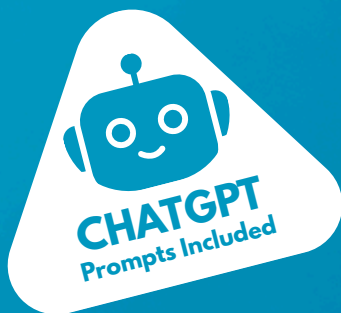




Marketing, Properly Explained

A Clear, Practical Guide To
Building Your Brand, Finding
Your Audience, And Mastering
The Basics Of Marketing



THE SME
MARKETING GUY





Quick Intro...

Marketing is the heartbeat of every business... without it, your message stays unheard and your brand invisible. This Playbook breaks down the theory of marketing into simple, practical ideas you can apply today. Whether you're a start-up or a small business owner, you'll learn how to build a brand people care about, reach the right audience, and grow with confidence. No jargon, no hype, just clear, proven marketing foundations.

The 3 Things You'll Learn...

01 The Essentials Of Marketing Theory



You'll learn the timeless models that shape marketing, including the 4 Ps, the Promotional Mix, and brand strategy, giving your business clear structure, focus, and the confidence to plan for long-term success, not quick fixes.

02 Turn Big Goals Into Smart Actions




You'll learn how to segment your market, target the right audience, and position your brand clearly, while also understanding the core building blocks of marketing strategy and writing a marketing plan that gives your strategy focus, clarity, and direction.

03 Track, Measure & Improve Results



You'll discover how brand strategy and management work together to build a reputation that lasts, protect your identity from being diluted, and create the foundation for steady, sustainable business growth that keeps customers coming back.



Marketing is the essential process of connecting your business with the right people by understanding their needs, building trust, and creating lasting relationships that drive action and loyalty

WHAT THE HECK IS MARKETING, REALLY?

When most people hear the word “marketing,” they picture adverts - big, bold TV ads or noisy sales emails. But at its heart, marketing is much simpler. It’s about creating a connection between what your business does and the people who will care enough to take action. Whether you’re running a coffee shop, a tech start-up, or a dog walking service, your business will only survive if people know who you are, what you offer, and why it matters to them.

Marketing is how you make that happen. It’s the art and science of bringing your product, your message, and your audience together. And without it, your business is little more than a well-kept secret.

Marketing Is About Human Behaviour, Not Shiny Tools

Forget the buzzwords and latest trends for a moment. The roots of marketing go much deeper. At its core, marketing is about understanding human beings... what makes them curious, what makes them trust, and ultimately what makes them act.

Whether you post a TikTok video or print a flyer for your local village noticeboard, the principle is the same:

	Who do you want to reach?		What do they need to hear to care?
	Where are they spending their time?		How will you help solve their problem?

If you think of marketing only as a set of tools (social media, ads, websites), you’ll miss the point. The tools are how we deliver the message. But the message itself, and the audience it’s meant for, is what really matters.



The Marketing Funnel

Marketers often explain how people go from “never heard of you” to “buying from you” using a simple model called the marketing funnel. It describes how people move through different stages of awareness:

1

Awareness: They discover your business exists. This could be through a Google search, a friend’s recommendation, or seeing your sign outside.

2

Interest: Something about you catches their eye. They want to know more.

3

Consideration: They compare your business with other options.

4

Action: They buy, book, sign up, or visit.

5

Loyalty: If you deliver on your promise, they come back again.

6

Advocacy: If you go above and beyond, they tell others about you.

In simple terms: First they notice you. Then they like you. Then they trust you enough to buy.



Marketing Is An Investment, Not A Cost

Many small businesses in the UK still treat marketing like an optional extra. Something you spend on only when sales are slow, or when there's leftover budget (which rarely happens). But smart businesses (the ones that survive long-term!) treat marketing as an essential, ongoing investment. Why? Because marketing isn't about chasing sales today. It's about building awareness and trust that keeps your business alive tomorrow.

A brand-new accountancy firm, starts posting helpful tax tips on Instagram every week, partners with a local charity to offer free financial workshops, and gives new clients a branded notebook to say thank you. A plumber who gets Google reviews and sponsors the village football team is doing marketing too. These are small but powerful habits that build awareness and loyalty over time.


The Difference Between Sales and Marketing

One of the biggest confusions beginners face is the difference between sales and marketing. Here's the simplest way to put it:

Marketing builds the relationship and creates interest

Sales asks for the commitment and closes the deal

Marketing might get someone to walk into your shop. Sales happens when they take out their wallet. In a small business, the same person often does both, but understanding the difference helps you see where your time is best spent.

A young man with curly hair is shown in profile, looking down at his work at a coffee bar. The background is blurred, showing shelves with coffee-related items. The overall tone is blue and professional.

The Marketing Mix, made up of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (plus People, Process, and Physical Evidence for services), forms the essential foundation for creating, delivering, and communicating your business's value to the right customers

THE BUILDING BLOCKS: THE 4 Ps OF MARKETING (AND BEYOND)

When you strip marketing back to its roots, you'll find a framework that's been used for decades to build successful businesses, big and small. It's called the Marketing Mix, most famously broken down into what we call the 4 Ps of Marketing.

The 4 Ps - Product, Price, Place, and Promotion - help you shape your offer, find your customers, and communicate your value clearly. As marketing has evolved, some businesses, especially service-based ones, also add a few more Ps to the mix. We'll cover those too.

#1 - PRODUCT: What You Sell And Why It Matters

Your product (or service) is the heart of your business. But it's not enough to simply offer something, it needs to solve a problem, meet a need, or fulfil a desire. Your product should answer this basic question: "Why would someone choose this instead of doing nothing or going elsewhere?"

A new accountancy firm like doesn't just sell tax returns. They sell clarity, confidence, and time saved, things their customers genuinely value.

When you define your product, think about:



What problem does it solve?



What's unique or better about it?



How will the customer's life be easier, happier, or simpler because of it?



#2 - PRICE: The Value You Put On Your Work

Price is more than a number, it's a signal. It tells your customers where you position yourself in the market. High prices suggest premium service or exclusivity. Lower prices suggest accessibility or simplicity.

The key to setting your price is balancing three things:



The value your product delivers.



What your target market can afford or is willing to pay.



Where you sit compared to your competitors.

Price wrongly, and you risk undervaluing your offer or putting people off before they've even experienced your business.



Set your price based on the value you deliver, not what feels safe. Undervaluing your work attracts the wrong customers and weakens trust in your business.



#3 - PLACE: Where Customers Find You

Place originally meant your physical shop or store, but today it's also digital. It refers to anywhere your customers encounter your business - a high street, a website, a social media platform, or a Google search.

Ask yourself:



Where are your customers looking when they need what you sell?



Are you showing up there?



Are you making it easy for them to access what you offer?

For a new accountancy firm, for example, it might mean having a Google Business Profile, being listed on local directories, and attending local networking events. It's about meeting your customers where they already are.



**Don't wait for customers to find you...
put your business where they already
spend their time, both online and offline.**



#4 - PROMOTION: How You Spread The Word

Promotion covers all the ways you tell people your business exists. This is where most beginners focus, but it's only one part of the puzzle. Promotion includes:

Social media posts

Google Ads or
Facebook Ads

PR and media
coverage

Word-of-mouth
recommendations

Email newsletters

Local
sponsorships

The best promotion happens consistently, not just when sales are slow.

The Extra Ps: Especially Useful For Service Businesses

For service businesses, marketers often add a few more Ps. These help shape the customer experience:

- **People:** The staff who deliver your service and how they represent your brand.
- **Process:** The steps customers go through when they buy from you, and how smooth or painful those steps are.
- **Physical Evidence:** The proof your business exists and is trustworthy. This could be your website, your branded invoices, your office signage, or your client testimonials.



The Ps Work Together, Not Separately

The danger for beginners is thinking these Ps sit in separate boxes. They don't. They overlap and influence one another.

If your product is brilliant but your price is confusing, you'll struggle. If your place is perfect but your promotion is invisible, no one will find you.

Marketing is strongest when the Ps work in harmony to create one clear, compelling offer.

Keep It Simple To Start

You don't need to be an expert in all the Ps to get started. Most small businesses start with a simple offer, a clear price, a place where they can be found, and one or two ways of promoting themselves. That alone can take you further than most.



You can post every day and run ads all week, but if your product, price, place, and promotion don't align, your marketing will fall flat. Build the basics first... then tell the world.



Different to The
Marketing Mix,
“The Promotional Mix” is
the set of tools you use
to help the right people
discover, trust, and buy
from your business

WHAT GOES INTO PROMOTION? THE PROMOTIONAL MIX EXPLAINED

Promotion is one of the most exciting parts of marketing, it's where your business steps out into the world and says, "Here's what we do." But promotion isn't just about running ads or shouting the loudest. It's about choosing the right mix of activities that help the right people discover, trust, and eventually buy from your business.

This collection of activities is called the Promotional Mix. It's the toolkit you draw from to spread the word, whether you're running a one-person start-up or a national brand.



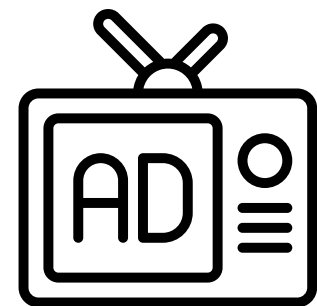
Don't try to use every promotional tool at once... start with two or three that fit your audience and budget, focus on doing them consistently, and build from there as your confidence and results grow.



#1 - ADVERTISING: Paying To Get In Front Of People Fast

Advertising means paying to promote your business on platforms where your customers already spend time. This could be:

- **Google Ads**
- **Facebook and Instagram Ads**
- **Sponsored posts on LinkedIn**
- **Print adverts in local newspapers or magazines**
- **Outdoor ads like bus stops or billboards**
- **Radio and digital radio ads**



Advertising helps you reach people quickly, but it costs money. If you're going to advertise, track whether you're getting real results (like enquiries or sales), not just clicks and views.

#2 - PUBLIC RELATIONS: Earning Trust Through Media And Community

PR is about earning attention, rather than buying it. This could be through:

- **A feature in your local newspaper**
- **An interview on a podcast**
- **A blog article covering your story**
- **Helping with a local charity event**

Good PR builds trust because it comes from a third party, not from you. People trust what others say about your business more than what you say about yourself. For example, an accountancy firm could run a free community workshop on budgeting for families, leading to coverage in the local paper. It's helpful, human, and worth talking about.



#3 - SALES PROMOTION: Giving People A Reason To Act Now

Sales promotions are short-term offers designed to encourage quick decisions. They add urgency and give people a reason to take action.

Common sales promotions include:

- **Discount codes for new customers**
- **“Limited time only” offers**
- **Buy one, get one free deals**
- **Referral bonuses when someone brings a friend**
- **Competitions and giveaways**



The key with promotions is to use them wisely. If you always offer a discount, people will wait for one. Use them to create spikes of interest, not a permanent habit.

#4 - DIRECT MARKETING: Personal And Targeted Communication

Direct marketing means communicating straight to your potential customers in a personal way. It can be physical or digital, and it often works best when it feels helpful, not spammy. Examples include:

- **Email newsletters**
- **Direct mail leaflets or postcards**
- **SMS offers**
- **Personalised messages through LinkedIn or networking groups**

Small businesses often start with an email newsletter... simple, free, and easy to manage. Over time, this helps build a loyal audience.



#5 - PERSONAL SELLING: Conversations That Build Trust

Personal selling is old-school but still powerful. It's when you or your team speak directly with a customer, answering questions and building trust one-to-one.

This might happen:

- **In a free consultation**
- **At a networking event**
- **Over the phone or on a Zoom call**
- **In your shop, café, or office**



For service businesses an accountancy firm for example, personal selling is essential. Most customers won't buy professional services without first talking to the person behind the business.

#6 - DIGITAL MARKETING: Where Most Small Businesses Start

This is the part of the Promotional Mix most start-ups use first. Posting on social media, writing blogs, improving your Google search rankings (SEO), and sometimes partnering with influencers. Examples include:

- **Writing blog articles that answer common questions**
- **Creating videos showing how your service works**
- **Using SEO to appear when people search for your services**

Digital marketing is low-cost to start but needs consistency to work well.



#7 - SPONSORSHIP & EVENTS: Putting Your Business In The Heart Of The Community

Sponsoring an event or running your own is a brilliant way to build brand recognition and goodwill. For example:

- Sponsor a local football team
- Host a business networking event
- Take a stall at a village fair
- Run a charity fundraising event




Sponsorship puts your brand in front of a new audience and shows your business cares about something bigger than profit.

Picking Your Promotional Mix: Start Simple, Grow Later

You don't need to use every part of the Promotional Mix right away. Most businesses start with two or three channels and build from there. For example:

- **A small retailer might use Instagram Ads (Advertising), a grand opening sale (Sales Promotion), and email newsletters (Direct Marketing).**
- **A new fitness studio might launch with Facebook Ads (Advertising), a free trial class event (Sponsorship & Events), and regular Instagram workout tips (Digital & Social Media Marketing).**

The best promotional strategy fits your audience, your strengths, and your budget. Start small, stay consistent, and build as your confidence and results grow.



Marketing is the
essential driver of your
business's growth,
creating awareness,
trust, and interest...
without it, even the best
products or services will
remain invisible

WHY YOUR BUSINESS IS NOTHING WITHOUT MARKETING

You could have the best product or service in your town, but if no one knows you're there, it won't matter. Your business will quietly fade into the background while louder, clearer competitors win the customers who could have been yours.

This is why marketing is not an optional extra. It's how your business survives. It's how you build awareness, trust, and interest long before anyone buys from you.

Marketing Builds The Pathway To Sales

Think of marketing and sales like two halves of the same bridge:

Marketing brings people onto the bridge

Sales helps them cross it

If you only focus on sales without marketing, there'll be no one on the bridge. If you market but never close a sale, you'll entertain but never grow. Both parts matter. Marketing creates the audience. Sales converts them into customers.



Before you focus on closing sales, focus on getting noticed, because no sales strategy, no matter how clever, will work if people aren't aware your business exists in the first place. Marketing brings people onto the bridge, sales helps them cross it.



People Buy What They Know, Like, And Trust

Customers rarely buy from strangers. Especially in the UK, where trust takes time to build, people buy from businesses they feel familiar with. Marketing helps your business:



**Get known through
promotion**



**Get liked through
personality and value**



**Get trusted through
consistency and proof**

**It's simple really: People buy
from businesses they know,
like, and trust**



You can discount your prices or push your sales, but if people don't know you, like you, or trust you yet, they won't buy. Focus on being visible, helpful, and human first.



Stop Thinking Of Marketing As Just “Getting Sales”

Marketing is much bigger than sales. Here’s what marketing also does for your business:

1

Builds your brand identity: your tone, your message, your personality.

2

Keeps you front of mind: so when people finally need what you offer, they remember you.

3

Differentiates you from competitors: making your business stand out.

4

Creates long-term relationships: so customers keep coming back.

Sales is a moment. Marketing is the journey that gets people to that moment and keeps them coming back after.



Without Marketing, Word Of Mouth Is Slow And Unpredictable

Yes, word of mouth is powerful. But without marketing to spark those first conversations, your business is relying on chance. You'll grow painfully slowly. Marketing gives you control. You choose how your story spreads, where it shows up, and who hears it first.

Marketing Is The Engine, Not The Paintwork

One mistake start-ups make is focusing only on branding - logos, colours, websites. But branding alone won't bring people in.

Marketing is the engine underneath the brand. It's what turns awareness into action. A beautiful logo without a marketing plan is like a sports car without fuel.

So, What Should You Do First?

If you're new to marketing, start small but start consistently:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | Pick one or two promotional channels |  | Set a clear goal (e.g., get 10 enquiries a month). |
|  | Show up regularly |  | Measure what's working, and adjust |

A photograph of two men standing in a parking lot filled with white delivery trucks. Both men are wearing high-visibility yellow safety vests over their work clothes. The man on the left is wearing a grey cap and a jacket, while the man on the right is wearing a grey knit beanie and a jacket. The background shows several white trucks parked in a lot, with a blue fence and trees visible in the distance. The overall scene is dimly lit, suggesting an overcast day or dusk.

Your brand is the
reputation and
personality your business
builds over time, and
managing it well means
consistently delivering the
values, voice, and
experience you want
customers to remember

BRAND STRATEGY: DEFINING WHO YOU ARE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Brand strategy is the long-term plan for how you want your business to be seen. It's not a one-off project, it's the foundation your brand will grow from.

Your brand strategy defines:

What your business stands for.

Who your ideal customers are.

How you want to make people feel.

What makes you different from competitors.

The tone of voice and style you'll use in all your marketing.

Think of it as your brand's personality, promise, and purpose, written down clearly, so you never forget who you are.

Why Brand Strategy Matters

In a crowded market, customers have endless choices. A strong brand strategy helps you:

Stand out from similar businesses.

Build trust and loyalty over time.

Communicate clearly and consistently.

Attract the right kind of customers.

Without a strategy, your brand will blend in. With one, it will stick in people's minds.



A clear brand strategy makes sure your business isn't just another option in a crowded market, it helps you stand out, build trust, and stay memorable to the people who matter most.

The Core Elements Of Brand Strategy

Brand strategy brings structure and purpose to how a brand is perceived, ensuring every element works together to build a clear and lasting identity. At its heart, it answers who the brand is, who it serves, and how it stands apart.

1

Purpose And Values: A brand's purpose and values define its reason for existing and shape how it behaves in the marketplace.

2

Audience Understanding: Ensures the brand speaks to the right people with relevance and clarity.

3

Personality And Voice: Creates emotional connection and shape the tone of every communication.

4

Positioning: Defines how a brand is seen in relation to competitors and why it matters to its audience.

5

Consistency: Consistency in design, language, and message helps build trust and recognition over time.

6

Application Across Touchpoints: A strategy is complete when it influences how the brand appears, sounds, and acts across every customer interaction.

As a beginner, you don't need a 30-page brand manual. Start with a one-page document that defines your purpose, audience, personality, and message. As your business grows, you'll refine and expand it naturally.



Brand Management Keeps Strategy Alive In The Real World

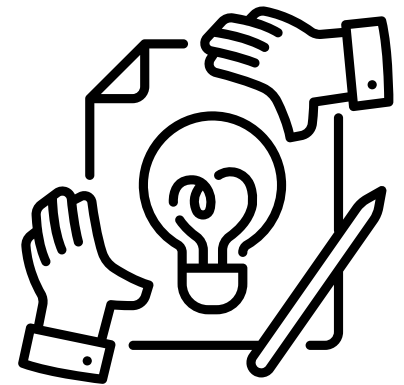
If brand strategy defines what a brand should be, brand management ensures it stays that way. It is the ongoing process of protecting your brand's reputation, keeping your messaging consistent, and ensuring every interaction lives up to your promise.

Without strong brand management, even the best strategy fades over time, confused by inconsistent actions or damaged by poor experiences.

The Role Of Brand Management

Brand management controls how your business is seen through:


- **Every marketing message**
- **Every customer interaction**
- **Every product or service experience**
- **Every visual and verbal element people encounter**



It's not just for the marketing team. In small businesses, it's the responsibility of the founder, the team, and anyone who represents the brand.



Your brand isn't shaped by one big campaign, it's built through small, consistent actions like clear messaging, great service, and professional responses that protect your reputation over time.



Segmentation, Targeting,
and Positioning (STP)
helps you focus your
marketing on the right
people, craft a message
they care about, and
stand out clearly from
your competitors

SEGMENTATION, TARGETING & POSITIONING (STP)

One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is trying to market to “everyone.” But not everyone wants, needs, or values what you offer. The businesses that succeed know exactly who they’re speaking to and they shape their message for that group.

This is where the classic STP framework comes in: Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning. It’s a simple way to break down your market, focus your efforts, and build a brand that stands out.

Segmentation: Breaking Down The Market Into Groups

Segmentation is where you divide your potential market into smaller groups who share similar traits. These groups could be based on:

- **Demographics: Age, gender, income, occupation.**
- **Location: Country, city, rural vs urban areas.**
- **Behaviour: What they buy, how they shop, when they purchase.**
- **Needs/Challenges: What problems they’re trying to solve.**
- **Lifestyle/Values: What they care about, how they spend their time.**

Targeting: Choosing Which Groups To Focus On

Once you’ve split your market into segments, you need to decide which ones to focus on. No business can serve everyone well. Ask yourself:

- Which group do I understand best?
- Where is the demand strong enough to make a living?
- Which segment is the most profitable or easiest to reach?
- Who do I enjoy working with?

A accountancy firm, for example, might decide to focus on start-ups and sole traders because they’re relatable, easy to reach online, and often overlooked by bigger firms.

That focus keeps your marketing clear and efficient.



Positioning: Defining How You Want To Be Seen

Positioning is all about how your chosen audience sees your business compared to competitors. Ask yourself:

- **What makes you different from others in your space?**
- **Why should your target market choose you?**
- **What message do you want them to associate with your brand?**


Bringing STP Together

Here's how STP works in action:

Step	Example Outcome
Segmentation	Divide the market: start-ups, freelancers, retailers
Targeting	Focus on start-ups and freelancers
Positioning	"Simple, friendly accounting for busy entrepreneurs"



Use STP to focus your message where it matters, so you stop wasting money shouting at the wrong crowd and start having meaningful conversations with the people most likely to buy.

A photograph of three people sitting at a table in what appears to be a meeting or collaborative work environment. On the left, a man with a beard and glasses is smiling. In the center, a woman with long brown hair is smiling broadly. On the right, a man with glasses and a dark sweater is also smiling. The background is slightly blurred, showing office shelves and plants. The entire image has a semi-transparent blue overlay.

Marketing strategy is your long-term plan that guides your direction, while tactics are the short-term actions you take to achieve that plan... both are essential, but strategy must come first

STRATEGY VS TACTICS: THE TWO SIDES OF MARKETING

In marketing, it's easy to jump straight into the doing... posting on social media, running ads, or printing flyers. But without a bigger picture guiding those actions, you're just busy, not focused. This is where the difference between strategy and tactics matters.

Marketing strategy is your big picture plan

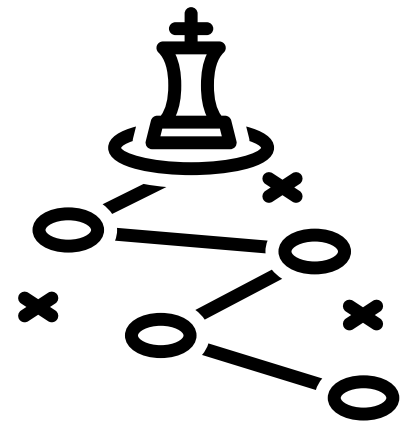
Marketing tactics are the actions you take to bring that plan to life

If you confuse the two, you'll waste time chasing trends and opportunities that don't help your business grow in the right direction.

What Is Marketing Strategy?

Your marketing strategy answers the big questions:

- **Who are we trying to reach?**
- **What do we want them to think, feel, or do?**
- **What makes our business different?**
- **Where do we want to be in the market?**



It's long-term. It's focused. It's the why behind your decisions.

Example: An accountancy firm's strategy might be: "Position ourselves as the trusted accountancy partner for start-ups and microbusinesses in Yorkshire who want simple, jargon-free financial advice."

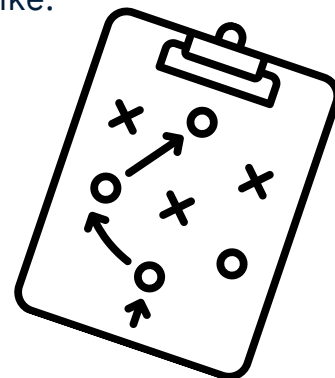
That's a clear strategy. It defines the audience, the offer, and the position in the market.



What Are Marketing Tactics?

Tactics are the tools and actions you use to bring your strategy to life. They are shorter-term and more flexible. Tactics answer questions like:

- **What should we post on social media this week?**
- **Should we run Google Ads next month?**
- **Are we going to a networking event next Thursday?**
- **Do we offer a 10% discount this weekend?**

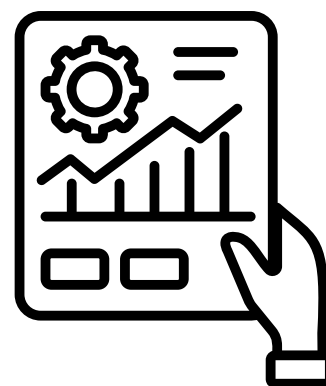


Tactics change as your business grows. Strategy rarely does.

Strategy Is The Map, Tactics Are The Steps

Think of it like going on a journey:


- **Strategy is the map showing your destination and the route you'll take.**
- **Tactics are the steps, turns, and fuel stops you make along the way.**



If you jump straight into tactics without a map, you might be moving, but you're probably going in the wrong direction.



Avoid the classic beginner mistakes: don't rush into tactics without a goal, don't chase trends without purpose, and never leave your audience guessing what you stand for... set your strategy first.

A man with curly hair and a beard, wearing clear safety glasses, is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is blurred, suggesting an industrial or workshop setting. The overall image has a blue tint.

A simple marketing plan gives your business clear goals, the right audience focus, and a manageable set of activities, helping you market with purpose

HOW TO WRITE A SIMPLE MARKETING PLAN

Marketing isn't just about doing lots of things and hoping something sticks. It works best when it's planned, even if your plan is simple. A basic marketing plan helps you stay focused, spend wisely, and measure what's working. You don't need a 20-page document. You just need to answer a few key questions clearly and honestly.

Start With One Clear Goal

Before you post on social media or run an advert, ask yourself: what do I actually want to achieve?

A clear, simple goal might be:

- **Get 10 new client enquiries in the next 3 months.**
- **Sell 100 products in your first month.**
- **Grow your newsletter to 250 subscribers by the end of the year.**

An accountancy firm, for example, might set a goal of gaining 5 new local business clients this quarter. Clear, measurable, and focused. Without a goal, you'll waste time on activities that don't move your business forward.

Plan, Promote, Win...

Ready to take action? Read our Playbook and discover simple, practical steps to create a marketing plan that drives real results for your business.





Know Who You're Talking To

Your marketing isn't for everyone. It's for the people who need what you offer. Describe your ideal customer as clearly as you can:

- **What kind of person or business are they?**
- **What problems do they have that you solve?**
- **Where do they spend time (online and offline)?**
- **What tone of voice or message will connect with them?**

If you try to appeal to everyone, you'll connect with no one.

Pick 2–3 Marketing Channels To Start

Instead of trying to be everywhere, start small. Pick two or three places where your ideal customers are most likely to find you.

For example:

- **A start-up accountancy firm might choose LinkedIn (Digital Marketing), local networking events (Personal Selling), and a small PR story in a business magazine.**
- **A small gift shop might focus on Instagram (Digital Marketing), a loyalty card launch (Sales Promotion), and email newsletters (Direct Marketing).**

Consistency beats complexity. It's better to do a few things well than many things badly.



Decide On Your Message

What do you want people to understand when they see your business? Your message should be simple, clear, and memorable. It could be:

- **“Simple, stress-free accounting for local businesses.”**
- **“Beautiful gifts, handmade in Yorkshire.”**
- **“Helping families protect their finances with easy advice.”**

Your message should answer one question: why should someone care?

Plan Out Your Activities

Next, list out what you’ll do over the next 1-3 months. This could be:

2 social media posts per week

1 local networking event each month

1 blog post every two weeks

**A seasonal promotion
in your shop window**

A leaflet drop in your neighbourhood

**Host a free Q&A session
at a local business hub**



Set A Budget (Even If It's £0)

Decide how much you're happy to spend. Even free marketing takes your time, so be realistic.

- £0: Posting on social media and networking locally
- £100/month: Running small Facebook or Google Ads
- £500 one-off: Hiring a designer for your logo and brand
- £50: Printing flyers for a local event

Start small, measure results, and spend more only when something works.

Track What Works (And What Doesn't)

The final part of your plan is to keep track of your results. You don't need fancy tools to start. Just ask:

- **Did I hit my goal?**
- **Which activities brought me new customers?**
- **What felt like a waste of time?**

Review your plan every month. If something's working, do more of it. If something isn't, tweak it or stop.





Keep Your Plan Simple... Then Improve It Over Time

When you're starting out, it's easy to overthink your marketing plan. You might feel pressure to map out a full year of activity or create a detailed strategy like a big company would. But the truth is, most small businesses waste months stuck in the planning stage, when what really matters is getting started.

A simple, focused plan will always beat an overcomplicated one that never gets used. Begin with the basics:

A clear, measurable goal

A clear picture of who you're talking to

Two or three channels where your audience spends time

A message that explains why you exist

That's enough to build real momentum. As your confidence grows, and as you learn what works for your business, you can add to your plan. Maybe you'll introduce a new social media channel, run your first paid ad, or host an event. But those things come later. Right now, progress matters more than perfection.



When planning your marketing, think about one story you could pitch to your local press... something real, helpful, or inspiring about your business. It's often easier to get your first bit of PR than you think, and it gives your plan instant momentum.



Review Your Plan Regularly

Set a rhythm to review your performance:

Weekly: Quick review of live campaigns

Monthly: Check KPIs against your goals

Quarterly: Review your whole marketing plan... what's working, what's not, and what you'll adjust

This keeps your plan agile and responsive rather than fixed and forgotten.

Adjust, Improve, Repeat

If something works... double down. If something flops... learn and pivot. Over time, you'll build a marketing approach that gets stronger every quarter. The best marketers aren't perfect, they're curious. Review your results without ego. Look for lessons, not excuses.



The smartest marketers aren't the ones who get it right first time. They're the ones who measure every result, learn from every mistake, and constantly refine their plan until the numbers prove they're on the right path.



Want to turn this Playbook into practical use? (and ask AI to help cheat)

1) Open ChatGPT and start a new chat.

2) Upload this Playbook by hitting the + button.

4) Copy and paste the below into the dialogue box (editing the relevant part)...

“You are my marketing strategist. First and foremost scan my website: [enter url] to understand what I do, my brand and my tone. I’ve attached the playbook “Marketing For Beginners” - please ensure you follow it’s theory, guidance and advice.”

followed by any of the below prompts (editing the relevant parts)...

The 4 Ps of Marketing

- “Help me define my product by explaining what problem it solves and why someone should choose it over competitors.”
- “Based on my target market [describe it], suggest three different pricing strategies and their pros and cons.”
- “Where are the best online and offline ‘places’ to reach my target customers, and how should I show up there?”
- “Write five promotional ideas I can use this month to create awareness without a big budget.”

The Promotional Mix

- “Give me a simple PR idea that would make my business newsworthy to a local newspaper.”
- “Write an email newsletter introducing my new service to first-time subscribers.”
- “Suggest three types of social media content that would build trust in my brand.”
- “Help me design a referral scheme that rewards existing customers for bringing in friends.”



Brand Strategy & Positioning

- “Write a one-sentence brand positioning statement for my business [insert business type] targeting [ideal customer].”
- “List five brand values that would resonate with [target audience].”
- “Help me create a tone of voice guide with three do’s and three don’ts for my brand communication.”

Segmentation, Targeting & Positioning (STP)

- “Break my market into three customer segments and describe what each one values most.”
- “Which of these customer groups [describe them] should I focus on first, and why?”
- “Write three tagline options that clearly position my business as different from competitors.”

Strategy vs Tactics

- “Draft a one-page marketing strategy for my business that defines my audience, positioning, and goals.”
- “List 10 short-term tactics that support this strategy, ranked by low-cost and high-impact.”

Writing a Simple Marketing Plan

- “Help me set a SMART marketing goal for the next three months with clear metrics.”
- “Suggest a three-month activity plan with weekly social posts, one PR action, and one promotional offer.”
- “Give me a £0, £100, and £500 version of a starter marketing budget, showing what I’d spend on.”
- “Create a simple tracking sheet to measure which of my marketing activities brings in enquiries or sales.”



Wrapping It All Together

As you grow, you'll discover that marketing is not a destination... it's a continuous learning curve. Some of the strategies you'll explore along the way include:

- **Differentiation: Standing out in ways that matter**
- **Cost Leadership: Offering more for less, efficiently**
- **Focus/Niche: Owning a small market others ignore**
- **Value-Based: Selling on worth, not just price**
- **Customer Intimacy: Building deep relationships**
- **Innovation-Led: Staying ahead through creativity**
- **Market Development: Finding new places to grow**
- **Product Development: Creating new solutions for your market**
- **Strategic Partnerships: Growing together with others**
- **Sustainability & Ethics: Leading with purpose and responsibility**

No one masters all of these at once. Start where you are, learn what you need, and grow step by step.

YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Marketing will challenge you, but it will also grow you. Your success won't come from knowing everything, it will come from starting with what you know today and learning the rest along the way. Trust your instincts, stay curious, and keep building a brand people believe in.

You've got this.

WHO IS THE SME MARKETING GUY?

The SME Marketing Guy is built around a simple idea: marketing should be accessible, practical, and actually make a difference to your business.

I'm Ed Carney, a commercially focused marketer with over 25 years' experience working within fast-paced, high-growth businesses, partnering with senior teams to drive real commercial results. I've built and delivered digital marketing, PR, brand propositions and strategic marketing plans, alongside CRM systems and AI-led automation, generating over £1m in annual revenue impact and achieving 400%+ ROI.

Everything here is based on real-world delivery, turning complex ideas into clear, practical marketing that generates enquiries, strengthens your pipeline, and supports growth.

The SME Marketing Guy is my way of making that experience available to small businesses without the cost, complexity, or commitment of a traditional agency. You can take the strategies for free and apply them yourself, or work with me directly to put them into action in a way that fits your business and your budget.



If you'd like help putting any of this into action within your business, The SME Marketing Guy can work with you directly to implement it in a way that's practical, focused, and aligned to your goals.

Whether you need support refining the approach, prioritising what to do first, or getting everything set up and moving, you don't have to figure it out alone.

If that sounds useful, get in touch and we can have a straightforward conversation about how to move things forward.

DISCLAIMER

This playbook has been created by The SME Marketing Guy to provide small businesses with clear, practical marketing guidance. Every effort has been made to ensure the content is accurate, relevant, and useful at the time of publishing.

Marketing is always evolving, and results will vary depending on your business, market, and how the strategies are applied. This guide is designed to offer proven, real-world insights, but should be used as a practical resource rather than a substitute for tailored advice.

The SME Marketing Guy is not liable for any decisions made based on this content or for any outcomes resulting from its use. You are encouraged to adapt the ideas and approaches to suit your specific goals and circumstances.

If you'd like support putting any of this into action, you can get in touch directly to discuss your business and how it can be applied.