



IDEAL
MARKETING

HOW TO CREATE A MARKETING PLAN



This guide will take you through the four steps of creating a marketing plan that delivers a provable return on investment for your business:

STEP 1:
SETTING YOUR GOALS AND TARGETS

STEP 2:
MARKET POSITIONING

STEP 3:
DRAWING THE PLAN TOGETHER

STEP 4:
MARKETING MEASUREMENTS



STEP 1: SETTING YOUR GOALS AND TARGETS

HOW TO USE BUSINESS GOALS TO DRIVE YOUR MARKETING PLAN

Let's begin with goal setting and using these goals to shape your marketing plan. To prove the return on investment of your marketing spend, you need to define what success looks like in your business.

There is often a disconnect between the marketing function and the business or sales team, which helps no one.

Review your business plan

Work with the senior people in your organisation, or if you work alone, put your 'MD hat' on and consider what you want to achieve in the next 12 months.

For example, do you need better awareness of a new product? How could you benefit from cross-selling or upselling to each new customer? What about encouraging repeat buyers or referrals? What are your most profitable products and services? Which audience segment is the most profitable, and how can you work with them more?

Generate a sales plan

A sales plan is informed by your business goals and plans for a period. If you haven't made a sales plan before, consider:

1. How much revenue you want in a period
2. Where you are now
3. What is the gap between the two points above
4. What products and services could fill that gap, and what that means your monthly targets are.



Decide on marketing targets and activities

This sales plan process will naturally lead to marketing targets, activities and measurements that will support your business goals. A marketing target might look like this:

'Generate x more prequalified leads per month to sell y product to z audience profile.'

This kind of aim could result in a campaign targeting a specific group of customers with a particular message. It's a more worthwhile goal than 'sell more stuff', which most marketing departments (even if you are the marketing department) are dealing with.

I'll give some examples from e-commerce because it's a self-contained ecosystem.

If you want to encourage repeat sales, you could:

- Run an email campaign to previous customers
- Send coupons on their birthdays
- Create a repeat subscription

If you want to increase upsells and cross-sells, you could:

- Add a 'people who bought x also bought these items' section in the basket area
- Create bundles of products that are often bought together, like a starter pack or using a theme
- Add a 'related products' area on the product page

If you want to increase referrals you could:

- Send a discount to customers to share with a friend giving a benefit to both

Hopefully, these examples demonstrate how the method you choose for increasing sales will determine which marketing activities are most appropriate.



STEP 2: MARKET POSITIONING

HOW TO POSITION YOUR BUSINESS FOR SUCCESS AND WHY MARKET POSITIONING IS IMPORTANT

Market positioning is all about how your audience sees you in relation to your competition. I'll start by asking you a simple question:

Why would someone use you over your competition?

Can you answer this easily? If not, you may have a positioning problem.

What is market positioning?

In simple terms, market positioning is the way you position your business in the market to attract customers. Your market positioning could be based on factors such as quality, price, speed or innovation. It depends on what's feasible and what matters to your customers.

Why is market positioning important?

Firstly, it allows you to attract your target audience. However, often a business will hold a position in a market and either not be fully aware of where they sit relative to the competition or not communicate it. But if you identify and communicate what makes your business unique in your marketplace and why it's the best choice for your target audience, you're more likely to win business.

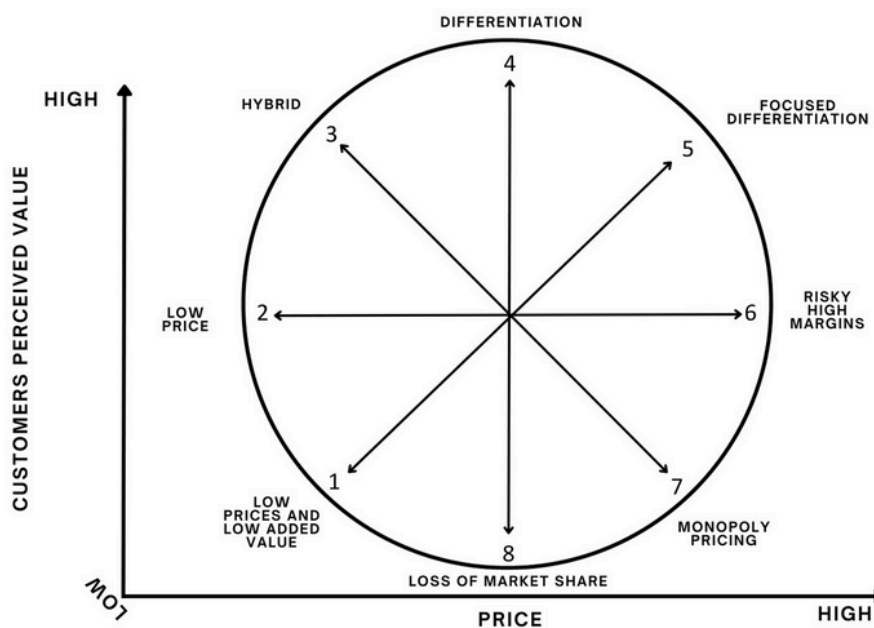
Secondly, market positioning can help you charge premium prices for your products or services. If customers perceive your business as high quality, innovative or providing something they can't get for less, they'll be willing to pay more for what you offer.

Finally, market positioning can help you build a solid and recognisable brand. If you can position your business well, you'll be able to create a powerful brand that customers will remember and trust.

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR MARKET POSITIONING?

You can do a few key things to improve your market positioning.

1. Create a clear understanding of your target audience and what they're looking for. Once you know this, you can start to communicate your unique selling points and position your business in a way that appeals to them.
2. Choose a differentiated position in your market instead of trying to do things better than your competition. If you're doing the same thing better, they can catch up, and you're in a constant race. A differentiated position may mean you have to stop doing some things to do one thing differently.
3. Plot your position and your competitors' positions in your market in a positioning matrix. You could look at something like '[Porter's Generic Strategies](#)' but I'm a fan of "Bowman's Strategic Clock", as shown below.
4. Finally, you need to make sure your whole team knows your market positioning and is working hard to communicate it effectively. If everyone is on the same page, you'll be able to create a consistent and powerful message that will resonate with customers.



If you feel you don't have a position, make sure you find one, occupy it and communicate why someone should use you over the competition. If you have a position but find it's a crowded marketplace where everyone is competing on price, could you change where you're positioned and update your communications accordingly?

STEP 3: DRAWING THE PLAN TOGETHER

CREATING A MARKETING PLAN AND BUDGET TO TAKE YOUR BUSINESS FORWARD

When making your marketing plan, budgets and timelines are the two main factors you need to consider.

What's the cost of gaining a customer?

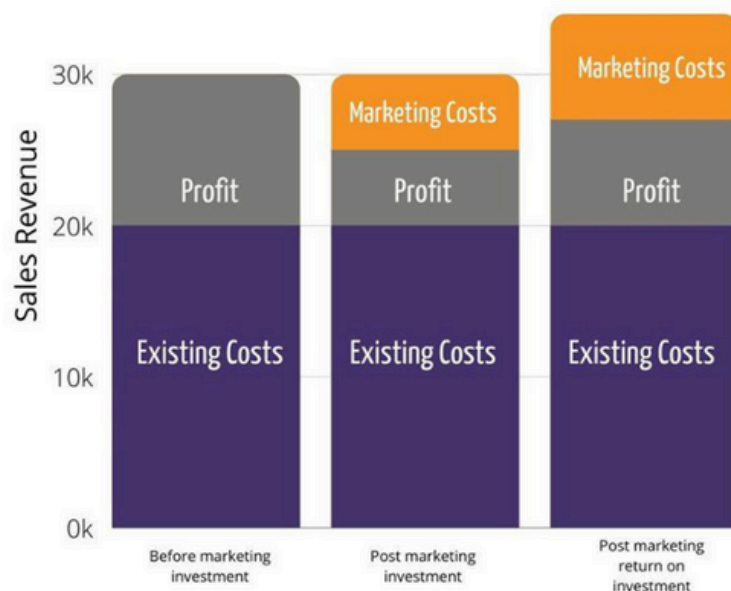
You may have heard that you should attribute between 2-5% of your sales revenue to marketing. That's a simplified way of creating a budget; an alternative is to consider the lifetime value of a potential customer and, in turn, decide what a reasonable cost per customer acquisition is.

The cost per customer acquisition (i.e. your marketing and sales costs) needs to come out of your existing profit, so it's worth understanding how much room you have to work with and how long it will take to make back the money you've invested in acquiring the customer. After all, there is no point in increasing your sales if it costs you all of your profit, unless you're playing the long game.

Planning for profit

Marketing is an investment that can take time to provide a return, so in the short term at least, you either need to be able to afford the marketing as a cost or have a forecast for when you will get your investment back. As your sales increase, you may decide to attribute a higher or lower amount of your profits back into marketing.

The following diagram provides an example of how an investment in marketing might look over time. Your increase in sales may be more significant or less, you may reinvest a larger or smaller proportion of your profits or even borrow to make the marketing investment. There are a lot of variables that will impact how quickly your sales revenue increases. Only some are within your control, but ultimately an investment in your marketing is an investment in the future of your company.



REPEAT SALES VS ONE-TIME SALES

For companies who have subscription services, fast-moving consumer goods, or can command brand loyalty, it can be worth investing a lot more than you make back in one sale because, in the long term, you expect to make back more than one sale costs. Of course, cash flow needs to be considered if you play this long game.

However, suppose your customers typically only buy once, and you can't encourage repeat sales. In this scenario, you need to know that your cost per customer acquisition will provide a return on investment within one sale.

Consider these two factors and your profit figures to define how much you can afford to devote to your marketing efforts.

SETTING A TIMELINE

Look back at your business goals – what timeline did you set your sales goals against? Now, look at your budget; what marketing spend can you devote and over what period? You'll need to strike a balance and potentially adjust your business goals if you don't have the marketing budget you need to achieve them in the timeline you initially set out. Once you know what kind of budget you have, you can investigate your marketing options.

Many people focus on choosing a certain marketing channel when they start investing in marketing because they know lots of people are using it – such as LinkedIn or YouTube. However, this kind of unresearched decision comes with a high risk of failure and wasted time and effort.

MARKETING CHANNEL OPTIONS

Your target audience should heavily influence your marketing channel depending on where they can be found. However, your budget and timeline will dictate what is possible/desirable, and audiences can usually be found in multiple places. I don't recommend only picking one channel; as you'll read below, no channel is good for everything. Different channels help at different customer journey points and have different costs and timelines.

Have a look at the table below for an idea of what channels might work best for you.

Type	Cost	Timeline to see results	Good for	Bad for
Content marketing	££		Taking a potential customer through the marketing funnel on autopilot from attraction to sale.	Quick results, as some of the content required are long-form guides and videos that take time to build but are worth it!
SEO	£-££		Helping your ideal clients find you.	Keeping customers sticking around rather than landing on your site to read what they came for and leave.
Organic social media	£		Keeping potential clients thinking of you, aware of what you do and building trust in the brand.	Converting leads into sales. People turn off if you sell too hard and only promote yourself. Also, social media algorithms don't favour self-promotion.
Email marketing	£		Easing potential customers through a marketing funnel, encouraging current customers to come back to you and building trust in the brand.	Attracting customers: since GDPR has enforced good quality email marketing, you need to build a list that provides great content consistently, which can take time.

Type	Cost	Timeline to see results	Good for	Bad for
Digital advertising	£££		Getting in front of your target market FAST and filling your marketing funnel with prospects.	Long term plans and small budgets – depending on the platform, you'll need to make a minimum commitment and the minute you switch off the ads, your marketing mechanism is gone.
PR	££		Raising awareness of your brand and building a positive impression of your expertise and authority.	Slower results and it can be difficult to prove return on investment. It's hard to predict what will be picked up by the media and challenging to prove the exposure and impression PR makes. However, PR has the potential to make a big splash without high costs.
Direct mail	££		Getting in front of new potential customers and getting noticed, particularly if you're creative with your mailer.	Long term results – once you send a campaign, you're done unless you rerun it to another area.

CREATE YOUR PLAN AND PROGRESS TRACKER

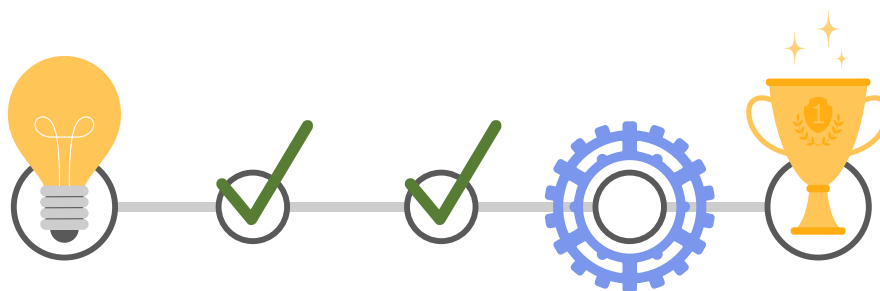
Once you've decided on the marketing channels you'll use and the budget you can devote to each, break everything down into step-by-step activities and plot them into a marketing plan. Download this [handy template](#) and fill in what you can now and the rest as the plan progresses. The fields include:

- What the task is
- The status of the task
- Anticipated start date to work on the task
- Anticipated end date
- Actual start date
- Actual end date
- Estimated cost
- Actual cost

This format works best because the plan can be updated as it evolves. Activities may take longer than you anticipated, and costs could fluctuate, and if they do, you'll have an easy way to keep on top of things in one place.

The alternative to making a marketing investment could be staying where you are or experiencing a decline in business. It's important to remember that if your competitors are investing and you're not, you could be left behind.

If you follow these steps, you'll be well on your way to creating a successful marketing plan. And if you need any help along the way, we're always here to lend a hand!



STEP 4: MARKETING MEASUREMENTS

DO YOU MEASURE WHAT MATTERS? HOW TO PICK THE BEST MARKETING MEASUREMENTS.

The final part of the process is the all-important step of measuring your marketing's effectiveness and applying those insights for even greater future success.

Vanity vs clarity metrics

The available data, particularly in digital marketing tools, are many and varied, but not all data is created equal. It can be tempting to report on everything and not feel any the wiser, so here at Ideal, we work to decipher the data and provide insights and recommendations.

Sometimes data can look impressive but doesn't tell us much. For example, with volume of website visits you may see your website visits go up over time, and we're often asked if the amount of visits a site is getting is 'good or bad'. It's possible to benchmark against industry averages, but the truth is that:

1. The increase in visits could be bots.
2. There's no point in having a lot of website visits if people are leaving on the first page they visit and not converting into a lead.

You could also see a lot of traffic coming from a particular source, like an email campaign or social media channel, but is this good quality traffic? What do the visitors do once they're on the site?

So, the goal isn't to get more website visits but to get more good quality website visits. We look at the whole picture to get clarity, not one measurement in isolation.

Common marketing measurements

Depending on the channel you're using, there are different measurements you can use. Below I've detailed which digital marketing measurements matter and what they can tell you.

Website analytics

You can use free tools like Google Analytics, pay for a tool that provides heat mapping metrics or use the analytics that comes with your CRM or sales tool. Whatever you pick, make sure the account is optimised to report on a successful visit to the website. In Google Analytics, this means defining a website 'conversion' like completing a contact form, clicking on an email link or visiting a particular page.

Social media marketing measurements

'Reach', 'engagement' and 'clicks' are the main measurements, although engagement could be broken down into 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments'. Reach tells you how many people had the potential to see your post, which may be due in large part to the social media channel's algorithm and also influenced by engagement. You'll often see an increase in engagement figures and reach at the same time.

Reach – you want to reach more people, but by itself, this figure only tells you how many people could have seen your post. If one of your targets is to increase brand awareness, this is a measurement to monitor.

Engagement – this demonstrates an interaction with your brand. If the objective of your social media is to improve brand awareness and how your brand is regarded, this metric is helpful to follow.

Clicks – getting clicks is positive if you want people to visit your website where they are more likely to contact you. However, we caution against using social media purely as a tool to promote your business and always including links because it can backfire and your reach is likely to be lower. This is because the algorithms that decide what content is shown on social media channels may not favour posts that link to websites outside of their platform. This means it's a good idea to combine promotional posts which include links with purely brand-building posts that encourage engagement and make a positive impression without using links.

Email marketing measurements

Open and click-through rates are the main measurements to pay attention to, but open rates can be skewed by different email software options. Open rates are heavily affected by your email subject, so consider doing an A/B split test on different email subjects if you want to improve open rates. Click-through rates depend on how many links you include in your email and of course how compelling the reason to click is.

Digital advertising marketing measurements

Digital advertising can be used for brand-building campaigns. However, we'd usually recommend only putting money behind a campaign that could lead to a sale or customer by sending visitors to a landing page expressly set up for the digital advertising campaign. Depending on whether you've used paid social media, Google Ads or another platform, there will usually be a 'pixel' or tracking code you can add to your website through which you can define success much like with Google Analytics.

If you're using Google Ads you can attach your Google Analytics account to your Google Ads account and import your goals. Most digital advertising options will use AI to improve the performance of a campaign over time, but it can only do that if it's clear what a successful website visit is, so it's worth taking the extra time to set this up as you'll get a much better return on investment in the end. The most important metric with digital advertising depends on your campaign's objective. Still, we suggest it's website 'conversions' because it will be hard to prove an ROI on a digital advertising campaign otherwise.



SEO marketing measurements

The objective of SEO is to improve where your website ranks in the search engines for chosen keywords, so monitoring 'Average Position in Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs)' is the most important measurement to demonstrate successful SEO work. However, the following are also important:

- **Impressions** – how many times the website was shown in Search Engine Result Pages for a keyword. This will increase as your average SERP position improves.
- **Click through rates** – this gives you an idea of the available times someone could have clicked through and how often they did.
- **Their behaviour on the website** – metrics like bounce rates, time on site and conversion rates matter because there is no point in attracting more visitors to a site if they don't do anything once they're there.

Tie it together

Ideally, you won't look at the measurements for one channel in isolation, as many digital marketing tools work together after an initial set-up. For example, you can add an integration between Mailchimp and Google Analytics that will allow you to know which email campaign someone clicked on to get to your website and then see the behaviour of those people. If you don't look at both sets of data, you could get a skewed perspective of which email campaigns are 'working' best.

Scenario A

You look at your Mailchimp data and see that one of the campaigns received a lot of opens and clicks, so you assume you should create more versions of that campaign.

Scenario B

You review both your Mailchimp and Google Analytics data and find that while the campaign that got a lot of opens and clicks resulted in more traffic than other campaigns, the time on site, pages visited, and conversion rate/volume of that campaign were lower than other campaigns.

Scenario A is vanity, and scenario B is clarity. If you can track the behaviour further into your sales software and report actual sales figures, then you are cooking on gas!

Reporting

Each digital marketing platform has its own way of delivering reports which can be customised to varying degrees and, in some cases, to send you regular reports. It can be tempting to sign up for ALL THE REPORTS and then leave them in your inbox.

Instead, I recommend drawing up a list of measurements that will tell you what you need to know about your marketing and how it's supporting your business goals. [The Digital Marketing Measurements Model](#) by Avinash Kaushik is a great way to align marketing metrics with business goals:

1. **Identifying business objectives** – determined by senior leaders – perhaps to boost online shop sales.
2. **Create a goal for each business objective**, such as boosting repeat sales or average order value. This will impact your marketing activities.
3. Write down **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for those goals. Determine what measurement will indicate goal performance, such as 'average order value' in your shopping software.
4. Agree on **Targets** for those KPIs – assess your current position and your goals. For example, "increase average order value by 20% in the next six months."



IDEAL MARKETING

GET THE MARKETING SUPPORT YOU NEED

By following the four steps outlined in this guide, you will create a marketing plan tailored to your specific requirements for success and be able to track and refine that success. If you'd like support with any aspect of the process, get in touch. A quick, easy, and free way to get started is by benchmarking your current marketing so you can move on to a well-informed plan of action. Take the [Marketing Funnel Assessment here](#).

Alternatively, you can join our flexible [Customer Attraction Roadmap](#) programme, which includes many options. Call us on **01858 374 170** or book an [exploration call](#) to learn more about how it could work for you.

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