

THE MODERN GUIDE TO MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS

by Wendy Goñi Mendez

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Is marketing essential to your business?

Do you need to be proactive but don't know where to start?

Are you finding your traditional marketing skills are a thing of the past, but just don't have the time to keep up-to-date with the forever changing trends?

This book is a collection of our best blog posts. The reason we have compiled this selection allows us to impart the wisdom we've gleaned over the past 15 years in business. We know first-hand how hard it can be when you're starting your own business or make the time to re-educate yourself as marketing techniques evolve with technology. Rest assured after reading this compilation, you will have a better grasp on how to market your business to its potential.

MARKETING TO A PLAN

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail which is why a marketing plan for the year ahead is one of your most essential business tools. It outlines what marketing strategies you are going to employ. It also ensures everyone in the company knows what you are trying to achieve and what role they play to make it happen.

Set clear guidelines

An effective marketing plan will clearly outline your monthly objectives — this is what needs to be achieved each month to reach your longer-term goals. These guidelines should incorporate budgets, deadlines, targets, sales forecasts and marketing strategies with quantifiable objectives. For example, increasing your database is a good goal to aim for, but make it more specific like increasing the database by 1000 new clients by 30 June 2017. You would then need to list what strategies will make this achievable.

Highlight key times on the calendar year

Identify the important dates throughout the year that will provide you with opportunities to connect with your customers. Valentine's Day, Easter, Christmas, School holidays are all peak purchasing times, so they are ideal times to push your products or services. If you run a financial services company, you could offer customers a special deal on budgeting advice so they don't get into debt over the festive season. Restaurants could provide special offers to any couple that choose to dine with them on Valentine's. Also find out when the large trade shows are coming to your area, there's unlimited potential to reach new clients at events like the Royal Easter Show and travel expos.

Plan for something fresh

Don't use the same old tried and tested marketing techniques that you've applied year after year. Plan for a new approach to marketing. If radio advertising and press ads aren't working for you, get a corporate brochure. If you're always sending out mail drops, try an e-newsletter. There are plenty of ways to change things up like updating your packaging, having a new product, starting a YouTube channel and revamping your tired old website. Be bold, be brave and freshen things up.

5 SECRETS TO MAKING YOUR WEBSITE RANK HIGHER

When you're small fry swimming in the big worldwide web pond, how are you supposed to compete when pitching your products against the big brand names? The answer is simple. You need to boost your search engine ranking to guarantee you are reaching your potential target audience. There are a few tactical secrets to achieving this and XDesigns can share them with you absolutely free.

Secret 1

Find out the exact phrases and keywords your potential target audience are looking for by researching the most popular words and phrases entered into the most commonly used search engines. It may sound difficult, but it's as easy as logging on to Google Keyword tool and searching the terms you would enter if you were looking for your own website.

It's not about selecting the keywords or phrases with the highest number of global searches, instead you need to choose the keywords and phrases you will use in your website copy by thinking about:

- 1. How relevant is the keyword or phrase to your website?**
- 2. How many other people are using the same keyword or phrases?**
- 3. Which keywords or phrases have the highest search volumes?**

Secret 2

When you have selected your phrases or keywords, it's important to incorporate them in the website copy. Correct placement is important. Generally your keywords should appear with 3 to 5 per cent saturation, but no more. You still want your copy to read well without it sounding like your keywords have been stuffed into every second sentence.

An example of badly written website copy with keywords: If you are planning a romantic candle lit night and need to buy candles, we are your candle specialist for rechargeable LED candles, candles with remote control and scented candles.

Secret 3

Ensure you use your keywords within the meta description, in titles and headings. If this all sounds a bit like understanding ancient hieroglyphics, it might be worth the money to get the advice of a proven graphic design and search engine optimising specialist.

Secret 4

Do a link exchange with other websites. Basically it's a "I'll list your link on my website if you list mine on yours." This is often referred to as back links.

Secret 5

Regularly update your website. No one has the time or wants to regularly update the main website copy, so the best way around this is to start a blog.

3 REASON YOU NEED TO CHOOSE CONTENT MARKETING

1. Increase your visibility on the internet.

Ever had a friend with a problem you don't know how to solve? Instead of admitting you haven't a clue, you "Google" the solution. Whatever your problem whether it's how to lighten images in Photoshop to unblocking a toilet — Google has the answers. So it's important your business provides answers for all the problems your customers might encounter by providing searchable content. This is known as content marketing.

Regularly update a blog. If you have an insurance website, you might want to host a blog with answers to everyday problems potential customers might be interested in knowing. Your blog topics don't have to be directly about the type of insurances or premiums. You could include topics like "Do I really need pet insurance?" or "The top 10 ways to deter burglars."

Write quality articles for online publications or ezines, and if you can't string a sentence together – find someone who can.

Presentations with provide solutions to problem solving. For example: If you are a plumber you might want to provide a presentation on "What to do during a plumbing emergency" which draws people to your website.

Create a monthly newsletter which can be emailed out to your database.

Use company events and post photos to make your company seem more approachable.

2. Content marketing doesn't have to be expensive

It costs very little to add on a blog to your website, create an enewsletter or update your Facebook or Twitter page. The most expensive aspect will be your time. Of course you can pull out the big guns like IBM's Cityone gaming website (Well worth checking out to see what you can do if you have lots of money), but you don't have to spend thousands.

3. Content marketing creates an emotional bond with your potential clients

Interesting content is going to keep bring your readers back to your website. For example; let's look at Purina. While they predominantly market pet foods, they know if there is one thing people are passionate about, it's their animals. So not only do Purina provide information about their products, they also provide information on every topic under the sun from pet nutrition and health problems to how to pick a new kitten.

The underlying subtext is that if you want healthy pets, and care about animals as much as Purina, you'll choose Purina pet food next time you're at the supermarket.

DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT CONTENT MARKETING

LIE 1

It's less work

Content marketing - you just write the website copy, post on Facebook or Twitter occasionally and you're done, Right? Hold that thought. It is not as simple as stringing a few sentences together about your product or service.

There's researching which keywords perform better, market research, making sure the content is search engine optimised, regularly reviewing the website content, assessing your resources and that's just scratching the surface.

LIE 2

No need to update it

Content marketing is not done and dusted when you insert the last full stop and the website goes live. There's blogging, reviewing copy and website analytics, responding to website enquiries, moderating blog comments. Can't it be automated so you can set and forget? Well there are some options you can set up to reduce the workload. For example if someone emails your company via the website, you can set up an automatic response to indicate the email has been received and how long before they can expect a reply, but there is no way to program content creation, strategies for social media and website management, engaging with your customers and monitoring your analytics.

LIE 3

It's cheap

Content marketing is often thought to be free. Compared to taking out a billboard in the heart of Kings Cross, of course a Facebook promotion is going to be cheaper, but it's like comparing oranges and apples – they're both fruit, each with their own nutritional benefits, but you wouldn't ditch one, in favour of the other because they both reach different audiences.

Chances are your social media promotion isn't going to go viral overnight. This takes time, money, consistency and employing a well thought out strategy.

LIE 4

It can be handled by a Facebook savvy office junior

Managing your social media strategies is not a task to be handed over to the office receptionist for when time allows. Content marketing requires skill and just because your employee is young and Facebook savvy, doesn't mean they have the talent to create content, apply social media strategies and ensure content is search engine optimised. Companies are now opting to hire experienced copywriters and journalists to handle their social media marketing. An office junior is never going to be able to match the talents experience professionals bring to the table.

5 TRIED AND TESTED WAYS TO REACH YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE ONLINE

One of the most important components of reaching your target market audience online is finding ways to connect with your potential clients.

Here are 5 tried and tested ways to reach your target market online.

1. Get social

Align yourself with social channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, SnapChat) that your prospective clients are already using. Actively encourage discussions by using questions and join conversations.

2. Get advertising

If you've used a search engine or Facebook, no doubt you will have noticed the advertisements which appear at the top or side of the page, seem to relate to whatever you've mentioned on Facebook or typed into a search engine. Ad networks use platforms designed to target potential customers based on key words. For example: Update your Facebook status with "I'm so sick of renting" and you're likely to see real estate ads in your area. This is a great way to connect with people who might be in need of your products or service.

3. Get blogging

By regularly updating a blog which provides information on how-to or your thoughts on what's happening within the industry, it will encourage prospects to seek you out. Become aware of the type of information your target audience will actively be searching for and make a point of answering these questions in an informative and interesting way.

4. Let others speak for you

Prospective clients are more likely to believe what others have to say about you rather than you tooting your own horn. Customer testimonials which highlight your difference from your competitors is one of the best ways to do this. Video testimonies are much more persuasive than written ones. Perhaps ask satisfied customers if they can recommend you on Facebook or commend you on LinkedIn.

5. Combined forces

Ever heard the saying if you can't beat them – join them? Find businesses which complement the service or product you provide and combined forces. After all, two heads are better than one. Write guest blogs once a month, share posts or retweet their updates, you could even co-host an e-book or webinar. It's a good way to get your name out there.

DOES YOUR COMPANY REALLY NEED A FACEBOOK PAGE?

Even though Facebook was launched in 2004, it's still a fairly new method of marketing and reaching potential customers. A fairly common comment business owners are making is "Does my business really need a Facebook page?"

If you're one of these company directors that think Facebook is just a phase or sounds like too much hard work, ask yourself this question – "Where else am I going to find an audience of over one billion users aged between 18 to 70?"

Having a Facebook page for your company is one thing, knowing how to use it to its potential is another. Here are 5 important ways to ensure you are getting the most from your company Facebook page.

1) Create a profile page. Choose a banner and profile photo that reflect your company's branding. For example; your Facebook banner could be a photo of your commercial premises, your employees in action or even your branded company vehicles. Use a logo for the profile page.

2) Invite as many people as possible to join your page. You need at least 25 members before your commercial page will be granted a Facebook website address. Getting your page out into the wider Facebook community relies on your friends liking and sharing your page in the hope their friends will like it and share it with their friends.

3) Keep it interesting. Post regular updates keeping your fans updated on what's going on with your business. It could be anything from special offers for Facebook fans to competitions, even photos of staff giving back to the community or Friday funnies.

4) Design a landing page for newcomers. A landing page is a specially designed page which links to your Facebook page but allows you to ask new visitors to your page to like it, and may be an opportunity to glean information from the users through use of a short survey.

5) Try to encourage interaction with your friends. Ask questions about what they think? Comment on current affairs which make provoke a reaction. Their comments on your site will attract the attention of their friends.

9 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS TO INTERACT

Are you posting content on Facebook and posing questions to your followers, just to be met with little to no response? Find out how you can create engaging posts to encourage interaction from your fans.

1. Link your posts to your website

It's simple to copy and paste URLs from your website into the status bar. It automatically posts the page title, meta description and images from that URL while allowing you to customise the text. Clicking on the attached images will redirect followers straight to your website.

2. Keep photos and videos interesting

Compelling photos and video clips attract attention and help your post stand out in a sea of posts from friends and other fan pages. Share photos of your customers enjoying your products. For example: If you own a restaurant, instead of posting a copy of the menu, use a video where your customers are commenting on the food or service, or enjoying dessert. Perhaps your staff could undertake the latest viral challenge like the Ice Bucket Challenge.

3. K.I.S.S. it

Keep It Short and Simple. Pretend you have limited characters to communicate what you want to say, around 110 and 150 characters will ensure you keep it brief.

4. Encourage conversation with your fans

Invite your fans to comment on your products or services the find a way to demonstrate you've taken their ideas on board. It's a great way to express you appreciate their feedback and are display willing to accommodate their needs. For example: A gaming company could ask their Facebook audience on ideas for games they'd like to see created, then put the best ideas into production.

5. Post special offers for Facebook fans

Limited deals especially for your Facebook fans can be used as an incentive to join your page in the first place and to keep your audience from losing interest. For example, secret passwords can be utilised to get a discount in-store when purchasing. Adding an end date will prompt fans to take action sooner, rather than later.

6. Provide VIP information

Make your fans feel part of an exclusive club by providing them with sneak previews, special information not available to any other customers and competitions. For example: For Christmas you could do 12 days of Christmas giveaway. Every day post a product photo you're giving away to one lucky Facebook fan.

7. Be community minded

You don't have to necessarily post products or services on your Facebook page. When there's a natural disaster or a global event that is trending in the media, it's an ideal opportunity to let your Facebook fans know you're more than just a company - you're a company that cares.

8. Respond in a timely fashion

Timeliness is everything when your Facebook fans have commented or asked questions on your page. The quicker you respond, the more probable they will interact with you in the future.

9. Monitor page insights

Keeping an eye on your page insights and Facebook analytics will help you keep your content relevant and get an idea of what is working and what isn't.

DO YOU NEED A MOBILE FRIENDLY WEBSITE?

Sitting on the train from Hornsby into Central station every morning, every second person seems to have their head down, clutching some sort of glowing device and is frantically tapping away at a screen. Be it an iPod touch, iPad or Smartphone, it's hard to ignore the fact that portable technology is becoming more prevalent. It's believed the number of users increase every day and is said that over 83 million web users who access the internet do it via their mobile device.

In the age of portable digital devices, which are now outselling PCs, it's not enough for business owners to have a website. Now there's the need for their website to be mobile-friendly as well.

For technophobes, the easiest solution might be to throw your arms in the air and try and ignore the rapidly increasing pace of technology, but it's a sure-fire way to lose customers. Websites that aren't optimised for mobile use are extremely difficult to navigate. The text is often microscopic. It requires having to zoom in and move the page around in an attempt to find what you're looking for. In fact it's just a pain in the butt, so unless you have a mobile-friendly site, it's likely a potential customer will log on to a competitor's website if you haven't moved with the times.

Mobile friendly sites are quicker to download. They're not bogged down with large images or fancy web banners using java or flash which take forever to download and chew through data allowance like hungry termites. Having a mobile optimised website is cheaper than having an app created for you. Apps need to be created in a variety of platforms so they are compatible with the mobile device. For example an app created for a blackberry won't work on the Android platform. Mobile friendly websites don't present the same compatibility issues which may arise if you were to have an app designed.

Your competitors already have optimised websites, so what are you waiting for? Talk to a proven graphic design company today.

HOW TO BLOG FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Everyone is doing it – blogging that is. Or at least it seems that way. You’ve thought about setting a blog for your business, but how do you go about it? What would you write? Why is it even necessary? If you’ve ever wondered about blogging for your business, then you’ve come to the right place. Having a blog allows your business to have a voice on the web. It’s a nifty way of allowing you to interact with your target audience on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, get information back from your blog readers which you can use to improve your product or service, while at the same time increasing your knowledge about what your prospective customers really want.

A lack of know-how, the time and commitment to regularly keep the blog updated, being a technophobe and the fear of what people will say are the main deterrents. However there’s no better way to learn than just to take the bull by the horns and start writing.

Wordpress.com has a blog format which you can have up and running within 5 minutes if you’re unsure of how to set one up as part of your company website. You can write the content yourself or if you don’t think you have the time or writing isn’t one of your strong points, you can always engage the services of a professional SEO copywriter. A professional copywriter with SEO skills a knowledge will have a working knowledge of Google principles and keyword usage throughout the copy will allow your blog to be easily found via search engine.

What do you put in your blog? The content needs to be useful. You can write about the latest news, how to guides, news relevant to your industry and make it interesting by putting a little personality into it. You can experiment with different content, because unlike print, a blog can always be changed. Make sure you always use a punchy headline which creates interest. If you find this difficult use the four “U’s” – make it **USEFUL**, **UNIQUE**, **URGENT** and **ULTRA SPECIFIC**. People in social media share or retweet blogs sometimes purely based on the headline. A good way to test whether your headlines generate interest is to tweet or share a couple of ideas on Twitter or Facebook and wait and see which has the most response. Stop procrastinating and start your blog today. There’s no time like the present.

WHAT ARE LEAD MAGNETS AND WHY DO YOU NEED TO USE THEM?

A lead magnet is a freebie or special deal on your website, which captures your website visitors' email addresses. It turns browsers into subscribers with a better success rate than most other email gleaning alternatives.

Think of a lead magnet as a fishing lure. It has to be an attractive offer to reel in the big fish.

In other words, what you're offering has to entice visitors to your page and make the effort of actually entering their email address worthwhile.

It can be a tough ask in a digital world where sometimes just clicking like or share seems to be like a big effort and spamming and scamming can be a concern.

Simply using a newsletter or offer subscription box isn't going to bait customers into divulging their details. Location, design, relevance, simplicity and compelling copy are all important components to creating a persuasive lead magnet.

A lead magnet needs to be concise about what the customer will receive in turn for giving you their email details. Use bribery, something a customer would normally expect to pay for, but will get free by simply providing their email address. For example: A weight loss companies might offer a week's long menu plan or an eBook on the 10 Foods You Should Never Eat.

Ensure you follow-up and each lead receives their free offer or deal in a timely manner, otherwise you're likely to end up with customers who feel like they've been duped into joining your email list. Generally, website visitors who are duped into parting with their contact details will end up feeling discontent with your company,

and unsubscribed next time they see an email from you. Captured email addresses can be added to your contact database (sometimes referred to as a sales funnel). However most visitors to your website won't buy anything on their first visit and an eye-catching lead magnet will only get you so far.

You need to put in place a great follow-up strategy to foster your leads and transform them into sales. For more information on setting up lead magnets for your website or blog, contact the team at XDesigns.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO REBRAND?

Rebranding your business can be a big undertaking as there's more to a brand than simply refreshing your logo or revamping website copy.

A rebrand requires you to evaluate your company's positioning, the mission, the clear messages you want the public take away from your marketing collateral, as well as an overhaul of your stationary, signage, business premises, advertising, social network strategies, right down to how your logo looks.

As marketing professionals, we're often asked the question "Do you think we need to rebrand?"

If you can answer yes to at least one of these reasons, it may be time to book yourself an appointment with the XDesigns team for a complimentary brand session.

Your business has never had a professional brand makeover

Often business owners who start out working from home and suddenly find their overnight their company has blossomed bigger than they could ever imagined have never sat down with marketing professionals to develop a consistent brand strategy. They may have a template website with free website hosting and logos designed by friends.

Your branding is dated

If your logo was designed back in the days when before the invention of MTV and when wearing rainbow leg warmers were still in fashion, it's time to help your company transform into the 21st century.

Your current brand has adverse connotations associated with it

Perhaps your business has been dragged through the courts, associated with people who have ruined its reputation or received bad press from leaving behind a large carbon footprint; a fresh brand overhaul may help disentangle your company from any previous bad publicity.

In 1991 Kentucky Fried Chicken underwent a rebrand and changed its name to KFC. Their reasoning was to disassociate themselves from the negative connotations of serving fried food, given the public's new focus on eating healthier.

You're branching into different products, services or regions

Beginners in business usually start out focusing on one product or service, as the business starts to grow and accumulate a clients, you may decide to extend your vision to include an international market, a variety of products or even add more services to your repertoire. A rebrand will be able to refocus your direction.

Your business functionality has changed

If you've changed the way you are conducting business, for example; you're ditching old processes for a cleaner, greener way of operating or perhaps you've changed your mission to be more community focused, you can use this in your branding to highlight your point of difference.

You've merged or taken over a company

Taken over a business that's gone into liquidation or you may even have merged with a new business, in both circumstances, it's definitely time for a rebrand.

To take the first steps in getting your rebrand underway, talk to the marketing professionals which can take your business success to the next level.

GET **YOUR** MESSAGE HEARD

**BOOK YOUR
COMPLIMENTARY
BRANDING
SESSION**

All the business advice in the world is useless unless you are technically savvy. If you want your business marketing come alive, talk to us here at XDesigns. It starts with a conversation in a complimentary branding session.

Our aim is to give you good insights into your current brand, changes or updates you could make and how you can apply this immediately to your business.

Some of the areas we will uncover:

- **Your logo is the main element of our corporate identity**
- **Does your business professionally present in the market place and we'll explore how it stacks up against your competitors.**
- **Does your marketing material tell your prospects what you do straight away?**
- **What you need to do to build your brand and get more out of your advertising dollars**

We'll ramp up the session with some clear points as to what you can do get more out of your advertising dollars.

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