points are.

Once you have this info, you're well on your way to crafting a message that is meaningful for them.

Matthew Rogan, Laevo

SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

When I started in business 21 years ago, marketing was about getting the biggest ad you could afford in the Yellow Pages and newspaper, it was about pamphlets and sending faxes with special offers.

Now it is digitalisation.

As professional service providers, I've found the best marketing strategy for Propertyology is to demonstrate our skills as property market analysts and national buyer's agents through consistent production of quality content.

From a strong social media presence, to regular blogs, videos, podcast interviews and catchy imagery, we are extremely generous with our knowledge sharing.

Be prepared to push creative boundaries and focus on consistently demonstrating that you satisfy the needs of your target market.

This approach has helped shape our national reputation as thought-leaders. A day barely goes by now without one or more journalists contacting Propertyology for expert commentary.

Simon Pressley, [Propertyology](#)

STAY CLOSE TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

When it comes to marketing, it's important to understand that at any one time:

- 3% of customers are ready to buy from you right now
- 60% will never buy
- 37% may be open to buying from you in the future

Most businesses target the 3%, so the market is very saturated. However, if you put systems in place to target the 37%, you will have a lot less competition.

So you need to find a way to keep in touch with your customers by providing exceptional value. This will ensure people get to know you, like you, trust you and eventually buy from you.

The best way to get in front of potential customers is via social media and email. Ensure you keep in touch on a regular basis – that way you will stay on top of mind and customers will choose you over your competitors when they are ready to buy.

Ivana Katz, [Websites 4 Small Business](#)

GET PERSONAL

Personalisation goes a long way, every time we communicate to clients.

The nice little personal touches are rarely forgotten and help us build rapport.

The ideas for these 'touches' are not always generated by data or a spreadsheet. Often, it is our interactions and subjective judgement (our 'internal CRM system') that helps formulate these ideas.

As an example, for Christmas last year we gave each client a hard-copy book, hand-picked by us based on what we know about our clients. It is a simple yet sophisticated and personalised idea that goes a long way in building relationships. And we'll be sure to discuss the content of these books the next time we speak to them."

Raymond Lo, [Picnic Customer Intelligence](#)

USE CONTENT TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Always give to get.

Create useful (and free) guides, ebooks and resources that provide value for your customers.

This form of marketing is a great way to stay in touch and build solid relationships, establish you as the industry expert and become a household name.

Iain French, [LockedOn](#)

IMPROVE YOUR CUSTOMERS' LIVES

Provide helpful content

Share as much valuable information as possible while focusing on the transformation your clients need, whether it's their career, product or their good selves.

Respect your customer

Your customer is your partner, so treating them with baby-talk, flattery or condescension doesn't help.

Focus on the solution not the cost

When selling your product, concentrate on the importance of the problem that your product/service solves.

Avoid value vomit

Don't splash tonnes of fluff, buzz words, unrealistic promises and heavy sales pitches while packaging it as a 'free PDF with amazing tips'.

Always be following up

You need to be the first to find out if your services/goods left an unwanted taste in the customer's mouth, not learn about it on a public forum.

Go easy on authenticity

While it's important to be yourself and speak openly, don't bring into the spotlight your kids, your cats or your personal struggles Every Single Time."

Olga Barrett, CV Wizard of OZ

EARN THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR THE SALE

'Be human' is a mantra I come back to often.

Marketing is as much about helping, entertaining, educating and problem-solving as it is selling.

Jumping straight into a sales pitch is putting the cart before the horse. Instil trust and build relationships first, and the revenue will follow.

Jessica Della-Franca, [Jessica Della-Franca Copywriting](#)

EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA

I've been active in the business world since the age of about 16 and in a full-time capacity from the age of about 20.

In that time I have seen many business fads come and go. As such, I've generally resisted the temptation to join the latest fad that comes along. My strategy has always been to provide the best service at an affordable cost and I have relied 100% on referred business only. This has been very successful for me.

That said, one so-called fad that is actually not a fad is the need for all businesses to become familiar with and utilise social media. If you do not use social media, you will waste a lot of energy and time trying to grow your business in this very competitive and time-poor world.

I am now 59 years of age and I, too, am learning about the brave new world of social media! It is never too late to start your journey.

Ranjit Thambyrajah, [Acuity Funding](#)

EDUCATE YOUR AUDIENCE

Marketing is like breathing. If you want to live, you've basically got to keep breathing.

In the same way, if you want to remain in business, you need to market your business.

Marketing doesn't always mean pitching for a sale. It's more adding value and educating your audience with the benefits of your offering.

Premila Dawson, MTA Travel

AIM FOR AN EMOTIONAL REACTION

To receive a reaction, it's best to cause an emotion and offer a solution to a problem.

The goal of my recruiting firm is to solve the issue of talent acquisition and retainment. I've generated significant results when my marketing content is relatable and offers a solution.

For example, a company in my industry will lose about US\$30,000, per month, per vacant position. We solve the problem by finding their new hire in record time.

We market our recruiting solution by tapping into emotional factors such as: decreased family time caused by working longer hours; how their health can suffer from stress; increased injuries from overworked employees; and financial loss.

We market a solution to an unpleasant scenario by addressing how the situation affects everyone involved.

Prior to changing our marketing campaign, I was spending thousands of dollars on ads and content which delivered little results. My material reached my target customers, but it didn't cause an emotion with the consumer.

Summer R. Chancey, [Viking Recruiting Resources](#)

TREAT MARKETING VERY SERIOUSLY

Your time is always spent on marketing. Some say 80%. It won't be enough! It's always 100%.

All your efforts will go into marketing – online and offline. And start it with the easiest way – without paid advertising.

Get connected, let people know what you're about – your message, purpose and outcomes you've delivered.

Jenny Vaz, [Grow Your Gravitas](#)

CONNECT WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

The most important marketing lesson I've learned during my time as a business owner is the importance of connection.

Now connection comes in three different forms:

1. Connection through storytelling, so you become relatable and have that true person-to-person connection
2. Connection through solving people's problems, so they know, like and trust you
3. Connection through authenticity, because if you're not your authentic self that will come straight through in your marketing, and people want to get to know you and what you're about

If you get these right then you're on your way to improving your results through your marketing!

Tracey Kitching, [Tracey's Wellness Mojo](#)

FIND A UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION

Determine your unique selling proposition.

Get clear on the one benefit you offer your prospective customer that no other competitor can offer.

Be sure it is unique and that your customer is willing to pay for it.

Daniel Tolson, Daniel Tolson

BECOME AN AUTHORITY FIGURE

You cannot completely outsource marketing.

You need to actively work with your marketer, to enable him to understand your goals, target market, niche, offerings and jointly come up with the best strategy.

Your voice has to be there in the message else it will become disjointed.

For ads, use a local agency – don't go for a cheap one overseas or, for that matter, the best one overseas. They must have experience in your geography, with your target market, otherwise you will end up burning dollars.

You can do a lot of work – in fact, you are probably awesome in everything. But not defining your niche is a big mistake. In fact, narrow it down to one defined avatar and then target them for marketing.

Be consistent with your branding and the quality of your online presence. People who are not liking your post are buyers as well – 70% of your clients are going to come from this segment. They are watching you. When they have a problem, they must think of you.

Position yourselves well by becoming an authority – raise your profile, become an author, speaker at events and consistently add value. It doesn't matter who you know but who knows you.

Shilpa Kulshrestha & Kapil Kulshrestha, [Scintillate](#)

SOLVE YOUR CUSTOMERS' PROBLEMS

The biggest marketing lesson I have learned is that you must identify specifically who you are targeting and direct all your marketing to them.

What is their problem, what is the consequence of that problem and how do I solve it?

Rebecca Jarvis, [Javrow](#)

ESTABLISH A CLEAR POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Here are three lessons.

First, your positioning is key in the marketplace. You must have an area of specialism so you can lead the field and keep developing self-mastery.

Second, you need a methodology. You need a system to create that difference and positioning to have the competitive edge. Key here is how you design and deliver you and your service.

Third, you need a signature model. Structure your methodology into a conceptual model – a model that will break performance boundaries, taking you from an expert to an authority. This highlights and positions you as the go-to person in your industry. It's what you will become known for.

Sheena Walker, [Sheena Walker Performance By Design](#)

INVEST SIGNIFICANTLY IN MARKETING

After analysis of income and expenses, profit and loss, always contribute 15-20% back into company marketing.

Don't market on what doesn't work. Always look at cheap but effective marketing campaigns.

If the company is a start-up, allocate a good portion to marketing strategies so the company can get airborne.

Nick Jancev, Focus Driving School

TURN YOUR CUSTOMERS INTO RAVING FANS

I had the good fortune of starting a company well before social media; I say good luck because I learned how to grow my business on a shoestring budget without access to online marketing and cheap advertising.

As a result, I learned how to think outside the square and only focus on marketing campaigns that reaped dividends rather than social media likes, which I believe confuse many people in business today.

I began with a fundamental question: which cost-effective marketing method works best in attracting and converting customers?

After speaking to existing customers of my then-small cake business, I discovered that the most successful form of marketing was word-of-mouth. During my whole career, both as an entrepreneur and now a business strategist and coach, this hasn't changed, despite having celebrity clientele, books and even a TV show; customers usually came to me based on personal recommendation.

Therefore, my number one marketing objective was to get every single person that came into contact with my business to refer their friends and family.

To do this, I focused every ounce of my attention and marketing budget into creating positive, engaging and fun customer experiences.

My objective was to transform every single person that came into contact with my company into a raving fan. Whether they bought my product or not was irrelevant.

For me, prospects fell into two camps equally as valuable: they either converted or they became part of my referral network and recommended friends and family.

The big mistake I see companies make all the time is they spend vast amounts of time and energy on marketing, such as advertising and social media. Unfortunately, they treat the customer experience as part of the sales process, something that starts after a customer has purchased.

I even see this on LinkedIn and other social media platforms; people spend vast amounts of time developing an online profile and followers and altogether drop the ball offline. I view customer experience as my most potent and cost-effective marketing tool and believe that as soon as a person comes into contact with my brand, it begins.

With my cake shop, this meant that every single touchpoint in my business was organised to create unparalleled customer experiences. From the way we answered the phones to deliveries, products, competitions, free giveaways, open days, community events, and even the bathrooms were included! Every single customer touchpoint was geared to create a five-star client experience and a talking point.

This meant that I never advertised or engaged in any traditional form of marketing; my entire marketing budget was absorbed in training staff, product give-aways, brand flares and creating activations, ways in which everyone could experience my brand and business, that were designed to generate referrals.



Rihanna posing with her Planet Cake birthday cake



Displaying the world's largest Opera House cake on Sunrise for Australia Day

Although people thought I had gone insane and starting to turn into Willy Wonka, it worked.

By the time I was in year two of my business, when I had asked customers how they had heard about the company, they would tell me that not one but that multiple people had referred them.

Even though the market was heavily saturated and crowded, the referrals kept building.

After three years, we had started to attract celebrity clientele like Nicole Kidman, Celine Dion and Rihanna.

After five years, I was firmly positioned as Australia's number one cake decorating brand, with books, my TV show and a seven-figure business.

All of this was created on one premise: to create exceptional customer experiences that would turn every single person that came into contact with my business into a raving fan, one person at a time.

Paris Cutler, **Paris Cutler**

MAKE FRIENDS TODAY, SALES TOMORROW

In-person networking, collaboration and digital marketing played a vital role in obtaining our initial customers.

In-person networking made a huge difference in winning customers' trust; but on the flip side, scaling is not easy.

With collaboration, it made it easy to focus on our specialisation, while other functions were owned by our partners. We saw digital marketing as having a high potential to scale, but engagement is the key to closure.

Ravishekar Thallapally, [Trizula Digital Solutions](#)

THINK YOUR WAY AROUND OBSTACLES

If the way you are approaching a problem isn't working, ask yourself, 'What if we do the opposite?'

We are living in a time of exponential growth in data and choice. The rapid growth in choice has become hugely distracting for our clients and is beginning to make everyone look and sound the same. Redefining or reframing the problem can often give you the edge you need to crack through the noise.

To illustrate my point, let me tell you a true story about the time I was trying to get a toehold in a large customs department.

The key IT security executive I was trying to meet wouldn't take my calls no matter what I did or how many voicemails or emails I sent him. I figured he probably received dozens of messages a day wanting to sell him something. So I reframed my message in a text message to, 'I'd like to seek your advice on...' He replied within minutes and said he could meet me the following day. He told me later that the reason he replied was because I 'asked for his advice' rather than trying to 'sell' him something.

Pro tip: Reframe the problem or try the opposite approach to gain access where others (including yourself) have failed.

As Jimmy Dean said: 'I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.'

Greg Ginnivan, [WisdomMakers](#)

PUBLISH IT AND THEY WILL COME

Start building your audience. Content will help get you discovered and build your authority and influence. Content marketing is easy to start with while you're building your brand and, if done well, can keep producing value for months or even years after the work has been done.

Content can be anything from blog posts, YouTube videos, podcasts and, of course, LinkedIn. It depends on what fits best for you and the audience you're trying to target.

These efforts mean that you will have someone to shout to when you have a finished product you want everyone to know about. Your first customers will find you through your content. Building an audience can even help you figure out what product to create and get great feedback as you take your followers on your founder journey.

Marcel Badia, [Preneurgrowth](#)

BUILD A STRONG REPUTATION

My big marketing lesson is that consumers trust content from other customers, not ads.

Staying consistent is very important. Don't think one or two bits of marketing will work; play the long game. Develop your own style and be real! Authenticity is the key!

Danny Doff, Laing & Simmons Double Bay

PLAY THE LONG GAME

As a beginning marketer, I routinely went for the sale early. I was selling a product below \$50 so this strategy was adequate to have a profitable business.

As the internet matured and advertising expenses increased, my strategy lost its effectiveness, so I transitioned to selling high-ticket items.

The biggest lesson on this journey was giving up the urge to go for the early sale before nurturing a relationship.

Nurturing begins now even before the introduction, via daily video content posting on social media, because I have discovered that the person who buys today is the person I didn't know but was watching my videos three months ago.

Murray Hughes, [Resurrected-Man.com](https://resurrected-man.com)

IGNORE AUTOMATION

He who would like to do well with their marketing must ignore automation, because it made me a lazy marketer.

I detest digital marketing automation. I do marketing for more personal and sensitive sale conversions as opposed to some generic insensitive campaign that gets sent to hundreds of individuals daily.

Bruno Kongawoin, [Lightbent Images & Photography](#)

HANG OUT WHERE YOUR CUSTOMERS HANG OUT

Before you start to be active on each platform targeting everybody, find your avatar, the one perfect client.

Find out where your avatar spends most of their time online. Be active there.

If you master one platform before moving to another, it will help you find the best practices to be efficient and effective. Managing multiple platforms can be overwhelming and frustrating even with automation tools.

Be consistent. Decide how often you can produce valuable content for your avatar and stick to it.

Your avatar will anticipate your content if your post educates or entertains and is shared on the same day at the same time each week.

Adam Kopacsy, [Octopus Mobile](#)

KEEP FOLLOWING UP

I used to think that following up was hassling. I've learned that it's not. People are busy these days and life often carries them towards the urgent, away from what is an important goal to them.

Being in healthcare, that goal often involves some help from someone like me. Following up with potential clients helps bring their goal back into focus and is often very much appreciated.

So if you have a great product or service you know can help someone you've spoken with – follow up with them! If they've moved on, they'll tell you, but they may very much appreciate your call.

Paul Harper, High Energy Health

STOP MARKETING WHEN YOU START SELLING

There is a huge difference between marketing and selling.

How you communicate and engage with your prospects is totally different once in a sales situation.

If you continue to market once you are in presentation mode, you are allowing your prospects to think about things and maybe go elsewhere. Stop marketing and start your sales presentation once marketing has done its job. One word can define the difference between marketing and selling – ‘Success’.

Marketing works, but selling makes money. Know and understand the difference.

Scotty Schindler, [Scotty Schindler](#)

SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE

The most important lesson I've learned is to listen intently to your current and potential clients, specifically the exact language that they use when speaking about the problems they have.

The better that you can speak (written, audio, or video) to the exact problems in the exact words and phrases your potential clients use, the better you will connect with them.

The stronger connection you have, the more they will resonate with your message.

Dr. Bruno Gervasi, Team Gervasi

CHERISH YOUR INDIVIDUALITY

How many times have you been asked that famous question: 'What is your point of difference?'

Some people think a point of difference lies in finding something unique with your products and services. I don't buy into this traditional view.

Products or services are generally easily replicated. But what can't be replicated is you.

For my business, I am very comfortable saying that my point of difference is me. This is not being egotistical. It is simply saying I am unique. Every single person on the planet is unique. So don't strive for originality. Just be yourself!

Brendan Rogers, BR Consulting

USE VIDEO TO BUILD TRUST

The most important lesson I've learnt is that you cannot underestimate the importance of content creation.

I can directly attribute over \$100,000 in sales directly to the creation and distribution of content across the major social media platforms.

People buy from people, and the best way to deliver that in a modern world scalably is to harness the power of video so people feel as if they know you and are part of your journey.

Jay Seeney, Blacklist Productions

DO MARKETING IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD

My number one tip to anyone new to marketing is that consistency is king.

Regardless of the method you choose, you must do it consistently and no matter how busy or quiet you are, you maintain the consistency. It's OK to ramp up, but never, under any circumstances, stop or slow down.

The other tip is just get started and tweak the plan along the way. If you wait for your plan to be perfect it could take months or years, when it is better to have a plan at 50% and start today, as it is better than nothing.

Phillip Raish, [Wild FX Signage & Print](#)

CHOOSE QUALITY OVER CHEAP

When we started our business, I was always focusing on the bottom line.

When our first website and marketing material was created, it was primarily a budget decision. The content looked like it was written by a high school student, and that's being generous. It wasn't credible enough, and ultimately cost us a lot more than we saved.

To quote Red Adair, 'If you think it's expensive to hire a professional to do the job, wait until your hire an amateur.'

In summary, marketing can be one of the best investments you will ever make – if done well. Choose wisely.

James Vautin, iChallenge

GET TO KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

It's not a lesson I've learned, it's something I've always practised when it comes to marketing. I don't take the daily-differing advice and opinions of the ever-changing self-appointed marketing gurus.

For me, the foundation of my marketing efforts and my advice to others is two-fold, but I'll just give you one. Keep your current clients in mind, not prospects. Speak to clients. Everyone is different. Who are they? What are their problems? What are their needs? How do you help them?

The answers to those questions are the marketing issues and topics.

Lori Boxer, [Weight No More Diet Center](#)

BE TRANSPARENT

In today's digital world, people find nothing more inspiring than a human story where you are vulnerable, and honest.

It's not about 'selling' a product or service on social media, it's about being real and transparent. When you do this, you are able to connect with people on a human level, not just a professional level, which is key to starting conversations that could lead to business opportunities.

Being transparent on social media will build trust and relationships through personal connection and that is how you will really 'move the ball' and grow your brand and your business.

Jennifer A. Garrett, www.jenniferagarrett.com

WEAR YOUR HEART ON YOUR SLEEVE

Two things I've learnt about marketing and having my own business.

Be authentic from the start. I wear my core values and beliefs on my sleeve. I am constantly surprised by how many clients come back to me months and even years later, and I know it's because of this.

I've learnt to be flexible in my messaging to suit my audience. Some are direct and detailed. Others like the big picture visions. It's not about how I would want to receive my info, it's about how they want it.

Dee Mills, CQ Mills Consulting

GIVE BEFORE YOU TAKE



The most important marketing lesson I've learned during my time as a business owner is to apply the 'give before you receive' and 'basic good manners' rules to my social media channels.

So successful have these two lessons been in keeping my client book full and pipeline filled that I share it with all my clients, who have gone on to enjoy the same sort of positive impact as I have in as little as three months.

I have distilled them down into a four-step strategy. Before you post anything on any of your social media channels:

1. Go to you feed and 'like' a minimum 30 posts (ideally avoiding corporate and sponsored posts).
2. Of the 30 you like, mindfully comment on six of them (meaning you need to read and understand the message/image they have taken the time to post). Which six? The six that most inspire you and/or the six that could have the biggest potential impact on your business.
3. I call this the '1 in 5 Rule'.
4. To qualify as a valid comment, it needs to be a minimum of 4 words, excluding emojis.

Simple, powerful and effective. Most business owners will see results in less than three months.

Therese O'Neill, **SOAR with Therese O'Neill**

BE CONSISTENT

Consistency is king! Keep turning up daily with a message that resonates with your audience and you will succeed!

I used to stop and start my marketing because maybe it didn't feel right, was too salesy or I wanted to refine my target audience (again!), and every time I'd start over I'd lose momentum, trust with my audience and faith in myself, and ultimately go nowhere!

My consistent success came from consistent marketing; that was the only thing that really changed to create the growth I'm grateful to experience today.

So my advice is to turn up with something that adds value to your audience's life every day and you will succeed in the end.

Emma Dunwoody, [The Dunwoody Consultancy](#)

SHARE YOUR STORY

When you are putting your face and content out there on social media, the best way to get the right clients is ... to truly be yourself.

When you are truly being authentic, the right people for you will automatically be drawn to you. Don't be afraid to share who you are with the world, and don't be afraid to share your story.

Your story can be very valuable and it can inspire others to reach out and share their own stories too. When people connect with you on a deeper level, it's easier to work together.

Hala El Khoury, [Back to Being](#)

PUBLISH INTERESTING CONTENT

These days, marketing is a digital battlefield. Somewhere out there, your competitor is planning their next online move.

Use every social platform as a marketing weapon.

Don't sit there waiting for the right time to post, market and engage your business to the world. Take advantage of each moment of your social presence; give your potential customer what they need, in the simplest way possible. Make it easy for them to engage you.

No one wants to do business with a boring company. No matter how serious your line of work is, be exciting, be intriguing, be different.

Rami Sabbagh, [Australian National Recoveries](#)

SPREAD THE WORD

Your brand is not what you say it is. It's what others say about your business that defines your brand.

It makes sense to make sure that you have consistent brand visibility online so that people find you. Where should you start? With the #herdofelephants branding tool, Google My Business. Then, move on to every other place possible to have your brand get found online.

You'll only really have to do it once, or only update it if you make material changes to your name, address, phone number, website, email or social media channel names.

Marc Charette, [Work Pics 360](#)

KEEP MARKETING, KEEP MEASURING

Marketing is one of the most important aspects for any business.

Without leads, how can you get the sales? Therefore my philosophy has always been: try to get as many eyeballs on your brand or business.

This is achieved by using a multi-scatter approach (i.e. social media, Google Ads and organic, print, referrals, word of mouth), but always continually measuring the ROI of each method.

And remember – always follow up to nurture the lead for the future.

Raha Sepehrara, Dental Suite Group

SEARCH FOR OPEN SPACE

In my previous business, when we launched our shampoo, we fought head on with brands by multinationals. However, we were minuscule compared to them, and they retaliated quite forcefully. Eventually we abandoned it, as it drained the resources of our food manufacturing business.

The mistake we made was to compete directly at the same level with the multinationals.

After doing the prognosis, we knew that to succeed, we should have entered the market at a different level so as not to create so much attention and pose a threat to our competitors.

This costly lesson has taught us that 'entry point' is a key marketing strategy.

Shirley Childs, Smart Business Entrepreneur

BEWARE OF SOCIAL MEDIA GURUS

Do your research on who you choose to help you with your marketing and where your dollars are spent.

I have found that over the years many people claim to have the magic solution to marketing a business but actually don't. They are very good at marketing themselves and what they offer, yet what is delivered is nothing special.

This is especially true with social media marketing services. Social media marketing is the 'cure' for a small business needing clients but is oversaturated and needs really good copy if it is to work.

Ask many questions, request to see testimonials and call some of their previous clients and ask their personal thoughts on the service they received.

Peter Ellis, [Lending Mate](#)

SHIFT FROM SELLING TO ADDING VALUE

Go deep into understanding your audience. Who are they specifically? How do they feel? What is a typical day in their life? What is the pain point or goal your product or service supports them with?

Once that's clear, keep them in mind in every single connection you have with them – across the entire marketing spectrum, including your one-to-one interactions and after-sale care.

When you know your audience, you shift from selling to adding value to their life. That's the sweet spot.

Yvette Mayer, Yvette Mayer Wellbeing

TAKE ACTION

I have learned most of my marketing from lessons that accumulated in time, not all at once. Not because I didn't understand some of them, but because I didn't believe those rules would work for me. When I started to believe and applied them, then I saw results.

In an era where what you learned yesterday is obsolete and you see disruptive business models every day, you can't always play by the rules. You have to trust your intuition and to believe what you are doing is good, significant and important.

Catalin Anastase, Lunar Media Productions

DELIVER SOCIAL PROOF

Video testimonials from your favourite and most loyal customers will allow you to set yourself apart.

Offering your most loyal customers some sort of incentive for giving a video testimonial is something a lot of small business owners ignore. Ask them questions such as:

- What is your favorite dish?
- What do you like about the restaurant?
- Will you come back?

Edit the answers into a highlight reel and post it on your website. Social proof makes a big difference, and even a few video testimonials go a long way!

Jonaed Iqbal, NoDegree.com

MARKET IT BEFORE YOU BUILD IT

Market it before you build it.

One of the biggest lessons I received very early on in my business life was to make sure you have demand. What you think people want may not be true or accurate. There is no point spending a lot of money building programs, services, ideas or products when you don't actually know if anyone will buy them.

To navigate this, we market the idea, make the sales first and then we take the time to build it out. The advantages are that it takes very little time to start and you know very quickly whether your business idea is going to fly or whether to move onto the next idea.

We have launched every one of our businesses with this strategy.

Dee Heath, Launch. Scale. Automate

FOLLOW A CLEAR STRATEGY

Make sure your marketing has a clear objective or a goal. Is it to brand build, sell a certain amount of products or services, or something else?

Not knowing this means you really don't have any way of measuring the effectiveness of your marketing. It should form the first part of your marketing plan.

Also, you need to know precisely what your marketing budget is. This should be calculated from your forecast and cash flow. Throwing any random amount of money at marketing is dangerous as it leads to both over- and under-spending.

Julian White, [Julian White Business Coaching](#)

CHANGE WITH THE TIMES

Marketing has drastically changed during my 16 years as a naturopath.

In the first 10 years, word-of-mouth was everything. Later, I created a website, as I understood that I must adapt to stay in business. Lately, the rules have changed again.

I needed to communicate using social media as this is what people check first thing in the morning and just before they go to sleep. Another challenge was how to connect through video. I had to adapt again, to allow the viewer to get to know who I am before meeting me in person.

If I've learned something in marketing, it's that I have to adapt to changes in marketing strategies.

Ghada El-Semaani, [Tree of life Naturopathy](#)

WIN YOUR CUSTOMERS' TRUST

Know your products and services, so you know the problems they will solve for your prospects. If you can quantify it in real dollars, even better.

Marketing and sales is the number one skill business owners must master, but it's the hardest lesson to learn.

Start by using low-cost direct response marketing ads and irresistible offers. Use your marketing to give clients confidence in your products and services, so they understand your capabilities and know you're reliable.

Marketing must win customers' trust and create massive impact, so clients are left with no other emotional feelings but to take action and buy your products and services today over your competition.

John Dwyer, Bizibuild

BUILD A NETWORK

Marketing isn't always about finding a new lead, because building a strong professional community is also paramount for supporting a growing business.

The great thing about being connected to a group of diverse people across the nation is that you'll have access to their distinctive knowledge, be able to develop new and creative insights and market your brand even more successfully.

However, most importantly, in the process of investing time and effort into your work network, you will develop professional relationships that could one day turn into partnerships and collaborations.

David Bryson, [iSearch Investigation Services](#)