

<http://businessballs.com/market.htm#marketing-planning-process>

marketing and advertising tips

how to write a strategic marketing plan or business strategy, marketing and advertising tips, internet and website marketing tips

This is a simple guide to marketing, strategic business planning, advertising and promotion and sales lead generation, for small UK businesses especially. With tips and techniques for advertising and PR, for non-marketing managers, and for marketing and advertising professionals too; this is marketing and advertising made simple. Also some easy tips on website design, internet advertising and marketing.

While much of this marketing theory page was written a while ago generally the principles apply just the same, in fact many of these basic pointers are good reminders of some of the simple things that are easy to overlook in these modern distracting times.

Incidentally, where references are made to the UK there will commonly be equivalent methods and processes and suppliers that are applicable in other countries.

N.B. Spelling: mainly for search reasons, UK-English and US-English spellings of organisation/organization are used on this page. Aside from this, the preferred UK-English spellings are generally used. Change the spellings for your own situation if using these materials in teaching and training notes.

a fundamental aspect of modern marketing

First, here's something that is fast becoming the most fundamental aspects of marketing to get right, especially if you want to build a truly sustainable high quality organisation (of any size) in the modern age:

Ensure the ethics and philosophy of your organisation are good and sound. This might seem a bit tangential to marketing and business, and rather difficult to measure, nevertheless...

Price is no longer the king, if it ever was. Value no longer rules, if ever it did. Quality of service and product is not the deciding factor.

Today what truly matters is ethical and philosophical quality - from the bottom to the top - in every respect - across every dimension of the organisation.

Modern consumers, business buyers, staff and suppliers too, are today more interested than ever before in corporate integrity, which is defined by the organisation's ethics and philosophy.

Good sound ethics and philosophy enable and encourage people to make 'right and good' decisions, and to do right and good things. It's about humanity and morality; care and compassion; being good and fair.

Profit is okay, but not greed; reward is fine, but not avarice; trade is obviously essential, but exploitation is not.

[Psychological Contract theory](#) is helpful towards understanding and developing fair balanced philosophy, especially in meeting the complex needs of staff, customers and the organization.

[Nudge theory](#) is a powerful change-management methodology which emerged in the 2000s. It's extremely useful in understanding, and to an extent managing, how people think and make decisions.

People naturally identify and align with ethical philosophical values. The best staff, suppliers, and customers naturally gravitate towards organisations with strong ethical qualities.

Putting a good clear ethical philosophy in place, and communicating it wide and far lets people know that your organisation always strives to do the the right thing. It's powerful because it appeals to people's deepest feelings. Corporate integrity, based on right and good ethical philosophy, transcends all else.

And so, strong ethics and good philosophy are the fundamentals on which all good organisations and businesses are now built.

People might not ask or talk about this much: the terminology is after all not fashionable 'marketing-speak', nor does it correlate obviously to financial performance, but be assured; everyone is becoming more aware of the deeper responsibilities of corporations and businesses in relation to humanity, and morality, the natural world, the weak and the poor, and the future of the planet.

Witness the antagonism growing towards certain multi-nationals. People don't rail against successful corporations - they rail against corporations which put profit ahead of people; growth ahead of society and communities; technology and production ahead of the natural world; market domination ahead of compassion for humankind. None of this is right and good, and these organisations are on borrowed time.

People increasingly prefer to buy from, deal with, and work for, ethical, right-minded organisations. And whether an organisation is ethical and right-minded is becoming increasingly transparent for all to see.

So be one.

Aside from which - when you get your philosophy right, everything else naturally anchors to it. Strategies, processes, attitudes, relationships, trading arrangements, all sorts of difficult decisions - even directors salaries and share options dare we suggest.

And it need not be complicated. The ultimate corporate reference point is: "Is it right and good?... How does this (idea, initiative, decision, etc) stack up against our ethical philosophy?"

Organisations are complex things, and they become more and more complicated every day. A good ethical philosophy provides everyone with a natural, reliable reference point, for the tiniest detail up to the biggest strategic decision.

So as you start to write your marketing plan, be it for a new start-up, a huge corporation, or a little department within one, make sure you put a 'right and good' ethical philosophy in place before you do anything else, and watch everything grow from there.

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See also (on other pages):

[business planning](#) - includes free strategic planning templates, samples and examples

[sales and selling](#) - methods, processes, theory, techniques - help for developing selling propositions and sales strategies

[business networking](#) - how to - tips, methods, ideas

marketing vs advertising - differences and definitions

Marketing and advertising are commonly confused. This confusion is compounded because meanings of both continue to evolve.

Below are definitions of marketing, followed by definitions advertising, and the differences between marketing and advertising.

Firstly it's important to note that:

The increasingly broad nature of the marketing definitions reflects the increasing dimensions by which organizations engage with their markets. It is truly fascinating and highly significant to see how the definitions of marketing have changed over time.

Marketing was traditionally simply 'selling products' (as if at a traditional old-style farmer's market). The term derives from this meaning. This meaning developed so that marketing became an extension of selling - a means by which to identify, design, and communicate or 'target' offerings to customers.

Nowadays however, we know that customers make decisions to buy many products/services by referring to vastly more and wider factors than simply product/service features, quality, availability, and price.

Nowadays the meaning of marketing is extremely sophisticated. A good modern definition of marketing must acknowledge that we buy things in far more complex ways than we did fifty years ago, even ten years ago. The internet and social media are major factors in this. Above all, marketing is a reflection of 'the market', and how the market buys and behaves, which especially entails people and society - much broader considerations than purely product and price. As the market evolves in sophistication, so does the way in which we understand what marketing actually is and what it means to conduct marketing well.

Here are three examples of how the scope and definition of marketing reaches much farther than ever before:

Organizational constitution - many customers will not buy from a supplier whose ownership is considered to be unethical, greedy, or overly profit-driven, whereas many customers positively seek out suppliers considered to have more ethical convictions and ethos, such as mutuals and cooperatives, or social enterprises. These issues are therefore now unavoidably part of marketing, and where marketing fails to consider or influence these matters, then marketing activity is potentially less able and effective.

Organizational probity - (probity means honesty, uprightness - it's from the Latin word probus, meaning good) - this includes issues such as environmental and social responsibility, and 'Fairtrade', etc. See the ['4P Purpose-Probity model'](#). Where marketing fails to involve, address and influence these fundamentals of organizational values, then marketing is to an extent (dependent on the service/market sector) disabled.

The psychological contract - the relationship between organization and staff directly affects market image and customer service/relationships. Marketing has for decades extended its reach to staff (traditionally, for example 'internal marketing' via newsletters and staff briefings, etc) but nowadays this 'internal' facet is immensely more significant. Organizational integrity and related failings are now much more transparent. Employer/employee relationships are now seen very obviously to influence quality and ethics of conduct and service (for example, scandals featuring News International privacy criminality, insurance industry miss-selling, and banking/investment risk). As such it is difficult to exclude considerations such as [the psychological contract](#) from the marketing responsibility.

definitions of marketing

Here are some definitions of marketing, oldest first, starting with the 1922 OED (Oxford English Dictionary). The increasingly broad nature of these marketing definitions reflects the increasing dimensions by which organizations engage with their markets, and consequently how the meaning of marketing has grown.

"The action of selling, i.e., to bring or send to market..." and also, "Produce [verb meaning] to be sold in the market." (1922 OED - Oxford English Dictionary, paraphrased)

"The action or business of promoting and selling products and services, including market research and advertising". (1998-2005 revised, modern-day Oxford English Dictionary)

"Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably." (The UK Chartered Institute of Marketing, CIM, official definition 2012.)

"Marketing encompasses and includes all organizational activities which involve or affect the relationship between a supplier/provider organization and its audience and stakeholders." (Businessballs.com, A Chapman, 2012)

definition of advertising and advertisement

We now see more clearly that advertising is quite different to, and actually within, marketing:

"The activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services." (2005 Oxford English Dictionary)

Advertisement is defined as: "A notice or announcement in a public medium promoting a product, service or event, or publicizing a job vacancy." (2005 Oxford English Dictionary)

"Communicating by print or electronic or other media to a customer/audience/market about a product/service/organization so as to improve the desire for or view of the product/service/organization." (Businessballs.com, A Chapman, 2012)

(Extending usefully as:) "...Advertising seeks, in measurable, cost-effective, controllable ways, to generate enquiries or sales and/or to raise awareness/perceptions of a supplier/provider/organization, by presenting motivating communications to an appropriate audience." (Businessballs.com, A Chapman, 2012)

in summary

Marketing and advertising are different.

Marketing is an extremely broad area that includes advertising, not vice-versa.

Marketing also includes PR, online presence/activities, customer service, selling/sales admin (methods and structure/strategy), branding, exhibitions, sponsorship, new product development, merchandising, surveys and market research, political lobbying, and even extends to ethos, culture, training, and organizational constitutional issues, since all this affects the image and trading style of an organization or product/service provider.

Advertising is far more specific than marketing; advertising is a function of marketing, and basically encompasses methods of communication with audience designed to produce sales enquiries, and/or improve awareness/perceptions of product/brand/organization. Advertising refers to printed and electronic media that is presented one way or another to market or audience, including packaging, point of sale, brochures and sales literature. Advertising increasingly extends to 'advertorial' in traditional and online media, which combines provision of objective helpful information and more subjective advertising/endorsement. Advertising (when properly executed) is the statistically driven and measurable implementation of marketing strategy, via carefully selected communications methods, targeted at predetermined audiences.

Advertising is one of several instruments/means by which marketing operates.

We might also regard advertising as one means of tactical implementation of the strategic aims of marketing.

marketing and business planning - and fundamental organizational philosophy, purpose, values, and ethics

a modern planning framework for a business or organization

First it's helpful to revisit, check or define the foundations of your business or organization. What are your fundamental aims and values? What is your ultimate purpose?

Is your underpinning philosophy congruent (consistent) with your planned business activities, operations and aims? (See the [leadership](#) page for explanation of how underpinning purpose and philosophy are so important for leadership, as well as for strategy and marketing.)

Below is a simple template for checking that you have the foundations and building blocks in place. If not, then decide (as far as you can, because it's generally the CEO's call) what they should be, because all good marketing plans need to have solid foundations first.

As regards the fundamental philosophical aspects see the sections on [ethical organizations and corporate responsibility](#) and the [Psychological Contract](#). These concepts are deeper than tools and processes and mission statements - having a sound philosophy and ethical position determines and protects the spirit and integrity of your organization.

When it comes to defining more detailed aspects of mission and strategy, of course there's degree of 'chicken and egg' here: How can you know your Mission until you validate it with your potential customers? How can you establish objectives and goals without consulting and involving your staff? These later stages obviously need to be put in place and refined when you are in position to do so without guessing or assuming, as the planning develops; even so, use the framework as a firm reminder to make sure you fill in the boxes when you are able - don't leave these issues floating undecided, or defaulting back to [X-Theory](#) autocracy (which they generally do where a vacuum exists). If in doubt, always err on the side of what is good and right and proper, which is another good reason for having a sound ethical position: it always provides a reliable reference point. In the absence of everything else - tools, processes, clarity of responsibility (who does what), etc - having a sound and well understood philosophy and ethical position will always help people to make good decisions.

Build from the bottom upwards. Consult and involve people affected and involved wherever relevant. You will see many different versions and interpretations of this framework. The principles are similar although the words might change. A business or an organisation is built on values and philosophy. Increasingly in the modern age, customers and staff are not prepared to sustain commitment to organisations whose philosophy and values are misaligned with their own personal ideals. Ten years ago organisational planning paid very little regard to values and philosophy. Customers were satisfied with quality at the right price. Staff were satisfied with a decent wage and working conditions. Today things are different. Organisations of all sorts must now cater for a more enlightened workforce and market-place.

When considering these planning stages start from the bottom upwards. This will help to reinforce the point that planning is about building from the foundations upwards, and that the stronger the foundations, then the stronger the organisation will be.

hierarchy of marketing and business planning stages

Start at the foundations (point 1 below) and work upwards.

8. Our Performance Indicators	How do our Targets and Objectives translate into the essential measurable aspects of performance and activity? Are these expectations, standards, 'Key Performance Indicators' (KPI's), 'Service Level Agreements' (SLA's), etc., agreed with the recipients and people responsible for delivery?
7. Our Targets and Objectives	How are our strategies comprised? How are these responsibilities and activities allocated cross our functions and departments and teams? Who does what, where, when, how, for what cost and with what required effect and result? What are the timescales and measures for all the actions within our strategies, and who owns those responsibilities?

<p>6. Our Strategies</p>	<p>How will we achieve our goal(s)? What needs to happen in order to achieve the things we plan? What are the effects on us and from where? Like planning a game of chess, what moves do we plan to make, why, and with what effects? How will we measure and monitor and communicate our performance? What are the criteria for measuring our performance and execution of our strategies?</p>
<p>5. Our Goal (or several goals in large or divisionalised businesses)</p>	<p>What is our principal goal? When do we plan to achieve it? How will we measure that we have achieved it? At what point will we have succeeded in what we set out to do? Goals can change of course, and new ones necessarily are developed as old ones are achieved - but at any time we need to know what our organisation's main goal is, when we aim to achieve it, and how its achievement will be measured. And again all this needs to be agreed with our people - including our customers if we are very good indeed.</p>
<p>4. Our Mission (or Missions if there are separate businesses within the whole)</p>	<p>How do we describe what we aim to do and be and achieve? What is special about what we are and do compared to any other organisation or business unit? Do our people understand and agree with this? Do our customers agree that it's what they want?</p>
<p>3. Our Vision - dependent on values and philosophy.</p>	<p>Where are we going? What difference will we make? How do we want to be remembered? In what ways will we change things for the better? Is this vision relevant and good and desired by the customers and staff and stakeholders? Is it realistic and achievable? Have we involved staff and customers in defining our vision? Is it written down and published and understood? The Vision is the stage of planning when the organisation states its relationship with its market-place, customers, or users. The Vision can also include references to staff, suppliers, 'stakeholders' and all others affected by the organisation.</p>
<p>2. Our Values - enabled by and dependent on philosophy and leadership.</p>	<p>Ethics, integrity, care and compassion, quality, standards of behaviour - whatever the values are - are they stated and understood and agreed by the staff? Do the values resonate with the customers and owners or stakeholders? Are they right and good, and things that we feel proud to be associated with? See the section on ethical organisations for help with this fundamental area of planning.</p>
<p>1. Our Philosophy - fundamentally defined by the leadership.</p> <p>When things go wrong in an organisation people</p>	<p>How does the organisation relate to the world? This is deeper than values. What is the organisation's purpose? If it is exclusively to make money for the shareholders, or to make a few million for the management buyout team when the business is floated, perhaps have a little re-think. Customers and staff are not daft. They will not be comfortable buying into an organisation whose deepest</p>

commonly point to causes, problems or mistakes closer to the point of delivery - or typically in operational management. Generally however, major operational or strategic failings can always be traced back to a questionable philosophy, or a philosophical purpose which is not fitting for the activities of the organisation.

foundation is greed and profit. Profit's fine to an extent, but where does it fit in the wider scheme of things? Is it more important than taking care of our people and our customers and the world we live in? Does the organisation have a stated philosophy that might inspire people at a deeper level? Dare we aspire to build organisations of truly great worth and value to the world? The stronger our philosophy, the easier it is to build and run a great organisation. See the section on [ethical organisations](#) and the [Psychological Contract](#) for help with this fundamental area of planning.

If you are an entrepreneur or leader, or anyone contributing to the planning process, think about what you want to leave behind you; what you'd want to be remembered for. This helps focus on philosophical issues, before attending to processes and profit.

Whatever your philosophy, ensure it is consistent with and appropriate for your organisational activities and aims. Your philosophical foundations must fit with what is built onto them, and vice-versa.

When you've satisfied yourself that the fundamental organisational framework is in place - and that you have gone as far as you can in creating a strong foundation - then you can begin your marketing planning.

marketing planning

Carry out your market research, including competitor activity.

Market information should include anything you need to know in order to formulate strategy and make business decisions. Information is available in the form of statistical economic and demographic data from libraries, research companies and professional associations (the Institute of Directors is excellent if you are a member). This is called secondary research and will require some interpretation or manipulation for your own purposes. Additionally you can carry out your own research through customer feed-back, surveys, questionnaires and focus groups (obtaining indicators to wider views through discussion among a few representative people in a controlled situation). This is called primary research, and is tailored to your precise needs. It requires less manipulation, but all types of research need careful analysis. Be careful when extrapolating or projecting. If the starting point is inaccurate the resulting analysis will not be reliable. The main elements you typically need to understand and quantify are:

- customer profile and mix
- product mix
- demographic issues and trends
- future regulatory and legal effects
- prices and values, and customer perceptions in these areas
- competitor activities
- competitor strengths and weaknesses
- customer service perceptions, priorities and needs

Primary research is recommended for local and niche services. Keep the subjects simple and the range narrow. Formulate questions that give clear yes or no indicators (i.e. avoid three and five options in multi-choices) always understand how you will analyse and measure the data produced. Try to convert data to numerical format and manipulate on a spreadsheet. Use focus groups for more detailed work. Be wary of using market research

organisations as this can become extremely expensive. If you do the most important thing to do is get the brief right.

Establish your corporate aims.

Business strategy is partly dictated by what makes good business sense, and partly by the subjective, personal wishes of the owners. There is no point in developing and implementing a magnificent business growth plan if the owners wish the business to maintain its current scale.

State your business objectives - short, medium and long term.

State your business objectives - mindful of the trading environment (external factors) and your corporate aims (internal factors). What is the business aiming to do over the next one (short), two-to-three (medium) and four-to-five (long) years? These objectives must be quantified and prioritised wherever possible. You may project your aims or vision for your business further into the future of course, which is feasible for types of business which are reasonable mature, stable and predictable. For such businesses some people might regard four-to-five years as medium term rather than long term. However, life and work and business and the world as whole all change far more quickly and unpredictably than in times past, so in some sectors (notably those seriously dependent upon or affected by modern technology) it's quite difficult to imagine reliably what your business will need to be like much beyond four or five years. In the modern age it's not easy, and often is not sensible either, to establish very specific and detailed aims much beyond four-to-five years into the future, especially if your business is in a sector that is prone to external influences.

Define your 'Mission Statement'.

All the best businesses have a 'mission statement', or at least a clear and repeatable description of your businesses purpose, from the standpoint of your products/services in your market. A mission statement announces clearly and succinctly to your staff, shareholders and customers what you are in business to do. Your mission statement may build upon a general 'service charter' relevant to your industry, but it must also say what's special or different about your business. Aiming to be 'the best' or 'the leading' provider/supplier, etc., in your chosen sector/niche/territory is a good approach to defining a mission statement. Consider what you can be the best at doing for your stated target market or audience. The act of producing and announcing the mission statement is an excellent process for focusing attention on the business's priorities, and particularly the emphasis on customer service. If your business is modern and good you will be able also to reference your organisational 'Philosophy' and set of organisational 'Values', both of which are really helpful in providing fundamental referencing or 'anchoring' points, by which to clarify aspects of what the organisation or business unit aims to do, what its purpose is, and how the organisation behaves and conducts itself.

Define your 'Product/Service Offer(s)'.

You must define clearly what you are providing to your customers in terms of individual products, or more appropriately, services. You should have one for each main area of business activity, or sector that you serve. Under normal circumstances competitive advantage is increased the more you can offer things your competitors cannot. Develop your service offer to emphasise your strengths, which should normally relate to your business objectives, in turn being influenced by corporate aims and market research. The tricky bit is translating your view of these services into an offer that means something to your customer. The definition of your service offer must make sense to your customer in terms that are advantageous and beneficial to the customer, not what is technically good, or scientifically sound. Think about what your service, and the manner by which you deliver it, means to your customer. In the selling profession, this perspective is referred to as translating features into benefits. The easiest way to translate a feature into a benefit is to add the prompt 'which means that...'. For example, if a strong feature of a business is that it has 24-hour opening, this feature would translate into something like:

"We're open 24 hours (feature) which means that you can get what you need when you need it - day or night."

Clearly this offers a significant benefit over competitors who only open 9 - 5.

Your service-offer should be an encapsulation of what you do best, that you want to do more of to meet your business objectives, stated in terms that will make your customers think 'yes, that means something to me, and my life will be better if I have it.'

Write business plan - include costs, resources and 'sales' targets.

Your business plan, which deals with all aspects of the resource and management of the business, will include many decisions and factors fed in from the marketing process. It will state sales and profitability targets by activity. There may also be references to image and reputation, and to public relations. All of these issues require some investment and effort if they are to result in a desired effect, particularly any relating to increasing numbers of customers and revenue growth. You would normally describe and provide financial justification for the means of achieving these things, together with customer satisfaction improvement, in a marketing plan.

Quantify what you need from the market.

Before attending to the detail of how to achieve your marketing aims you need to quantify clearly what they are. How many new customers? Limit of customer losses? Sales values from each sector? Profit margins per service, product, sector? Percentage increase in total sales revenues? Market share required? Improvement in customer satisfaction? Reduction in customer complaints? Response times? Communication times?

Write your marketing plan.

Your marketing plan is actually a statement, supported by relevant financial data, of how you are going to develop your business.

"What you are going to sell to whom, when and how you are going to sell it, and how much you will sell it for."

In most types of businesses it is also essential that you include measurable aims concerning customer service and satisfaction.

The marketing plan will have costs that relate to a marketing budget in the business plan. The marketing plan will also have revenue and gross margin/profitability targets that relate to the turnover and profitability in the business plan. The marketing plan will also detail quite specifically those activities, suppliers and staff issues critical to achieving the marketing aims.

Being able to refer to aspects of organisational Philosophy and Values is very helpful in formulating the detail of a marketing plan.

marketing is more than selling and advertising

Marketing provides the means by which the organisation or business projects itself to its audience, and also how it behaves and interacts in its market. It is essential therefore that the organisation's philosophy and values are referenced and reinforced by every aspect of marketing. In practical terms here are some of the areas and implications:

There are staffing and training implications especially in selling and marketing, because people are such a crucial aspect.

Your people are unlikely to have all the skills they need to help you implement a marketing plan. You may not have all the people that you need so you have to consider justifying and obtaining extra. Customer service is acutely sensitive to staffing and training. Are all your people aware of what your aims are? Do they know what their responsibilities are? How will you measure their performance? Many of these issues feed back into the business plan under human resources and training, where budgets need to be available to support the investment in these areas. People are the most important part of your organisation, and the success of your marketing activity will stand or fall dependent on how committed and capable your people are in performing their responsibilities. Invest in your people's development, and ensure that they understand and agree with where the organisation is aiming to go. If they do not, then you might want to reconsider where you are going.

Create a Customer Service Charter.

You should formulate a detailed 'Customer Service Charter', or customer service , extending both your mission statement and your service offer, so as to inform staff and customers what your standards are. When you have very few staff (like one or two) it is possible to communicate these ideas without necessarily writing them all down, but more than this really requires some sort of written record of these standards. In any event it is good to be able to show these statements of intent and quality to your customers. These standards can cover quite detailed aspects of your service, such as how many times the telephone will be permitted to ring until the caller is gets an answer. Other issues might include for example: How you deal with complaints. How you handle suggestions and requests from customers. What your waiting/delivery leadtimes are. How many days between receipt and response for written correspondence. These expectations should where relevant also be developed

into specifically agreed standards of performance for certain customers or customer groups - often called Service Level Agreements (SLA's). Increasingly, customers are interested to know more about the organisation's values and philosophy as they relate to customers, together with more obvious detailed standards of customer service.

Establish a complaints procedure and timescales for each stage.

This charter sets customer expectations, so be sure you can meet them. Customers become disappointed particularly when their expectations are not met, and when so many standards can be set at arbitrary levels, think of each one as a promise that you should keep. Do not set standards that you do not believe you can achieve.

Remember an important rule about customer service: It's not so much the failure to meet standards that causes major dissatisfaction among customers: everyone can make a mistake. The most upset is due to not being told in advance of a problem, not receiving any apology, not getting any explanation why, and not hearing what's going to be done to put things right.

Establish systems to measure customer service and staff performance.

These standards need to be absolutely measurable. You must keep measuring your performance against them, and preferably publishing the results, internally and externally.

Customer complaints handling is a key element.

Measuring customer complaints is crucial because they are a service provider's barometer of quality and performance. You need to have a scheme which encourages, not discourages, customers to complain. Some surveys have found that nine out of ten people do not complain to the provider when they feel dissatisfied. But every one of them will tell at least a couple of their friends or relations. It is imperative that you capture these complaints in order to:

- Fix the problem, and/or explain what you can do to address it and minimise its implications, if it cannot be fixed.
- Put customers at ease and give explanations and reassurance to the person complaining. Listen and understand what lies behind the complaint, so that you can fix the situation, not just the service/product fault.
- Reduce the chances of the customer complaining to someone else (friends, higher up in your organization, an industry watchdog, etc).
- Monitor exactly how many dissatisfied customers you have and what the causes are. This is vitally important if you're regularly failing to deliver your mission statement or service offer!
- Take appropriate corrective action to prevent a recurrence. This goes beyond fixing the problem. It means identifying the cause(s) and fixing these causal factors so that the problem cannot arise again. Failing to fix a complaint allows a bigger problem to develop; however failing to address the causes of a failure/complaint, thereby allowing the cause to remain and produce repeat failings, is unforgivable, and may in certain serious cases be criminally negligent.

Most organisations now have complaints 'escalation' procedures, whereby very dissatisfied customers can be handled by more senior staff. This principle needs extending as far as possible, especially to ensure that strategic intelligent complaints and constructive feedback (all immensely useful) are handled by someone in the organisation who has suitable strategic appreciation and authority to recognise and act appropriately.

Many organisations waste their most useful complaints and feedback by burying or hiding the complaint at the initial customer service 'outer wall'. Complaints and feedback are gold-dust. Encourage and use complaints wisely. Fix them; fix the causes, and interpret the causes to learn how to make even bigger deeper improvements.

There are implications for ICT, premises, and reporting systems.

Issues of Information and Communications Technology also relate to your business plan. Are your computers and communications systems capable of handling the information and analysis you need? What type of [Customer Relationship Management](#) (CRM) system is most appropriate for your needs? Can customers find what they need to know from your website(s)? Can staff find what they need to know from your computerised systems? Do your systems provide the data necessary to make business decisions? Are your systems connected where they need to be, for example finance, sales/service/order-processing and stock/storage; staffing and training, appraisals and job-grades? Small companies should try to keep ICT systems minimal

because complex ICT and reporting is expensive and time-consuming, but bigger companies need very well designed ICT systems, otherwise information and vital business data become chaotic and unmanageable.

Premises can be equally significant considerations, which increase with the scale of the business. Is there sufficient space, now, and to allow for growth and seasonal or other peaks of activity? Is your space and layout designed so that it can be used well? Is the reception area appropriate? Are the staff facilities helpful towards maintaining a happy and comfortable working environment? Are there sufficient meeting rooms? Is the decor and the layout suitable for staff and customers? If car-parking is difficult what can you do to minimise negative impacts? Who needs to be based in an office and who is best based at home? If your business involves a flow of products or parts, etc., such as a shop or factory, can the physical flow of products operate smoothly, or can you make some big improvements with a simple redesign of flow and layout? The way space is used is crucial to efficiency. Efficiency equates to cost and quality. You should design and plan efficiency into the way you use your space.

Reporting systems are crucial for management and business decision-making. It is said that if you can't measure it you can't manage it, and where finance and business performance is concerned that's certainly true. If there's an aspect of your service or performance that is important can you measure it?

How do you report on it and interpret the results? Who needs to know? Who needs to capture the data? When you get a new customer (for an ongoing transaction) do you ask how they heard of you and why they chose to give you a try?

Communications and ongoing customer feedback are essential.

Having an open dialogue with your customers is vital. There's a double benefit to your business in ensuring this happens:

- You can anticipate problems and stay aware of how you're performing, rather than discovering days or weeks afterwards.
- Your customers feel better about the service you provide as a result of the communications, or simply because the channel is open, even if they don't use it. It's basic human nature to want to be listened to, and to be kept informed. In this way people feel that they matter, and that they are cared about. If your company fails to build this openness into communications standards, then customers feel isolated and uninvolved, and prone to leave and go somewhere else, where they feel more valued.

Involving customers (and staff) is easy. It just takes a little thought and care. For example devise a simple feedback form. It can double as a promotional tool as well if it's made available on a wider scale. The form can carry details of your mission statement, service offer and your customer service charter.

Business is completely and utterly dependent on customers.

No business would exist without customers.

So design and plan everything you do with the customer in mind, especially those processes, premises, systems and staff with whom customers directly engage.

branding, advertising and promotion

Here are some guidelines on branding, and for planning and managing advertising and promotion activities, especially for small businesses. (The principles transfer to very large businesses too, in fact many very large organisations forget or ignore these basic rules, as you will see from the featured case-study example).

branding

Branding refers to naming a business or product or service. A brand will typically also have a logo or design, or several, associated with it.

Businessballs is a brand. It has a name and a logo design.

So is Cadbury (a company brand, although now a division of a bigger one), and so is Milky Way (a Cadbury product brand). Each of these have associated logo designs; several actually for different situations.

So is Google a brand (so big a brand and a part of life it's become a verb, 'to google'). On its main webpage, Google cleverly, and for fun, changes its logo design quite often, according to special events in the calendar.

So is Manchester United a brand (upon which a vast merchandise business has been built). The power of the Manchester United brand is so great that it transcends its sport and particularly the notion of a 'local football team'.

And so increasingly, your local school, hospital, and council are all brands. Brands are everywhere.

If your name is John Smith and you start a landscape gardening business called John Smith Landscape Gardening, then John Smith Landscape Gardening is a brand too.

Branding is potentially a complex subject because it extends to intellectual property and copyright, trademarks, etc., for which, if you are embarking on any significant business activity, you should seek qualified legal advice. When doing so contain your ambitions and considerations (and your legal fee exposure) so that they are appropriate for your situation.

There is much though that you can decide for yourself, and certainly a lot you can do to protect and grow your brand so that it becomes a real asset to you, rather than just a name.

General guidance about business and product names, your rights to use them, and ways of protecting them, are provided (for the UK) via the UK [Intellectual Property Office](#) website. Many of these principles apply internationally, although you should check your local laws for regions beyond the UK and especially beyond Europe.

Aside from the legal technicalities certain basic points should be considered concerning branding:

- Brand names must be meaningful and memorable in a positive relevant sense. Ideally your customers should associate your brand(s) with your business, your quality, and perhaps some other aspects of your trading philosophy and style.
- Choose your brand names carefully. Product and business brand names carry meanings. Meanings can be different among different types of people. If possible test possible brand names with target customers to see what the market thinks, rather than relying only on your gut instinct or your friends' opinions.
- If your business is serious, and certainly if it is international - you must seek advice about the international meaning of branding words and the rights and protections implications of those words.
- As a general rule, but not a consistent point of law, you are usually much safer (in avoiding risk of breaching someone else's rights to a brand name) if you use a generic (properly descriptive) word or phrase to brand your business or product, than if you use a made-up name, or any word which does not properly describe your business or product.
- For example - if you open a pet shop in Newtown and you call it (give it the brand name of) 'Newtown Pet Shop' then probably this will not breach any existing protected rights belonging to someone else in the pet business. If instead you want to call (brand) your pet shop 'Petz' or 'Furry Friends' then there is a strong likelihood that someone else might already have protected such a brand name, which could give problems for you in the future, especially if your business becomes big and successful, or you wish to sell it one day, or if the rights-owner happens to be particularly aggressive in protecting their own rights.
- Websites - which by their nature are accessible globally - lead to additional complications in protecting your brand, or in avoiding breaching somebody else's brand rights. A country domain suffix, such as a .co.uk, is generally more appropriate for a small local business, than a .com suffix, but arguments can easily be made for securing the equivalent .com domain name as well as a local country suffix website name, if only for protective reasons. If a particular com domain name is available then this generally and logically indicates that nobody else has a great interest in that particular brand name (unless there are issues of similar spellings). If in doubt you must research trade mark registers in the territories concerned (which can commonly be done online), and/or seek suitable reliable qualified help.
- It takes many years to build trust and reputation in branded names (of businesses, services, and products) so making frequent changes to business names and brand names is not a good idea, and in some cases even making a single change can produce surprisingly powerful problems. See the case-study example of ineffective branding and organization name changing below.

- If you must change a brand name, and there are times when this is necessary, you should plan (unless there are strong reasons for ceasing the previous brand) a transition which customers and the wider market-place understand. An obvious solution is to phase the change by merging the old and new brand names. The UK Nationwide Building Society is a good example of this when it joined with the Anglia Building Society. For several years the new company was then branded the Nationwide Anglia, only dropping the Anglia when the market fully recognised the change. Commonly executives and agency folk managing a new brand name project tend to overlook the sensitivities of customers who know and trust the old brand, and this is especially risky to customer loyalty and business continuity wherever a brand with a strong reputation is replaced.
- Beware of creative agencies giving you advice that's more in their interests than yours and your customers. Brands and advertising are primarily communications with customers, they are not works of art or the personal statement of a designer. The creative aspect of a brand (particularly design or logo) must be of good quality, but the creative element is not an end in itself. Often the best solution is the simplest one, because customers understand it. Always ask yourself - "Will people understand this (brand or brand image/communication)? Will it be meaningful to my target audience, and does it truly fit with what I'm trying to do in my business?"

branding and name-change - case-study example - how not to do it

For very many years the UK government department responsible for business was called the DTI - Department for Trade and Industry.

The DTI was formed in 1970. It was a merger of the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Technology.

The name DTI was effectively a brand. It was a government department, but in all other respects it was a massive branded organization, offering various services to businesses, and to regions and countries also.

The DTI had a logo, a website. It had staff, a massive target audience (of billions globally), customers (effectively, tens of millions), a huge marketing and advertising spend, including national TV campaigns, posters, informations brochures, and every other aspect of branding which normally operates in the corporate world.

The organization name 'the DTI', was an obvious and recognised abbreviation of 'Trade' and 'Industry', and this described very clearly what the department was responsible for.

Not surprisingly, the DTI name developed extremely strong brand recognition and reputation, accumulated over 27 years, surviving at least two short-lived attempted name changes during that period (each reverting to DTI due to user critical reaction) - until the name (brand) was finally killed off in 2007.

For more than a generation, millions and millions of people recognised the DTI name and knew it was the British government's department for business. Many people also knew the website - if not exact the exact website address, they knew it was 'www.dti...(something or other)'.

Simply, tens of millions of people in the UK, and also around the world recognised the DTI as Britain's government department for business.

For people in business, this is a very substantial advantage for any organization to have. In a corporations, this sort of brand 'equity' is added into balance sheets, and can be valued at many £millions.

Then in 2007 the government finally forced through a name change, and the DTI was replaced, with, wait for it...

The Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform - BERR.

Twenty-seven years of brand equity and reputation gone, just like that.

BERR became instantly the most forgettable, least logical, and most stupid departmental brand in the entire history of government department naming and branding cock-ups.

No-one knew what it stood for, no-one could remember what it was called, and no-one could understand what it was supposed to be doing even when it was explained.

Even the term 'business enterprise' was a nonsense in itself. What is business if it's not enterprise? What is enterprise if it's not business?

And what is 'regulatory reform' in the context of business and enterprise? Hardly central to international trade. It was a bit like renaming Manchester United Football Club the Trafford Borough Playing Fields, Caterers and Toilets.

Not surprisingly BERR didn't last long, and duly in 2009 the government changed the name again to BIS - (the department for) Business, Innovation and Skills. Let's see how long this name lasts. I'll give it a year or two at most.

It's only taxpayers' money, so the enormous costs and wastage caused by this recklessness and poorly executed strategy are not scrutinised like they would be in a big company.

You can perhaps begin to imagine the costs, losses and other fallout caused by changing such a well-established organizational name and presence, twice in two years.

The case-study does however provide a wonderful example of re-naming/re-branding gone wrong on a very grand scale.

available mix of advertising methods

Advertising is a complex and an ever-changing aspect of business. New ideas and media uses are being devised all the time, and as the advertising industry switches emphasis from media to media, and as new technologies and lifestyle trends develop, so new advertising and promotional methods need assessing and comparing with traditional available methods as to which is more or less cost-effective for your given purposes.

For example through the 1980s and 1990s there was a huge trend towards direct mail (junk mail), which seems to show no signs of abating - many very large consumer brands switched significant advertising spending into direct mail, often away from TV. TV on the other hand is increasingly attractive to small local businesses.

Loyalty schemes - a fundamental aspect of retail advertising and marketing - demonstrated significant success rates through the 1990s through to present times. Loyalty schemes entail building detailed customer databases, which enable the rewarding of, and very specific product/offer targeting to, customers within the database. Customer loyalty is traditionally rewarded with vouchers for the retailers' own products, plus special internal and external offers, all of which carry a much higher perceived value for the customer than the actual cost to the loyalty scheme operator.

Internet advertising in certain territories and for certain sectors is now more popular (industry spend) than TV advertising, although since these media are now gradually merging it will become increasingly difficult to make absolute differentiations between the two media. Internet advertising revenues eclipsed those of radio advertising several years ago.

Crucially, internet advertising is extremely accessible and usable for very small businesses whereas conventional TV advertising is generally not at all.

There are many different forms of (what can be defined as) internet advertising (which are fast growing/newly emerging), notably:

- your own website(s) - a 'virtual brochure' and sales process on the web for your customers
- extending your own website functionality to enable direct communication via email or newsletter, podcast, etc., to customers and potential clients who have opted in to receive such contact/materials from you
- adverts on other websites (notably Google's Adwords scheme, although there are hundreds of other big providers/agencies) - which may be anything from tiny text links and contextual links in related materials, to big video banners or audio ads - all of which can be targeted with great precision, (assuming you know your targeting criteria..)
- links and entries of your company's details on internet directories and listings websites (for example Yell.com, and specialist industry news/listings websites)
- the promotion and sale and fulfilment of your products/services via websites such as Amazon and Ebay
- the promotion and sale of your products services via specialised voucher or discounting websites, such as Groupon
- the review and comments and discussion about your products and services, product launches on websites such as Amazon, Ebay
- the development of community/user groups via social networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook, extending to product/service news, updates, and any other information you want to share with your audience through social networking channels

- the development of professional, business-to-business communities and user groups, and use of these channels via professional and industry-specific social networking websites such as LinkedIn, and potentially more importantly via highly focused industry-specific website communities for your own market sector
- blogs that you can write about your specialism/sector/industry/products/services/etc - on the major blogging websites, and/or on industry/consumer/lifestyle-specific websites
- articles (editorials or advertorials) and other online materials that you can post or have published on other websites
- videos and clips that you can upload to websites such as Youtube and Vimeo (which may be educational, instructional, demonstrational, entertaining, or serve some other purpose)
- and plenty more methods/concepts which are emerging all the time on the web.

Internet advertising is potentially very effective because:

It generally enables a lot of testing and fine-tuning (of targeting of message, 'keywords', and audience). It's also very 'scaleable' and adaptable - you can start small and increase the activity/spend/budgets, and change it in many ways, as you learn what works best. Origination and set-up time and costs are generally much less than for conventional design and print advertising methods. Also, lots of internet advertising costs only your time. If you can create interesting helpful materials, or simply a few interesting words on a very consistent enduring basis, then you can build a useful relevant following of potential/existing clients, and in doing so, a reputation and awareness for your business and brand too.

Advertising methods change with lifestyle and technology developments - learn what's available to you - learn what your competitors are doing, which is particularly easy on the web.

Read about advertising methods and developments and trends. Historically (1980s-90s) advertising agencies were commonly 'multi-services' agencies, and split their operations to handle the creative, production and media-buying processes. Nowadays however, multi-services agencies are far less common. The range of advertising methods is so vast that advertising agencies are now more commonly specialised in one or a small number of advertising services (types of advertising).

Whether you work with an advertising agency or not, learn about the methods that are available to you, and keep up with developments so you can make informed decisions about where to put your advertising emphasis, and what 'mix' of methods to use.

choose methods according to cost, targeting and response

Most advertising campaigns can be analysed at the planning (before) and measurement (after) stages in terms of cost per thousand, and if you are seeking a direct response, it should be monitored according to cost per response and also cost per conversion.

Conventional design and print advertising must more carefully take account of cost of origination (design), production (printing if relevant) and media (such as local radio, display advert, list procurement and postal fulfillment).

Generally - conventional design/print and online - you will pay a higher cost per thousand for better targeted methods, but in return you should expect a higher response rate, so the cost per response can be lower than cheaper methods.

Choose advertising and publicity methods that suit your targeting. If you are a small local provider of dog-grooming services there is no point in advertising nationally or internationally via the internet. Conversely if you manufacture highly specialised precision-engineered surgical instruments then you should arguably be targeting buyers and users on a global basis, via the internet and probably international journals and events too.

Organisations which offer advertising services are usually (one way or another) able to provide a lot of information about their readership/audience, or to ensure that quite accurate customer targeting applies. You can look at other advertisers that repeatedly using various media to gauge how effectively it's working for them, which will provide some clues as to how well it might work for you.

If you are considering an advertising method that involves a reasonably serious investment for you, try to avoid guessing whether it will work or not, and instead research how well it actually works. You might even ask some

of the existing advertisers if it's working for them and to what degree. Or run a small test or pilot, before you commit to a bigger campaign.

Building evidence of advertising effectiveness - crucially tracking and recording your media, methods, messages, costs, and results (responses and conversions and order values) - is a vital part of decision-making and managing your advertising and marketing mix.

Why guess if you can base decisions on experience and previous statistics and data?

Any large scale activity must first be tested and the response measured for quantity and profile.

Sophisticated advertisers only commit to major advertising programmes after accumulating response data from pilots and previous campaigns. They avoid guesswork, and so should you.

design, production and the role of external agencies

These principles apply to all types of design and advertising agencies, including design/print, corporate identity, PR, website design, etc.

Your advertising material helps to form your image, so make sure you are happy with the design, however modest the style and usage. Use typefaces and logos in a consistent way, and if you can afford the help of a good designer early this will set the tone and rules for usage later, which will save time and money in the long term.

When establishing a new business many people fail to establish a good quality design and image around their name/brand. If you are targeting a discerning audience, especially with a premium product/service, it is not a good idea to do so with DIY branding, (unless you are a designer).

If you already have (perhaps you buy a business) a perfectly satisfactory business name/ branding/design ('corporate identity') don't change for the sake of it. Change it only if there is a real need to do so.

Brand familiarity and loyalty take years to build. Don't throw away perfectly good branding just because some well-intentioned overly enthusiastic agency person persuades you that a change is necessary.

When making any change consider your real purpose and implications.

Consider and be warned by examples in recent times of large-scale corporate identity cock-ups, such as BT (trumpeting figure), the Post Office (calling itself Consignia), and British Airways (multi-national aircraft tail-fin designs) - all of these cost tens of millions of pounds, yet they all failed disastrously and resulted in expensive rebranding or reversion to the original identities.

The role of design and advertising agencies is also concerned with planning and implementing advertising or promotional 'campaigns' on a client's behalf.

This advertising process starts with a 'brief' comprising: the purpose of the advertising, how much you will pay, and what you expect to produce in return, including how you will measure whether it is successful or not. A written brief is critically important if you are using an outside agency. Advertising is notoriously subjective; creative agencies are often difficult to manage; so misunderstandings can easily creep in if your control is not tight enough. See also the [tips for working with product designers](#) because many of the principles are transferable to working with advertising agencies.

Here are some general rules for working with advertising and design agencies:

- Try to appoint people who come recommended and who have experience in your sector.
- Agree and confirm written briefs for all work.
- Maintain a balance between what you want to say and how the agency wants to say it. Some agencies and advertising people are highly skilled and can be trusted 100%. Others need managing carefully, especially in the early stages of a relationship.
- Don't allow the message to be over-complicated. Simplicity works. Usually 'less is more'.

Agencies charge like wounded bulls for correcting copy (text) once they've started the project, and particularly when the design is nearing completion, so ensure you check and correct all the words and details you provide to a designer or advertising agency when the project begins.

Business people very commonly overlook this and assume that fine points of detail (which only you know, and which the agency can't guess) can be clarified or corrected or inserted later in the design stage. Well, such corrections can of course be made later, but at a big cost and nuisance. A designer is a highly skilled person. It is a waste of his/her expensive time correcting errors which the client (that's you) could/should have sorted out before handing the project over. If late amendments from the client involve undoing and restructuring things (be it a website, or a brochure-pack, etc) then project/campaign deadlines and budgets can be seriously disrupted.

If you are a small business try to use an agency with the services you need under one roof (apart from printing which is traditionally separate). Some agencies can tend to mark-up (ad profit to) bought-in services quite heavily, eg., graphic design, photography. You'll also find it easier to establish accountability if your agency is responsible for the whole job, rather than just a part of it.

Where applicable, until you are satisfied with the agency's print prices it's a good idea to ask for an alternative print quotation, and check what mark-up the agency adds on.

In the case of list procurement (for mailings and telemarketing campaigns, etc), display advertising, or leaflet distribution through inserts or 'Door-to-door' delivery, check whether the agency is adding a mark-up (it's likely), and if so that you are happy with this mark-up.

Ask the same question in the case of any other procured services or products, eg., promotional merchandise, exhibition space, etc.

advertise to build awareness and to generate response

Within the advertising purpose you should define whether you seek to create brand awareness or to generate a direct response.

Effective marketing generally demands that you do both, but on a limited budget you may be restricted to concentrating on one or the other, so think carefully about what will help most.

Different media and methods are better suited to one or the other.

Direct Mail and internet advertising are very good at generating a direct response, as are magazine and newspaper adverts, and inserts.

Posters, TV, radio and press editorial are all much better at creating brand awareness and building credibility.

If you do not have enough customers, or in any other way need to increase your sales and profit, especially if you are running a small business and have tight finances, then you must concentrate very hard on advertising that will generate a direct response (sales and/or sales enquiries).

There is no point trying to build brand awareness at times of great financial pressure. If you are under great financial pressure, you need sales. You will increase sales by putting your efforts into direct response advertising.

(This all assumes that you have profitable products/services to sell, and that you do not have a problem being paid for services/products already supplied).

use language that your customers understand

A good advertising or design agency should automatically take care of these following issues, but if you are among the many businesses which do not use an agency, then you will be doing this for yourself.

In all of your advertising material take care to see things and hear things from your customers' viewpoint. As a knowledgeable supplier there is always a tendency to write copy and present information from a technical and 'product/service' standpoint. Remember that your customers are usually people without such good technical or detailed understanding of your products and services.

You must therefore help them understand things in terms that really mean something to the reader - as it relates to their needs and priorities and challenges.

Focus on what your propositions do for them, not what your propositions are in technical detail. You should use clear simple language. Do not think that complicated language will help build an image of professionalism and intelligence - this generally puts people off.

Your expertise should be demonstrated by your ability to show that you can interpret and translate (sometimes highly complex) products and services into meaningful needs and outcomes and improvements for your customers.

Truly effective advertising and marketing conveys complex issues to the audience in a manner that is interesting, relevant, meaningful, and easy to digest very quickly.

Thomas Jefferson suggested that "The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do" and this is a good maxim for writing good advertising material.

If you or the 'copy-writer' at your advertising agency cannot achieve this in your advertising and marketing communications then find someone who can, or you will be wasting a lot of your advertising effort and investment.

There is little point in spending a lot of money on a very well targeted and cost-effective campaign (online, or direct mail, etc) if what you communicate does not motivate your audience to read and take action.

translate your product/service offer into meaningful customer benefits

Having decided through the processes described above to focus your message on a few key strengths of your business (your 'service offer' or 'proposition') you must now express these as 'benefits' to your customers.

A 'benefit' is a technical [selling](#) term. A benefit is the good effect that your customer obtains from your product/service.

Crucially the customer should know this, not just you, the seller.

The nature of benefits in sales and marketing is that the customer sees or feels or understands the beneficial effect.

This is what customers buy. Customers do not actually buy products or services; customers buy the important things that products or services will do for them.

So give your customers information about the benefits of your products and services - explain what your proposition means to your customers. How will it make their lives better, or their business more profitable, more streamlined, more ethical and sustainable, more socially responsible? How will your proposition improve the quality of their service to their own customers? How it will make their employees lives' easier, better, less stressful - whatever you believe to be the strongest most relevant and meaningful customer outcomes.

Obviously, if your target customer is a business, then there are opportunities for your services to benefit their own staff and customers. These are usually very important benefits to business customers.

See the [sales training](#) section for lots more help and tips for translating your offering, proposition, products and services into meaningful customer benefits.

advertising must be costed and linked to measurable response

Because advertising is such a complex science the only real way to be sure that something will work before you try it is to refer to previous indicators, and if you've no previous statistics or reliable data then run 'pilot' or trial first. Start measuring the effectiveness of your advertising from the very beginning. Keep detailed records of what you did, when, to whom, for how much, and what resulted.

The results of certain types of advertising can be quite difficult to measure, particularly where no direct response is sought, (where follow-up sample surveys might be the only way to gauge effects), but measure everything in whatever way you can. Starting a business and a completely new advertising campaign inevitably involves a bit of calculated guesswork, however, if you start measuring and recording results from the beginning then you'll make your task much easier next time around.

Modern online advertising methods usually enable very accurate measurement of advertising effectiveness.

Key statistics and ratios to be measured include:

- cost per thousand (potential customers reached, with your advert)
- cost per response
- cost per enquiry or 'lead' (basically a prospective customer expressing interest)
- percentage responses (enquiries from a given number of contacts/customers reached)
- conversion numbers and percentages and costs (conversion of a 'clickthru' to an enquiry/lead, or conversion of an enquiry/lead into a sale)

A very basic and often overlooked method of measuring and recording advertising effectiveness and results is to ensure that every enquiry is greeted at some stage with the question, "How did you hear about us?" or "How did you find us?" Even very large 'professional' organisations commonly fail to instill this basic principle within their customer service processes, and yet it is very important.

You should measure advertising from the standpoint of every particular advertising activity, method, or campaign, and also from the simple standpoint of every sale you make, which of course come from a variety of advertising sources.

These days there is every opportunity to properly record and measure enquiries and advertising responses: Computer-based CRM ([Customer Relationship Management](#)) systems nowadays offer relatively easy and cost-effective ways of managing customer and enquiries information. Make sure you use one. Then you won't need to guess as to what forms of advertising work best for you.

Remember also that advertising forms a part of your business plan, which is aimed at being profitable. This is especially important when your advertising is aiming to produce direct responses and sales (rather than building awareness and reputation, etc).

If your advertising seeks to generate customers and sales, but does not produce a gross profit in excess of its cost, then you must stop it or change it, otherwise you are obviously wasting money.

types of advertising media and marketing methods

Prior to considering methods of advertising and marketing it is important to ensure that you understand and adhere to local country laws relating to data protection and customer rights concerning privacy and opt-out of various marketing methods. This especially relates to maintaining and using lists and people's personal details, for telemarketing, direct mail, texting, fax-marketing (very rarely used nowadays), and email. Generally private consumers enjoy more protection than business-to-business customers. See the notes about [laws relating to direct marketing and advertising](#).

Small local businesses who target their local community often overlook some very simple easy and cost effective ways of advertising.

These low-cost methods are not generally so suitable for big corporations with big budgets, but the ideas can be very effective (and very inexpensive) for small businesses and self-employed people targeting the local area with small advertising budgets.

Here is a quick list of local very low cost advertising ideas, which with a little imagination and selective effort can be developed into a very effective local advertising campaign, which can produce a continuous 'pipeline' of new business:

- Posters in windows and on notice boards, and in staff rooms of local businesses.
- A promotional stall at a local car-boot market or county show.
- A stall or leafleting presence at a local relevant gathering or event.
- Using leaflets or business cards in dispensers where local people sit and wait or queue or gather, for example: doctors, dentists, vets, church rooms, tourist information office, outpatients departments, library, nurseries, mini-cab offices, forces and services sites (e.g., police, ambulance, etc), launderettes, post offices, newsagents, hairdressers, takeaways, cafes and bars, hotels, pubs and restaurants, golf clubs clinics, leisure centres, etc.

- Reciprocal referral arrangements with other good local suppliers, especially those who serve your target audience with different products and services (which enables you to be more helpful to your own customers when they ask you to recommend other services).
- Regularly giving news and interesting pictures about your work to your local newspaper (see [PR](#) below), or perhaps even writing a regular column relating to your specialism in the local free newspaper or parish magazine.
- Offering existing customers an incentive (gift of some sort, or money off your next supply) for introducing a friend as a new customer for you.
- Door-to-door leaflet distribution through the postal service or other suitable service. (This is a particular effective method if your neighbours (US neighbors) are potential customers, and especially relevant for small start-up businesses targeting local consumers.)
- Speaking at local [networking](#)/business events.
- Speaking or facilitating at the local school or college - for example with business education and preparing youngsters for the world of work (which gives you publicity and builds your reputation).
- Local trade directories - typically monthly publications distributed to the local community.
- Targeting special offers at local big employers, through their PR and/or HR/social activities.

While most of these methods are for small companies and local campaigns, a few can certainly be adapted and used effectively by big organizations with surprisingly good and cost-effective results.

Here are more advertising methods, generally for larger corporations, campaigns and target markets, in more detail:

the internet, websites, email, cd-roms, dvds, social networking, etc

Online and electronic media are fast becoming the most flexible and dynamic advertising methods of all.

Many people now use the internet instead of - not merely in addition to - directories, newspapers and the telephone, etc.

The internet is therefore a crucial and potentially very effective vehicle for advertising and marketing.

Part of the online revolution, the popularity and reach of social networking media/websites such as Facebook and Twitter also offer very inexpensive (but potentially very time-consuming, so beware) ways to promote your business and offerings, together with establishing brand, reputation, credibility, audience and following, etc.

Electronic and online advertising media - notably establishing your own website(s) and online services/product availability - can be expensive and challenging to originate and implement initially, but costs tend to be low thereafter, and can be extremely cost-effective if sensibly researched and implemented.

Online video (for example using Youtube and Vimeo, etc) offers hugely diverse and exciting opportunities to represent your business and offerings, via many different strategies, from educational and instructional, to presentational and any kind of dramatic staging or context that you might imagine (and can afford to produce).

Email is an extremely inexpensive method of communicating short or quite large messages to potential customers; although needs careful design, organization and implementation, because the email medium is very widely abused and involves risks and implications that can be counter-productive if poorly managed. The same applies to texting, via mobile/cellular telephone systems.

As the internet extends progressively to mobile phones (smartphones and tablets, etc) the opportunity and necessity to make use of online and web-related marketing methods becomes increasingly important and useful.

The internet and email provide unprecedented opportunity for radically new methods of promotion and advertising, such as viral marketing, and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) of educational or informative articles, newsgroups, forums, affiliation and partnering arrangements, email newsletters and campaigns, blogs and blogging, social networking, and many other new ideas which appear more quickly than most of us can absorb, interpret and implement.

Modern and emerging digital and web-related advertising marketing methods offer audience reach, precision of targeting, level of fine-tuning and control, measurement and analysis, and cost-effectiveness that conventional advertising media simply cannot match.

Online media technologies now offer highly sophisticated flexibility for the production and accessibility of sales and marketing materials - brochures, product specifications, etc.

For some while it has been possible to produce sales literature and brochures in user-friendly (commonly interactive) digital format. Progressively ever more 'feature-richness' can be incorporated into user experience when accessing marketing information.

Early sophistication of website design enabled user 'interaction'; this has now made way for 'virtual' experiences. Such design was initially (around the turn of the 20th century) very expensive, but given that the cost of online technology and design tends always to reduce quite steadily and quickly, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century even very modest websites could realistically feature the sort of design and user experience that was the stuff of science-fiction fantasy a generation ago.

In response to the online revolution, conventional printed sales and marketing materials of all types (from newspapers and magazines, to brochures and business cards) are becoming largely obsolete, as customers look to the internet (via phones, pc's, laptops, PDA's and in the future TV too) for quick, up-to-the-minute information about products, services and suppliers of all sorts.

Customer reviews - online - of products and services and providers and sellers, etc., are now a crucial aspect of the marketing, selling, buying, and customer service process.

Social networking websites (Facebook and Twitter from around 2010 notably) have now become immensely significant in the publicity and marketing of products and services and corporations, and also in the management of customer relationships, reputation, image, and especially positive and negative reviews/opinions.

And as more agencies, technology companies and digital media organisations develop their offerings and technologies, so the costs and time of design, origination, production and implementation will reduce to levels that will shift the big majority of marketing communications away from traditional (printed and other non-digital) media into modern electronic and online media, digital information, and online 'engagement' between customers and suppliers of all sorts.

Internet advertising has advanced fantastically beyond the early days of simple trade listings, internet directories, and 'pay-per-click' advertising offered by the major search engines. Such sophisticated methods are now easily available, very viable, and extremely relevant for very small 'local' businesses, and are all examples of this fundamental shift in marketing.

Take time to learn about and understand which of the new digital methods will work for you and how. You will be experiencing already many of these methods as a customer on the web. Think about how it works while you are a customer, and ask yourself how you might make use of these incredible methods instead for yourself as a supplier.

Most, if not all of the information you need is freely available on the internet - take time to look for it and learn - and ensure that your business explores and implements the many very cost-effective advertising methods available to you via internet media and the modern digital revolution.

press and public relations (PR)

The press release is the most under-rated form of advertising. Why? Because it's free, and moreover press editorial is perceived by the audience to be true, whereas advertising of all almost all other types is seen as 'oh no another advert' and therefore implies uncertainty or scepticism. Getting your editorial printed for free is easier than you may think, and [guidelines for using PR](#) follow in more detail below. TV and radio news publicity works in much the same way, although more difficult to secure and control. Surveys and questionnaires provide perhaps the best opportunity for achieving valuable and effective publicity. See the guidelines about [surveys and questionnaires](#) below.

seminars

Creating an informative seminar and inviting your target audience is an excellent way to educate the market and promote your company and proposition. This method works especially well in the business-to-business market, and where educating customers is appropriate, for instance if marketing a new technology or service to architects and specifiers. It is possible to have certain types of seminars accredited for CPD (Continuous

Professional Development) by professional institutes, which provides an extra incentive for prospective customers to attend.

telemarketing

Using telemarketing staff or a telemarketing agency is a proven method of marketing. If well-managed, telemarketing can be an extremely good and cost-effective method for generating sales enquiries, selling products and services and making appointments for sales staff. It is important to identify a good telemarketing agency, and to that ensure your aims, outline script, and communications process for enquiry generation follow-up, are all clearly established and understood, by the agency and your own staff. A good CRM computer system to manage lists, data, follow-up and outcomes, is normally essential for telemarketing is to be successful on any reasonable scale, and good telemarketing agencies will already be using such systems which hopefully will interface with your own systems.

Considerable care needs to be taken when defining and agreeing the telemarketing 'brief' with the telemarketing staff, department or agency. Good experienced telemarketing staff and managers understand what works and what doesn't for given markets, types of propositions and products and services. Listen to their advice.

Generally telemarketing 'scripts' are not a good idea for high quality propositions, nor for professional business-to-business campaigns. A good telemarketing agency will work best by developing their own approach to meet the broad requirements of a project 'brief' and an outline of what you want to achieve, and how you want to achieve it.

Rigid scripts have the effect of limiting the natural style and capabilities of telemarketing staff, moreover customers generally find scripts, which quickly become robotic and characterless, very impersonal and insulting.

Refer to the legal implications (Data Protection Act and Preference Services) in the direct mail section.

Consumers and businesses are protected by certain rights relating to direct marketing techniques such as telemarketing, and you must ensure that your activities adhere to these rules.

direct mail

Some of the principles and rules referenced here also apply to other types of direct marketing, including 'door-to-door' distribution and telemarketing methods.

Direct mail is the process of sending your material (by itself or in a shared mailing with other items) direct to the address of the potential customer by post. The elements which make up the direct mail process are basically:

1. a mailing list of names and addresses (from your own data-base or names sourced elsewhere)
2. the item(s) to be mailed, and envelopes or packaging, if applicable
3. resource or facility to 'stuff' and address or label the envelopes/packaging (assuming you are putting the item in an envelope or packaging, which of course is not always the case)
4. and postal charges, which depend (in the UK) now on the size and shape as well as the weight of the item being mailed.

The last two stages are often called 'fulfilment'.

Direct Mail is generally used to generate a direct response from the recipient and will commonly incorporate a reply or response section within the mailed item.

Aside from the strength of your proposition, response rates vary according primarily to the quality of the list, notably:

- the reliability of the list data (new clean lists obviously perform better than old out-of-date lists)
- and how well 'targeted' the list is in terms of your offer (how relevant it is to the recipient).

Direct mail is not a precise science. See the [direct mail story](#) for example. There are many things that can go wrong, and even more things that are unknown and unimagined by the campaign manager. Like the rest of advertising, whether a direct mail campaign works well or poorly it's often very difficult to discover what elements

need to be changed and how: the proposition, the mailing list, the reliability of the fulfilment, the day and time of delivery, the response mechanism, something else? For large ongoing campaigns it is appropriate and cost-effective to conduct follow-up surveys of respondents and non-responders, but for smaller initiatives it's rarely cost-effective to attempt detailed analysis other than to look for obvious indications of success or failure.

A direct mail campaign which produces more than a 2% response is normally considered very successful. Lower than 1% response is more usual. You then need to take into account the conversion rate (the conversion of responses into sales), assuming the campaign is designed to produce responses or enquiries and not sales directly. Aside from the quality of the responses, which is determined by the campaign, conversion rates also vary according to factors outside of and after the direct mail activities themselves, such as response handling, IT systems, sales follow-up, etc. It is therefore important to judge a direct mail campaign first on percentage and quality of response, and then separately to assess the overall results of the campaign including conversion statistics and sales values.

Inexperienced marketeers (and many experienced ones too) tend to over-estimate forecasted response rates for direct mail, so a planning tip is to be pessimistic (prudent, as accountants say), especially when calculating advertising viability and return on investment. When you first state your estimated response rate as part of the financial justification for the direct mail campaign, next reduce it by a factor of 10 (i.e., re-assess the campaign viability using one-tenth of your initial response forecast). If the figures still show a positive return on investment then your campaign might well be successful. If not, then it's sensible to re-think the whole thing.

Your own database of existing and past customers will typically produce a significantly higher response than that of a list sourced elsewhere. List prices vary enormously, from a few pounds up to several hundreds of pounds per 1,000 names and addresses, depending on volume, how specific the list is, and how selective your profiling criteria are. You can also choose whether to have the list on labels, or on a disk in a common spreadsheet or database format, the latter being most common now, and easy to import, if appropriate, into a CRM (customer relationship management) system.

Mailing list prices also vary according to the terms of use, notably the number of times the list can be used (list rental), or whether unlimited use is permitted, or whether the list is being actually bought outright.

These days for small businesses it's very easy and cost-effective to do your own or outsource a mailmerge direct mail, campaign, using a word-processing program in conjunction with the list of names and addresses on a spreadsheet program. Large scale direct mail campaigns are normally best managed via a CRM (customer relationship management) system. Contact the Direct Marketing Association or country equivalent for more information about providers of lists and mailing services, etc.

display advertising

The taking of advertising space in the editorial sections of magazines or newspapers, as opposed to the classified sections, which are a less expensive, and generally lower performing method. All significant publications will be pleased to provide you with their 'Media Pack', which gives full details of all the types of display advertising available, for how much, together with lots of information about their readership profile and circulation. If you are trying to generate a direct response from display advertising you may need to feature a coupon of some kind. Otherwise display advertising is concerned with image-building and creating awareness. As with other advertising methods, the use of Free-phone telephone numbers and Free-post addresses all increase response rates.

directories - local directories, Yellow Pages, Thomsons, etc

These sorts of directories remain useful for local domestic, consumer and household products and services suppliers, but their usefulness is fast declining, and in many sectors traditional printed directories are hardly used by customers.

Older people tend to use printed directories more than youngsters. Consider this in terms of your own products, services and target audience.

If you are targeting young people you should question whether printed advertising directories are worthwhile at all.

The shift to mobile/phone media and communications, away from traditional media, and also away from desktop computers, has been increasingly dramatic through the early 2000s, and especially from the 2010s.

That said, for certain businesses in certain territories, traditional printed directories still have a value and can still produce enquiries and orders. Generally a business telephone landline normally gives free Yellow Pages and Thomson's entries under a single classification in each local book. Display adverts or more entries are (generally) charged at varying rates according to the circulation numbers of the book(s) concerned. About a hundred Yellow Pages directories books cover the UK. Usually these sorts of directories are published annually, on rotation at different dates around the country. Directories can be effective for generating enquiries for consumer businesses, but are not appropriate for all types of business-to-business sectors. Ask yourself - where would my potential customers look for suppliers of my products and services?

Consider and seek out local smaller directories and trades booklets also. The increasing ease of publishing means that production of good quality small-scale local directories is now very easy for publishers and most towns now have at least one local directory or booklet listing local suppliers which is distributed to all households in the area. Some of these can be very cost-effective in generating new customers.

directories - internet

Internet directories and specialist search engines are a potentially very effective way to advertise and market your services, because so many customers now use these listings to find suppliers. Many listings are free. Some work well, others don't. Many listings are not free. Again some work well and others don't. Ask other similar suppliers what works for them. Test the listings yourself to see how well they work and how commonly they feature in the main search engine listings, especially Google.

To discover what website listings and directories you should appear on, search for your own products and services using Google. Include the town or area or other geographical descriptions in your search phrases - in as many different ways as you think your customers would.

You should aim to be featured on the internet directories and listings websites which appear at the top of the Google results for the search terms that your customers will be using.

brochures, leaflets and printed material

Printed marketing materials of most sorts are declining in significance as people increasingly seek and access information about products and services online.

A generation ago there was no digital or online alternative to a printed brochure. Now there are several alternatives, and in many situations potential clients prefer the new formats to the old, which can render the traditional printed version unnecessary or actually wasteful.

Please consider this trend towards digital/online when reading this section, and assess accordingly the extent to which traditional printed materials are essential or advantageous for your various products and services, etc.

Some of the principles about readability and presentation apply equally to digital/online materials as to printed versions. Other factors are irrelevant to digital/online media.

Brochures and leaflets can be used for a variety of purposes, and can be distributed in different ways. A good printer can provide examples and costings, and the easiest way to learn what works and what doesn't is to look at other people's material. The aim of a brochure is foremost to generate new business through providing information in a way that appeals to the reader. The acronym AIDA (attention interest desire action) should be the basis of its design. Some brochures and leaflets are pleasing pieces of art, but they don't achieve anything for the business, so avoid falling into this trap. If you work with a designer be sure to control any fanciful tendencies and keep the message and style to the point. Too much spent on a brochure can give the impression that your business is extravagant.

When producing leaflets and brochures think about the way that they are to be distributed. If it needs an envelope try to avoid using a non-standard envelope size, which will add cost unnecessarily. If the material is required as an insert is it acceptable to the publication? Is it to be available from a rack? Do you want people to retain the material? If so perhaps a business card or plastic credit-card-type attachment would help?

There are thousands of different types of paper. Letterheads are usually printed on to 90-100gsm (grams per square metre) cartridge, laid or bond. A 100gsm paper is adequate for single sided mono or colour printing. 130gsm is better for double- sided. 200gsm is minimum weight for a post card format. 250-300gsm is used for business cards. Heavier boards are usually measured in microns rather than gsm because density affects weight more at these gauges. Coated matt and gloss 'art' papers are used for higher quality effects, but add to cost. Various lamination processes add more quality and more cost.

The print process is actually a number of separate stages:

1. design
2. reprographics (now a computerised process which produces camera-ready-artwork and the film from which the printing plates are made)
3. plate-making or electronic equivalent (for low quantities, digital print processes now enable high quality printing direct from a computer)
4. printing
5. finishing (stapling, folding, etc if relevant)

Generally it is not possible to undo a stage and return to the previous one without re-originating at least the previous stage, so take care when signing off each stage. If your instructions to an agency or printer are not correct you will end up paying for the time they spend re-originating and amending, so think things through before you start the process.

Re-prints are generally cheaper than the first run because the reprographic work and plates do not need to be produced again. When you ask for a print quote ask at the same time for a price per thousand 'run-on' - you'll be surprised how low this cost is in proportion to the main quote. This is due to the origination and set-up charges being already absorbed by the main run.

'Full colour' printing uses the colours black, red, yellow and blue, and requires a plate to be made for each colour. Mono printing is black on white and requires just one black plate. Each colour can be tinted (ie applied less than 100% solid) to varying degrees across the print area, so with good design even black and white printing can give a high quality effect. Conversely, a poor design can make full colour printing look cheap and nasty. If you want something classier than black and white, two colour printing can produce amazing results, without the cost of going to full colour.

As a rule, printing costs reduce dramatically with volume. Digital printing methods are appropriate for low volumes, and fast becoming viable for higher volumes. There are various printing processes, which are appropriate for different purposes and particularly volumes. Ensure that the process is appropriate for your application. As a rule colour is more expensive than mono (black and white), although digital printing is not so sensitive to colour/price differences.

loose and bound inserts

Inserts, in the form of leaflets, brochures, or other material, are provided by the advertiser to the publication, to be sent out with the magazine or newspaper. You have to produce the materials to be used as inserts which incurs printing costs, and then pay the publication a charge for insertion. There is a big effect from economies of scale. Charges vary according to weight of insert, how many inserts per publication, volume, the narrowness of the circulation profile, and how the publication is itself distributed. Response rates from inserts are almost always lower than direct mail, but inserts are a very flexible and cheap method of distributing an advert to a target audience. Bound-in inserts cost extra, require longer lead-times, and are favoured by some advertisers because they don't fall out and consequently are seen by more of the total readership, which can be two or three times greater than the circulation.

'door to door' leaflets and advertising distribution

Large quantity leaflet drops to consumer households and business addresses, without the need for envelopes or normal postal charges, can usually be arranged through the postal services (the Post Office in the UK), so that your leaflet is delivered at the same time as the normal post, or at other times of the day if required.

Demographic targeting, based on postcodes and population census data, is possible to a degree, and the cost is often inclusive in the distribution charges.

Other specialised household distributors provide similar services, sometimes incorporated within local newspaper deliveries.

Details can be obtained from various door-to-door distribution services providers, and the UK Direct Marketing Association.

If you are starting a business serving your local area, door-to-door leaflets (or other advertising materials, especially those designed to generate a direct response) remain one of the most productive and cost-effective ways to reach customers and to generate new sales.

Some people start a new business and sit waiting in their office or manufacturing unit for customers to appear, as if by magic. They will not appear. If you ever find yourself sitting waiting in your office for customers to appear, or 'busing yourself' doing some more planning or brainstorming, or messing around with your computer settings, stop what you are doing, and instead go out and deliver some advertising leaflets into people's letterboxes. This will help to make customers appear.

As a very rough rule:

- if you have a good, simple, relatively low-cost quick-decision sales proposition
- and you have designed a leaflet which conveys the proposition effectively,
- then (very roughly) every 100 leaflets you deliver (to your appropriate target market) should produce a new customer.

So, imagine - every couple of hours you sit doing nothing, or something unimportant, in your office, you could instead deliver a hundred leaflets, and produce a new customer.

posters sites (hoardings, taxi-cabs, buses, roadside fields)

For advertising considered as public information a variety of poster sites are free to the advertiser, so it makes sense to use these freely, supported by some record system so you keep them up-to-date and utilised. Other sites vary according to nature and cost, from large roadside hoardings to buses, taxis and sports grounds. Anywhere that people pass or gather in large numbers is a potential poster site, and as with printed media, audience profile information is usually available. New sites are being discovered and exploited all the time, such as supermarket trolleys and floors, table napkins, public conveniences, and the media extends now into continuous video at post offices and filling stations forecourts, etc.

local radio, TV, cinema and the internet

Other forms of targeted media advertising, and now TV and radio are increasingly used by smaller local businesses, although tight geographical targeting is obviously difficult. Cost of production can be a significant factor.

Producing your own information and managing e-commerce on the internet is now viable for even very small businesses. For consumer businesses, the on-line shopping boom began several years ago: If you are supplying consumer products that can be shipped easily through the post or a carrier and you are not yet selling via the internet I would urge you to catch up with your competitors and start doing so, because many of your competitors will already be doing it.

E-commerce is now firmly established in the business-to-business sectors too, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for B2B suppliers (manufacturers and wholesalers notably) to compete and survive in the modern market place without a fully developed and cohesive e-commerce capability.

all business-to-business organisations should now have a web presence

If you are large organisation then you will likely already have had this in place for several years. If you are a small business you might imagine that having a presence on the internet is not important. It is.

Sophisticated website design, technology, functionality, and integration with other organizational processes are nowadays very normal aspects of a modern web presence. The website user experience in business-to-business sectors used to be quite passive, but it is very active and dynamic now.

Happily website/online design and technology have become less expensive and more easily available since the early development of web commerce, but the scale of possibilities that can be enabled via a website and related online systems is absolutely vast, so good [project management](#) discipline is crucial for ensuring smooth and effective development of such capabilities.

Attracting users to a website remains a major and constantly evolving challenge too. There is little point in having a wonderfully engineered and brilliantly integrated website if no one is attracted to visit and use it.

See the [tips for creating effective websites](#), particularly addressing the issue of site popularity and Google ranking, etc.

guide books, hand-books and newsletters

Publishing your own information material is potentially very effective, and costs can be reduced by incorporating relevant supporting advertising from other organisations wishing to be associated with your services and to target your audience. Guidelines for Newsletters follow later. (Remember now that electronic media is able to extend the use and potential of newsletters far beyond traditional printed media.)

Alternatively you can advertise in a relevant guide book produced by another organisation. However, be careful to ascertain accurate details of circulation and profile if considering small or unproven publications.

open days and exhibitions

The advantage of personal contact is that you actually get to talk to your potential customers, which dramatically increases the chances of getting your message across. But there is a limit to how many people you can target and access using these methods. Costs of preparation and organisation can be big, and are rarely transparent at the outset so beware.

Events of this nature do nevertheless offer good possibilities for follow-up PR activity, which can contribute greatly to building a customer-friendly image.

word of mouth

Personal referral is unsurpassed as an advertising tool. It costs nothing, other than the cost of delighting customers, and is the most powerful advertising of all. Encouraging word of mouth referral is therefore a good reason for sustaining excellent customer service and relations. If your customers are thrilled by the service you give they'll tell their friends.

The internet has increased the volume and visibility of positive customer referrals, reviews, recommendations, and also negative feedback, so that customer referrals and feedback are now highly significant in marketing.

You can encourage word of mouth referrals through the use of discount vouchers and coupons, loyalty and 'friends and family' schemes, introduce a friend incentives, and any other mechanism that encourages people to spread the word on your behalf.

Social networking websites enable customer reviews and feedback on a truly vast scale. The importance therefore of delighting customers with your quality of product/service and customer care, has never been greater.

Customers frequently buy online now only after checking previous customer feedback and reviews about products and suppliers.

Positive feedback is generally only sustained by offering high quality, in all aspects of your service, including complaints handling.

networking and clubs

Using [business networking methods](#) to develop contacts and introductions is an especially cost-effective marketing method for consumer services and products, and more particularly for business-to-business services. A variety of networking opportunities exist in all sectors and regions, including trades associations, chambers of commerce and trade, networking websites, societies, clubs, breakfasts, lunches, events, and anywhere that potential customers and influencers gather, and the systems within which they communicate and socialise. Use your imagination. Always be prepared to speak to others enthusiastically about your business - the world is full of potential customers.

An increasing number of networking communities and services are now to be found on the internet too. Explore these opportunities, keeping in mind the particular target audiences most relevant to your aims.

direct marketing, advertising, and the law

In the UK there are strict laws protecting consumers, and to a different extent businesses, from aspects of direct marketing and other forms of advertising. Other countries generally have their own equivalent laws.

Consumers and to some degree businesses can 'opt out' of being subjected to various sorts of direct marketing activities. In the UK this system of opting out is managed via the processes and organisation of 'Preference Services'. When you use direct marketing - whatever the method - ensure you are acting within the law, and have consulted the relevant Preference Service rules (or local country equivalent).

Separately, the Data Protection Act in the UK contains implications for storing list data and using certain lists, notably for private consumers, and for the marketing of particular services (for example financial services), and there are similar laws dealing with this aspect in different countries, so check the law as applicable for your own situation before buying and using lists. More details (for the UK) about Data Protection rules are at the [Information Commissioner's Office](#). You should adhere to your local laws or guidelines concerning unsolicited direct marketing. In the UK these are explained by the Information Commissioner's Office in terms of [direct marketing by phone, electronic or postal methods](#). If you are not in the UK seek equivalent advice.

And aside from this, advertising is subject to scrutiny and action by the Advertising Standards Authority (UK), and of course all advertising and marketing is ultimately accountable to the various laws which seek to protect people and organisations from illicit or fraudulent trading.

For more information about good and acceptable practices in advertising (and by implication marketing too) refer to the UK [Advertising Standards Authority](#), and the the [European Advertising Standards Alliance](#) (EASA), which represents European national self-regulatory and representative organisations for the advertising industry in Europe.

Whether you are marketing to private consumers or to businesses and other large organizations be fair and reasonable.

Certain practices may technically be within the law, but are not ethical or generally acceptable, so don't use them.

Think about what sorts of direct advertising (especially telephoning, texting, emailing) annoys you as a customer or consumer. If something annoys you, then it will annoy other people, and you would be wise not to use such methods.

It is bad business to gain a new customer at the cost of inconveniencing or alienating other people.

A particular example of bad business and bad marketing is making 'cold' telephone calls and pretending that the call is about a survey, or an 'opportunity' rather than being honest immediately about the purpose of your call. Avoid this cheap little trick. It will lose you more customers than it will win.

Also avoid the highly discourteous practice of leaving messages on somebody's answerphone or voicemail, asking for a call back, by only stating your name and number. Sales organizations who use this tactic are unethical and fundamentally fearful that what they are trying to sell is not good.

There is no law against marketing using the above two tactics, but they are cheap and nasty, annoying and timewasting and inconvenient; potential customers will respond negatively. So don't use such methods.

There are plenty of positive effective perfectly ethical ways to engage potential customers in sales discussions. There is no need to resort to anything else.

advertising 'tricks of the trade'- guidelines to cost-effective advertising

Here are a the most important techniques for effective advertising.

1. Use the 'AIDA' structure/sequence

Remember 'AIDA' - (see [AIDA](#) in [sales and selling](#)).

AIDA is a simple effective structure for any sort of advertising or selling communication/design. Follow it always.

AIDA stands for the very strict and reliable sequence of steps that your customers (and all of us too) experience when buying something, especially for the first time.

Every item of advertising - especially any designed to produce a sales enquiry - must be designed according to the AIDA sequence to be properly effective.

1. Attention - first attract attention ("I want to read/listen to/watch/explore this..")
2. Interest - next build interest ("Yes, that means something to me..")
3. Desire - ("This could/will help me and I want it/to know more..")
4. Action - ("I will take the next step - [phone/email/reply/buy]..")

The Attention part is the banner or headline that makes an impressive benefit promise.

Interest builds information in an interesting way, usually meaning that this must relate closely to the way that the reader thinks about the issues concerned. You must then create Desire for the audience; this must relate/convey your product/service benefit(s) to the reader so that he/she wants them. Finally you must prompt an Action, which may be to call a telephone number or to complete and send of a reply coupon. Advertising that does not prompt action is a wasted opportunity.

2. Your main message must be the most prominent

The biggest part of the advert must be your main benefit statement.

This is the main 'attention-grabber', and must entice the reader to read on.

Do not be tempted to devote 50% of the advert space to some fancy artwork or a quote from Shakespeare, or some other 'stylized' gimmick.

3. Offer a single impressive benefit, quickly and simply

Research generally proves that where responses are required, the best adverts are those which offer an impressive, relevant benefit to the reader. This 'promise' should ideally contain the business brand name, take no longer to read than is normal for the media (direct mail is about 4 - 8 seconds, or about fifteen words) and be clearly the most striking part of the advert. This point cannot be stressed enough; you must keep it quick, simple and to the point. And the trend is for ever quicker points: David Lewis, an eminent consumer psychologist, says, "Copy is getting shorter, and a major factor behind this is that people these days suffer from acute shortages of both time and attention. Younger generations are extremely visually literate. They have been brought up on computer games, so they couldn't deal with a lot of polished copy, even if they wanted to." Think about the vocabulary and language you use; know your target audience: a simple test is to avoid any words or grammar that would not be found in the newspaper that the target group would read.

4. Your message must be quick and easy to absorb

Use a clear layout, clear fonts and clear language. Do not distract the reader from the text by overlaying images or using fancy fonts. Use simple language, avoid complicated words, and keep enough space around the text to attract attention to it. Use simple traditional typestyles: serif fonts are quicker to read than sans serif. (For normal reading distances) use ten, eleven or twelve point-size for the main text; smaller or larger are actually more difficult to read and therefore less likely to be read. Look at newspapers and library books, which are almost always serif fonts of ten to twelve point size.

Obviously for longer-distance adverts such as posters, use font sizes which can be clearly seen, given the distance from which the audience sees the material.

Avoid cluttering the advert with fancy images, colours and backgrounds. Make it easy to read.

For the same reason avoid italics, shadows, light colours reversed out of dark, weird and wonderful colours. None of these improve readability, they all reduce it. Use simple black (or dark coloured) text on a white (or light coloured) background for maximum readability.

5. Involve the reader - use the '2nd person': "you" - "your" - "yours"

Refer to the reader as 'you' and use the second person ('you', 'your' and 'yours' etc) in the description of what your business does for the customer to get them visualising their own personal involvement. Describe the service as it affects them in a way that they will easily relate to it.

6. (where possible) Incorporate something new - or **!! NEW !!**

Advertising which features the word 'new' prominently tends to be more effective.

Generally an offering which is 'new' is more appealing than a offering which does not mention 'new' (which is by implication old, same again, or known).

Simply, customers respond better and are more easily attracted initially to a concept that is new or original. If they've heard or seen it all before it will be no surprise that they take no notice at all. So you have to consider this when you are developing your propositions and offerings, because it's not good to call something new if it is not actually new in some way. Somehow you should find and be able to offer newness or originality in your product/services offerings. This relates fundamentally to your business offering(s). The more and better you can be seen as new and original, then the more enquiries and business you will attract.

People must believe there's something new or different in your offering from the start.

There are many ways to be new and original, for example, (some more exciting than others):

1. Best price/discount/cheapest - not especially new or original, but better than nothing; (for example 'budget' airlines thrive on this special selling point; it's not generally a good basis for building a high integrity sustainable business, and tends to pressurise quality, staff and customer relationships, but can be effective in emergencies).
2. Best value - value can be developed and expressed in many ways, crucially from the customer's standpoint, and is a big opportunity to innovate new and original offering - focusing genuinely on best value is generally an excellent way to build high quality sustainable business offerings.
3. Product or service design/type/version/quality/innovation - can be extremely effective, especially where the supplier has flair and/or can access good design to develop and maintain product/service advantage versus competitors; (this is often easier than it seems - just ask customers what particularly they want and cannot get from current providers, and seek to develop these features/solutions)
4. Service/customer care/back-up/support quality - often overlooked by sellers and marketers, and a major opportunity to create and emphasise newness and originality.
5. Availability/speed/location/delivery/convenience - very effective if you are targeting a market which responds to these factors.
6. Adaptability/universality/'translatability'/'internationality' - potential to find newness/originality for offerings which have a wide/international audience.
7. Durability/robustness/long-lasting/warranty/guarantee - can be very effective in establishing competitive superiority, obviously where product/service can withstand such an offering (or where for whatever reasons customers will rarely claim for or actually experience long-term product/service failings - some products can even very easily withstand 'lifetime guarantees', in which case why limit warranties to 12 months or two years?..)

8. Process of buying - often overlooked, the ease by which customers can buy and pay for products/services can be a huge opportunity for newness and originality (for example, converting payments into a monthly 'rental' or fixed payment plan).
9. Free stuff - always highly appealing - free add-ons, free starter-packs, free trials, free bonus/loyalty rewards, free gifts, etc.
10. Packages - packaging or 'bundling' products and services is a big opportunity to create newness and originality - and can make very good business sense for customers and suppliers.
11. Style/image - there is vast potential to devise newness and originality in style for certain markets - especially consumer products/services related to lifestyle/personal interest - this depends strongly on the quality of design and customer experience.
12. Exclusivity/personal service/loyalty rewarding - can be a highly desirable original feature in many sorts of products/services.

There are many more possibilities, so develop propositions/offering(s) that are new and original or special or unique, and emphasise this in your advertising.

Ask yourself, why should people be interested if your proposition is no different to your competition? You must emphasise what makes your service special. Put as much emphasis as you can behind your USPs (unique selling points), and either imply or state directly that you are the only company to offer these things.

Aim to be the best at what you do or offer, in whatever way(s) you can differentiate your offering(s) from your competitors, meaningfully and usefully for your target market.

Again refer to the [selling article](#) about developing [unique selling propositions](#).

7. Your proposition or offer must be credible and believable

The UK Advertising Standards Authority (or your country equivalent) would prevent you from making overly extravagant claims anyway, but you should still attempt to make your offer seem perfectly credible. This is usually best accomplished by explaining 'why' and 'how' you are able to do the things you are offering, in support of your claims; you can also increase credibility by showing references or testimonial quotes from satisfied customers.

For example, if you claim particularly good customer service, this can be reinforced with an outline of your policy on seeking customer feed-back and carrying out satisfaction surveys.

8. People open envelopes from the back..

This is not just about opening envelopes. It's about optimising every detail that you can in your advertising methods, so that you make it as easy as possible for people to receive your messages.

Concerning envelopes, this is a small point of detail for postal advertising campaigns, but every little technique helps, especially if you are working with big numbers. This is important for double-sided single sheet/card inserts in envelopes. Remember this if you send anything in an envelope, or instruct a mailing house, because reading the second half of a mailed advert muddles the AIDA sequence, and wastes time before the reader sees the main benefit statement.

Similar points of detail apply to other methods, for example:

- Advertising emails which contain attachments tend not to work as well as emails which contain the advert within the email itself. It's about speed and ease. People are put off by the slightest obstacles, even extra split-seconds. People are also put off by risk and uncertainty.
- The subject line and sender name are crucial in optimising email advertising. Think about the emails you open and read happily, and which you immediately discard, or open and become irritated. Be clear, relevant and helpful. Avoid gimmicks and tricks which will annoy people or waste time.
- Door-to-door leaflets generally achieve better response rates if they are delivered at different times and after the main postal delivery.
- Window posters sited close to doorways work better than posters further away. Line of sight is important. Think about the flow of people traffic.

- Changing (otherwise long-standing) advert designs improves responses. If you run repeating adverts, or display the same style posters for periods or more than a week or two, change the colours/colors. Otherwise people become accustomed and 'blind' to the same image. Changing colour is one easy way to keep adverts fresh and as attention-grabbing as possible. People respond to new stimulus more than the familiar.

9. Use lower case type - word-shapes are lost when capitals are used

People read by recognising word-shapes not individual letters, do don't use upper case (capital letters) for text, and other than for very short words not for headlines either, as capital/upper-case letters take longer to read and so reduces impact, overall readability, and audience absorption rates.

10. Your advert headline should be three-quarters up the page or advert space

Position your headline statement where it can be seen quickest. Do not put headlines at the very top of the space. The eye is naturally drawn to between two-thirds and three-quarters up the page or space, which is where the main benefit statement needs to be.

11. Analyse what you can - but much will remain puzzling

Advertising is often referred to as a 'Black Art' because it is mysterious, and is rarely a precise science. Advertising sometimes works better than you imagine it will (although rarely..), and conversely plenty of advertising fails to work as well as you expect it will. The [Direct Mail Campaign Story](#) is a amusing example of the unpredictable nature of advertising ideas and methods.

Analyse and measure advertising as well as you can, but do not expect to be able to analyse reliably every aspect of your advertising.

Some of it will be very difficult to interpret, and many sales you achieve will be from mixed and uncertain sources.

This is easy to appreciate when you consider that many customers must see a supplier's advertising several times before they feel trusting and confident enough to contact the supplier and to agree to buy.

Customers generally try to avoid risk, and resist change. Many customers dislike making buying decisions, particularly if the supplier is new. This is called inertia. Inertia is difficult to overcome when you are a supplier chasing new customers, but it is a helpful aid in retaining existing customers, up to a point. The role of inertia, and the need for familiarity, are two major factors which make advertising uncertain.

Often we can identify the direct advertising prompt (a particular advert, leaflet, mailshot, etc) which causes a customer to buy, but before this there could be several different 'contacts' or 'hits', by which a customer sees and begins to build awareness and desire for a particular supplier or product.

Consequently it's helpful to think of advertising as a continuous organizational/company attitude, rather than a single campaign.

Your business, whatever it is, and whatever specific advertising you carry out, is actually continually 'advertising' - by your quality of products and service, your communications, and any or all of these other factors:

- your signage (on premises, etc)
- your vehicles (their signage, and the conduct of your drivers)
- your staff (and how they talk about you, their employer)
- your suppliers (and how they talk about you, their customer)
- your customers especially - how they talk about you
- your publicity in local and wider news media
- your actions and reputation for social and community and environmental responsibility
- and any other ways that your business/services/products are seen

Direct response advertising attempts to generate enquiries and sales immediately. Aside from this, various advertising, including direct response adverts, instead/also builds awareness, image, familiarity and trust in brands and suppliers. Word of mouth referrals and reviews especially have this two-pronged effect.

A famous advertising quote is that: "Half of our advertising is effective, and half is not, but we have no idea which half is which..." (Variations of this quote have been attributed to William H Lever, English industrialist and founder of Lever Brothers, 1851-1925; and also to US businessman John Wanamaker, 1838-1922; and no doubt others as well.)

The quote is a reminder that advertising is very difficult to manage reliably, and that importantly you will achieve the greatest success by managing your quality in every respect, as well as your advertising.

There is little point in having a brilliant advertising effort which generates lots of new sales, but then losing your customers and damaging your reputation by failing to meet promises or satisfy customers' needs in other ways. We might see this as pouring new business into a bucket which has a big hole in the bottom, so that customers leave as fast as they join.

Above all, appreciate that everything you do in business has an advertising effect - far beyond isolated advertising methods and campaigns. So ensure that everything you do is of great quality and integrity. Then the need to measure specific advertising activities, indeed the need to advertise at all, will become far less.

PR - public relations and using press-releases for free advertising and publicity

PR stands for Public Relations. (A 'press release' is one aspect of public relations activities. The press release/PR initials are merely coincidental. PR means 'public relations'.)

Public Relations, or PR, generally refers to the management of your business reputation, usually via media such as newspapers, trade journals, the internet - and radio and TV if you are a big company, or if you somehow become involved in a big issue of public interest.

PR is typically defined as having two main aspects:

1. The proactive management of publicity about your business to the public and/or your trade via different media, and
2. The reactive management of public awareness and opinions about your business in response to issues of public interest in which your business is one way or another involved.

Each of these two aspects is explained separately below.

N.B. Before the internet, the reactive aspect of PR (item 2 above) was of little concern to small businesses, whereas the reactive aspect of PR has always been an extremely significant consideration for large businesses. However the growth of internet social networking websites (sometimes called 'web 2.0' - i.e., websites which allow user interaction and postings, etc) has now caused even small businesses to be much more mindful of reactively managing public awareness, in addition to the earlier need to proactively manage PR.

1. Proactive management of publicity

Many small businesses fail to realize and exploit the amazing opportunities offered by PR - specifically generating publicity about your business through relevant consumer and trade media.

Here is some useful terminology:

- Copy - 'the copy' is a technical term for the content/writing/article that you send or release to media (it's also a term in advertising, where it refers to the text/words in advertising materials, hence the job title 'copywriter', being a person who is expert in writing for advertising - the term is very different to the term 'copyright', which refers to the ownership and protection of intellectual property).
- Release/Press release - a submission or circulation of publicity material - in full usually 'press release' or 'media release' - typically an article or news story, often with a picture, diagram, table, etc., written in a style suitable for the publications/audiences targeted. Press releases should be official communications (obviously from the business concerned), with media enquiry contact details for further information (generally the PR agency for big company press releases, or the company/business itself if managing its own PR activity).

- Editorial - factual stories or articles in press/media - as distinct from advertising. When press releases from businesses appear in text-based media they are regarded as editorial content, in the same form as other editorial items which journalists have researched/reported themselves.

All newspapers, trade journals, consumer magazines, and news/magazine-type websites need press releases from external companies with story to tell, to help fill their pages. Local papers particularly need news submitted by the local community or they have to pay more for journalists to go out and find news. Look through your local papers and magazines to spot the PR material submitted by commercial organisations. This will encourage you as to how easy it is to provide 'news' stories for the local press.

Local TV and radio are also amenable to PR, but they're a bit more selective. Nevertheless consider local TV and radio as targets for your own PR activity for any business story of significance, local interest, or 'novelty value'.

Research and keep an up-to-date list of relevant (industry and local) editorial contact names and numbers, journalists, departments, email addresses, etc.

PR 'news' must be submitted to the news department (editorial department if it's a magazine) of the publication concerned. Increasingly online publications enable online submissions, and the range of media outlets vast now compared to a few years ago.

This wide choice means you should target your activities carefully - look for publications, printed and online, radio, etc., which offer the best access to your target audience, with maximum audience numbers and territorial/industry-sector coverage.

Email is nowadays the preferred format for submissions of news/editorial stories, but given the unreliability of emails, and the generally difficult nature of dealing with media even under ideal circumstances, it is good to follow-up or give prior warning of emailed editorial releases by phone or text. Persistence is important. Expect a success rate of much less than 100%. In time relationships will develop for you, and journalists and other media contacts will respond more positively, especially if you are consistent and helpful in your communications, and supply good quality material relevant to their audiences.

For big companies, dealing with very high profile media (such as national radio, TV, big websites, newspapers and big-circulation magazines and journals) to achieve publicity and exposure for your press releases and other editorial stories is a matter of cultivating relationships with journalists and editors. This is why most big organizations tend to use PR agencies to handle their media relationships, where PR specialists have many years experience and lots of contacts.

If you are a small business and become involved in a very big news story then you are strongly advised to enlist professional help from a reputable PR agency. Press and media professionals can be utterly ruthless. Inexperienced people trying to manage a crisis or other big news story are very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by journalists and editors.

Ordinarily however, if you are a small company with a small budget, and keen to target local and/or specialised media, then you should be able to handle your own PR activity using your own resources.

Be aware that the journalists will usually alter/edit your 'copy' or release, so don't agonize over the precise wording, but do enough to make it interesting and newsworthy.

Generally journalists are very happy to deal direct with organisations rather than their PR agencies, so don't be shy.

Remember that press-release publicity is free. All it costs is your time, or what you pay a PR agency to do it for you. This can make it extremely good value compared with conventional advertising.

Take every opportunity to use PR creatively and frequently. It's worth managing your PR through some kind of routine or standard process, to maintain a regular and consistent activity, and which can be delegated to a staff member when and if desired. For a little thought you can easily achieve the equivalent of thousands of pounds worth of display advertising per year, for no advertising cost.

Press-release publicity carries more credibility than paid-for advertising. People are largely unaware that much of what they read in the local and national newspapers is in fact carefully planned PR. They are therefore more receptive towards it and moreover believe it almost without question.

Photographs improve editorial 'take-up' by 100s%. This means that press releases which have an accompanying interesting and relevant photograph are far more likely to be selected and featured by the journalist and editor of the media concerned.

A good photograph in support of a press release will dramatically improve your chances of publication. Either provide your own, or if your story is an event that you will be involved with or plan to stage you can ask the press publication to send their own photographer.

Do it now - old news is no news. If you've got something newsworthy don't wait or the opportunity will be lost. Even simple things like staff promotions, qualifications attained, hobby achievements, staff joining, babies, all make acceptable PR stories, and always be on the lookout for the quirky and unusual.

Ask for editorial coverage before paying for display advertising. If you plan to pay for display advertising or inserts in any type of publication always ask before giving the order if you can have some editorial coverage as a condition of placing the advertising business. Many publications will agree at this stage, and you'll have some free editorial to support the advert. Some publications combine the two and sell 'advertorial' feature space, which purports to be news but is really a large paid-for advert.

Surveys provide excellent material for editorial, and are used by many companies for publicity purposes. Any business can organize an interesting survey. See the guidelines about [surveys and questionnaires](#) below. You'll learn something about your market and create a significant opportunity for free publicity. Read newspapers and magazines and you will soon see examples - even in the national broadsheets.

Always try to persuade the publication/journalist to include your business contact details/website address in editorial resulting from your PR activity. Sometimes this is possible, sometimes not; whatever, include these details in your release and ask the journalist/editor if they can appear. Many small publications/media are very happy to include these details in the editorial, and the value can be very significant. Usually a good story with a photo will occupy far more space - for free - than you would be happy to pay instead for equivalent advertising space.

2. Reactive management of public awareness

Brief your staff and have a policy for dealing with sudden news stories which emerge on the internet/in the media involving your business, especially crisis situations.

If you are in a situation which is likely to attract press attention, then you must ensure that your staff are aware of your positions and policies. Ideally appoint someone with strong marketing and communications experience and skills to be in charge of press contact, and channel press enquiries through this person, so that other less able staff are not placed in awkward positions or forced to comment.

If you wonder why so many people are quoted in the news media as saying, "No comment," it's usually because they've been taught to do so, and are following a policy.

Any staff member who talks to the media about a serious issue (involving your business/organization) without proper training and briefing is liable to make matters worse, whether the original story is good or bad.

If press/media attention is potentially threatening to your organization's reputation and image, particularly if you operate in areas which have a major public interest or are controversial for any reason, it is sensible for senior staff to undergo training in how to deal with the media, especially in crisis situations. Many PR companies provide such training.

All 'lower-levels' of staff in large organizations (i.e., below senior or executive management) should be instructed not to talk to media representatives/journalists, and to refer enquiries and requests for interviews, etc., to an established properly authorised person or department in the organization.

N.B. This does not affect or undermine the rights of employees who might have good reason to act as 'whistleblowers' in raising or publicizing matters of corporate wrongdoing. Organizations have a duty to manage publicity so that it is fair, ethical and truthful. Suppressing the truth in many situations amounts to a criminal act, and great care must be exercised by organizational leaders in handling the transparency of any matter which could have serious legal implications.

Products, services, activities of organizations which can attract potentially serious/threatening/difficult media attention certainly include:

- Health and safety
- The environment
- Local community
- Equality, disability, racial/gender discrimination, etc
- Injustice
- Stress and illness among employees
- Poor quality and poor customer service
- 'Fat Cat' syndrome (directors/executives enjoying great rewards and advantage)
- Animals
- Children
- Quirky news stories - products that don't work properly, poor service, corporate stupidity

There are others. Media is driven by what interests very big audiences.

Read your local newspapers to see the sort of issues that create big headlines locally, and read national papers and news websites to see the sort of issues which can reflect very negatively on organizations. There are many.

With the development of social networking technologies, media attention nowadays tends to 'swarm' in very big numbers and massive sudden waves of media interest that are difficult to predict, and certainly even more difficult to counter if a story 'goes viral' (which describes the mass swarming and spreading effect of social networking media).

newsletters - guidelines for producing effective newsletters for staff or customers

Producing your own newsletters for your customers, trade contacts, local community, etc., is an excellent way of giving information, building reputation, credibility, trust, and an image of friendliness, canvassing opinions (and being seen to do so), and advertising your own services.

Your chosen audience for a newsletter will depend on your type of business and target markets. Logically your audience will be existing and potential customers, and others you'd like to keep informed and with whom you'd like to develop good relations.

Newsletter formats are extremely flexible and varied - anything from a multi-page magazine, to a single email. Newsletters may be printed or electronic or both, and 'opted in' or not (opted-in means that recipients have signed-up or agreed to receive the newsletter, which is usually necessary for private consumers, and is advisable in many situations anyway).

While many of the guidelines here refer to printed newsletters, the same principles apply to electronic media such as emails and pdfs.

The circulation/distribution of newsletters almost always requires a list of some sort, therefore producing and circulating a newsletter generally entails building a database of recipients (existing and potential customers and their details), which is useful for many other purposes.

When you design and write your newsletters remember that while the purpose is essentially to advertise your business in a positive light, people will want to receive and read them if the style and content is interesting and entertaining.

Follow the basic rules of AIDA, concentrating on the first two issues of Attention and Interest. Computer technology now makes it very easy to create a very effective newsletter, even if you start with a very basic news-sheet or bulletin.

If possible, especially when you are committed to the concept and wish to increase scale, it is helpful to engage a professional designer for the general layout, graphics and banner artwork.

Larger companies generally use a PR agency to produce their newsletters, where bigger scale and greater sophistication is warranted.

Invite contributions from your readers; a section for readers' messages - 'letters' or 'letterbox' or 'mailbox' - is a good way to fill space and make the readers feel more involved. This could include feedback/comments about

format and content of the newsletter itself, which will help to convince you how and whether to continue publishing future issues.

Commit to a frequency and size that you can sustain. If you can only manage one every three months so be it. Don't promise a monthly and then fail to get the next editions out on time, which would defeat the object of building your image. If necessary start with a single page, and allow it to increase in size if you see positive reasons for doing so. Start by piloting just a few copies, perhaps just a few hundred, and increase the distribution as you refine it.

Adopt a format and styling that is fit-for-purpose. Basic rules of advertising production apply. Keep it simple, easy to read, and avoid anything off-the-wall or extravagant. Use a format that is cost-effective and amenable to your method of distribution.

Include photographs and details of your staff. Pictures of customers and other people will help bring it to life. Publishing pictures of staff is also motivational for the staff, provided the presentation and context are positive of course.

Include optimistic and happy stories. Keep the content and tone very positive. You must not distort facts of course but you do have some licence to present issues in a way that will reflect as favourably as possible on your business and your people.

Make one person responsible or appoint an agency. Often the most difficult challenge in producing a newsletter is sustaining it. It is extremely difficult to collect good ideas and news for content, and if there is not a clear point of responsibility with schedules and deadlines the whole exercise will end up being rushed, perhaps late or incomplete, with the result that it has a poor effect on staff and readers alike.

A marketing or PR agency will take on the job for you at a price, but even with expensive production support, getting the raw material is still the most difficult part of the process, and needs firm planning and monitoring.

Maintain a consistent design and feel. Consistency of appearance is essential to build recognition, awareness and positive association with your business. Maintain consistent corporate identity, logos, and typestyles, and try to develop a consistent structure of content too. Familiarity is a big aspect of the appeal and success of regular publications (think about newspapers). Familiarity builds loyalty and a feeling of trust in the reader, and this reflects on the business which produces a newsletter. If the newsletter style keeps changing, then the business producing the newsletter will seem uncertain and changing too.

Relate the news to your customers and their community. Keep in mind all the time who your audience is, and select content which is relevant and presented in a way that your readers will want to read it.

It may be possible for you to recover some of the cost of the newsletter by selling some advertising space, but be careful about the type of suppliers you include so as to avoid detracting from the image you are presenting.

If you create and distribute newsletters in electronic format then you have excellent opportunity to archive the materials on your website, freely available to all, and so build up a library of useful information for visitors and searchers far outside of your own database or circulation list.

website design and internet marketing tips

Websites and the internet can seem extremely complex, and on certain levels they are, but the fundamentals are simple.

Have faith in common-sense principles and your own experience when developing websites, or briefing a designer to do so.

Here are some basic rules for good internet and website marketing, and particularly for creating effective websites:

- Keep it simple. People want information quickly, clearly, with no nonsense. Remember your own frustrations when using unnecessarily complex websites. Make your own website easy to use and to convey your important messages. Aim for simplicity and ease of use in all functionality.
- The internet and the website medium are ideally suited to specialised providers, suppliers, companies, etc., so try to specialise and be the best in what you offer within that specialisation on the web.

- Give as much as you can free online from your website. Especially materials that can be printed or downloaded, or information that can be read from the web page. Technical and factual information, how-to guides, historical background, and lots of other objective reference information relating to your products/services are all obvious valuable free things you can offer from your website, although oddly many organisations completely overlook this opportunity. Businesses tend only to 'sell' on their websites. But people use the web mainly for gathering information. If you provide useful information about your specialisms, your website will appeal to more people, and develop bigger traffic, than if you use your website merely to promote and sell your products and services.
- A website is on a screen, but actually it should be designed rather like a shop. Think about it in the same way. Ease of access to what people want. Products organised in clear categories. Supporting information should be available. Avoid clutter. Make browsing easy. Have a clear and clean layout. The experience should be warm, personal and welcoming.
- Remove obstacles like registrations and password requirements as far as possible. These are barriers to visitors. Shops don't have barriers and registration requirements do they?...
- Fancy graphics and visual effects please many designers, but not customers. Over-complicated design puts people off, and gets in the way of reading and absorbing the information that people are seeking.
- Lots of text is good. If it's relevant useful content, search engines like lots of text too, but it must be relevant.
- Keep information up-to-date. Many search engines take account of page update frequency, so update your website frequently.
- Offer what people are interested in. Not what you want to push. The web, and search engine rankings, are driven very much by users. If you offer what people want, then your website will grow in popularity.
- Good websites will be found by most search engines. Provided a link exists somewhere on the web to your website, then search engines will find it.
- The big three US/Europe search engines are Google, Bing (ex MSN) and Yahoo. Google remains by some considerable margin the most popular search engine. Google's listings are based on Google's very clever ranking algorithms, basic details of which freely available at Google's own website. Before you consider engaging a website ranking specialist look at Google's own free advice. There is much you can do yourself, because so much of what makes a website successful concerns the content on it, and this remains the biggest driver of traffic - more so than technical SEO (search engine optimisation) tactics and 'secrets'.
- Other websites linking to yours will certainly improve your search engine rankings, but building a site that other sites will want to link to is far more beneficial than directing all that effort instead into a 'reciprocal link' campaign. Reciprocal linking is much over-rated as a website optimisation tactic. Relevant high quality links (from reputable popular websites) are significantly more helpful. Having hundreds of irrelevant links on tiny unpopular websites counts for very little.
- Search engines downgrade or de-list websites that use dishonest optimization methods or cheating, so don't resort to such methods. Cheating typically entails distorting content, or establishing inbound links using spam or other nuisance techniques.
- Measure and analyse your traffic. Most website hosting solutions and providers now include traffic statistics packages. Google Analytics has become the industry standard tool for website tracking and analysis.
- Read blogs and newsletters about website optimisation to learn about the tools you can use to design and measure your website's performance in relation to the web as a whole - especially what people are searching for, how users find websites, and what you can do to optimise your own website. Again Google's own information and tools are extremely useful, and often overlooked.
- If you engage a website designer or agency follow the principles for working with any creative agency. Develop your specification first (i.e., especially processes and structures, spelling and grammar checked, structure and process implications) - before you engage a designer, and then issue a very clear design brief. Don't waste a designer's time finalising and correcting fundamental content and material issues once the design stage has commenced. Designers are not mind-readers - you must develop clear ideas of what you want your website to be and do. The designer's job is to interpret this specification into technical code and computer functionality. Your responsibility is 'what' the website must be and do. The designer's responsibility is 'how' it becomes this.

surveys and questionnaires - for staff or customers

If you employ and/or supply people it is important to know they think about your organisation/business, and what they need from you.

Don't guess or assume, or worse, tell them. Ask them.

A survey is the common method to discover staff and customer attitudes, needs, desires, problems, complaints, suggestions, etc.

Many of the problems that arise for businesses and employers would not do so if the leaders had asked staff and customers for their views, feedback, and suggestions, etc.

Surveys of customers are a very important aspect of marketing. They are very relevant to developing products and services, and the business or organization as whole. Surveys are also a very significant aspect of public relations.

A survey of customers and/or potential customers (staff too potentially) also provides an excellent opportunity to achieve some valuable positive publicity afterwards. News media and trade journals are always very keen to publish survey data (obviously where privacy, discretion, sensitivities of respondents are not threatened). Media publications and websites are particularly interested in survey results which inform their readers' understanding of issues such as consumer trends, business and industry-specific trends, lifestyle, the economy, and anything else readers find entertaining and informative. Where a business carries out a survey and some of its findings are published, the business/organization is reflected in a very credible and authoritative light.

Usually a survey is based on a questionnaire. Market research companies can design and organize staff and customer surveys. So too can good telemarketing agencies. You might prefer to organize a survey internally due to control or costs reasons, in which case it's helpful to follow a sensible process. Even if you use an agency, it's helpful to understand the process.

Below is a quick guide for the process of creating and organizing a staff or customer survey, or some market research, based on a questionnaire.

All situations are different, so seek other ideas from colleagues and external people, and adapt your own plans accordingly.

Obviously (but often overlooked) to develop an effective questionnaire you must first define exactly what you wish to discover. Start by establishing the information you seek to learn, and then build your questions, and select the respondents (which implies your format and method too) accordingly.

Brainstorming is a useful start. You should also consult with all interested parties in listing your survey criteria. It's a lot of effort to design and manage a survey, so it's silly to miss something important because the early planning stage was rushed.

Here are the main steps to designing a survey of staff, customers or your market, using a questionnaire:

steps to designing staff/customer surveys

1. Decide and agree the purpose of the survey. Define the facts that you wish to reveal. Keep it as simple as you can. There is a temptation to expand surveys into additional sectors and subjects, but this normally dilutes the usefulness of the response and the resulting analysis. It helps to concentrate on the key issues for your essential target group. In this respect, surveying is rather like marketing and selling. If you spread your efforts too wide and thin your results will be wide and thin too.
2. Decide your target respondents or audience or market sector or staff audience. Ensure that your target respondent group is relevant to your survey subject, and satisfy yourself that you can identify and reach the target group via whatever communications and survey method you choose.
3. Decide the level of privacy and anonymity which is appropriate for your survey. Many surveys work better if conducted anonymously. On the other hand, a survey of business customers generally works far better if respondents are known and given the opportunity to express specific views from their own particular standpoint.
4. Decide the minimum response (number of completed questionnaires) that you need for a useful sample. For business customer surveys a minimum of 100 responses is an acceptable number provided respondents represent a suitable cross-section of the relevant target audience or customer base. Consumer surveys tend to require several hundred respondents for very useful results.
5. When you know the above it is easier to decide your survey method(s). Focus groups generally achieve the highest and most reliable feedback, but are time-consuming to organise, and by their nature are limited in scale. The method is however very useful to augment larger survey activity. Phone or face-to-face interviews produce quite high response rates compared with postal or online surveys. Generally electronic surveys do not produce high response levels.
6. Organize your survey to allow for the anticipated response rate. For example anticipate a low response rate (between 2% and 10%) if the survey method is passive, such as postal or email or web-based. More proactive methods like telemarketing give a higher response rate (assuming the contact list is reliable you can work on

about 20-50% response from the contact list - and be guided by the telemarketing agency if you use one). For general consumer market research surveys via street or door-to-door interviews again consider that most people decline to take part, and therefore you should build a low response expectation into your planning of numbers and time. The highest response rates are from focus groups (basically a focus group is an arranged meeting of a small group of people, for interviews and discussions, usually combined with a questionnaire) which by their nature enable 100% response. Interestingly a much ignored opportunity for very high responding surveys is complaints and grievances from your target group. Think about it... complaints and grievances are an extremely useful source of valuable feedback and views, which ideally should be incorporated into any survey project. It's a waste not to.

7. Decide the survey method(s) - email, internet, telephone, written document, focus group discussions, street surveys, door-to-door, or combination of these - whatever will fit your situation and target group best. Consider the reply mechanism if one is required. For example include postage-paid addressed envelopes. Or for internal staff attitude surveys consider tasking someone to encourage and collect replies. Whatever, make it easy for people to respond.
8. Consider incentivising or offering prizes to survey respondents, or even a payment - especially to focus group members. It's very frustrating to put the time and effort into designing and running a survey only to find that you get a response that's too low to be useful. People are very busy and mostly are not prepared to give time in responding to questionnaires, even if it's in their interests to do so. For passive survey methods (for example postal or internal mail) expect response rates to be less than 10%. Sometimes they can be less than 1%. Business customer surveys work well if postal questionnaires are supported by telephone introduction to explain the survey purpose, then followed-up ('chased') by telephone too if necessary.
9. Design the actual questionnaire: List the individual questions/issues. At the earliest possible stage it helps to build the survey onto a spreadsheet - this enables data and structure and scoring, etc., to be organized much easier than in a text editor. Try to create a natural flow or sequence in the questions. Use closed questions (yes/no) where useful, and offer multiple-choice answers, and avoid giving a bias to the questions influenced by your own assumptions, or the CEO's personal views.
10. Then create questions - seek expert help with writing the questions - it's important to get this right. Questions that seem clear to you might be confusing to people far removed from the project. It's crucial to frame the questions objectively and clearly so that they can be quickly and clearly understood by the reader. Clear questions also maximise response rates. Confusion and lack of relevance in questionnaires are big reasons for people not responding. Effective questionnaires must be easily and quickly understood, so test your questions on someone who knows nothing about the situation, even some young teenagers (arguably the most difficult audience of all), to check that your intended meaning is properly and quickly understood.
11. Devise a scoring method and design this into the questionnaire format. Analysis of results is very difficult and time-consuming if you fail to consider this properly. Ideally you must be able to convert answers into numerical data to make analysis quick and reliable, especially if your survey is large. If in doubt seek help from a spreadsheet expert. Finance departments in organizations usually contain such people, who are often delighted to help with survey projects because they are interesting and connected with the customers and/or staff side of the organization. Spreadsheets enable all sorts of clever analysis if you know how to do it, and it helps greatly for good analytical functionality and structure to be built into the design of the spreadsheet from the beginning.
12. Write a suitably appealing supporting explanation of the survey's purpose. Also take care with the questionnaire instructions, and also give some details about the follow-up process. People are more likely to respond if they can see and understand a meaningful purpose and follow-up for the survey. Achieving a good response to a survey is always challenging, so the better your supporting explanation then the better your response rate will be. A survey also helps towards positive staff/customer relations - it shows you are interested in their views, so make the most of the opportunity to communicate and explain.
13. Consider and decide about publishing the survey analysis (or a summary), and how best to convey results and follow-up actions to the respondents and other interested parties. This is especially important with surveys of employees. For certain types of market research or attitudinal surveys consider also the PR (Public Relations - publicity) value and opportunities arising from your survey. Subject to rules of privacy and agreement with your respondents, a survey commonly makes excellent press editorial and publicity.
14. Test the survey and method(s) with a small sample of people, preferably representative of the actual target group. Check that the scoring and analysis can be done. This is especially important if the survey is large, expensive, and/or crucial to the organization's strategy and decision-making. The need for testing is one very good reason for planning surveys sufficiently in advance of the deadline for getting the results.
15. If you test the survey, obviously refine the questions and structure and survey methods appropriately.
16. Run the survey. Monitor its operation. Don't wait until the end to discover a problem that you could have fixed at the start. If you use an agency check their progress soon after they start, and again at suitable intervals,

depending on the size of the exercise. Again don't wait until the end to discover there was a problem that should have been fixed at the start.

17. Chase up the replies using telephone follow-up where necessary. This is another reason for monitoring progress: commonly response levels fail to be as high as planned, in which case the earlier you are able to add some extra impetus the better.
18. Analyse the results and implement follow-up actions as appropriate, which if appropriate must involve giving agreed feedback of results and outcomes to respondents. If you are struggling with the analysis because the format was badly designed, it's still not too late to call in some help from a spreadsheet expert, rather than struggling on and making a mess. If the data is there in one form or another, a good spreadsheet person can often achieve a minor miracle and save the project, or simply save you several days work.
19. Write up the report fairly and objectively, and circulate it as agreed, especially if it throws up a few nasty surprises, which are actually the most valuable survey results of all.
20. Ensure all specific complaints and matters arising from individual customers are followed up reliably and satisfactorily.
21. Review the survey project overall and incorporate lessons and improvements next time.

Tip - a good way to understand how to structure questionnaires and write survey questions is to see how other organizations do it. Look at the various survey materials which you receive yourself - through your letter-box, in new products that you buy, at airports and stations, in magazines - they are everywhere once you look for them.

See also the notes on designing and managing an [employee motivation survey](#). Essentially this focuses on understanding staff motivational attitudes, but the guidelines also include useful techniques and rules for surveys and questionnaires in general.

The [training needs analysis methods](#) are also useful for understanding and designing surveys, and the TNA spreadsheet tools can easily be adapted into more general questionnaires for other purposes.

Another example of a questionnaire is the [Multiple Intelligences Test materials](#) - which provide further examples of how to design survey questionnaires.

The [personal strengths indicator](#) is another (very basic) example of a simple survey format, which is fine if the survey is small and does not require a lot of statistical analysis.

While analysis and structure are vital in big surveys, ultimately what's most important is simply taking the trouble to ask for people's views about important issues, rather than guessing or assuming, or telling people what you think they should be.

Well designed and implemented surveys always produce a positive effect for the organization. People - whether employees or customers - think better of the organization for being asked and consulted, especially if they see you've listened and done your best to react positively to the feedback you've been given.

running training/information events - a proven new business/enquiry generation method

Designing and running a free (or very low 'token' cost) training or information event is a proven and very effective way to generate new business and customers.

The method can be used by anyone who needs new business and customers - by large corporations and even self-employed providers.

Designing and running free training/information/experience events is an excellent way to generate new business at any time, and the process works especially well in tough economic conditions, when customers want to save money, and are looking for new ideas themselves.

This method, with a little adaptation, is effective for all industries and all target markets:

training/information event method

<p>1. Design a training course or workshop or other educational/informative event.</p>	<p>Fill the event with useful facts, information, tips, techniques, statistics, methodology, advice, demonstrations, examples, and maybe a guest speaker/expert or two. See more content ideas below. The event you design must relate to your product or service, and appeal to your target decision-makers/customers. The event can be anything between two hours and a couple of days long. Generally the event will need to be bigger and more content-rich according to the size of customers and seniority of decision-makers you are targeting, although there can be exceptions. The most important issue is that the event will appeal to your target audience. Adapt this concept to be more of an 'experience' or showcase, or sampler, if you are targeting consumers with a consumer/lifestyle offering.</p>
<p>2. Decide a suitable method of advertising your event.</p>	<p>You could buy a list of target customers to use for direct marketing, or use an indirect method, for example display adverts or inserts, or web advertising. In the UK you do not need to register your own company or yourself under the Data Protection Act for using a customer list, unless, broadly, you rent or sell the list, or are offering financial services. More details (for the UK) about Data Protection rules are at the Information Commissioner's Office. You should also adhere to your local laws or guidelines concerning unsolicited direct marketing. In the UK these are explained by the Information Commissioner's Office in terms of marketing by phone, electronic or postal methods. If you are not in the UK seek equivalent advice. Generally a good approach is to buy a list from a reputable list supplier, or to use an indirect advertising method which will reach your target audience, and which is not subject to preference rules. By way of clarification, a phone call or email is direct marketing, whereas an advert or insert in a newspaper or magazine, or a card in the local newsagents window, are all indirect marketing.</p>
<p>3. Create an advertising mailer or other communications method for reaching your target audience.</p>	<p>Look at the advertising 'tricks of the trade' to help you do this. Sell the event, not your product or service. Your advertising must be very clear and concise. Make it easy for people to see immediately what you are offering, what the main benefits of the course/event are (ideally a single strong benefit), and easy for people to respond and register to attend. The event should be free, or offered at a low price so as to reduce 'no-shows' (people who say they'll come and then don't). My own preference is to offer the event free and minimize the 'no-shows' by some other method. The event must be very easy to get to, ideally by public transport, and offer easy car-parking for your target audience. The event date and timings must be as easy as possible for your target audience to take time off work to attend. For example do not stage an event for finance directors at month-end or fiscal year-end. Take account of other</p>

	seasonal factors which would make the timing of an event and its core benefit more attractive to customers.
4. Set up your method and system for handling responses and recording registrations of people wishing to attend.	These respondents are effectively enquirers or prospects for your product or service - think about it - you will have their attention at your event for the duration of your event. Ensure therefore that your registration system enables you to gather the necessary contact details enabling you to follow-up after the event. And ensure you look after them very well before, during and after the event, because this will reflect directly on your quality as a supplier or provider.
5. Run the event.	Do focus on giving: information, help, knowledge - whatever people need. Do not focus on selling. People will be attending to learn and take away knowledge, ideas, etc. If you sell hard or too much to them you will be breaking the psychological contract, and undermining your own integrity. At the end of the event seek feedback (use a suitable feedback form and evaluation method) about the quality of the event and what could have been included additionally or improved. During the event - typically in the coffee breaks and lunch breaks (if applicable) - you will be able to discuss and get to know what subsequent business development opportunities might exist among your attendees. They will approach you with questions and potential work/contracts if you seem to know your area well and you extend a professional and reliable image. It is appropriate at the event to seek people's permission to follow-up. If you fail to seek permission and then follow-up anyway this will upset some people.
6. Follow up.	Follow up the event with phone calls or appointments as appropriate.
7. Evaluate and refine.	Analyse the outcomes. Refine your methods and plan your next event.

content ideas for a training/information event

Training/information events can be used in the marketing of any sort of business.

Here are some simple ideas for content to include in a training/information event used for business generation:

- tips
- tricks of the trade
- methods
- demonstrations
- health and safety aspects

- technology updates
- legal/law/legislation briefings
- guest expert speakers
- 'how to' sessions
- 'sampler' experiences
- showcase of suppliers/products/services
- activities and games (must be relevant and enjoyable - not all areas are amenable to this)
- workshop sessions
- hands-on making and doing and trying, etc

The extent to which you sell your own products/services at a training/informative event depends on the situation. The more you try to sell at an training/information event, then the more you will detract from and undermine the event, and your reputation as an objective fair helpful provider, so be careful in ways that you might choose to 'sell' at such events.

As a general rule, the bigger and more complex/expensive the product/service then the less you should try to sell it at the event. Your aim in this situation is to build your own credibility and to generate interest for follow-up discussions.

If you are targeting consumer/retail customers then you can include a stronger selling element in the event, in which case position it suitably in your event advertising material. In this situation the event is arguably closer to a 'party' concept, as used and proven to work effectively by large businesses like Tupperware and Ann Summers, etc.

Choice of venue is important. You need somewhere flexible for numbers because lots of people fail to attend events that they consider to be free and of relatively low priority. Some venues are prepared to offer special deals for first events, on the basis that if it works they'll have the chance of further bookings. Be creative and adventurous in finding potential venues. Often an unusual venue can be a significant part of the attraction to the event. [Negotiate](#) with your potential venues to achieve the best deal.

Partnering with like-minded customers or suppliers can be useful in running events, and also in finding suitable venues.

There are many common features between a training/information marketing event and a [group selection recruitment event](#).

If you are in the middle of the supply chain perhaps there is opportunity to partner with a large up-stream supplier to stage the event at their showroom or factory.

Use your imagination.

Imagine and maybe ask your potential customers what sort of event they would find helpful.

Running an event is a wonderful way to involve staff. Involvement motivates everyone who takes part, and lightens your own load.

If you are self-employed and want to design and run an event, and don't want to do it alone, then partner with an associate or a supplier.

In summary:

- A successful training/information event which
- generates new customers and business tends to be
- promoted and designed so that it:
- appeals strongly to your target customers, because it
- offers very desirable and helpful information/experience/opportunities/training to attendees, and which
- links naturally to the products and services you seek to sell afterwards.

If you are really successful in designing and promoting and running effective events you can find that the event itself can become a chargeable 'product' for your business, or in some cases actually becomes the main part of your business.

In the modern age, successful selling increasingly requires the supplier to give (knowledge, information, experiences, etc) before selling anything. This type of training/information event method fits very neatly with the modern way of working cooperatively and collaboratively.

see also

- [nudge theory](#) - why people think and decide the way they do, and ways to influence this
- [business networking](#) - methods and tips
- [the 'psychological contract'](#) - helpful philosophical and ethical foundations
- [cold calling](#) - how to transform a complete pain in the backside into thrilling and joyful success
- [sostac®](#) - PR Smith's business marketing planning system
- [business planning](#) - which includes free strategic planning templates, samples and examples
- [sales and selling](#) - which contains lots of help for developing selling propositions and sales strategies
- [ethics in business](#) - karma actually works... be good, and your business will be good too
- [love and spirituality in business](#) - genuine empathy and compassion are extremely powerful forces

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