



five steps to marketing success!

an e-guide for small businesses

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about the writer

Sarah Raad is the Business Development Director of tent. She has seventeen years of marketing and PR experience from the heritage, cultural and charitable sectors, having held positions at Live Theatre, Dance City and Tyne & Wear Museums as well as her work with small business clients at tent.

Over the last 5 years, Sarah has advised our clients on issues such as marketing planning, campaign management, copy writing, direct marketing and PR. She can help you to maximise your marketing budgets, increase sales and raise your profile.

Highlights of Sarah's career to date include: overseeing the press and PR for TWM during the Year of Visual Arts, including the media campaign for the return home of the Lindisfarne Gospels in 1996; launching the Segedunum project in Wallsend; managing the marketing campaigns for various dance festivals in the region, including British Dance Edition: 2000; working on the relaunch of Live Theatre in 2007 and its £5.3 million redeveloped building. During her time in cultural marketing, Sarah was Vice Chair of the region's audience development agency, Audiences North East.

We hope that you find this guide useful. We'd love to hear how you get on with it and if you have any questions or comments. Please don't copy bits of it or use it publicly without our permission or we might get a bit miffed :)

5 Steps to Marketing Success © was written by Sarah Raad in 2011

introduction

Many of us dream of running a successful business, one that allows us to do the kind of work we love, where we attract the right kind of clients and customers and have a full and flowing pipeline of satisfying and lucrative work and sales.

But without clear goals, a strategy and action plan, your dreams of business success may well stay where they currently are, in your head whilst day to day you struggle to get enough business and to attract the amount of work or sales that you would like. And worse still you could end up spending too much time on clients, customers and activity which doesn't bring you the professional and financial gains that you want.

With all that in mind, we have devised this five step plan to help small businesses start to think more clearly about their marketing activity, focus on the things that are important and help them to spend their marketing time and resources as effectively as possible.

step one: attracting the perfect customers & clients

Although it's tempting to answer 'anyone!' when thinking about what kind of clients and business that you want, it's important to narrow the field down to those who have a real need for your service, who understand the benefits of it and can afford to pay. Yes you will always need to educate and persuading potential clients and customers, but by beginning with a clear idea of who you are aiming your business offering or products at you can save yourself time and money.

When you focus in this way, you can start to make sure that your marketing messages, strategy and the tools you choose work to attract what you want. You can learn to spot the wrong kinds of clients and opportunities to pursue and to more easily see those with potential. Over time, all kinds of people will find you through word of mouth and your marketing activities, but to be truly strategic about the kinds of clients and customers you wish to attract, spend all of your time and energy focusing on work that you really want and customers who will provide the business and income that you need.

Once you have a clear idea of who your ideal target market is, spend some time thinking about what would motivate them to buy your product or use your service. What are their aspirations? What are they looking for? All of this will be very important when taking the next step...

step two: brand & communications

Every business, no matter how small, needs to carefully consider its brand image and identity, how it communicates and what messages it sends out.

What do you want to communicate to potential clients? What do you want them to know about you?

Are you selling the benefits of what you offer or simply telling people what you do? Are you tapping into their desires, wishes and needs?

What are your brand values? What do you stand for and stand out as?

How can you communicate all of this in a way that will be attractive to the target market?

Remember a brand is not a logo. A brand is the story that you tell about your business in everything that you do. More than just a colour scheme or a font, your brand is a promise of what you will deliver, not just in terms of your service or product but who you are, your values, your beliefs.

I know we're bound to say this but don't sell yourself short by attempting to tackle improving your brand image yourself, or putting this most important element of your business in the hands of someone without the experience or creativity and talent to do anything less than an amazing job for you.

step two: brand & communications continued

Your brand is a key part of your business that it is worth investing in. Many fantastic businesses have either failed or made life very difficult for themselves by trying to skip over the importance of visual branding. Small businesses often think it's not as important for them to think about branding as for large businesses. They couldn't be more wrong. It's just as, if not more important.

This isn't a sales pitch; there are plenty of great design and branding agencies out there, find the right one for you! (Although of course we'd love to talk to you if you like our work, why not visit www.tent.uk.com to see more)

step three: the basic four P's of marketing

Some marketers would have you believe there are twelve P's of marketing – let's keep it simple by concentrating on the four most important ones!

Product: markets change constantly as do the needs of customers and clients, is what you offer and sell still something people need or want? Can you adjust your offering or package it differently to make it even more attractive? Could you have a range of offerings so that you appeal to a wider market? What can you do to make your product or service stand out from those of your competitors? Have you conducted any research to back up your beliefs about what the needs and wishes, your target market are? Your business success rests on getting your offering right so make sure this stage is given due consideration!

Price: research your competitors but above all assess the value of your product or service to your target market along with their ability to pay and set your prices accordingly. There is no point in spending time trying to sell to people who can't buy. There is also no sense in undercutting your competitors so much that you end up having to work twice as hard and sell twice as much to make a living. And remember, you don't ever differentiate yourself purely on price unless you're the pound shop! So long as your pricing is in the right ballpark, your brand, reputation and the quality of your service are far more important motivators as to whether someone buys into your business or not and more importantly if they give repeat custom.

step three: the basic four P's of marketing continued

Promotion: get your message right and stick to it across all media. Effective communication and branding rely on dogged repetition of your message, your brand values and the benefits of your service or product. It's tempting to deviate from core messages, worry that your marketing is getting boring. Don't. Take time to get it right and then make sure you are consistent and congruent at all times.

Place: look at the range of marketing channels, direct mail, face to face networking, advertising, online, social media etc choose what will work best for you, both as a business but also you as a person. Not every company needs to advertise in the yellow pages. Not everyone is comfortable with public speaking. It's important to stretch yourself however and not avoid certain marketing activities because they make you uncomfortable. Seek help, advice and training to give you the skills and confidence that you need.

step four: write your plan

Don't get hung up about your ability to write a marketing plan. Instead, break it down into stages. Decide what you'd like to achieve in terms of sales/ income, how many clients you'd like, how many retail outlets you want to be on sale in for example, whatever is most appropriate to your type of business, and by when.

Decide what you are going to do to reach your goals, what tools and tactics you will employ, cost up your options and set a budget. If you don't write your plan down, it's not really a plan at all; it's just some ideas in your head! Take yourself away from your office for a few hours with a notebook or a laptop and get it all down.

It's equally important not to get too bogged down in planning. People spend weeks polishing and perfecting a plan when they could be just getting on with it and getting out and making contacts, connections and sales – many a business has used the excuse of writing their plan as a tactic to delay starting what they fear most – starting to market their business!

Use your plan to help you, not to weigh you down. Break things down into smaller tasks, give yourself deadlines. And meet them.

step five: step back!

The fifth point is the one that the vast majority of small businesses fail to do – measure and evaluate. Return on investment (ROI) is crucial. Why continue to spend money on something that isn't working?

So many companies waste marketing budgets by not measuring the success of their marketing efforts. They either give up on a plan that's about to bear fruit or continue to run with an idea that isn't working, because they haven't figured out the ROI. Try to ensure your marketing activity is easy to track. If you want to send email newsletters, use software that gives you stats and feedback on how many people opened it, which articles they clicked on etc. If you use face-to-face networking events, make a note of useful connections and who you met where. That way you can start to assess the success of different groups you have been attending. Promotional codes applied to advertising and leaflets are a great way of tracking which promotions worked best.

A marketing plan is a living, breathing thing and needs to be adjusted and altered along the way and if you don't know what's worked and what hasn't you can't do that vital adjustment with confidence.

so, what will your next step be?

At tent, we are passionate about helping small business owners to live their dream and grow their business. We've been doing it ourselves for five successful years and have developed a special support package to help any business get their new marketing strategy off to a flying start...

Marketing Kickstart

If you'd like some assistance in making this year your most successful year yet, why not invest in a Marketing Kickstart from tent?

With a Marketing Kickstart from tent, you'll discover:

- How to identify your ideal clients & customers
- How to find your brand values and start using them
- The best tactics for you to win the right kind of new business
- How to present and package your services & products more effectively
- How to write a realistic and manageable marketing plan

All of this will be covered in a half-day one to one planning session which will leave you fired up and confident about your business. This session can take place at your premises or at our lovely garden studio in Clara Vale.

In addition you will have four follow up Marketing Kickstart phone sessions to help motivate you, keep you focused and give you any additional advice you need.

get in touch

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