

Your On-Line Marketing Plan





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INTRODUCTION

Most small business owners are aware of the Internet or World Wide Web. They may even be aware that having a website can help with their marketing efforts, but many are unclear about how to get their business on the web – at a cost that is within budget. Even more are confused about what a website is supposed to achieve for the business.

Websites for Startups is, as the name suggests, the specialist in providing websites for startup and small businesses. Better still, we provide websites that can grow with your business, are easy to maintain & update and are low or no cost in ongoing maintenance.

So, we've established that we can help you get your business on the web. Arguably, that's the easy part! Have you given any thought to what you want to achieve for your business through a web presence?

Even though our websites are shockingly underpriced 😊 there is still a cost. As your small business is likely to be starting with a very tight budget – you need to be clear about priorities and what is going to give you the '*most bang for your buck*' in marketing spend.

Hopefully you will have a plan for your business. It may not be printed on 120gsm paper and bound in an impressive cover, it may be a series of spreadsheets, notebooks or just thoughts, but there will be a plan.

You also need a plan for your business marketing campaign and that plan needs to be clear about what you want, need and expect from a web marketing campaign. If you don't do this, there is no value in simply putting up a website. It will do nothing for your business and you would be better off saving your money.

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It's in our interests for your business to succeed and for your website to play a valuable role in that success. For that reason we have produced this document which is designed to encourage you to think about your web marketing strategy as a piece of the marketing mix you will be applying to your business.

The booklet is interactive. There are spaces for you to pause, think and write to turn this book into a living document that represents your business marketing plan.

It is a cliché – but it is valid.....

If you fail to plan – you plan to fail

Don't be one of those business owners who fail simply through lack of planning.



Markets and Marketing

Marketing is often overlooked by small businesses. You may be one of those who believe that marketing activities are reserved for large companies with large budgets and you couldn't be more wrong.

Marketing is all about getting to know your market and making or supplying what you know **people want**. Compare this to *selling* what **you want** to make or supply to a market that may well not be interested.

Large organizations can introduce new products into the market place. Think about Apple. Who knew they needed an iPod before iPods were released? A market had to be created and it was possible for Apple to do this as they had both reputation and money – and lots of it.

As a small business you are unlikely to be as well known nor as well financed as Apple so it makes sense for you to determine what problems need solving in your market niche; what needs and desires exist.

You are seeking the itch that you can scratch and in return you make money.

If you get your marketing right chances are you will never have to sell. People will come to you to buy. Isn't that a nice thought?

Trying to sell whatever you enjoy making or doing, without ascertaining whether or not there is a market for those goods and services, makes yours a lifestyle business. It may or may not be capable of supporting you and your family and there's nothing wrong with it – you just need to be aware that you are relying on luck and a fair wind.

So, although having a marketing strategy for your business may not have been your highest priority I urge you to reconsider. Doing some research and planning now can save you a lot



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of heartache further down the line when you could discover your passion for your product or service is not shared.

How disappointing would that be?



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What is a Market?

A market is simply the people or other businesses who could potentially use your goods or services. They are the people and organizations who have this infamous itch that you are going to scratch.

You need to be clear about your target market. You need to be able to describe your ideal client to the point that you would recognize them if they passed you in the street.

This brings us to the very first step in your marketing plan:

Who makes up your niche market?

Not what (not the product or service) but Who?

So, this is where you get to do something. There is work to do here!

Spend some time thinking about your niche market; the people who want and need your goods or services. Really get to know them. Get to the point where you would recognise them if you passed them in the street. Consider everything - age, sex, income level, marital status, social class, geographic location, education level, employment status. You want to know what problems they have that you can solve. What unmet needs and desires they have that you can fulfill.

Keep writing until you have a complete picture of your niche market – your ideal customer.

Only by taking the time to complete this market profile can you even begin to think about your marketing plan. If you don't know who you are marketing to, how can you possibly know how best to reach them?

If you struggle to identify who would benefit from your business offering perhaps it is time to rethink ?

If your answer below is a generic 'everyone' you have a different problem. As a small business you cannot market to everyone. You will have no credibility and you will be lost in the noise made by the larger players. You need to refine your target market down into a manageable and clearly identifiable segment.



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My Niche Market looks like this:



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My Niche Market has these problems I can solve and these needs and desires that I can fulfill:



YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

You now have a very good idea about who makes up your niche market and what they are looking for. It's time to review your products and services.

You may be planning to sell your own products and services, those of others or a mix of the two. What needs to be considered is how you can provision your market needs and set up a funnel for repeat business.

I know this will sound crazy when they haven't yet made the first purchase but we are, as Stephen Covey so succinctly put it, beginning with the end in mind.

If you have a high ticket price item, you may need to encourage trust by offering lower priced items first - perhaps a book or information about the expensive item? It is rare for anyone to hit a website they don't know and hand over a credit card number for a large purchase. You need to build a relationship and be prepared for the prospective customer to get to know you over time.

If you sell a lower ticket price product or service why not start looking around for a suitable 'upsell'. You may not provide this yourself; you may just make referrals for which you receive a commission.

It is much harder to keep finding new customers than it is to cross-sell, down-sell, on-sell or up-sell an existing customer. Provided this is done with integrity, people really do not mind. They come to trust your judgement and can even come to rely on you as the 'go-to-guy (or gal) for your niche.

It's that time again. Time to do some work. At this stage don't judge any of your ideas. Here you are looking at getting clear about the products and services you intend to supply to your market.

Having captured that information, use it as a basis to brainstorm ideas for possible upsells, onsells and downsells for your market



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My Business Products & Services:



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Ideas for Upsells, on-sells, cross-sells (products and services):



Being Different

Having determined who is in the market for your business offering and what it is you are going to be selling it's time to think of ways of making your business stand out from the crowd. You do this by determining your Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

Why should your market do business with you and not someone else? (And, don't make the mistake of thinking this is about price!)

What is your story?

Are you the fastest?

Are you the nearest?

Are you the.....?

What is unique about the way you do business? What is unique about you? Think of something that makes you memorable (for the right reasons).

Your USP combined with your marketing activities will create TOMA. I know. More acronyms. TOMA stands for Top Of Mind Awareness.

With a strong USP and a good marketing mix of activities yours becomes the name or brand that is the first one to come to mind when a need for your goods and services arises.

You want to be the first thought not the afterthought.

Part of identifying your own USP is knowing what your competitors are up to. In fact a major part of marketing is getting to know your competitors but don't always view them as the enemy.

Competitors can be friends and associates, competitors can help your business. Having competition also proves there is a market for your goods or services. Be very afraid if you can find no competitors. I know you are smart and innovative but it is unlikely you have



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come up with an idea nobody has come up with before. If nobody is operating in the market there will be a reason for it – lack of demand.

OK, you may be convinced you are a trailblazer; that you are creating a new market. I couldn't be more pleased for you and I hope you have lots of time and a very significant bank balance – because you are going to need both.

Having looked at your competitors and considered your own business it's time to do some more work.

You are going to identify your USP. Think about your main competitors – their products, their services, the way they operate, their opening hours, their guarantees.

How are you different?

How can you be better?

Only one idea is needed for a USP.

Don't be tempted to make this about price. Being the cheapest is the fast track to bankruptcy. Think about offering additional value – and make it memorable to help build up the Top Of Mind Awareness.

My USP:



The Marketing Mix

Having determined who your business is for and what makes you unique amongst your competitors it's time to think about how you are going to put your message across.

Once you establish **who** you are trying to reach (your target market) and **what** your message is (your USP) you are in the perfect place to decide **how**, **when** and **where** to market.

Having a mix of marketing activities is important as it will allow you to gain maximum coverage of your market.

What are marketing activities and what is a marketing mix?

A marketing activity is anything that educates or notifies your market about you. Think business cards, flyers, brochures, articles, editorials, press releases, word of mouth recommendation, advertisements, branded give-aways and, of course, websites.

The first exercise you completed to identify your 'who' will help you to determine which marketing activities would be most likely to reach your target market and it is these which are combined to form your marketing mix.

By working through the exercises in the book you can save a whole chunk of change and time by making your marketing efforts targeted, relevant and accessible. The accessibility comes from choosing the best medium; the one your target market is most likely to see. You can spend your very limited marketing budget where it is going to do most good.

If your target market is unlikely to look for you on the Internet getting a website up and running is not a priority for you. If the Internet is the first place they are likely to look, a website becomes an essential.

Think about how you can make it worthwhile for people to recommend you. Word of mouth marketing is some of the most persuasive there is – provided it's genuine. Ask people for



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feedback when you have completed their order. If you are frightened of what they might say, marketing is the least of your problems!!

When a customer or client expresses appreciation ask them if you could use their comments in your marketing materials. Ask customers and clients to refer you to their friends and acquaintances – if your goods and services live up to their promise, people are happy to make recommendations.

Think carefully before investing in print advertising. Really research your market to ensure this is the best way of reaching your target audience. Traditional print advertising has so many drawbacks compared with modern day alternatives. It is expensive, it is permanent – you can't change anything once things have been printed and distributed, you have no reliable method of testing and tracking results.

The world has changed and the way businesses reach customers has changed too.

Compare print advertising with online web advertising. You can run a low cost pay per click campaign for a few hours. You can run an A/B split test to compare results. You can immediately change and improve the wording on your ad. You can test colours, fonts, price points in hours – all for pence or cents.

Print advertising may be the most appropriate for your market. I don't know which market you are in so I can't have a definite view – all I am asking you to do is think carefully and really get to know your market before going down this route.

So, what will your marketing mix be?

What marketing activities and collaterals are you going to use to reach your potential customer base?

How are you going to distribute those materials? AND – very important – How are you going to measure the results so you know what is working and what is not? Testing, tracking and assessing results is the only way you can be sure you won't be throwing good money after bad.



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My Marketing Mix:



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Marketing on the Internet

Keywords and Traffic

Web visitors come in all shapes and sizes and with different intents. Some will just be looking and not even be sure what it is they are looking for. These are the web visitors who type one word queries (keywords) into the Google search box. If someone types in 'dog' are they looking for information, supplies or even for a particular type of dog? Who knows?

It is extraordinarily difficult to get a small business site ranked on the first of the Google search engine results pages for a high level search term such as 'dog'. The number of competing sites runs into millions. You could of course spend a lot of time and money to get your website ranked for a high level search term but the traffic you receive as a result is unlikely to convert well as it will not be targeted traffic.

The next category of web visitors contains those who are looking for information about something. Perhaps 'digital photography'. The search engine still doesn't really know what these people want. Do they seek a digital camera? Do they want to learn about digital photography? Do they want to discover how to work with digital photographs? Again, who knows?

If you optimize your web site for the keyword phrase 'digital photography' you are again going to struggle to get the site well ranked and even if you do achieve that coveted first place listing there's no guarantee that the traffic it generates will become customers or clients. There is no way of knowing what's in their mind or whether you have what they seek.

The best web visitor you can hope for is the one who brings their itch to their search (remember? – you can scratch this itch). These people type in a detailed question or a specific product detail and they are clear about what they seek. The beauty of this is that there are fewer competing sites for these very specific keyword search terms so it makes it much easier for you to get your site ranked well AND when the traffic does come to your site



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you can be sure that it is very targeted traffic which will in turn increase your conversion rate.

Conversion rate? That is the figure which represents the percentage of web traffic that comes to your site and completes your most wanted action. Depending on your business that may be a sale, it may be a registration for more information, it may even be a phone call.

All advertising conversion rates are lower than you would hope. It is no different on the web. It is a nonsense to try to give you hard and fast figures as there are so many variables to take into consideration but the realistic, and perhaps slightly cynical, view is that you can expect between 1% and 2% of visitors to do what you want them to do.

Don't write off the web surfers. It is estimated that it takes 7 visits to a website before someone will buy. Each visit builds another layer of trust until they feel confident about you and your business. This means you have to give people a reason to bookmark your site and pay a return visit or subscribe to your RSS feed.

Consider giving something away in return for an email address to which you can market – RESPONSIBLY. If you are going to harvest email addresses simply to become a spammer you have failed to understand how marketing works. You can use email marketing campaigns to build TOMA (remember, Top Of Mind Awareness?), to build trust and to reassure potential customers that you are a real person running a real business – not a robot operating out of a Country where you are advised not to travel alone.

Keywords and traffic are linked. Choosing the right keywords for your website can make or break your Internet business. By focusing on specific, relevant terms and choosing those which have the highest search volume, you are giving your website the best chance to produce the most wanted response.



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Now it's time to think about your niche market and the language and keywords or keyword phrases it uses. The more keywords you can list, the better. Brainstorm this section over a couple of days; just keep adding to the list. Ask friends and relatives what they would type into Google to find you? Add those phrases to your list.

You are looking for a list of no less than 250 keywords!!! If you get stuck contact help@websitesforstartups.com and we'll send you a starter list to get your creative juices running!

Add single keywords (if you must) but keyword phrases of up to 5-7 words are better. Put yourself in the searcher's shoes. What would you type into a search engine to find you.

My Keyword List:



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Types of Websites

A website can serve many purposes and you will save yourself time and money by knowing what you want to achieve before you start.

Do you want a simple online brochure? A shopping cart? A forum or chatroom? Are you going to be collecting information from visitors?

Having a website means your business is open for enquiries and trade 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year. Having a **good** website that 'speaks' to your web visitors will mean some of those enquiries convert into sales.

Once you have an idea of what you want your website to achieve decisions need to be made about who is going to build it, where it is to be hosted, which list building service you are going to use, who is going to maintain it, what search engine optimization work is going to be done. In some ways, building the actual website is the easy part.

Talk to more than one web developer, ask questions, get quotations. Don't be tempted to spend a huge sum on a first iteration of a web site, especially for a new business. A lot can change in the first 12 months of trading and it is very possible to outgrow a website very quickly as you learn more about your business. If you have invested a large sum in a first website it is heartbreaking.

If you want to maintain the website yourself be sure content is kept separate from code by the use of templates or a structured platform. Ideally you want to be able to make modest changes for yourself. This will not only save you money – it will also mean you don't have to wait for your web developer to get around to making the update for you.

Talk to your web designer about search engine optimization ensure he or she does not intend to use any black or grey hat techniques, ask about their understanding of LSI – this is especially important if they are going to be writing copy for you.



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Be sure to register your own domain name, in your own name, on your own registrar account. We can make domain registrar recommendations if you need them – just let us know.

Ensure you have independent access to your hosting so you can access your site if anything untoward happens.

Agree a fixed price, not an hourly rate. The latter can soon mount up.

Make sure your web developer understands your business. Share the market research you have done. Talk to them about suitable colour schemes, graphics and fonts. The look and feel must be designed with the target audience in mind – they are the ones you need to attract.

Talk about ongoing maintenance, who will be doing what and how much it is going to cost. Try to think ahead so you have no nasty surprises.

Commerce or content site or a mix of both? You may have a commerce site with a blog attached to hold your content. There are many options and a good web site builder will be able to advise you.

Will you be offering a referral fee? Are you going to reward people for sending others to your site to buy your products and services? If so, you will need an infrastructure in place. You may be able to process a few sales manually, but as traffic builds, you will want this task to be automated.

How are you going to keep in touch with your web visitors? Will you be sending ad hoc emails or a regular newsletter? Are you going to offer an RSS feed so visitors can subscribe to be notified when your site is updated? Will you be using traditional mail as well as electronic mail?



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How are you going to get your site noticed? You can buy traffic through a pay per click campaign or you can work to achieve organic search engine listings. One costs hard cash the other costs time, which may be more valuable than the cash.

Are you going to offer your web visitors an online meeting place? A forum or a chat room or one of the newer social networks?

Are you going to be transacting sales over the Internet? If so, how are you going to process payment cards – securely – and deliver the deliverables?

How much content will you include on your site? How often will it be updated? Where is that information going to come from? What subjects will the content cover?

Are you going to allow advertising on your site? If so, which adverts and for how much?

The clearer the vision you have the easier it will be for the designer. But, remember, a web design is not an open ended project. You will be quoted for a deliverable and once it is delivered all changes will need to be paid for. You cannot expect your web designer to be forever revising and tweaking which is why it is so important that you are able to make small modifications for yourself.



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Conclusion

You should now have the bones of a marketing plan, with particular emphasis on web marketing. Congratulations.

Whether you intend to build your own site or commission someone to do it for you, working through the exercises contained here and getting clear about your requirements and expectations, can only make life easier.

A website can become a key piece of your marketing strategy which pays for itself in the additional business it draws in for you, or it can be a white elephant which does nothing useful and ends up gathering metaphoric dust in the Google sandbox.

It is all too easy to just think 'I need a website'. There is more to it if you want that website to be a success and contribute to the success of your business.

As always, we are here to help and support you by

- ❖ Building your website
- ❖ Undertaking keyword research
- ❖ Analysing your competition
- ❖ Completing niche research
- ❖ Maintaining your website
- ❖ Hosting your website
- ❖ Creating content for your marketing collaterals
- ❖ Identifying possible Joint Venture Partners
- ❖ Expanding your web presence as your business grows
- ❖ Tracking and Testing Conversion
- ❖ Optimising your site for the search engines
- ❖ Managing pay per click campaigns
- ❖ Analysing web usability

If you need us!

Contact us at: help@websitesforstartups.com