



The Chartered
Institute of Marketing

The 15

ESSENTIAL MARKETING MASTERCLASSES FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

POWERFUL PROMOTION ON A SHOESTRING

*DEE IS A GREAT SOURCE OF ADVICE THAT NO SMALL BUSINESS SHOULD BE
WITHOUT. HER WRITING IS ALWAYS CLEAR, DOWN TO EARTH AND INSPIRATIONAL.
— LISA BUCKINGHAM OBE, FINANCIAL MAIL ON SUNDAY —*

DEE BLICK

Bestselling author of
The Ultimate Small Business Marketing Book

**The 15
Essential
Marketing
Masterclasses
for Your Small
Business**

The 15 Essential Marketing Masterclasses for Your Small Business

POWERFUL PROMOTION ON A SHOESTRING

Dee Blick



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*To Alan Blick, an exceptional, loving and kind man,
and wonderful father-in law.*

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About Dee Blick



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Dee Blick is a Fellow of The Chartered Institute of Marketing, the world's largest marketing body. Fellowship is the highest status any marketer can attain. Dee has 30 years marketing experience, the majority of which has been spent working with small businesses. She has a track record of planning and delivering successful campaigns for small businesses on a shoestring budget and is renowned for her practical approach to small business marketing. Dee has won many awards for generating the highest reader responses for her press releases, adverts and editorial features from ABC1 audited publications. She is also an established and successful business author. Her second book, *The Ultimate Small Business Marketing Book* entered the top 150 books on Amazon UK when it launched and became the No1 bestselling small business marketing book of 2012. Dee is a warm and engaging professional public speaker, regularly invited as a keynote speaker by organisations including Royal Mail and The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Foreword

by **Andy Fernandez, The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM)**

We live in an era when more and more well-known high street brands are struggling to ward off increasingly popular on-line retailers. Retail brand casualties, particularly in the leisure and entertainment sector, are on the rise. Woolworths, HMV, Comet and Blockbuster are just some of the familiar brands who have been hit by the ever-increasing popularity of shopping from the comfort of your home. No longer is it easy to find the CD or DVD you are looking for in town centres. Who would have predicted 20 years ago that many would be picking up their favourite album or latest Hollywood release from the same store in which they carry out their weekly groceries shopping? Basmati rice, washing-up liquid, a free-range chicken and a copy of the latest James Bond DVD please!

Our buying habits are continuously evolving. We are influenced by what we see and hear and by those around us. But there are particular things which we as customers warm to. We like to be treated well. We like things to be straightforward, particularly if we're paying for a product or service. Businesses can still earn our loyalty whether it is through customer service, social media engagement, promotions or even PR. As humans, we naturally like to feel appreciated and it's no different when we're a paying customer. It's the things like the personal touch, gestures of goodwill or even the simplest "service with a smile" that endear us to those we buy from.

Many of us feel that we receive a more personal approach when buying from small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Despite the major high street and on-line brands dominating the marketplace, it is still a breath of fresh air to have smaller companies competing in the marketplace. With over 4.5 million SMEs in operation in the UK alone, we still heavily rely on their services and they rely on our custom. But can they compete against the high street's big hitters? There are many different elements to running a business successfully – each element is a crucial cog. Maintaining the effectiveness of each of these cogs is paramount to the success of the business. Effective cogs form well-oiled machines.

Foreword

In recent years, CIM coined the phrase “Keep calm and carry on Marketing” during its launch of a white paper on marketing during a recession. It showed that organisations that increase their marketing spend and activities in a recession are those who emerge the strongest in times of recovery. So does fortune really favour the brave? *Do SMEs need to be brave, or can some meticulous planning and shrewdness be enough to increase business?*

Dee’s many years of experience in dealing with small businesses have really made her something of an expert. So much so that her last book, in which she provided straightforward but highly effective marketing advice and tips, was a phenomenal bestseller with thousands of small businesses benefiting from the secrets she has learnt over the years. A passionate marketer, Dee also has the wonderful and natural ability to engage you through her effortless writing which has inspired so many.

Many marketing books claim to have the answer to creating strategies that will in turn create demand. But how many books have you read that allow you to take away practical information and advice which will enable you to completely reinvent the way you target customers? The 15 masterclasses that follow have been selected by Dee as the crucial components which, by implementing and delivering with great care to your audience, will have a great impact on your business.

Read this book and be inspired by 15 masterclasses that will help you drive your business forward.

Andy Fernandez
The Chartered Institute of Marketing

Introduction

In the last 30 years I have been fortunate to work with hundreds of small businesses and have come across many more at my book signings and speaking engagements. During this time I have built a clear understanding of what small businesses *really need* when it comes to promoting their business, and the challenges they face on a daily basis in getting to grips with their marketing.

When I was planning the structure and content of this book, those needs were at the very front of my mind. I know that if you're a small business owner or are responsible for the marketing of a small business, you're more often than not light on budget and tight on time. What you do spend on marketing has to be invested wisely. You have to feel pretty confident that any funds put into marketing are going to yield a return that makes your time and effort worthwhile.

And that's why I am hoping that you'll find *The 15 Essential Marketing Masterclasses For Your Small Business* a treasure trove for helping you to develop robust and effective marketing campaigns that will drive your sales and build customer loyalty on the leanest of budgets. No more guesswork or wondering whether you're taking the right approach or not. In each masterclass I share the top tips and strategies that I have honed from working with small businesses on a daily basis and illustrate these with dozens of case studies.

I recognise that the topics covered by the masterclasses in this book are each worthy of a book in their own right. But I also recognise that as a small business owner you're probably not too concerned with the theory and science behind each marketing tactic, and are more interested in knowing how to put them into practice. *And it is the small business owner that this book is aimed at.*

So, in each masterclass, I have endeavoured to cover the practical principles behind each particular marketing tactic; providing tips and strategies that you can apply to your own business in the knowledge they have been successful for businesses like yours.

In 5 of the 15 masterclasses I have enlisted the help of renowned experts that I have known for many years, have immense respect for, and whose advice and tips I am confident will help you. Ben Locker shares his wisdom on how to write great web copy and Liz Barnes offers her insights on e-marketing and LinkedIn. Robert Clay reveals his top Twitter tips, Aneela Rose shows us how to write great press releases and Nicky Kriel explains how LinkedIn can be used to good effect. Short biographies of each of these experts can be found at the back of the book.

The 15 masterclasses are:

- Masterclass 1 – The perfect practical marketing plan
- Masterclass 2 – Your perfect positioning statement
- Masterclass 3 – Why it pays to locate and research your target audience
- Masterclass 4 – How to write copy that sells
- Masterclass 5 – How to make your website a magnet for hot prospects
- Masterclass 6 – How to write successful adverts
- Masterclass 7 – How to get PR in printed publications
- Masterclass 8 – Why it pays to do direct mail
- Masterclass 9 – How to take the chill out of a telephone cold call
- Masterclass 10 – The secrets of successful email marketing
- Masterclass 11 – How to be a confident and engaging public speaker
- Masterclass 12 – How to build your expert status
- Masterclass 13 – How to wow your customers with genuine customer care
- Masterclass 14 – Why you should be falling in love with LinkedIn!
- Masterclass 15 – How to be terrific on Twitter

The idea behind writing the book as a series of masterclasses is for each one to cover an individual marketing topic in isolation, enabling you to dip into whichever subject you choose and in whichever order you like. Having said that, however, I recommend that you read “Masterclass 1 – The perfect practical marketing plan,” before reading any of the others. The potency of any marketing activity is driven purely by its place in your marketing plan. With an efficient marketing plan in place, the significance and suitability of the subjects covered in the subsequent masterclasses will be more apparent. Once the marketing foundations for your business have been laid, the

The 15 Essential Marketing Masterclasses for Your Small Business

remaining masterclasses will help to inspire, motivate and guide you in creating inventive and effective marketing campaigns.

I wish you much success and happiness, and sincerely hope that this book enables you to take your business to the next stage!

Kind regards
Dee Blick

Masterclass 1

The Perfect

Practical

Marketing Plan

In this masterclass you will learn:

- **Why a marketing plan is essential for your business.**
- **How to create an effective targeted marketing plan.**
- **The marketing planning mistakes to avoid.**

Whilst many of the small businesses that have approached me for assistance with their marketing had not previously recognised the need for a marketing plan, they had certainly been experiencing the problems and challenges associated with not having one. These include:

- Overspending their marketing budget. This can be as a result of panic buying when business is slow, or of failing to keep within affordable limits when business is booming.
- Spending money on unsuitable marketing activities. Without a clear understanding of who they want to target and how they want to reach this audience, they are more likely to be wasteful with their budget, spending it on marketing ideas with only a slender chance of success.
- Writing sales communications that are not sufficiently appealing to their target audiences to elicit the required response.
- An over-reliance on generating business from existing customers rather than spending time and effort on increasing their customer base.
- Relying heavily upon word-of-mouth recommendations to bring in new business and consequently not engaging in any marketing activities.
- Sporadic marketing activity. As commitment to marketing wanes, so the momentum of previous campaigns diminishes.

It is understandable that small business owners do not automatically think of creating a marketing plan when they are in the early stages of establishing their business. A marketing plan suggests the need to become bogged down in theory at a time when the business owner wants to concentrate on the practicalities of generating sales. And then there is the concern of how much it will cost to create a marketing plan and whether it will require the expertise of a marketing consultant.

It's little wonder that so many small business owners steer clear of marketing planning and choose instead to dive straight into action and employ marketing

tactics that are often unplanned, inconsistent, irrelevant and, as a consequence, ineffective.

Your marketing plan is your marketing satellite navigation system, guiding your business towards success in the most efficient way possible.

There are some things to bear in mind when creating your marketing plan:

- You do not have to be a marketer, nor do you have to work with a marketer, in order to create a detailed, informative and practical marketing plan. However, creating a worthwhile marketing plan does require organisation and self-discipline. You will need to allocate quality thinking time rather than snatching ten minutes here and there.
- You will need to carry out some research and be prepared to spend time documenting your thoughts. Your marketing plan has an important role to play in the development of your business and should not be rushed or dismissed as an academic exercise. It is fine to scribble the odd marketing idea on a beer mat but you can't take this laid back approach with your marketing plan itself.
- A marketing plan is most definitely not theoretical. It should never be regarded as a document that has been created only to satisfy the requirements of an investor or shareholder before being permanently filed away. It is a practical, informative and vital document; one that you should tweak, modify and improve on an ongoing basis.

Your marketing plan is the engine that drives your sales. Without a marketing plan you undermine your sales efforts.

If you understand your customers' needs and how to meet or exceed these needs, and are then able to use this knowledge to support your sales efforts, your conversion rates will soar. But you can only achieve this if you have put in the hard yards; researching your audiences, spending time understanding your competitors, analysing your products and services. Changes or improvements should be made before the selling begins. If you simply dive head first into selling, ignoring the questions that need to be answered in your marketing plan, you risk alienating your target audiences, targeting the wrong people or simply handing the sales initiative to your competitors.

What information should be contained within your marketing plan?

Here are the nine areas that your marketing plan should cover:

1. An audit of your marketing activities to date – what have you spent, how much new business has been gained?
2. Any improvements you're planning on making to your products and services.
3. A review of your key competitors.
4. Your realistic and achievable business goals for the next 12 months.
5. Your positioning statement – the compelling reasons why your target audiences should buy from you.
6. Your target audiences – why you want to reach them and how you plan to do so.
7. An audit of your marketing communications – are they outdated or no longer relevant to your current offerings?
8. Your tactical plan – a shortlist of your chosen marketing campaigns.
9. Any limitations or barriers – what is standing in the way of your marketing plan being implemented?

Where do you start?

I would like to share my small business marketing planning template with you. I developed it 20 years ago and in this time have refined it to the stage where I know from experience that it works for virtually any small business. It is a simple and straightforward document. You just need to invest some time and effort in completing it. It has the power to transform your business.

Imagine for a moment that you have contacted me and asked me to help you with your marketing plan. After agreeing a date for a one-day marketing planning session, I have sent you this marketing planning template and asked you to spend as much time completing it as you can before our session, jotting your thoughts down under each heading. When you arrive for our session, we work through this document, padding the answers out further still, using a flip chart for brainstorming. You go away, augment the document and start putting it into action.

Now, whilst you don't have me for the day, you can still use this template to create an extremely effective marketing plan. There is no need to pay a marketing

consultant to help you and, as mentioned earlier, you don't need marketing experience to work through it.

Don't feel that you need to complete it in one sitting either. In fact, I would encourage you to allow time in your diary for a number of sessions in which to contemplate each heading, scope out your thoughts and document your answers. There is no requirement to emerge with a perfect, beautifully written plan, but you should create a thorough document that you believe will help you to formulate your marketing activity.

Be prepared to make tweaks, improvements and corrections as you start to implement it. Plan your activity over a 12 month period but regularly review your plan and adjust it to reflect any changes in the criteria upon which it was created.

The Small Business Marketing Planning Template

1. Audit Your Marketing Activities to Date. How Have You Have Been Promoting Your Business?

Why should you do this?

You don't want to continue a marketing activity simply because it's something that you've always done. Reviewing what you have spent in relation to the new business that you have gained will help you to identify and improve those activities that are still worth continuing, and to abandon those activities that are no longer working.

What information are we looking for here?

Look back over the last 12 months. Identify the different ways in which you have promoted your business (advertising, business networking, direct mail, social networking, exhibitions, seminars, cold calling etc.). Beside each activity, make a note of what you were hoping each activity would achieve for your business. Try to be specific and include the sales you were anticipating, the number of new customers you were hoping to gain, the number of existing customers that would spend more etc. Once you have gathered this information, answer the following questions:

- Did you fall short of your goals? If so, why do you think this was the case? Were your targets realistic? Did you expect too much for too little? How far short of achieving your goals were you?
- How much money did you spend on each activity and what were the results from each activity?
- Are there any activities that have been really successful and should be expanded, any that could be more successful with a little tweaking, or any that have fallen flat and need to be curtailed completely?
- Can you identify any weaknesses in your marketing thinking over the last 12 months? Have you developed planned campaigns and stuck to them well or have you tended to spend money on isolated marketing activities, such as the occasional advert, the odd exhibition, a one-off leaflet drop, social networking when you have a moment or two to spare? Were your target audiences always at the front of your mind when choosing your marketing tactics? What was your rationale for choosing each activity? Have you let your own personal likes and dislikes dictate how you market your business? For example, one business owner I worked with confessed that his marketing centred round business networking because he enjoyed meeting people in a semi-social setting. When he reviewed the cost of his networking activities and the business he had gained as a result, it was clear that some of the networking associations he belonged to were ineffective and he should not renew his membership of these. Another business owner had fallen into the trap of promoting her business exclusively through blogging and social media. Although these tactics were free (with the exception of the time she was spending) it became clear on review that her target audiences were not being reached in any discernible quantity. Although she continued to blog, she reduced the amount of time she spent doing so and used the time it freed up to run direct mail campaigns, accessing her target audiences in a more effective way.

Note

Do pause before completely abandoning any marketing activity that has not worked for you. One of my clients told me that direct mail did not work for them and that

although they had run several mailshots, the business gained as a result had failed even to cover their costs. Upon review, however, we recognised that direct mail itself was not the reason for the lack of success; it was the way in which it was being used. A fresh approach to their sales letters and a new mailing list helped ensure that their next mailshot was profitable. So although there may be some activities that you are rightly convinced should be abandoned, be cautious of condemning others until you have looked closely at the reasons for the poor performance. It may be that the original approach was at fault.

2. Appraise Your Products and Services. Are You Planning Any Improvements over the Next 12 Months?

Why should you do this?

The small businesses that thrive and continue to be desired by their target audiences are the ones that place a value on continually improving what they offer. If you fail to consider this in your marketing plan, you risk being eclipsed by your more innovative and customer focused competitors. Your marketing plan provides the ideal opportunity for you to stand back and to review objectively what you offer. Consider and document improvements and changes that you would like to make that will benefit your customers.

What information are we looking for here?

Make a list of the changes, why you are making them, the impact you believe they will have on present and future customers and when they will be implemented. Will they give rise to an increase in price or can they be accommodated within your existing pricing structure? What impact will they have on your profit margin? Will these changes improve your ranking with competitors?

Note

Any product or service enhancement provides a perfect opportunity for inclusion in a marketing campaign. Any small but significant change to your offering is positive news and should be communicated to your customers and prospects.

3. Identify Your Key Competitors in the Areas in Which You Propose to Operate

Why should you do this?

Your customers are likely to be very aware of your competitors and this alone is a good enough reason for you to be aware of them too.

Why it is important to do this can be illustrated by the example of one particular business owner who approached me after the unsuccessful launch of his on-line training programme. He believed that the reason for his lack of success was insufficient media coverage. He had marketed his system to training managers as a unique product they would not be able to access from any other provider. However, had he done his competitor research beforehand, he would have discovered that several businesses were already offering something very similar, if not better. Before making claims about your products or services it pays to have completed your competitor research beforehand. Then you can say with confidence why you are better, special or different.

What information are we looking for here?

Carry out some research on those businesses you regard as your closest competitors. What can you learn from them? Compare your offering with theirs. Note those areas in which your products or services exceed those of your competitors (you can flag these in your marketing communications), and those in which your offering falls short in comparison (you may want to implement some improvements as a result).

Do you have competitors for all of your services or just for some? Are you really targeting the same audiences?

Note

This is one exercise in which you can learn a huge amount simply by reading the websites of your competitors. You may find it useful to compose a list of those details that you would like to know about each competitor so you can judge each one by the same criteria. It's always useful to be completely aware of your competitors and what they are doing, so revisit this part of your marketing plan every few months.

4. Document the Measurable, Realistic and Achievable Business Goals You Aim to Accomplish in the Next 12 Months

Why should you do this?

Judging the impact of your marketing activities is more straightforward if you have established goals against which to measure them. These goals do need to be specific, however, and simply stating that you want to “increase sales significantly in the next 12 months” is too woolly a target to be useful.

What information are we looking for here?

Start with your biggest goal – usually the level of sales you are hoping to attain in the next 12 months. Here are some examples:

- In my first year of trading as a business coach I want to generate £36,000 of fees (my previous salary). To achieve this, I need a minimum of 12 retained coaching clients, each spending £2000 to £4000 p.a.
- We must quadruple the sales of our hydraulic levelling systems with caravan owners in the next 12 months. To achieve this goal we must attain 60 new customers this year.
- We want to increase product sales from £500,000 to £600,000 in the next 12 months. To help achieve this we will need to increase the number of stockists that supply our products from 800 to 1000.
- We want to increase our annual turnover of promotional gifts and corporate clothing from £250,000 to £285,000 in the next 12 months with at least £28,000 of this increase to be achieved from promotional clothing sales.

Once you have documented your main goal, consider and document the smaller objectives that will help you to attain that goal. Here are some examples for illustration:

- This year I will exhibit at a minimum of two exhibitions that are attended by my target audiences.
- This year I will implement a quarterly marketing programme to communicate with my lapsed clients/existing customers.
- This year I will aim to increase the minimum amount that a customer spends with me from £250 to £400.

- This year I want to increase the number of hot prospects that I convert to clients from 17% to 23%.

Note

There's nothing quite like seeing your goals staring back at you in your marketing plan to persuade you that it's time to set about trying to accomplish them. Make sure that some of your business goals excite you when reading them, making the hairs stand up on the back of your neck and your heart beat just that little bit faster.

5. Define Your Positioning Statement

Why should you do this?

If you want to stand out in a crowded marketplace and become a magnet for customers, you need to create a positioning statement. So many small businesses undersell themselves because their communications – on-line, face-to-face and in print – fail to emphasise the benefits they offer. Looking at your business objectively and asking yourself the question “Why should customers buy from our business and remain loyal to it?” will help you to identify those positive aspects of your business that differentiate it from those of your competitors. Your positioning statement is the DNA of your business and should be reflected in all your marketing communications.

What information are we looking for here?

In addition to feeding into your marketing plan, your positioning statement performs a vital role in determining how you promote your business through all your communications. Due to its importance, the creation of your positioning statement and the information that should be contained within it is covered in detail in Masterclass 2.

6. Define, Research and Locate Your Target Audiences, Segment by Segment

Why should you do this?

Any marketing activity that you undertake is likely to be blunt and ineffective if you have not previously identified and investigated your target audiences. Your message may reach thousands of people but if few of them have any interest in what you are

offering, it is unlikely that it will result in many sales. Only by understanding which audiences have the greatest need for what you offer and knowing how best to reach these audiences, will you be able to create marketing campaigns with a high chance of success.

What information are we looking for here?

As with your positioning statement, identifying and researching your target audiences is a vital aspect of your marketing planning as a whole and the process of doing so is an involved one. Consequently, Masterclass 3 covers this exercise in detail.

7. Audit and Develop Your Marketing Toolkit

Why should you do this?

It can be tempting to hang onto outdated marketing communications if you still have a large quantity of literature yet to be used. However, using these tired and old communications can actually sabotage a campaign and damage your brand. In fact, a communication does not need to be out of date to be redundant. It may still be accurate on a factual basis yet no longer suitably reflects the needs of the audiences being targeted or adequately emphasises the benefits on offer. Appraise your current marketing communications against your positioning statement and after completing the target audience exercise. Do they still pass muster? Your communications need to change as your business changes.

What information are we looking for here?

Auditing your marketing toolkit will help you to identify any improvements or changes that you will need to make to your communications in the next 12 months. Include all the communication tools that you use to market your business. For example, your website, newsletters, brochures, flyers, sales letters, bulletins, product sheets, seminar handouts, press releases.

When reviewing your current tool kit, consider the following:

- Did you enlist the services of a professional designer or copywriter to create your communications or did you take a more DIY approach? If the latter, do

they still represent your brand in a positive way? Try to be dispassionate when analysing them. What would be your impression had you received them from a competitor? Impressed or underwhelmed?

- In light of your positioning statement, could any of your communications be improved to provide more depth, substance, relevance or reader appeal? Are your messages too generic to sufficiently engage your audience?
- How effective has each communication been? Did it have its desired effect? Have you received any feedback about it from customers or other third parties?

Answering the questions above will help you to decide which parts of your current marketing toolkit remain valid, which require improvement and which should be rejected. Don't decide yet upon which communications you will create in the next 12 months until you have studied the remaining masterclasses in this book. They will aid you in your decision making.

8. Create a Shortlist of Your Chosen Marketing Activities

Why should you do this?

Once you have identified your target audiences and understand where you can find them, the next step is to decide which marketing activities are going to help you to communicate with them effectively.

What information are we looking for here?

The marketing activities you choose for future campaigns should be influenced by the outcomes of your marketing activity audit and the research you have undertaken as part of your marketing plan. When you are confident that you understand the channels open to you for each target audience, you should draw up a shortlist of the marketing activities best placed to exploit these channels. You could consider the suitability of advertising (local, national, sector specific), face-to-face business networking, targeted direct mail, e-marketing campaigns, PR, on-line directories, webinars, social networking, partnership activities, seminars, exhibitions, launch events, media briefings.

Once you have decided upon the most appropriate activities, you then need to amalgamate them into specific marketing campaigns for each of your target