



21 Secrets of **Simple Marketing** **Success**

**Small Business Marketing Strategies
You're Probably Not Using...
But Should Be!**

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Secret 1. Avoid blah-blah-blah marketing

Sad to say, but most small business marketing is blah-blah-blah. It goes something like: “We’re the best. We have great service. We’re dependable. We offer great value. Stop in for great selection, competitive prices, and the personal touch you’ve come to expect.” Blah. Blah. Blah.

There’s nothing in this about ME – the reader. You know, your customer? The guy with the money? And the problems you might be able to solve? And the friends I could refer you to? Did I mention I’m also the guy who will be in the market soon for your specific product or service? Where’s all the stuff about me?

Here’s the point – **good small business marketing is not about your small business!** It’s about how your business is different, valuable, and meaningful to customers. It’s about *why* people should do business with you – and **ONLY** you – because you’re the expert in your field. Convey this message effectively and you WON’T have to work with “drive-by” clients who are a pain to deal with and who run away the second they see a lower price.

Here are three tests to apply to your marketing – see how you do:

1. **The black marker test:** Put one of your ads (or flyers, brochures, or promo pieces) and one of your competitor’s ads side-by-side. Now black out both names. Could your ad be mistaken for some other company’s ad? Could you just cut out the competitor’s name and stick it on your ad and people just might not know the difference? If so, you have a piece of blah-blah-blah marketing.
2. **“So what” test:** Take a look at each of your marketing statements in your ads, brochures, and on your website. For each point, can you come up with a compelling value-based answer to the question, “So what?”
3. **“Prove it” test:** Readers assume all marketers are liars. Do you *prove* any of your claims? How? Testimonials, third-party proof, verifiable facts?

Secret 2. Stop selling “sugar”

One of my Marketing Mentor clients is a commercial lender at a community bank. In the middle of a sales seminar, as we’re talking about finding out what his commercial lending customers really want, and how to package and position his bank’s offerings squarely in the cross-hairs of those wants, he exclaims with a bit of frustration, “But David – the problem is that I’m selling sugar!”

I turned to the rest of the group and asked, “What’s wrong with this picture?”

Everyone agreed that if **the banker** thinks he’s selling “sugar” (a commodity where all that matters is price, price, and price), then the banker is sunk. End of story.

You have to go back to Square 1 with your small business marketing strategy and answer some hard questions so that your marketing messages click and stick. Obviously, if your own people believe they’re selling “sugar,” how effective can they be in front of customers, clients, and prospects in articulating the compelling advantages of doing business with you?

Here’s a starter set of questions to get you going:

1. Who is your core customer?
2. What specific challenges do they face? (in their own words)
3. Who is your competition?
4. What do they do well and not so well?
5. Who are we?
6. What do we do well and not so well vis-a-vis the customer and the competition?

Secret 3. Set the buying criteria for your customers

What if I told you there was a simple marketing strategy you could use to...

- **Stop** your potential customers from price-shopping you to death
- **Convert** a much higher percentage of prospects to customers
- **Pre-empt** your competition, regardless of their slick marketing campaigns

Well, there is. The secret is called: "Setting the Buying Criteria." A clearer way to say it is: setting the criteria by which your company's prospects make a buying decision when it comes to your category of products and services.

In a nutshell, here is how it works. In your marketing material (emails, brochures, web sites, sales letters, etc.), you want to define what makes a good buying decision. And in your definition, you want to make sure that your company is the only one that fits the definition! This is setting the buying criteria.

When you set the criteria, you always want to do it in such a way that it excludes your competitors. They should not be able to qualify based on the criteria you've set. This is why the criteria you use should always be exclusive, authentic and customer-centered.

Let's step out of the small business world for a quick example. Assume for a moment that you're a car manufacturer who specializes in sports cars. One of your criteria might read like this:

"Whatever sports car you choose, make sure it has at least 250 horsepower. Any less and you'll be sacrificing speed, acceleration, and performance, all of which are critical to the pleasure you'll get from your new sports car."

You'll notice I set the criterion (250 horsepower) high enough that it eliminated some cars, but not so high that it eliminated all cars. The important thing is, I've

narrowed the field. As we move on, we layer additional buying criteria:

"Once you've found a sports car that has at least 250 horsepower, you'll also want to make sure it has a 6-speed manual transmission. At least half the pleasure of a sports car is being in total control. An automatic transmission just won't cut it.

"Rear-wheel drive is a must for a true sports car. It gives you the best cornering power possible, without feeling like you're going to run off the road (as you might feel with a front-wheel drive vehicle).

"Also look for fully independent suspension, so you get the best road feel. Each wheel will move on its own, independent from the other wheels, giving you maximum traction and performance.

"Lastly, be picky about the kind of engine your sports car is equipped with. The best sports car engine is a boxer engine. It's perfectly balanced and produces no vibration. You can set a quarter directly on the engine while it is running and it will not fall off. "

By shrewdly selecting these and possibly one or two additional criteria, you can make your sports car **the only logical choice** in a crowded market. If you shrewdly define the criteria for buying, you'll create a scenario where **your business is the only one that can possibly qualify**. All competition will fall short.

Setting the buying criteria works for 3 powerful reasons:

1. You're seen as someone who can be trusted. By telling your prospects what they should look for when they buy - or conversely, telling them what to watch out for - you become a trusted advisor. Your prospects believe you have their best interests at heart (and you do), and because of this level of emotional

bonding through trusting you and your guidance, they are more likely to work with you instead of the competition.

2. You're letting your prospects come to their own conclusions. When you set the buying criteria, you're not saying, "Work with us because we've got X, Y, and Z." Instead, you're indirectly guiding your prospects to the conclusion you want them to reach. You're saying, "When you make a decision of this kind, make sure your supplier provides these things..." Your prospects run down the checklist you've created and decide (on their own) that your business is the best choice.

3. You're doing something different. If you examine your industry, you will be lucky if you find even one competitor taking advantage of this strategy. That makes it easy for you to stand out. When your prospects see that you're looking out for them... and none of your competitors are... then it becomes exceptionally easy for you to turn them into customers. Prospects will be drawn to you, and will gladly give your firm their business.

When you set the buying criteria, there are a number of ways to position them. How you position them is important, and one may work better than another for your particular company's needs. Here are some idea-starters:

- The 7 Essentials of Hiring a Web Designer
- Don't Even Think About Waterproofing Until You Read This...
- How to Hire a Consultant Without Losing Your Shirt
- The Small Business Owner's Guide to Computers and the Web
- How to Get the Most Value from Your Attorney

But remember this: the most effective way to position your criteria will always be from an angle that educates and protects the consumer. **You cannot say, "5 Reasons To Work with Us."**

Yawn. Your prospect doesn't care about you or your company. At least not yet. That's why you need to speak to your prospects with care and concern, as a trusted advisor to a dear friend. This is how you reach them. So make sure that you position your criteria with this in mind.

Before I turn you loose, I believe it's important for you to understand one more thing... that is, the importance of giving your prospects a **reason why**.

When you list out your criteria and position them in way that appeals to your prospects, you still need to make sure - with each and every criterion - that you are giving your prospects a believable reason why it's so important.

In the sports car illustration, I listed a **reason why** each criterion was important for the consumer to consider when choosing a sports car. I explained how the fully independent suspension was necessary for "maximum traction and performance." I mentioned that a 6-speed manual transmission was important because it gives you "total control."

If I had not given any reasons why these criteria are important for the consumer to consider, my case would have been very weak. The same holds true in real life. You must give your prospects a strong reason why. Review your criteria. If you list a criterion for which there is no good **reason why** you've mentioned it, then it shouldn't be included. Get rid of it or find another criterion to replace it.

Creating a powerful buying criteria pamphlet or booklet takes very little time to do and it is a highly effective small business marketing tool.

Once you implement it, you will stop prospects from price-shopping, convert more prospects to customers, and - best of all - pre-empt your competition so you become **the one and only logical choice**, even if you're competing in a crowded market.

Secret 4. Move aside

Most small businesses have a hard time moving into a niche or declaring a specialty. Most small business owners want to attract as much business as possible, so they go for broad marketing across all product and service lines, trying to attract all audiences for all that they can offer. And the marketing messages get spread so thin that soon, you're spending more and more on marketing and getting less and less return. Does this sound familiar?

The truth is that successful small businesses know who they are – they “**move aside**” and **specialize** in a niche. They focus more energy on marketing their “flagship” services to a very specific target market.

Why? Because – unlike Wal-Mart or Citibank, your business can't be all things to all people. “Move Aside” is about finding your niche, and claiming your expertise in a narrow area of specialty. In plain English, this means you want to become the “Go-To Guy” or “Go-To Gal” for your specific audience – the exact opposite of a “jack-of-all-trades and master of none.”

Perhaps you want to be known as “the firm that knows the insurance industry inside and out” or “the restaurant experts” or “the turnaround specialist.” Maybe you want to appeal to busy executives with an elite image or appeal to retirees with a homespun image.

The people you speak with will have a very different reaction to these two mental images of your products/services:

- “I think your company might be a good fit.”
- “Finally! This is exactly the kind of company we've been looking for.”

Let me give you an example that will make this point very clearly.

In my hometown in suburban Philadelphia, there's a real company that lists among its services "Carpet Removal, House Cleaning, Odd Jobs, Catering."

Now, I don't know about you, but when I want a caterer, I'm looking for someone who does professional catering **all the time**. I don't want to have to worry about "Did they wash their hands after the carpet removal job and before serving the guests at my daughter's wedding?"

In fact, even among "serious" catering companies (the ones that don't do carpet removal) if I'm looking for a caterer for a wedding, I'll probably be drawn to "Wedding Bells Catering" much more so than "Sam's Catering" or "Good Eats Catering." In today's marketplace, **specialists rule**.

Create your own special niche. Developing a specialty can go a long way to attracting more substantial clients. Being known as the "experts" in a particular field gives you the opportunity to stand out from the crowd. This is the edge that will tend to draw prospective clients to you.

The fact is that **the marketplace values clarity, focus, and direction**.

Once you become known for being great at **one thing**, your company can spread its wings and start to attract more business across the board through a powerful "Halo effect." Meaning if you are known for being great at one thing, people naturally assume you're great in a variety of other ways, too. However, if you try to **say** you're great at everything, nobody will believe you!

The only way to know if this will work for your business is to **try it!** You'll be pleased with the speed and magnitude of the results.

Secret 5. Figure out how to kill the competition

Here is a strategic small business marketing question that most business owners don't ask often enough:

How can we kill the competition?

One of your serious challenges is how to beat competitors who are often bigger, meaner, and better-funded than you are.

What are their weaknesses?

Where can you zig where they zag?

How can you move in on an opportunity more quickly to fill a need that they can't, won't, or don't even see?

Every small retailer today is complaining about Wal-Mart kicking their butt up and down the street, and a lot of Mom and Pop stores are being forced out of business.

Let's change our perspective once again and leave the world of small business for a moment. Let's look at a Mom and Pop pharmacy. How can they compete with the big drug chains and supermarkets and big box retailers?

Obviously, you can't *out-Wal-Mart* Wal-Mart!

If you can't compete on price, compete on personality and the extra touches.

Do home deliveries. Have a physician advice line. Have free blood pressure monitoring. In season, do flu shots. Have pharmacists that actually know the

customers by name. Have coloring contests and offer cookies and juice every Saturday for kids (and grandkids). In short, do all the things an agile smaller pharmacy can do that the big behemoths can't.

So figure out what **your** business can do to kick the competition up and down the street.

Once you have all this down, **then** you can think about doing some advertising (maybe).

But until you're really different and better and smarter and quicker, advertising your "**Same-O Lam-O**" **company** with the latest gimmicks and slick layouts from your ad agency is just a waste of money.

Your marketing needs to come from your reality. Forget about what your marketing should say and how to say it. Focus on what your small business should DO and how to DO IT!

Secret 6. Develop customer intimacy

Customer intimacy sounds like a fancy marketing term. Its definition is simple – the business that knows their customers best WINS.

How do you get to know them?

Move closer to the customer. Live in their world, think about their problems, and think about *their* clients and prospects. Their families. Their wants, needs, hopes, dreams, opportunities, and challenges. Think about what they're up against. Consider what they need the most help with.

What's the first step? **Research. Preparation. Homework.**

Industry, regional, business, demographic and consumer news, trends and statistics are now at every business owner's fingertips on the Internet. Often for free.

If you're not intelligently researching your target market's issues, challenges, and pressures, how can you possibly come to them with a credible solution?

Don't like sitting at the computer all day? An even better idea is to hit the street.

Visit your local clients, talk to your contacts in the fields you serve, get some firsthand information about what's going on in their world – what are their challenges, perspectives, obstacles, priorities; what are their dreams, their “only-ifs,” and their biggest aspirations?

Is this a lot of work? You bet. Do the majority of small business owners put in this kind of effort? No way. Which is exactly why YOU should. You'll find some great resources on the next page to help you **develop your “radar.”**

KEEPING INFORMEDwww.marketwatch.com

Rather than link to the same wire stories found at other business sites, MarketWatch has its own staff of reporters and writers delivering up-to-the-minute market news and first-rate commentary. Next to every company name are links to that firm's stock chart, profile, related news and other information.

www.pbs.org - Frontline

Here you'll find links to past segments of the fine PBS documentary series. Archives are neatly organized by topic, so you can easily find highlights like the interview with Jeffrey Skilling during Enron's glory days.

www.marketplace.org

This nationally syndicated radio show prides itself, and rightly so, on delivering business news in fresh and entertaining ways. Click to listen to the day's Web-only morning report or the most recent evening broadcast. The archives are free.

www.stockhouse.com

Lots of free resources plus for \$9.95 a month, "Power Members" can use MediaScan to search hundreds of news sources at once, without banner or pop-up ads getting in the way. Power Membership also includes real-time stock quotes (free users get them delayed) and full access to its BullBoards community forums.

CHECKING COMPETITORSwww.freeedgar.com

Access every corporate sec filing (10Ks, 10Qs, proxy statements, etc.) going back years, or find out about upcoming IPOs.

www.hoovers.com

A quick-reference resource for succinct corporate profiles, company news and financials, all free. Paid subscribers get access to more in-depth info on public and private companies.

TRACKING TRENDS

eia.doe.gov - Energy Information Administration

For free research on a crucial industry, try this site from the Department of Energy, which forecasts future prices and trends for oil, gas and other petroleum products. In addition to statistical tables, the EIA produces clearly written reports that spell out in plain English what the numbers mean. It also features profiles of the energy sector in various countries and regions.

www.dailycandy.com

An unscientific but engaging analysis of the latest fads — at least, what self-styled hipsters in New York City and Los Angeles are wearing, eating and doing. There are also city-specific editions for Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

www.demographicsnow.com

There's a wealth of data on population, income and such available online from the government at no charge, but it may not be tailored to your business needs. Several paid sites offer this service, and this is one of the most comprehensive. Fees vary; the restaurant data service, for example, is \$299 a month. Also available: free reports based on Census data.

www.stat-usa.gov - STAT-USA/Internet

For a \$200 annual fee, you get access to detailed national and international trade statistics, plus background research on more than 100 foreign countries. A service of the Department of Commerce.

factfinder.census.gov - U.S. Census Bureau

American FactFinder links you to prepared reports on popular topics. The Population Estimates site shows how fast different areas of the country are growing and why.

MANAGING A SMALL BUSINESS

eventuring.kauffman.org

Primarily a search engine, the site gathers articles and advice from around the Web on everything from effective advertising to executing a business plan, and it provides quick summaries with each direct link. *The Entrepreneur* section

contains successful executives in various industries sharing insights on such diverse topics as corporate culture and cash flow, branding and burnout. The site is run by the not-for-profit Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, so it's refreshingly independent and ad-free.

www.toolkit.com

Practical how-to guides on topics such as marketing a product, organizing an office and protecting assets, penned by the site's team of writers and analysts. The Ask Alice advice column tackles timely issues like identity theft and deceptive accounting. Membership is free.

online.wsj.com/small-business

The Wall Street Journal's site for small-business owners offers timely feature articles ("Dot-com Entrepreneurs: Where Are They Now?"), plus free tools such as a step-by-step guide to writing an effective business plan.

www.business.gov - U.S. Business Advisor

A useful reference, run by the Small Business Administration, on federal laws and regulations, loan programs and other government-sponsored services. Special sections cover such topics as taxes (new rules, untangling the code) and workplace issues (complying with the ADA, maintaining indoor air quality).

ONE-STOP BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE WEBSITE

www.executivelibrary.com

In their own words, this site is a one-stop shopping directory of "1450+ Content-rich sources for an informed intelligent perspective." Includes continually updated live links to news, magazines, finance, industry research, market research. A truly comprehensive business portal.

Secret 7. Don't talk techniques and technology

Small business owners should not present themselves as technicians, number-crunchers, or talk about their “techniques, approaches, and methods.”

Newsflash – Your customers and prospects don't care.

Instead, present yourself as a problem-solver. For years now, large accounting firms have taken the lead in portraying themselves as "business partners." They know the danger of being viewed as "number crunchers" or “geeks” or... heaven forbid, “consultants.”

Why have they changed their tune? Simple. Experience shows that today's customers want both solid results PLUS personalized help, guidance and direction. And as a small business owner, YOU are ideally suited for this role!

For many customers, your business can become a **one-stop shop**, giving customers the benefits of a product expert, service partner, information advisor, strategy planner, and personal guide all rolled into one.

There is another factor here that should not be ignored: It is never in your best interest to be viewed as a commodity. Today, your small business must offer **the value of a consultant** in order to secure **lasting and price-irrelevant relationships**.

You must be able to subtly and regularly communicate to every customer: “These are the measurable ways I am enhancing your results.” Do **that**, and they won't leave you for a slightly cheaper alternative down the street. And do it **consistently**, and you'll develop customers for life.

Secret 8. Take control of your brand

Every small business has a brand, whether they know it or not. That branding occurs in the minds of your customers, prospects, employees, stakeholders, and community at large. One mistake that's fairly common in small business is letting the marketplace determine your company's positioning.

You need to take control of your brand and position yourself in the marketplace. It is your job to shape and fashion the perception that prospects have of you and your firm. If you assume that "everyone knows what our company does," you're in trouble – big trouble. It is your job to **determine, define, brand, present, and then control** the way your business is perceived.

Here are a few basic, but very important, elements in controlling perception: What's the message (written and unwritten) conveyed by your **business cards, your letterhead, and your brochures**? Remember, people want to do business with approachable, hassle-free, customer-centric businesses. The image you convey determines how prospects think of you.

When it comes to specific products and services, do you offer **options** and different levels of service, or a take-it-or-leave-it deal?

More importantly, do you talk about your company and what the company does (inputs) or do you focus on overt benefits to your customers and successful outcomes (results)?

If the client's bottom-line results are not foremost in your discussions, **why should customers choose to work with your company?** (Hint: work with your team to **develop a simple 1-page sales tool** for each of your products and services where client results and outcomes – in dollars and cents – are always on page 1!)

Secret 9. Move alone

Right now, your company's marketing efforts may be **lost in a sea of gray**.

Me-too rules the day. Everywhere you look, there is more and more and MORE of the SAME OLD THING marketed by the SAME OLD BUSINESSES in the SAME OLD WAYS. Boring. And deadly.

The problem is that **people don't buy gray**. If you and your offerings blend into the background, you might as well close up shop right now.

Let me put it another way: all companies go bankrupt. It's just a matter of time.

Want proof? Out of the 100 largest companies of 50 years ago, 17 survive today. And none of those 17 are the market leaders they used to be.

Why? Because, as the saying goes, "shift happens." If you're not separating yourself from the crowd, you're blending in – and nobody will even notice you, much less **seek you out and tell their friends** about you.

Here's an example of a company that really hasn't been doing a bad job – but they're also not the standouts they used to be.

On a recent call to American Express, I was straightening out a billing problem. At the end of the call, the customer service rep asked me, "Have I exceeded your expectations for this call?" and I flatly answered, "No."

I had a billing problem, and the rep fixed it. That's my *expectation*.

Now, if the rep had offered me a \$50 American Express gift check to be used at any of American Express' online retail partners, THAT would have exceeded my

expectations. **That story** would be worth repeating to 20 or 30 people.

Can you imagine my telling anyone, “Hey, I called AmEx to fix a billing error. Guess what? They actually fixed it!” That’s not moving alone. That’s barely being good enough to compete!

Here’s a good test to see if your marketing strategies are in the category of “moving alone” – they are **if you’re doing something that:**

- Is “simply not done” in your industry
- Customers will make a remark about (remarkable!)
- Goes against conventional wisdom (I call this “uncommon sense”)
- Others (including your competition) think is “crazy”
- Others (including your competition) will actually be AFRAID to copy

Remember the immortal words of Jerry Garcia:

“You don’t want to be considered the best of the best. You want to be considered the only ones who do what you do.”

Secret 10. Don't assume everyone knows you're a genius

Never assume that everyone knows that your company and your people are brilliant.

Communicate your expertise. As an independent professional or service business owner, you have valuable knowledge that can benefit both individuals and businesses. Why not use this information to your advantage? Every business publication and many local newspapers welcome brief articles on subjects which will be of interest to readers.

Take time to get acquainted with business and financial editors. Find out what topics they are interested in publishing for their readers. Indicate that they are welcome to call you when a story related to your company's expertise arises.

Every editor wants to get "the local angle" to regional, national, and even international news.

You can serve as that expert in your community if you invest a little time getting acquainted with editors and reporters.

Make it crystal clear to your local media community (TV, radio, newspapers, Business Journal, regional magazines) that your firm is a **source of subject matter expertise**, not just a vendor of products and services.

Secret 11. Don't advertise like every other business

More and more small businesses are advertising aggressively, particularly in business publications and local newspapers.

Unfortunately, many of these ads are worthless because they are dull, boring, and just plain unremarkable. They might feature the name and tagline of the company. Maybe a black border, a slogan, or a piece of stock clip art.

This type of advertising does little more than indicate that your firm exists.

It's blah-blah-blah advertising (See Secret #1!) It also puts you in a position where you **look** like every other company, **sound** like every other company, and **act** like every other company. Not a very compelling reason for prospects to pick up the phone or jump onto your new shiny website!

If your goal is to position your firm so that when a CEO, business owner or family has a **question, problem, or need - your firm's name immediately comes to mind**, then you need a different plan. You'll want to have excellent and consistent visibility.

Avoid "Same-O Lame-O" ads in the newspaper or Yellow Pages. Forget about the chamber newsletter. Use **postcards, toll-free 24-hour recorded messages, published articles**, and offer your customers **value-packed websites, booklets and Special Reports**.

That's what creates a WOW! marketing mix. We'll explore the specific ingredients you'll want to include in your own marketing plan a little later in this book.

Secret 12. Market to people who are already listening

Is your small business marketing to people who are already listening?

It is very, very hard to market your products and services to everyone. And frankly, not everyone needs or wants what you're offering. That's just hard reality.

But there is a core demographic that is **already tuned in**. They don't need convincing. They're just waiting to hear from you about what's new, what you're up to, and how you can help them. Aren't those people worth reaching out to? Of course they are! Do you know who they are and how to reach them? Hmmm.... let's think about that one.

You could – and should – start with your company's existing customers. These are your most valuable prospects. They convert the quickest and they are also the most profitable. Not to mention that they are the least expensive to market to!

You could create an email list. You could integrate "Tell a friend" forwarding into your emails and web pages. You could offer referral bonuses of exclusive services or benefits. You could develop your **existing fans** into **enthusiastic brand advocates** and multiply your sales and marketing effectiveness by 10 or 20 times.

You could host events like "Welcome to the Neighborhood" Breakfasts or Customer-to-Customer special events.

You could create an award like Community Hero or Entrepreneur of the Year.

In short, you could (and should) **make a big business splash in a small business pond**.

Secret 13. Harness the power of A&D

There are two questions foremost in every businessperson's mind when you approach them, whether in person, over the phone, via email, or in any other form of contact:

1. **What do you do? (Articulation)**
2. **How are you different? (Distinction)**

Some small business owners instinctively “get” this concept. And others don't.

I met a nice enough looking fellow at a networking function and asked him what he did. He replied, “I'm with the bank.” I said, “Oh that's interesting. There are a ton of banks around here. How is your bank different?” He looked like a deer caught in my headlights and said, “What do you mean?” I asked, “What makes your bank unique?” He really didn't understand – much less answer – the question. He just fumbled and stammered and hemmed and hawed. Not pretty.

As a savvy business owner, you must be able to **articulate your value** and clearly **distinguish your firm from the competition** in a powerful way.

If your products and services (or ideas or value) are not unique on the surface, you need to **dig deeper** and find a way to articulate the benefits, outcomes, and RESULTS of what your business is offering, and then specifically show how it's different/ better/ smarter/ faster/ simpler than the competition.

Ideally, every member of your staff should be able to consistently and confidently answer the question, “So what do you do?” with a compelling small business marketing statement of no more than 15 words that gets people to react with “WOW! I want some of that!” It's a tall order. Secret 14 will help you fill it...

Secret 14. Develop a powerful audio logo

One of my Marketing Mentor clients who is a CPA wanted to grow his business. He wanted to boost the impact of his 10-second audio logo – the short response of 8-12 words that you give when people first meet you and ask, “So what do you do?”

His old answer was some variation of **“We help small to medium sized businesses meet their financial goals.”** No surprise, this wasn’t getting much response. People would say, “That’s nice” and move on to the tray of prune Danish, which at that point was more compelling than learning anything else about the his services.

At the same time, this accountant was struggling to move away from “drive-by” customers – the once-a-year clients who would come in with their shoebox of receipts at tax time, get their tax returns done, and then disappear.

He really wanted to focus on business clients where he could help guide their financial decisions throughout the course of the year in a more proactive, meaningful and partnership-oriented way.

Solution: add four simple little words to his audio logo, so now it sounds like, **“We help small to medium sized businesses meet their financial goals BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE.”** That’s always a showstopper and gets people curious and interested in exactly what “before it’s too late” means.

He talks about how his “tax-returns-only” clients are essentially coming in for an “autopsy,” when what he specializes in is the financial version of **“smart diagnosis, ongoing care and regular treatment”** to keep clients financially healthy (not just at major points of crisis or opportunity). This accountant has effectively repositioned himself as the “Finance Doctor!”

So think about building your own audio logo around your clear and unique points of Articulation and Distinction (A&D):

- What do you really DO?
- WHO do you do it for?
- Why does it MATTER to them?
- How are you truly DIFFERENT?
- How can you HELP?

Taking some time to answer these five simple questions will help you brainstorm and develop a powerful audio logo so people will remember what you do, why your business is different, and how you can help them and others they know.

The ability to condense your company's compelling value statement into a powerful audio logo – and deploy it consistently – will boost the effectiveness of ALL your marketing and sales efforts. It's time well spent.

Sharpening this one very simple tool – the dozen words you say at least 4-5 times a week – will yield incredible results and help you fill your potential pipeline with people who are interested, qualified, and eager to do business with you!

Secret 15. Develop marketing materials they'll keep

What's the biggest challenge your marketing material faces? Well, naturally, the first challenge is that it needs to be READ. But the second challenge, which very few small business owners think about – is that your marketing material should be so valuable that it is also KEPT.

The key to developing marketing materials that prospects and current customers simply cannot throw away is that your marketing materials must have **value to the customer**.

Let me put my “prospect hat” on for a minute. You're the small business owner (that's the easy part) and I'm your prospect. Truth is, there's little or no value for me to know all about you, (although there's a time and place for that) but **there is value in your marketing materials benefiting me, your prospect** such as:

Value Source #1: Educating me – I once got a marketing brochure from a printer who wanted my business. His four-color, glossy brochure showed a color picture of his new press along with a page of specifications which extolled the benefits for the printer. Who cares? I know he was proud of his new machine but because the expensive brochure was of no value to me, I pitched it immediately.

On the other hand, back in 2003, I received a 4-page full-color glossy newsletter produced by a company called Digital Color Graphics in Philadelphia. It was filled with small business advice, checklists, marketing tips, great business quotes, and a dozen cool websites and relevant online resources that I didn't know about. I'm writing this in July of 2008 and I still have this 2003 glossy newsletter in my files. I've never had high-volume digital color printing needs, but if I did, you know whose name and number is only an arm's length away? Digital Color Graphics! And guess how many times I've told this story and used their name in seminars and speeches. You got it – **a lot**. Educating a prospect has value!

Value Source #2: Motivating me – a brochure telling me how wonderful your people are has no value to me, but information about how I might benefit from making some quick and easy changes in my personal or professional life as it relates to your category of products or services – that I could use! Motivating a prospect has value!

Value Source #3: Arming me – with information about industry trends, new tools and resources, warnings, tips, traps, gotchas, or competitive intelligence has tremendous value! Arming a prospect has value!

The keys to marketing materials that get read, kept and lead to business are:

1. Talk about the prospect, not you
2. Give the prospect something of value

What would make you want to keep marketing materials from a computer company ...a list of services, OR a “**Systems Kit**” with checklists of how to avoid problems, monthly file maintenance and virus protection?

What would make you want to keep marketing materials from a law firm...a history of the firm, OR a “**Small Business Legal Manual**” with quick legal tips, a summary of employment law, and sample forms and contracts?

What would make your prospects and customers want to **keep** your marketing materials? Length of time in business? Awards? Products and services? Current rates? OR would you rather have customer success stories (especially if told from the client’s view); articles that address your prospect’s concerns; and profitable ideas you have for their personal and professional well-being?

The underlying idea here is that the **customers** who buy from you get a **seven-course steak dinner**. But your marketing materials should provide **everyone** with a nourishing “Happy Meal.” (And one they’ll want to keep!)

Secret 16. Develop a keep-in-touch program

A good keep-in-touch marketing program should put you in front of your clients, prospects and referral sources from once a week to once every five to six weeks. People have a short memory and contacts that are over six weeks apart are less effective.

Here are a few examples of good keep-in-touch marketing programs:

Produce a newsletter. You can print and send one via snail mail or create an electronic one and distribute it via email. Personally, I find online newsletters (ezines) to be one of the most effective, least expensive, and most under-utilized marketing tools for independent professionals and service businesses; there are no printing costs and the distribution can be free or very inexpensive.

Write articles and submit them to publications that interest your potential clients. If you don't want to take the time to regularly publish a newsletter, at least write a few articles every year and try to get them published.

Then send reprints to all your current and potential clients. Marketing through professionally published articles continues to be one of the most effective marketing strategies for service business owners and solopreneurs.

Send postcards and greeting cards. When going on vacations and exotic trips, take your address book with you and send postcards to key clients and referral partners. Find out people's birthdays and important dates and send them hand-written greeting cards.

Tip: send greeting cards on **little-known holidays** (like Groundhog Day, First Day of Spring or Winter.) When sending greeting cards during major holiday like Christmas and New Years, your card gets lost in the crowd. But sending cards on

an off-beat occasion will help you stand out and get the attention you want. (You can even outsource this and still make it look like you took the time to hand-write the card - check out www.sendoutcards.com!)

Give public presentations to local professional associations. When you do - make sure to invite all your current and potential clients.

Leverage your networking time. Sadly, most small business owners do not get the results they could from networking.

When you plan in advance to attend certain events, invite both your current and potential clients – especially if there is a relevant business-building presentation involved. Facilitate introductions and let your existing clients sell you to your prospects.

Nothing sends a more powerful message than your best customers hanging out with you and talking about how you and your firm are helping them grow their business!

Secret 17. Advertise smart

A century ago, department store owner John Wanamaker said, “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half.”

Selecting the right message, method and market for advertising is difficult even for companies with discrete, tangible products. It's no wonder that selling intangible services is even more difficult.

There are five common elements missing in many small business marketing vehicles, including websites, brochures, print ads, and the like:

1. **Appeal to emotion.** Small businesses seem to think clients are only buying competence. They are not. Customers already assume you are **competent** and are buying **confidence** (their own) that you can be trusted to deliver your products and services effectively and on time. Make sure trust is an element of your ad.
2. **Tell a story.** People identify more with a story than with a list of terms, attributes or even a list of features. Take the reader along for a ride to share the experience of benefiting from your services.
3. **Make it easy to buy.** Many ads tell about a service but don't end with a call to action. Let the potential buyer know what you'd like them to do next (e.g., call you, email for a free report, go to a website, attend a seminar).
4. **Keep it simple.** Service businesses often deal in complex ideas and processes - an ad is not the place to explain all this detail. Write the story so a tenth grader can quickly grasp the concepts. And run it by a real tenth grader to confirm that it can be quickly grasped!
5. **Track your results.** Because it is so hard to do, many business owners simply don't bother to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts. You should know, before you place an ad, how many impressions it will produce and an estimate of returns and potential profits. If an ad isn't producing as expected, it's time to try something else.

Secret 18. Forget referrals... get referred!

Eighty percent of my marketing consulting and association speaking business is from referrals, yet I never **ask** for a referral...I ask TO BE REFERRED!

When someone is nice enough to give you a referral, ask them if they would REFER you instead. Huge difference! Getting referred scoots you past the gatekeepers, knocks down the walls of resistance and significantly improves your odds of getting in front of people who can make a decision about the services your company offers! **So Rule #1 is: Get The Other Person To Refer You.**

Of course, this only works if you adhere to Rule #2...

Rule #2: Help The Other Person Refer You. NOT help in the traditional way of asking them to “phone ahead” for you. If you simply ask your customer to make a phone call on your behalf, you run three risks:

- 1) They **forget** (count on it!)
- 2) They make the call but **misrepresent** you
- 3) They make the call but **under-represent** you

No one can sell you like **you** can sell you! You cannot expect your customers and clients to be able to introduce you to a referral in a way that says all the things you need said to get a positive reaction, get an appointment and eventually... get the business.

Here are the steps to getting **WOW! referrals** flowing to you:

- **Write the perfect testimonial letter about yourself.** Include everything you'd want someone to know who might eventually use your services. This is not a time to be humble!

- Write the letter as if YOU were sending an introduction letter to a prospect and include all the reasons they'd want to talk to you and eventually do business with you.
- Ask the person who wants to refer you if they would be willing to take your letter, put it on their letterhead, and send it. Give them the option of changing any words they are uncomfortable with. (They never do!)
- Have them "cc:" you so you know the letter was mailed and you know how to time your follow-up.
- Make your follow-up call a couple days after you receive your cc copy in the mail and say, "I understand ____ sent you a letter about me. I really appreciated what they said and wondered if I could tell you what we're doing to help ____."

Your customers will jump at the chance to use your letter as their own. Most people hate writing letters and procrastinate about it, and your prepared letter gets them off the hook – **and gets you referred!**

Secret 19. When profits call, answer the “damn phone”

I did some work with the owner of a catering firm who wanted to systematize his company’s sales and service operations by writing an easy-to-use, reader-friendly but detailed procedure manual. Not compliance or transaction-related, but just the day-to-day “how we do things around here” kind of manual. A snapshot of the cultural DNA, if you will.

So far, so good.

I saw immediately how this manual could raise the bar on everyone’s performance at the catering company and make excellent service and savvy selling a consistent, all-the-time activity, and not a once-in-a-while accident!

When we started talking about the way his employees handled inbound telephone calls, he wanted to label that section, “**Using The Damn Phone**” because so many of his people considered phone calls an interruption and they were always complaining about getting their cooking, prep, and delivery tasks done while “the damn phone” was ringing all the time.

Hmmm... can you see where this is leading?

You should worry a lot more about business that falls through your fingers than business that you don’t win. It’s the **missed sales opportunities** that cost small businesses more money than the customers they compete for and don’t win.

See if you can spot the missed sales opportunities in the following story: (hint: it won’t be difficult)

Marketing News magazine made 5,000 telephone calls to Yellow Page advertisers requesting price information on a particular product.

Here's what they discovered:

- 56% didn't answer within eight rings
- 8% put the caller on hold for more than two minutes
- 11% couldn't provide the price information requested
- 34% provided the price and then hung up
- 78% did not even ask the caller's name

Ask yourself:

- Have you ever studied how your phones are answered?
- Who is answering?
- What are they saying, doing, and asking on the initial call?

Here's a missed sales opportunity up close and personal: A few weeks before a friend of mine moved, he called six banks that were within walking distance of his new office. He told them he'd be moving two business and two personal savings and checking accounts, and two other accounts for his kids. He told them that he did not want marketing brochures but a personalized response to his specific business and personal needs.

RESULT: Only two of the six banks responded! And the two that did sent -- guess what -- their marketing brochures!

He needed a bank fast, so he called the two banks that responded. One promised to call him back but never did and the other one put him in contact with their relocation department (where he should have been referred in the first place). Guess who got my friend's business? Questions for you:

- Do you respond to all qualified requests for information?
- Do you respond promptly?
- Do you respond accurately and give a personalized response, or does every request get the same off-the-shelf response?
- Do you follow-up after every request?

Secret 20. Alert the media!

Publicity is an essential – and often overlooked – resource you can use to market your small business effectively and inexpensively. It's often the **most effective** and **least expensive** source of new leads, new customers, more profit, and faster growth!

When your business has a limited marketing budget, the best thing for you to do is to get people interested in your company. How do you do that with a limited budget? Write a newsworthy press release and send it to the editors of local and national publications that your potential customers read.

This press release should be no longer than one page. Make sure you only send the release to the editors that directly cover your specific industry or market segment and don't forget to include your complete contact information. It is not necessary to follow-up with editors as long as you include your contact information. (In fact, most editors do not like getting follow-up calls about your press release. If they like it... THEY will call you.)

Here are the four steps to writing a newsworthy press release:

1. Decide when you are sending out the release. It is always best to send out your release after 11AM Eastern Time, any day besides Friday and Monday unless you have hard news. Also decide whether the release is "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or not. If not, include the specific date and time that you want the publication to make your press release public knowledge. Write the release date and time or "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" at the top of your press release.

2. Create a catchy headline that accurately summarizes your press release. Your press release's headline can be one line or have a subheading as well. Just remember you are competing against hundreds of other press releases on the

editor's desk. When editors don't have time to sit and read every single press release that comes in, they sometimes just take a glance at the headline. It is very important to **have a headline that gets their attention** so they start reading. Work hard on a great headline because research shows that people read the headline five times more often than they read the stories in the news. If your headline is a real "grabber" and tells your story in shorthand, you win!

While you should make your headline interesting and intriguing, make sure it has something to do with the content of the press release. Using a headline like "Free Trip to Bermuda" when your press release is about your new location downtown is not appropriate unless you are giving away free trips to Bermuda to your customers (and even then that headline should be revised.)

3. Compose the body of your press release. A short (3-4 paragraphs), newsworthy press release will grab the attention of editors, which will, in turn, get you publicity – all for only the cost of emailing, faxing or mailing the release. The release has to highlight the uniqueness of your business – what differentiates you from your competitors (See Secret #13). If you can't think of a unique thing about your company - wait until you can before you send out the release!

Here are a few newsworthy topics to write about in your release:

1. **Grand Opening/Re-Opening of a location**, e.g. an interesting story about why/how you started your firm and the target markets you serve.
2. **The results of a recent survey** your company created, e.g. provide the results of the survey to the news media.
3. **Tie your company to an upcoming holiday**, e.g. retirement planning tips during national Grandparent's week or cool gift ideas right before the winter holiday season.
4. **A strategic partnership** that your business has formed: e.g. your new alliance with the largest insurance agency in the state.
5. **Include a short, concise business profile** or CEO bio at the bottom of

the release. If the editors have never heard about your firm, this is the place to give them some additional background information.

Here are some additional tips to pack a powerful punch into your media efforts:

- After writing your release, edit it and re-edit it
- ~~Get rid of words that are not necessary.~~ Lose unnecessary verbiage
- Make sure the sentences are easy to read and even easier to understand
- Use strong and lively words in your release
- Format your press release to be double-spaced on one page
- At the end of the release type "# # #" so the editors know they have reached the end of your press release

Remember: when you distribute the press release, make sure to only distribute it to **publications where the readers would be interested** in your subject and make sure the release is **real news** and not a thinly-veiled advertisement or a sales pitch for a particular product or service your company offers.

Final tip: A seasoned PR pro once told me that the news media – whether it's print, radio, TV, or online – is interested in only three things: **people, people, and people!** So make sure to feature the “people angle” prominently in your press releases. Mention specific employees, include specific customer quotes and success stories, and show the people side of your story. These kinds of releases always get picked up more often than stories about faceless companies and their new products, services, or technology.

There's a very good reason that *People* magazine is the most popular publication in the United States. People love reading about people!

Secret 21. Only action creates results

It's time to get into action. All these **Simple Marketing Secrets** are great. You've gotten lots of good, actionable information in this book. The question is: **will you act on it?**

Here's some help for getting into action and generating tangible results for your business. In the next 15 minutes, you can create a simple, action-oriented marketing plan.

There is no doubt that small businesses with a clear business/marketing plan do much better financially and have a greater chance for high profits and high growth than companies without a clear, easy-to-follow plan. Yet so many businesses and business owners do marketing "by the seat of the pants" and go from putting out one fire to putting out another without having any direction or guidelines.

Frankly, every independent professional and service business owner I've ever talked to recognizes the importance of having a marketing plan but many don't know how to create – and more importantly – consistently implement one.

There is no need for long definitions and fancy forms. The 1-page marketing tool you're about to get can be photocopied, will fit on a single piece of paper, and can serve your entire team as a daily reminder and action plan.

It's your 15-minute **Simple Marketing Action Plan** and you'll find it on the next page...

Simple Marketing Action Plan

Marketing Categories	Goals and Action Steps
Press Releases	Goal: Action Steps:
Referrals	Goal: Action Steps:
Publishing Articles	Goal: Action Steps:
Internet Marketing	Goal: Action Steps:
Speaking	Goal: Action Steps:
Networking	Goal: Action Steps:
Direct Mail	Goal: Action Steps:
Advertising	Goal: Action Steps:
On the phone	Goal: Action Steps:

Place this Action Plan in a place where you can see it every day.

That's it!

That's how simple this is. As a matter of fact, I'm afraid that you may dismiss this strategy altogether because it seems TOO simple and common sense. But believe me, simple works!

If you can focus on a small handful of simple marketing tasks that you find **easy**, **effortless**, and **enjoyable** – that is the key to marketing that is also **effective**.

The following page contains a **sample plan already filled out**, so you can see how this works in real life. Take a look and then go back and create your own plan using a copy of the blank form – and put it into action!

Marketing Categories	Goals and Action Steps
Press Releases	<p>Goal: Have at least four press releases accepted over the next 12 months</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify targeted media outlets <input type="checkbox"/> Get contact information for news editors <input type="checkbox"/> Find a newsworthy angle/story and submit a new press release at least once a month
Referrals	<p>Goal: Increase average referrals to 3 per client</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a referral acquisition strategy, <input type="checkbox"/> Identify 5-7 best times to ask for referrals, <input type="checkbox"/> Develop referral tools (free info-products, referral & thank-you cards) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a keep-in-touch program, ideally 2 contacts per month <input type="checkbox"/> Find a way to consistently create a WOW! effect with your clients
Publishing Articles	<p>Goal: Write a new article every month, have four articles published in targeted publications over the next 12 months</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify targeted publications <input type="checkbox"/> Find out contact information for editors <input type="checkbox"/> Send article query to targeted editors <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a personal editorial calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule one day a month to write an article <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month submit articles to several publications
Internet Marketing	<p>Goals: Increase the number of web visitors to 6,000/month, publish 12 issues of e-zine, build a database of 15,000 subscribers</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Optimize bank website for search engines <input type="checkbox"/> Find an e-zine hosting/publishing system <input type="checkbox"/> Publish one e-zine with a new article a month <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a strategy to build e-zine subscriber list
Speaking	<p>Goals: Deliver two presentations a month in front of target market audiences</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify local groups that regularly invite speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Develop 3-5 attention grabbing presentation titles <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a simple speaker's press kit and send it to targeted association programs chairs <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule 1 hr/ week to follow up on mailings

Speaking (cont'd)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a feedback form to capture audience's contact info in exchange for a giveaway <input type="checkbox"/> Record presentations and create an audio CD to send to event planners and give to prospects
Networking	<p>Goals: Attend 6-8 networking events every month</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Select 2-5 groups that attract my target market <input type="checkbox"/> In each group, identify centers of influence and develop strong relationships with them <input type="checkbox"/> For each group, identify their needs as a group and find a way to serve <input type="checkbox"/> Find a way to be highly visible during the networking function (take on a leadership role or volunteer to help out) <input type="checkbox"/> Block off one hour of time after each networking event to enter new contacts into database and send high-value follow-up materials <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on <i>fewer</i> contacts + <i>stronger</i> connections
Direct Mail and Advertising	<p>Goals: Create two direct mail campaigns and place four direct response ads per year</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify 2-3 specific target markets <input type="checkbox"/> Identify publications which your target market subscribes to <input type="checkbox"/> Find a list broker and direct response copy writer <input type="checkbox"/> Develop irresistible offers and focus on A&D – avoid “blah blah blah” ads and sales letters <input type="checkbox"/> Test your offers with existing customers <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a 3-5 step follow-up strategy for each response <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule best times to place advertising and run direct mail campaigns
On the phone	<p>Goals: Convert 100% of rate and service inquiries to active prospects</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop an easy-to-use incoming phone script <input type="checkbox"/> Always capture the caller's name and contact info <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a short series of qualifying questions to uncover caller's needs, wants, and situation <input type="checkbox"/> Add all inquiries to contact database and begin value-based keep-in-touch campaign

This is just a first step. You can revise your plan over time and add more elements to it – but then again, it's the simplicity that makes it so effective!

About the Author + Free Offer

Before working with David, most professional speakers and service business owners relate to statements like:

- ***“I can't seem to grow my business... I try to find more clients, but it just isn't happening.”***
- ***“I can't find the time to deliver my services, run the nuts and bolts of my business, and do marketing.”***
- ***“I feel like I have enough clients; why aren't I making more money?”***



David's Marketing Mentor Program is your passport to proven marketing strategies, clearly focused business growth tactics, and personalized 1-on-1 implementation guidance for professional speakers, coaches, consultants, authors, experts, and service business owners:

<http://www.doitmarketing.com/speaker-marketing/>

An Invitation from David Newman:

If reading this book inspired you to take action, but you don't know where to start, I will give you **20 minutes** of my time to help you get into action. That's a **\$150 value marketing consultation – free**. No gimmicks and no strings. The catch: my time is limited and my schedule fills quickly – it's always first-come, first-served so contact me right away to book your time.

Contact me at **610-716-5984** or David@doitmarketing.com and we'll schedule a mutually convenient time to talk. Here is to your success!

David Newman