

LEARNING MADE EASY



# Small Business Marketing Strategies

ALL-IN-ONE

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



*Presented by*



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE





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## ***Small Business Marketing Strategies, All-in-One For Dummies®***

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# Introduction

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**W**elcome to *Small Business Marketing Strategies All-In-One For Dummies!*

Because you picked up this book, it's a good bet that you're a small business owner or marketer who works with small businesses. You likely want to find out as much as you can about how small businesses are marketing themselves in today's fast-changing world of social media, websites, blogs, mobile phones, and other platforms, media, and post-modern doohickeys. You want to know how you can turn tweets, likes, shares, comments, photos, blogs, profiles, apps, and so forth into dollars. Well, if that's the case, you've come to the right place.

This book presents and explains a wide variety of information, all aimed at enlightening you on what you need to know to achieve success. Whether you need know-how and advice on the basics of current marketing practices, discovering and defining your clients, using Facebook or Twitter to promote your business, leveraging content marketing to draw in customers and potential customers, launching a campaign, optimizing your content for search engines — or kick it old school with broadcast, print, and outdoor ads, you'll find the help you need here.

The aim of this book is to provide you with the very best ideas, concepts, and tools for marketing small businesses. Using the info here, you should be able to create marketing campaigns that speak to real people in the language they use day in and day out. And you should be able to avoid many common mistakes that end up turning your customers off or wasting your time. Marketing is a tricky business. But you probably already knew that.

## About This Book

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This book is a generous conglomeration of material from a number of Dummies marketing and social media books, carefully selected with an eye toward getting you going with an overall marketing program.

For a tiny fraction of the amount you'd pay to get a marketing MBA, this book delivers an easily understandable road map to today's most innovative and effective marketing techniques and strategies. The information you find here is firmly grounded in the real world. This book isn't an abstract collection of theoretical, pie-in-the-sky mumbo-jumbo that sounds good but doesn't work when you put it to the test. Instead, you'll find only the best information, the best strategies, and the best techniques that are working on today's business environment, both online and off.

This book is also meant to be at least a little fun. Marketing doesn't have to be a bore — especially nowadays, when it seems to be merging with entertainment and interpersonal communication in ways that wouldn't have been dreamt of even a decade ago. At any rate, maintaining a sense of humor can be vital when facing the challenges that all small business folk face from time to time.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses (URLs) break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an ebook, you've got it easy — just tap the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## Foolish Assumptions

This book makes a few assumptions about you. For example, you are interested in marketing (duh). You own or work for or with a small business (also duh). Maybe you've already started or at least conceived of a marketing campaign and are looking for tips to refine the techniques you're already developing. Or perhaps it's something you think may want to try, to boost your income and enlarge your customer base, and are looking to read up on it before you make your move. You'll find a lot to like in these pages.

If you have little or no experience in marketing so far, no worries. There's plenty of fundamental information here as well. The early chapters will get you up and running on the core concepts.

It's also safe to assume that you can — or believe you can — use a computer, a smartphone, and the web and other services of the all-powerful Internet. You may not be a gearhead, but you can tap, click, and search with the best of them.

Finally, this book assumes you're eager to scoop up and implement new tips and tricks and that you're willing to acquire some new perspectives on the topic.

# Icons Used in This Book

Icons are handy little graphic images that are meant to point out particularly important information about starting your own business. Throughout this book, you find the following icons, conveniently located along the left margins:



TIP

This icon directs you to tips and shortcuts you can follow to save time and do things the right way the first time.



REMEMBER

Remember the important points of information that follow this icon, and your business will be all the better for it.



WARNING

Danger! Ignore the advice next to this icon at your own risk. Heeding this info can save you boatloads of trouble.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

This one points out slightly advanced material that you can safely skip if you're in a hurry. But by all means, read these if you want to stretch yourself a bit.



EXAMPLE

This icon points out specific real-life examples to illustrate a point.

## Beyond the Book

In addition to the material in the print or ebook you're reading right now, this product also comes with some access-anywhere goodies on the web. No matter how hard you work at marketing, you'll likely come across a few questions where you frankly don't have a clue. To view this book's Cheat Sheet, simply go to [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) and search for "Small Business Marketing Strategies Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

If you're new to marketing, you may want to start at the beginning of this book and work your way through to the end. What a radical concept. A clear path of information and practical advice leading to success awaits you. Simply turn the page and you're on your way. But you can start anywhere. If you've already studied

or done some real-world marketing and are short of time (and who isn't?), feel free to use the table of contents and index to zero in on particular topics of interest to you right now, whether that's creating a board on Pinterest, upping your visibility in online directories, or working with direct mail.

Regardless of how you find your way around this book, the sincere hope of this endeavor is that you'll not just amp up your marketing prowess, but enjoy the journey as well. Good luck!

# 1 Setting Up Your Marketing Foundation

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Taking the necessary marketing steps that lead to sales

Getting your marketing program started

Understanding how small business marketing is different

## Chapter 1

# Framing the Marketing Process

**Y**ou're not alone if you opened this book looking for an answer to the question, "What is marketing, anyway?" Everyone seems to know that marketing is an essential ingredient for business success, but when it comes time to say exactly what it is, certainty disappears from the scene.

People aren't sure if marketing, advertising, and sales are the same or different things. And they're even less sure about what marketing involves and how to do it well.

To settle the matter right up-front, here's a plain-language description of what marketing — and this book — is all about.



REMEMBER

*Marketing is the process through which you win and keep customers.*

- » Marketing is the matchmaker between what your business is selling and what your customers are buying.
- » Marketing covers all the steps involved in tailoring your products, messages, online and off-line communications, distribution, customer service, and all other business actions to meet the desires of your most important business asset: your customer.
- » Marketing is a win-win partnership between your business and its market.



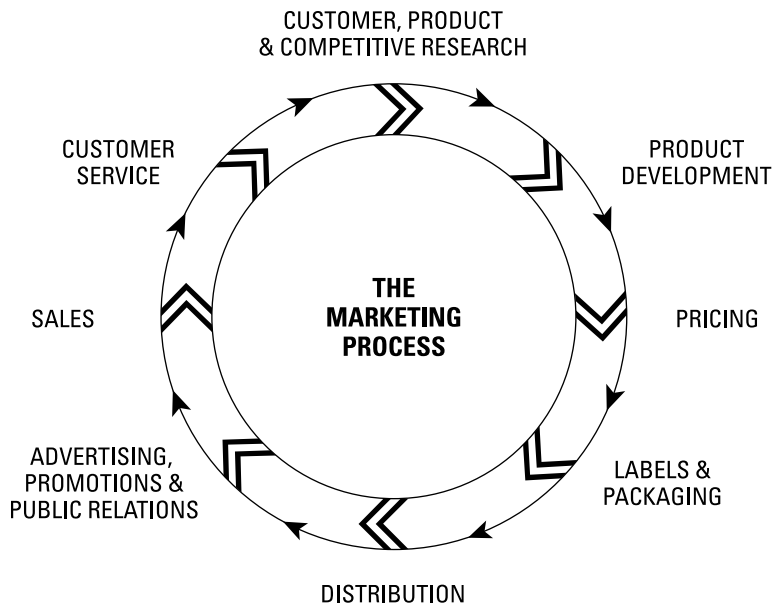
Marketing isn't about talking *to* your customers; it's about talking *with* them. Marketing relies on two-way communication between your business and your buyers. This chapter gives you a clearer idea of what the marketing process is.

## Seeing the Big Picture

Marketing is a nonstop cycle. It begins with customer knowledge and goes around to customer service before it begins all over again. Along the way, it involves product development, pricing, packaging, distribution, advertising and promotion, and all the steps involved in making the sale and serving the customer well.

### Following the marketing wheel of fortune

Every successful marketing program — whether for a billion-dollar business or a solo entrepreneur — follows the marketing cycle illustrated in Figure 1-1. The process is exactly the same whether yours is a start-up or an existing business, whether your budget is large or small, whether your market is local or global, and whether you sell through the Internet, via direct mail, or through a bricks-and-mortar location.



**FIGURE 1-1:**  
The marketing wheel of fortune.

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Just start at the top of the wheel and circle around clockwise in a never-ending process to win and keep customers and to build a strong business in the process.

As you loop around the marketing wheel, here are the marketing actions you take:

1. **Conduct research to gain knowledge about your customers, product, market area, and competitors.**
2. **Tailor your product, pricing, packaging, and distribution strategies to address your customers' needs, your market environment, and your competitive realities.**
3. **Create and project marketing messages to reach your prospective customers, inspire their interest, and move them toward buying decisions.**
4. **Go for and close the sale — but don't stop there.**
5. **After you make the sale, begin the customer service phase.**

Work to develop relationships and ensure high levels of customer satisfaction so that you convert the initial sale into repeat business, loyalty, and word-of-mouth advertising for your business.

6. **Interact with customers to gain insight about their wants and needs and their use of and opinions about your products and services.**

Combine customer knowledge with ongoing research about your market area and competitive environment. Then use your findings to fine-tune your product, pricing, packaging, distribution, promotional messages, sales, and service.

And so the marketing process goes around and around.



REMEMBER

Successful marketing has no shortcuts — you can't just jump to the sale. To build a successful business, you need to follow every step in the marketing cycle, and that's what the rest of this book is all about.

## Understanding the relationship between marketing and sales

People make the mistake of thinking *marketing* is a high-powered or dressed-up way to say *sales*. Or they treat marketing and sales as two independent functions that they mesh together under the label *marketing and sales*.



REMEMBER

In fact, sales is an essential part of marketing, but it's not and never can be a replacement for the full marketing process. Selling is one of the ways you communicate your marketing message. It's the point at which you offer the product, you make the case, the customer makes a purchasing decision, and the business-to-customer exchange takes place.

## MARKETING: THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PARTS

Advertising. Marketing. Sales. Promotions. What are the differences? The following story has circulated the marketing world for decades and offers some good answers for what's what in the field of marketing communications:

- If the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign that says, "Circus Coming to the Fairgrounds Saturday," that's *advertising*.
- If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk it into town, that's *promotion*.
- If the elephant walks through the mayor's flower bed, that's *publicity*.
- And if you get the mayor to laugh about it, that's *public relations*.
- If the town's citizens go to the circus and you show them the many entertainment booths, explain how much fun they'll have spending money there, and answer their questions — and they ultimately spend a lot of money at the circus — that's *sales*.

Because marketing involves far more than marketing communications, a second part to this circus analogy shows how the story might continue if it went on to demonstrate where research, product development, and other components of the marketing process fit in:

- If, before painting the sign that says, "Circus Coming to the Fairgrounds Saturday," you check community calendars to see whether conflicting events are scheduled, study who typically attends the circus, and figure out what kinds of services and activities they prefer and how much they're willing to pay for them, that's *market research*.
- If you invent elephant ear pastries for people to eat while they're waiting for elephant rides, that's *product development*.
- If you create an offer that combines a circus ticket, an elephant ear, an elephant ride, and an elephant photo, that's *packaging*.
- If you get a restaurant named Elephants to sell your elephant package, that's *distribution*.
- If you ask everyone who took an elephant ride to participate in a survey, that's *customer research*.
- If you follow up by sending each survey participant a thank-you note, along with a two-for-one coupon to next year's circus, that's *customer service*.
- And if you use the survey responses to develop new products, revise pricing, and enhance distribution, you've started the *marketing process* all over again.



WARNING

Without all the marketing steps that precede the sale — fitting the product to the market in terms of features, price, packaging, and distribution (or availability), and developing awareness and interest through advertising, publicity, and promotions — even the best sales effort stands only a fraction of a chance for success.

## Jump-Starting Your Marketing Program

Small business leaders are most likely to clear their calendars and make marketing a priority at three predictable moments:

- » At the time of business start-up
- » When it's time to accelerate business growth
- » When they experience a bump on the road to success, perhaps due to a loss of business because of economic or competitive threats

You may have opened this book because your business is in the midst of one of those three situations right now. As you prepare to kick your marketing efforts into high gear, remember that marketing isn't just about selling. It's about attracting customers with great products and strong marketing communications, winning them over, and then retaining their business by exceeding their expectations. As part of the reward, you achieve repeat business, loyalty, new customer referrals, and a better shot at long-term business success.

The following sections can help you get a leg up on beginning your marketing program.

### Marketing a start-up business

If your business is just starting, your marketing plan needs to address a set of decisions that existing businesses have already made. Existing companies have images to build upon, whereas your start-up business has a clean slate upon which to write exactly the right story.



TIP

Before sending messages into the marketplace, answer these questions:

- » What kind of customer do you want to serve? (See Book 1, Chapter 2.)
- » How will your product compete with existing options available to your prospective customer? (See Book 1, Chapter 2.)

- » What kind of business image will you need to project to gain your prospect's attention, interest, and trust?



EXAMPLE

A business setting out to serve corporate clients would hardly want to announce itself by placing flyers on community bulletin boards. On the other end of the spectrum, a start-up aiming to win business from cost-conscious customers would probably be better off announcing a promotion-packed open house than placing large ads full of praise from affluent business leaders.

If you're marketing a start-up business, pay special attention to these first few chapters. They can help you identify your customers, make pricing decisions, present your product, size up your competition, and set your goals and objectives.

## Growing your business

Most established businesses grow their revenues by following one of the following routes:

- » Grow market share by pulling business away from competitors. (See Book 1, Chapter 3.)
- » Grow customer share either by prompting larger transactions during each visit or by generating more frequent repeat business.
- » Grow interest in new offerings that generate additional sales volume for your business. (See Book 1, Chapter 2.)



REMEMBER

Almost always, the most cost-efficient route to higher sales volume is to look inside your business first, shore up your product and service offerings, and strengthen your existing customer satisfaction and advertising spending levels *before* trying to win new prospects, which requires significantly more effort and expense.

## Scaling your marketing to meet your goal

Small business owners often feel overwhelmed by the marketing task. They aren't sure how much money they should dedicate to the effort, whether they need to hire marketing professionals, how to weight efforts between traditional media and online communications, and whether they need to create new ads, brochures, and websites to get the job done.