

"This book is just like its namesake — Duct Tape — it's good, incredibly smart, amazingly practical, and immensely sticky stuff. You can begin to put it to use immediately."

*Michael Gerber — author of The E-Myth Revisited*

# Duct Tape Marketing

**Revised and Updated**

"Clever marketing ideas galore and lots of contrarian thinking . . ."

—*Forbes* magazine



**The World's **Most Practical**  
Small Business Marketing Guide**

# John Jantsch

Foreword by Michael Gerber

Afterword by Guy Kawasaki

# Duct Tape Marketing



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The World's Most Practical  
Small Business Marketing Guide

John Jantsch



THOMAS NELSON  
*Since 1798*

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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For Carol—love always



# Contents

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<i>Foreword: On the Subject of Marketing Integrity, by Michael E. Gerber</i>	ix
<i>Introduction: A Solution to THE Small Business Problem</i>	xii

## **Part I: The Duct Tape Foundation—The Way to Sticky Marketing**

(Help Them Know, Like, and Trust You More!)

Chapter 1: Strategy Before Tactics	3
Chapter 2: Identify Your Ideal Client	11
Chapter 3: Discover Your Core Marketing Message	24
Chapter 4: Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message	42
Chapter 5: Create Products and Services for Every Stage of Client Development	55
Chapter 6: Produce Marketing Content That Educates	66
Chapter 7: A Web Presence That Works Day and Night	90
Chapter 8: Get Found Online in Your Town	113
Chapter 9: Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing	124

## **Part II: The Duct Tape Lead Generation Machine—Turning Stickiness into a System That Works for You**

(Turning Know, Like, and Trust into Try, Buy, Repeat, and Refer)

Chapter 10: Run Advertising That Gets Results	137
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## Duct Tape Marketing

Chapter 11: Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium	159
Chapter 12: Earned Media Attention and Expert Status	182
Chapter 13: Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine	200
Chapter 14: Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System	230

## Part III: Getting on a Roll!

(Find Out What Works and Do More of It)

Chapter 15: Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar	257
<i>Appendix A: Duct Tape Marketing Small Business Marketing Resources</i>	275
<i>Appendix B: Special Offers</i>	277
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	278
<i>About the Author</i>	279

# Foreword

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## On the Subject of Marketing Integrity

I have known John Jantsch for more than ten years, first in his role as a certified E-Myth consultant for my company, E-Myth Worldwide, a role in which he served his clients and me with the enthusiasm of a disciple, and then later as the founder and CEO of his own marketing consulting firm, Jantsch Communications. During those years, John and I have talked about business, life, and his personal process for growing both his enterprise and his knowledge about business so he could fulfill the single most important objective he has always had—to serve his clients, his community, and his family as best a man can.

What is remarkable about John is that, unlike many in this tricky world called business who claim to know the unknowable, all for the purpose of enhancing their personal brand, he has remained true to who he is—a guy from Middle America who knows himself as few of us do, and who aspires to nothing more than being a good householder and a good gentleman. But none of this modesty can hide the fact that he has spent a huge amount of the hours of his life drilling down into the practical world of marketing to discover what actually works—and why. Nor does it keep us from seeing his unique ability to teach anyone how to put this practical knowledge to work to create a wonderfully effective business.

In short, this book is really about *integrity*—John’s integrity, and that of the true art of marketing—which is why I have called this foreword “On the Subject of Marketing Integrity.” John and I share a

## Foreword

passion for the subject of integrity in marketing. Marketing—which could sometimes be called *selling*, which could further be called *getting someone hot to buy*—yes, that’s essentially what anyone who buys this book is looking for—even you, dear reader! After all, to everyone in business, getting someone hot to buy is obviously the holy grail. And that’s what every marketing book worth its salt had better be about if it’s going to hold anyone’s attention.

Yes, John keeps his promise, step by step by step, to demonstrate to you how to do marketing to get *your* “someone hot” to buy *your* something, but also—and this is very, very important—how to do it with integrity. This begs the question, what does integrity have to do with marketing? Well, first of all, without integrity, marketing is left to tricks, sophistry, and lies—the same devices the old trickster used with peas and shells on the streets of many cities: Is it here? Is it there? Where is it? Is it anywhere? With John, not only will you know where the pea is, but long before you wonder, John will have told you forty-two times.

John wants to make sure you don’t get lost here. He wants to share the science of his craft, not overwhelm you with his wizardry. In short, true to John’s integrity, he is less interested in your thinking he is a marketing genius—there are more than enough of those out there!—than he is in delivering to you what he’s promised.

This book is just like its namesake—duct tape—it’s good, incredibly smart, amazingly practical, and immensely *sticky* stuff. You can begin to put it to use immediately.

And John tells you how. This book is also amazingly thorough. John spares no effort in digging deep down into the mechanics of marketing, as opposed to academic claptrap. He is less concerned with the philosophy than he is with the tools, tasks, and skills required to look at marketing as a vocational school of marketing might. When you finish this book, John will want to know that you have applied it to achieve very specific results and will want you to tell him so! Yes, finally, when all is said and done, John wants to talk to you about what you’ve done

## Foreword

and how he's helped you on your path. Like the good friend John is, he'll get back to you from the middle of America and ask you how you're doing, how it's going, and what's up.

I hope this has helped, dear reader. And give John my very best when you see him. He's about to become one of your best friends too. Which is what I meant with the subject of marketing integrity. Who wouldn't want his customer to become one of his very best friends? I know I would. Wouldn't you?

Michael E. Gerber  
author of *The E-Myth*

# Introduction: A Solution to THE Small Business Problem

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## Journey to the Center of the Marketing Universe

So, what's changed since I first sat down to write *Duct Tape Marketing*, and has it been sufficient to warrant an update of this text?

Actually, as anyone who's been trying to build a business over the last few years can attest, a startling amount of change has occurred—and yet, much has remained the same. The updates in this version of *Duct Tape Marketing* reflect many of the changes with regard to tools, rules, and tactics, while retaining the fundamental message that marketing is a system.

There was a time, just a few short years ago, really, when small businesses finally concluded that they must use the Web to supplement their marketing efforts and create another potential channel for marketing messages. Today's business must evolve that thinking radically again or face extinction. The onslaught of social media use didn't simply create another set of marketing tactics; it signaled, to those viewing it strategically, a shift in the marketing landscape that has become preposterously evident as we race through the twenty-first century.

*The Web and digital interactivity now represent the center of the marketing universe.* Most marketing decisions must start and end there. Today's marketers must view their marketing strategies and tactics with an eye on growing the online center and radiating beyond

## A Solution to THE Small Business Problem

with spokes that facilitate most of the offline transactional functions that drive sales and service.

All businesses, regardless of industry, have become what I call O2O businesses—their primary marketing objectives are focused on driving people online to drive them offline. In that effort, the online core Web presence has significantly heightened responsibilities. For example:

- While advertising was once used primarily to create a sale or enhance an image, it must now be used to create awareness about Web content.
- While SEO was at one time primarily a function of optimizing a Web site, it must now be a function of optimizing brand assets across social media.
- While lead generation used to consist of broadcasting messages, it must now rely heavily on being found in the right place at the right time.
- While lead conversion in the past often consisted of multiple sales calls to supply information, it must now supplement Web information gathering with value delivery.
- While referrals used to be a simple matter of passing a name, they now rely heavily on an organization's online reputation, ratings, and reviews.
- While physical store location has always mattered, online location for the local business has become a life-and-death matter.

If you are still looking at your marketing efforts in a linear way—with online tactics falling somewhere in line—it's essential that you change the way you view this model entirely. Today's marketer must build from the center first. Only then can you create the strong foundation that will carry your marketing into the next decade.

## What Exactly Is Marketing?

In the first edition of *Duct Tape Marketing*, I revealed a definition of marketing that I had developed through years of working with small business owners and as a response to the textbook definitions that meant so little in the real world. I'm happy to report that my real-world definition of marketing seems to get more relevant with each passing year and each evolution of new marketing tools and techniques.

My definition of marketing is: “getting someone who has a need, to know, like, and trust you.” That’s it! It is the work we must embody on the path to turning that *know, like, and trust* into *try, buy, repeat, and refer*. This work, as you may have surmised by now, is done by installing a system and systems-thinking mind-set to run your entire marketing universe.

The elements of the original Duct Tape Marketing system, an approach that has revolutionized the way tens of thousands of marketers now view their marketing, are still intact, although reshaped and reemphasized in line with the vast changes presented by the Web, technology, and the adoption of social media behavior. One thing that you won’t find, however, is a special section on social media—so popular in current marketing books—as my belief is that these elements now pervade every other aspect of business and marketing and simply belong in the conversation about every marketing strategy and tactic where appropriate.

## The Duct Tape Marketing System

Yes, marketing is a system. While this may be hard for some business owners to come to grips with—leaning instead toward the “marketing is a strange form of creative voodoo” thinking—marketing is not only a system; it may be the most important system in any business.

## A Solution to THE Small Business Problem

Following are the seven core steps that make up the simple, effective, and affordable approach to systematic marketing that is the foundation of Duct Tape Marketing and this book.

### 1. Develop Strategy Before Tactics

Most business owners take the idea-of-the-week, tactical approach, when a good marketing strategy is *the most important* aspect of any successful marketing implementation. For example, before you decide on direct mail or a Facebook page, you must adopt and commit to a marketing strategy. All tactical decisions should be filtered through your strategy to see if they make sense or support the overall marketing strategy.

The concept of a marketing strategy may seem foreign or out of reach, but it's really little more than determining and narrowly defining your ideal client and creating and communicating some key point of differentiation. The challenge in this comes when business owners realize that it means they can't be all things to all people, and saying they offer good service isn't a differentiator; it's an expectation.

### 2. Embrace the Marketing Hourglass™

Maybe you're familiar with the marketing funnel concept—get as many prospects as possible in the top of the funnel, and choke a few through the small end. The marketing hourglass suggests that there is a logical path for each prospect that starts with the large end of a funnel, but as in an hourglass, goes to work turning new customers into an expanding base of advocates and referral partners. This approach begins and ends with a significant focus on the customer experience and requires special attention to the creation of systems and processes that move prospects logically along the path of know, like, and trust, and then try, buy, repeat, and refer.



## Introduction

### 3. Adopt the Content Publishing Model

Marketers today must commit to producing content much as a publisher might. Prospects expect to search for and find large amounts of useful information on any subject or challenge. Consistent production of content that builds awareness and trust, such as client success stories, testimonials, and educational material in the form of blog posts, e-books, and online seminars is a major component of the new marketing system.

### 4. Create a Total Web Presence

It's simply not enough to have a Web site and think you're really participating online. The majority of purchasing decisions made today involve some amount of online *research*. Today's business must be quickly found online, easily engaged, and easy to communicate with. This requires a major focus on *search engine optimization* (SEO) and social media participation.

Of course, this also means integrating your online presence and activity into every offline business function.

### 5. Orchestrate the Lead Generation Trio

With a fully functioning lead generation system in place, a large portion of your leads can originate as referrals, but by building out your system with the addition of advertising and public relations, you amplify your efforts in each. When a prospect comes into contact with your advertising message, reads about your new product in a trade journal, and then gets invited to your educational workshop by their accountant, they've practically sold themselves.

### 6. Drive a Lead Conversion System

Most small businesses view marketing as an exercise in lead generation only when the true measure of success is lead conversion.

The same systematic approach that created a lead must be in place when a prospect wants to learn more. Simply having

## A Solution to THE Small Business Problem

a well-thought-out path that every new lead walks, a way to nurture and educate leads, and a proven process for orienting new clients can dramatically and positively influence the bottom line conversion results an organization experiences.

### 7. Live by the Marketing Calendar

The scarcest resource in any business is time. There is always more to do than possibly can be done. Some people deal with this kind of “overwhelm” by simply shutting down and doing very little.

Marketing momentum requires consistent work over the long term, and this is best handled by creating a marketing calendar. The annual marketing calendar is a great planning device for campaigns and product launches, but it’s also an effective tool to use to schedule out the many projects that you know must be done in a timely and consistent manner. By creating monthly projects and themes, weekly action steps, and daily marketing appointments, you keep the focus on marketing heightened and the building of your marketing system in full production.



## Part I

# The Duct Tape Foundation—The Way to Sticky Marketing

(Help Them Know, Like, and Trust You More!)

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In Part I we are going to focus our attention on all the things you must do to get your marketing business off on the right track. Completing these foundational steps is much like laying the foundation of a building. The ability of the building to stand strong in good times and bad is dependent on the strength of the foundation. These steps involve creating the strategies and tools needed before you ever go out there and attempt to generate a lead or a customer.

These nine chapters cover everything from identifying your ideal client to getting your entire team involved in marketing. Each chapter will help you leverage your ability to get your customers to know, like, and trust you more. When you get all nine of these foundational areas working in concert, you will have the absolutely necessary foundation in place for truly sticky marketing!



## Chapter 1

# Strategy Before Tactics

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**A**nyone who has heard me speak or read my blog knows that I believe that marketing strategy is far more important to the small business than marketing tactics. And yet, the tactical idea of the week gets most of the attention from the business owner.

Strategy and tactics must go hand in hand in order for a business to achieve a measure of true momentum, but an effective strategy must be in place before any set of tactics make sense.

The following Sun Tzu quote, borrowed from *The Art of War* and adapted in the title of this chapter, pretty much sums up my feeling on the subject—“*Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.*”

The reason strategy gets mostly lip service when it comes to marketing planning is that most people misunderstand what a marketing strategy really is. So, let me start with what it’s not. Strategy is not a wish list, set of goals, mission statement, or litany of objectives. What is it, then?

### **A How, Not a What**

A marketing strategy is a clear explanation of how you’re going to get there, not where or what “there” is. An effective marketing strategy is a concise explanation of your stated plan of execution to reach your objectives.

To become the market leader is not a strategy—it’s an objective. To serve customers with honor and dignity is not a strategy either—it’s a

## Duct Tape Marketing

mission. To double the number of new customers is not a strategy—it's a goal.

Goals, missions, and objectives are nice, but how you plan to achieve them—otherwise known as *strategy*—paired with a logical set of tactics, is the surest route to victory.

To become a market leader, you may find that an effective strategy is to carve out one very narrow market niche and dominate it. To serve your customers with honor and dignity, you may discover that an effective marketing strategy starts somewhere in your hiring process. To double the number of new customers, the most effective marketing strategy may be to build a formal network of strategic referral partners.

Each of these strategies will have a corresponding list of tactics and action steps, but the action plans and campaigns will all have your stated strategy as a filter for decision making and planning.

After working with thousands of small business owners, I've developed a three-step process for developing a marketing strategy. I must warn you, though, that market conditions, competitive environments, and trending opportunities all play wild-card roles in the process. A company considering a marketing strategy in a mature market with entrenched players will have a much different view of things than a company trying to bring a new technology to a market with no proven purchase habit.

When developing a marketing strategy for your business the following steps come into play.

### 1. Decide Who Matters

For any strategy and corresponding set of tactics to work, they must appeal to someone. The first element, and in some cases the primary element, is deciding who. Develop your marketing strategy around a narrowly defined ideal client above all. (More on this in the next two chapters.) This step alone

## Strategy Before Tactics

may actually prove to be your strategy—to get good at serving a niche market.

Using your ideal client profile as the basis of your strategy also allows you to think very personally about how you will serve your clients and how you can use your tactics to attract them. Without this concentration on an ideal segment, your marketing strategy will often lack focus.

### 2. Be Different

After developing a profile of an ideal client it's time to find a way to appeal to this group. In my experience, the only sure way to do this is by discovering or creating an approach, product, or service that clearly differentiates you from the rest of the market. The market needs a way to compare and contrast, and if you don't give them one, they'll default to price comparison.

You need to dig in and find the way of doing things that your customers truly value. What's going on in your industry that frustrates people? How can you turn the way they have "always done it" into an opportunity for innovation? In some cases, you may be doing something truly unique; you just aren't communicating your core marketing message effectively.

If you don't take this step seriously, everything else you do in terms of marketing will be far less effective. That's how serious being different is. (Complete details on this step in chapter 3).

### 3. Connect the Dots

The final step in the marketing strategy game is to take what we've done previously—defining an ideal client and creating a core differentiator—and turning it into your stated strategy.

When I created Duct Tape Marketing, my stated strategy was to create a recognizable small business marketing brand by turning marketing for small businesses into a system and product. This strategy contained a narrowly defined ideal client and a clear point of differentiation.



## Duct Tape Marketing

Our mission was to radically change the way small business owners thought about marketing and our “marketing as a system” strategy became how we would do that.

Like most effective strategies, the gap in current offerings and positioning was what offered the clear opportunity. Connecting your strategy will also include a careful study of the competitive environment—and that of other unrelated industries—in order to fill a need with your innovation or differentiation.

Let me return once again to Sun Tzu and *The Art of War*—“All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.”

Now, before you determine whether Facebook is better for your business than LinkedIn or if direct mail is still an effective way to generate leads, start at the point where you will ultimately create the greatest possible impact—strategy!

## Fuse Online and Offline to Drive Ultimate Engagement

From a marketing strategy standpoint, one of the things that must be considered is how prospects and customers have come to adopt the Web and social media. Firms that are taking full advantage of this transition are fusing offline tactics with online tactics to do much of the relationship building required to engage customers.

As I continue to watch this phenomenon, I’m more convinced than ever that it’s one of the primary strategies that every local business needs to adopt as an intentional, overarching marketing strategy. It’s not a matter of looking at the Internet and social tools with an eye on sales. It’s one of tuning your entire marketing process in a way that fits how offline buyers make decisions and grabbing that piece of business.

## Strategy Before Tactics

See, Zappos or Dell or Amazon can't really create the engagement and experience that you can in your high-touch, in-person business. That's your competitive advantage. Don't think about making a sale online; think about getting a chance to make an impression. The primary way to do that is to become an online warrior for creating awareness for your products, services, brand, content, and expertise. When a local shopper or information gatherer turns to a search engine, drive that surfer offline for the total package.

Creating customers offline will, in my opinion, always (okay, for the next few years, anyway) be the most profitable way for a small business to build long-term, high-profit revenue. But those revenues will never appear if you don't master the online information space first.

The online-to-offline mind-set involves a healthy dose of what many would refer to as SEO, but its success actually hinges on how you intend to engage online visitors once you've got them. There are three phases to the development of your fused approach.

1. **Discovery:** In this phase, you lay the groundwork for understanding what your local prospects are looking for and how you can use this data to create awareness for the products and services you offer. As an offline business, you have the distinct advantage of asking your customers, but you must also take clues from your successfully placed online competitors.
2. **Content:** Content is a very large and growing concept online, but here interpret it as educational content creation aimed squarely at answering the kinds of questions your prospects may have about your products/services. It also encompasses the liberal use of outposts for your content in places such as local directories, social networks, and bookmarking sites that lead paths back to your primary Web hub.
3. **Engagement:** This term is tossed around frequently in social media circles these days, but few things compare to

## Duct Tape Marketing

engagement done face-to-face. Once you win eyeballs and prime real estate in local directories such as Google Maps, your strategy of engagement needs to kick in. This is your intentional tactical approach to driving those eyeballs into your stores, events, workshops, demonstrations, and information sessions—offline. This is where you get the opportunity to tangibly demonstrate your value, experience, trustworthiness, and expertise in ways that no amount of online participation ever will. (Hint: That’s why video is so effective as online content.)

The Internet, a tool used by many to sell goods globally, is quickly becoming the power tool locally. Use this tool properly and you can drive an unstoppable flow of prospective business into your offline lead conversion machine.

## Attributes of a Surefire Start-up

If you’re just getting started or still planning your business, you may wonder how you can create a marketing strategy that includes a narrowly defined ideal customer or core differentiation. Before you get too far, consider the following.

There are lots of great business ideas floating around out there. Perhaps you’ve even scratched out your own business plan and are waiting for the perfect time to get the big idea off the ground.

Many start-up businesses are founded on someone’s big idea and, unfortunately, far too many fail before any part of the dream is realized. Yes, starting a business can be risky, but if you take stock of the following attributes before you start thinking about creating or realigning your business, you may come to understand how to turn your start-up into a surefire success.

## Strategy Before Tactics

### **The Owner Is the Customer**

Understanding the characteristics, desires, and behaviors of a narrowly defined target market is very hard work, but essential to your success. Every marketing book or expert will tell you this, but few can give you the magic tablet that allows you to go deeply into your prospect's psyche. You can acquire some measure of knowledge from various research techniques, but nothing beats living, breathing, and feeling the same things your prospects do. Some of the surest successes in history have come from founders who created a product or service to meet a personal need and discovered a business by virtue of doing so.

### **The Market Understands the Offering**

Some entrepreneurs dream of locking themselves in a padded room for a year or so and emerging with the world's greatest innovation. Sounds romantic, I know, but if your innovation simply solves an incredible problem people don't yet know they have, you may wind up burning through the money before they get it. Better to innovate around a proven market, borrow genius from an unrelated industry, or discover an unmet need in a mature market crying for a solution.

### **The Market Already Spends Money Here**

Sometimes marketers shy away from competition. If market research shows that there's too much competition in a given area or industry, the thinking is that the market is saturated and there's probably no room for your start-up. To that I say, "Nonsense!" While it may be true that your neighborhood couldn't possibly stand another coffee shop, I've found the success of several businesses in an industry, even in the same direct community, can spell opportunity.

If people are already spending money on a product or service, then two-thirds of your work is done. They understand and value the offering enough to whip out their wallets. All that's left for you to do now is show them how much better you can make the experience. Few

## Duct Tape Marketing

businesses really provide great service. In fact, stealing market share in mature markets is one of the easiest paths for smart start-ups to run.

### **It's an Innovation That Simplifies**

Much of this idea is focused on entering proven markets. While that's absolutely the advice I'm giving here, know that you must do so with a significant point of differentiation that the market easily understands and appreciates. In most cases, this can be done by looking at the way most folks in the chosen market operate and finding a way to simplify your offerings around breaking the mold.

For example, if people in your service business operate by proposal and bid, come up with a fixed price. If the traditional operating method is custom work, come up with a series of prepackaged offerings that meet most people's needs without the custom hassle.

There's a popular pizza restaurant in Berkeley, California, that has one unique pizza on the menu each day. They make it up in big batches and serve thousands a day at \$20 per pie.

### **Nothing Is Precious**

Here's the one that can snag small business founders. If you're in love with your bright, shiny baby start-up and all that it offers, you may become blind to the reality the market suggests. The ability to keep an open mind and a willingness to discover what the market really wants and adapt accordingly is one of the core advantages of your smallness—remember to use it.

Talk to your customers; talk to your competitors; talk to your employees. Remember that nothing is precious but what the numbers prove to be so.

## Chapter 2

# Identify Your Ideal Client

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When I talk to groups of small business owners at workshops, I will often make the statement that when you properly target your clients, you will discover that you no longer have to work with jerks. I always get a laugh when I say this, but I can also see people in the audience nod in relief.

You can choose to attract clients that value what you offer, view working with you as a partnership, and want you to succeed, but only if you have a picture of what that ideal client looks like.

The primary purpose of this foundational step is to help you identify, describe, and focus on a narrow target of clients or segments that are perfectly suited for your business. This may actually include the discovery of several ideal segments.

I want to emphasize this notion of *ideal* for a moment. I intentionally use this term to help introduce the concept of business relationships. In healthy client/business interactions, the idea of a relationship is at the forefront of all dealings. In a healthy relationship, both parties have responsibilities, needs, and goals. Helping each other meet those needs is a given in a good relationship.

In a healthy small business marketing relationship, the same applies. So, this notion of ideal customer comes with some givens. When you create a fully functioning marketing system, one that produces predictable results, you gain the confidence to choose whom you see as an ideal client. That's not about snobbery; it's about basic survival. Clients who don't respect the value you bring, don't pay on time, and don't do

## Duct Tape Marketing

their part will drag your marketing business down faster than any other business dynamic.

If you don't take this step seriously, not only will it be difficult for you to grow your business predictably, but you will find yourself with ill-mannered customers.

## The Ideal Prospect

One of the reasons we focus so much attention on this notion of defining an ideal target client is that all clients were at one time prospects. So, in effect, what we are really doing here is getting you to define and focus on your *ideal prospect*. Much of your marketing focus, at least initially, will be on creating more and more ideal prospects or leads. You will eventually come to the point where you can predict with a fair amount of accuracy that if you generate a certain number of ideal prospects, you will in turn convert a predictable number of those prospects to customers.

## Let History Guide You

One of the easiest ways to start to get this picture of who or what makes an ideal client is to take a close look at the customers your business has attracted to date. You may find that some segment of your existing business makes up a very focused market.

Here is my step-by-step approach for helping organizations discover their ideal client, with an eye on creating a communication plan with them in mind.

### Step 1: Be Profitable First

If you can, create a spreadsheet of your clients and focus on the amount and type of business you do with each. You might even rank them in order from most to least business over the last three years.

## Identify Your Ideal Client

Now, carefully comb through the list with an eye on profit. Which are your most profitable clients? Are there entire types of work or clients that traditionally produce unprofitable sales? I know it sounds crazy, but most businesses take on work that in the light of day ends up being a waste of time at best.

The key is to understand the most profitable work. Is it a certain product or service, type of engagement, or even a challenge that you enjoy solving the most? (This is often a good time to resolve to get rid of work that you know is no longer profitable.)

### Step 2: Add Referrals

Now let's divide that list again. From the profitable work identify clients that are known referral sources. Here's what I've found to be true: only happy clients refer, and happy clients are most often found because you and your approach are a good match for what they needed.

This narrow group of profitable clients, the ones that also refer, holds the key to discovering your ideal client profile.

### Step 3: Study the Demographics

From your narrow, referring-client group, start looking at the physical characteristics that are known about your ideal client group. You're looking for any common characteristics that are shared. Marketers call this "demographics" and often stop here and go buy a demographic selected list to do some outbound marketing. While I think that demographics, such as age, income, and even zip code, can be important, they are only a part of the story and are useful in an outbound marketing kind of way.

### Step 4: Research Client Behavior

The secret to attracting, as opposed to hunting, your ideal client is understanding what makes them tick, what triggers them to go looking for someone like you, and what behavior they typically exhibit that might act as another marker for you to focus on. This is the essence of



## Duct Tape Marketing

attraction and how marketers create inbound marketing paths to their business. For example, if you know your narrow market enjoys tech-related conferences, show up at a few of these or even work to get on the stage. If they are active in civic or nonprofit causes, you might look to create partnerships with these types of organizations.

### Step 5: Create the Biographical Sketch

Finally, once you are able to pull together profit, propensity to refer, demographics, and behavioral markers, you have the making of what I refer to as the *ideal client biographical sketch*.

The idea here is that you create a picture of your ideal client through the use of words and images that is so rich, just about anyone could conjure up a vision of such a client. The key question to answer for yourself—and then ultimately for your staff, partners, and referral sources—is this: How would I spot the ideal client?

You may have different profiles, and that's okay too. Just give them different attributes and name them—either Bob and Susie or Needy and Squeezy.

If you draw a picture to accompany the “how would I spot” question and then hold that picture as the filter for every marketing decision—“Would this appeal to Bob?”—you're on your way to building a business that every ideal client will recognize is built just for them—and that's something people will pay a premium for.

## Use Social Media to Add Focus

Getting psychographic and behavioral data on a market is a common practice for marketers, as it adds much richer information than statistical data can. Collecting this kind of information used to be expensive and more aggregate than personal. Social media adoption has altered this piece of the puzzle in interesting ways. People joke about folks

## Identify Your Ideal Client

describing what they ate for dinner on Twitter, but that kind of information, while seemingly inane, is marketing gold. Append your entire customer list with everything you can know through social media and you will discover more about what motivates and drives your customers than years of research could ever tell—including which ones wield influence and love to connect and refer.

## What's the Problem?

Let's revisit our definition of marketing here—*getting people who have a specific need or problem, to know, like, and trust you.*

Without a need or problem, you don't really have a market. So, what's the problem? What are your customers attempting to solve when they buy your products or retain your services?

I define *problem*, for our purposes, very broadly to include needs and wants. A problem may well be getting people's computers to talk to each other, but it may also be a burning desire to look good to their peers. The point is not to necessarily understand or judge what people are really buying; it's to identify and acknowledge what you are really selling. Here's the cold, hard truth—no matter what you think you are selling or providing, it is the customer who ultimately determines what you are selling. You don't sell goods and services; you sell solutions to problems.

So, what do you really sell? Is it peace of mind? status? pain relief? State this revelation as bluntly as possible and your marketing business will benefit immediately.

## Location, Location, Location

For some businesses, location is a primary marketing issue. Retail businesses, for instance, commonly depend on a certain defined trading area

## **Duct Tape Marketing**

for clients. Some businesses discover that shipping a product or even making sales calls beyond a particular area is cost prohibitive. It can be helpful to plot on a map the location of your current clients to determine if you have a trading pattern or if certain geographic areas are more desirable in terms of target market concentration.

Businesses that don't feel any real geographic constraints should complete this mapping exercise, as you may discover patterns that lead you to pockets of business. In other words, there may very well be a concentration of businesses in certain industries that you serve that you were not aware of until you actually pinpointed the physical location of each client. Hanging a customer pin map on the wall can be a fun way to keep the focus on your clients too.

## **How Clients Make Buying Decisions**

It's important to understand how your ideal clients come to a buying decision for your product or service. Is it by committee, bid, RFP, gut feeling, referral, search engine, impulse, or some other process? Perhaps there is no real pattern here, but if you can understand a little more about how your ideal clients buy, you can focus on setting up your education system to address their decision-making process.

## **Find the Best Ways to Reach Them**

Some narrowly defined markets are very easy to reach; others are very difficult. One of the considerations when defining and ultimately narrowing a target market is to be confident that you can actually reach them to help them know you and learn to like and trust you and your company.

Is there an association that serves this market? Are there publications

## Identify Your Ideal Client

focused on this market? Can you buy mailing lists made up of this market? Can you network with this market? Add these details to your spreadsheet to help the picture come into even better focus.

## The Value Factor

One of the guiding principles of the Duct Tape Marketing approach is the ability to charge a premium for your products and services within a chosen target market.

You cannot make a market out of people who *should* need what you offer, even if they desperately *do* need what you offer. When making the final determination of whether you should narrow your focus on a given market niche, you must determine if this market values what you have to offer enough to pay a premium for your expertise and understanding of this given market.

Don't have an answer for this one? Look around for companies that already seem to be thriving in this market. You may be able to find the answers you are seeking based on some readily available information that they publish (more on competitive research in the next chapter).

## Is It a Viable Market?

By this point you should have discovered all there is to know about your ideal prospect. Now you've got a decision to make. Is this a viable market? To answer that, ask yourself:

- Is the market large enough to support my business growth goals?
- Can I easily promote my business to the decision makers in this market?
- Does this market value what I do enough to pay a premium?

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Think Narrow

I want to reemphasize my call that you take all that you have learned in this chapter and commit your business to serving one or more very well-defined market niches—at the exclusion of all that don't fit your narrow ideal market description or segments.

By focusing on a very specific market niche, you are free to develop products and services tailored to its specific needs. Your language and processes then can send a very clear signal that you do indeed understand those unique needs.

Many times niche markets can be easier to communicate with. A specific industry will likely have a trade association, publication, or mailing list readily available. Personalizing your marketing to this easily identifiable group and identifying them by name (construction company owners, salon owners, or chronic headache sufferers) will dramatically increase the effectiveness of your communications.

When you focus on a narrow target market, you will often encounter much less competition and hold a competitive edge over generalists who claim to also serve this market.

### Visualize Real People

Once you've done your research on your ideal client, it's time to start getting visual. Write out a description of a real ideal client that you would love ten more of. Write everything you can think of: what they look like; what they think; what they want; what they fear, what they believe fun, risk, and passion look like. Use photos of real people to help create this total persona, and then hang it on the wall for all to absorb. Maybe you need to do this a couple of times and develop several distinct ideal client personality types. Imagine if you put these images and descriptions on the wall and referred to them as you made sales calls, wrote Web copy or brainstormed about a product innovation. It's similar to having them in the meeting with you. In fact, go a

## Identify Your Ideal Client

bit over the top and create life-size, ideal client cutouts and invite Bill, Mary, and Tom into your meetings. At the very least, it will add some fun to the meeting.

## More Than One Segment

In some cases you may need to segment your market into several very distinct markets. This may be because your ideal target markets have different needs for your product, or it may be because different products or services that you offer appeal to different, distinct markets.

Many businesses practice this approach already, but when Duct Tape marketers takes this tack, it is with the intent of tailoring their marketing to the needs of a specific market niche.

## Don't Have an Ideal Client Yet?

To locate hot market opportunities, think about problems and ways to solve them. In other words, look for people, industries, or companies that have a problem that no one is solving, and find a way to solve them. With this approach, it doesn't really matter if the client is big, little, new, or old—the defining characteristic is a need. Some of the greatest market innovations in history have taken this approach.

I read once that Steve Jobs of Apple Inc. defined the target market for the iPod as “people who didn't want to carry around 10,000 CDs.” That definition likely explains why young and old, techie and non-techie could be seen snapping up iPods faster than stores could stock them.

So what problem exists that you could solve, that could define an entire market opportunity? Is it small businesses that can't afford a certain solution? Is it people who don't need full service? Is it someone who wants something faster, smaller, or hassle-free? People who don't

## Duct Tape Marketing

like paperwork? Companies that want same-day something? A market of people in transition?

Residential real estate agent Melinda Bartling decided to focus on marketing to women with changing lifestyles. She knew that what she was doing had caught on when Mary, a friend with whom she networked, referred Melinda to a friend of hers who needed to downsize her home. Melinda thanked her for the referral and then asked why Mary didn't refer her friend to Mary's own son who sold real estate. Mary told her that he would have been too impatient and that she chose her because that was her specialty!

Melinda's Web site, [www.mychanginglifestyle.com](http://www.mychanginglifestyle.com), is a valuable resource for local buyers, as well as sellers and women relocating to the area. Any woman coming on board with her firm also has the opportunity to meet other women with similar interests.

What irritation in your industry does everyone just live with? When have you heard your clients or even your competitors mutter, "That's just the way it is in this business"? Start looking at things differently!

When you go searching for a target market that is hungry for a solution, there are three questions you should consider in order to verify whether you truly have identified a hot market:

1. **Do they want what I have?** It does not matter if people desperately need what you have. If they do not want it for one reason or another, then you are sunk. You will kill yourself trying to convince someone that he or she really *should* want what you have to offer. People rarely act to their own benefit unless they want to.
2. **Do they value what I do?** You must look for people who are already investing in the type, or at least the category, of service you have. Price shoppers will always be price shoppers; do-it-yourself types will always be do-it-yourself types. Look for those who appreciate the extra they get from what your solution has to offer.

## Identify Your Ideal Client

3. **Are they willing to pay a premium for what I do?** This one is often overlooked and misunderstood. No matter what you sell or what service you provide, you don't need to compete on price.

## The Ideal Prospect Profile

Now take what you've learned to this point and create an ideal prospect profile. This is simply a paragraph or two that paints a picture of your ideal client almost as though you were describing someone sitting across a table from you. Try to stay with this formula in your description:

Physical description + What they want + Their problem + How they buy + Best way to communicate with them = Ideal Prospect.

Here's an example:

My ideal prospect is a service business owner with 15–100 employees and no internal marketing department, located in the Chicago metropolitan area. They have typically been in business for over 5 years. These businesses are outwardly successful and have done very little marketing. They have begun to feel constrained due to this lack of marketing.

The greatest problem my ideal prospect faces is that they have lost control over the various marketing initiatives and materials that have been created on the fly over the years. Internally, there is no marketing accountability, and most, if not all, of the marketing responsibility falls to the business owner. They have also found it difficult to grow their business beyond its current market share due to increasing competition.

They desperately want to take their business to the next level.



## **Duct Tape Marketing**

The best way to reach these ideal prospects is through direct mail offering productivity tools, business workshops sponsored by trusted business professionals, and referrals from other business professionals.

This description leaves little to chance. I've even sprinkled in clues of things that this ideal client might say when talking to someone at a networking event. This type of description can help your sales team correctly identify ideal prospects, ensure that referral sources refer the right leads, and help frame any advertising decisions.

With an accurate ideal prospect description in hand, you will eventually turn your sales calls into more of an audition. That's right—your prospects will audition to become clients. Again, there's nothing elitist about this idea; you will begin to more fully understand every action or comment made by your prospects as basic signals that this either is or is not an ideal client candidate. Many of the physical characteristics of a prospect can be determined before you ever meet, gleaned from public records and Web sites.

Once you have installed your Duct Tape Marketing lead machine, described in a later chapter, you will establish this physical description of your ideal prospect as the minimum requirement for accepting an appointment. Then discovering the deeper needs and emotional characteristics that ultimately make up the client relationship will become the real job of your sales efforts.

## **Database Marketing**

Let me paint an intriguing picture for you. Suppose you ran an ad this week in a trade publication heavily read by your ideal prospect. That ad offered the readers a free report titled “The Top 10 Things You Must Know Before You Buy X” (your product or service). As a result,

## Identify Your Ideal Client

twenty-seven people called a toll-free telephone number to order their free report. The names and addresses of those people were e-mailed to your marketing assistant, who loaded them into your ACT database, assigned the introductory marketing letter task to each, and printed and mailed the letters. Each new prospect was added to your newsletter list and distributed to your salespeople for a phone follow-up.

This very basic scenario is easily achievable with the use of a database marketing program. The most popular titles include ACT!, GoldMine, and Maximizer. This software is often categorized as *customer relationship management* (CRM) software, but what it really does for the small business owner is allow you to automate many of the marketing processes and successfully delegate them to others in the organization.

Web-based applications, such as Sunrise from 37signals and Sales force.com, are also enjoying widespread acceptance. There are consultants that help tailor these programs to your specific business needs.

The final action in this step is to consider purchasing and employing one of these powerful software packages.

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## Action Steps

1. Look for common characteristics, such as age and gender, among your profitable clients that also refer business.
2. Uncover a common frustration among your target market.
3. Write a description of your ideal target market in terms that are easy to communicate.
4. Determine whether your ideal target market is large enough to support your business.

## Chapter 3

# Discover Your Core Marketing Message

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### Stand Out in a Crowd

Quite often small business owners will ask me to reveal the most powerful marketing strategy I have seen. I can say without hesitation that the most powerful marketing strategy has little to do with advertising, direct mail, Web sites, or referrals. No, before any of those things will really have any impact on your business, you've got to uncover and communicate how your business is different from every other business that says they do what you do. You've got to find a way to stand out and stake your claim on a simple idea or position in your prospective clients' minds. Your claim must be powerful and intentional—even if you must alter some aspect of your business to achieve it. Once this is done you must create a *core message* that allows you to quickly communicate the difference between you and your competitors or you will never be able to break from the grip of what I call the “commodity business.”

### Get Out of the Commodity Business

Most prospects think that one business is essentially like the other—a commodity to be acquired by simply picking up the phone. Quite

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

often in the mind of the market, one accountant is like another, one electrician like another, one auto repair shop identical to the next. It doesn't really matter if it's true or not, unless you are willing to do something about it.

The problem with residing in the commodity business is that if your prospects can't identify some specific way in which your firm is unique, they will default to the only thing they can measure—price.

Offering to simply exchange what you sell for a set price in return is one of the weakest marketing offers you can create. Price, as I suspect you've learned, is a terrible place to compete. There will always be someone willing to go out of business faster than you.

Find something that separates you from your competition; become it and speak it to everyone you meet. Quality isn't it; good service isn't it; fair pricing—not it. These are all expectations. The difference needs to be in the way you do business, how you package your product, the way you sell your service, the fact that you send cookies to your clients, your ability to show people how to transform their lives—it's in the experience you provide.

## The Core Message Process

As you will learn in this chapter, capturing your unique difference and communicating it in a powerful manner is a multistep process.

Here's the path we are going to take:

- Discover, capture, and commit to a unique position.
- Create a *marketing purpose statement*.
- Turn your purpose statement into a *talking logo*.
- Craft a simple core message to use in all of your marketing.

### Ways to Capture a Difference

There are many tried-and-true ways that a small business can approach claiming a unique point of difference. In some cases you may already possess a unique position and simply need to identify and communicate it via a *core message*. Some businesses, however, find that they need to make a considerable shift in their business, products, services, or business model in order to create some element of their business that allows them to stand out in a way that is significant to a specific market.

A home remodeling client of mine found that they had trouble competing on higher-end work. They did higher-end work, but they also did handyman-type work. They were seen as more of a construction business than the design-oriented remodeling business desired by the upper-end buyer. Once they fully understood the distinction the market was making, they changed their name to more accurately appeal to the upper-end client and started referring the fix-it type jobs to a network of referral partners. In less than a year they completely changed the market's view of the type of work they did best, and they no longer had trouble competing for the most profitable work.

It's worth noting here that being different for difference's sake isn't enough. An identifiable target market must value the difference for it to be a candidate for your core message.

One of my favorite ways to create a unique difference is to offer an *astonishing guarantee*. Can you offer a guarantee so strong that no one else in your industry would dream of doing it? The use of a guarantee as a way to reduce a potential buyer's risk has long been employed by savvy marketing people. In some circles, a guarantee has become a required aspect of the sales process.

But what if you did more? What if you created a guarantee that did far more than simply warranty satisfaction or guarantee "risk-free" shopping? What if you created a guarantee that was astonishing?

What's an astonishing guarantee? It's one that makes you nervous

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

—and that’s the point. If you could create and communicate a guarantee that nobody in your industry would even consider, you would automatically have two very powerful things going for you: a core marketing message that would *differentiate* you from your competition, and a *forced focus* on delivering excellence and winning loyal, repeat customers. What else?

- **An astonishing guarantee turns heads**—“Try our service for ninety days, and if we don’t perform exactly as promised, we will double your money back.”
- **An astonishing guarantee generates buzz**—“They promised *what?*”
- **An astonishing guarantee creates a mission**—“Okay, troops, there’s only one job: making happy clients. What needs fixing?”

What could you promise that no one else would dream of? That’s the start of an astonishing guarantee. Let’s look at a number of starting of points:

- **Product**—Can you offer a product that is so unique, or even trendy, that your business is associated with that offering? Or can you extend a product and offer a valuable service to make the product more useful to the customer?
- **Service**—Same goes for a service. Many times this can be the packaging of a service as a product. Consulting is often delivered on an hourly basis. Packaging a consulting engagement based on an outcome, with defined deliverables and fixed package price, is a very effective way to differentiate a service offering. Don’t forget to give the service a powerful name!
- **Market niche**—Carve out an industry or two and become the most dominant player serving that industry. A really nice

## Duct Tape Marketing

bonus to this approach is that you can usually raise your prices dramatically when you specialize in this manner.

Susan J. Sheley of Cyndi Waldron & Associates, LLC, in Kentwood, Missouri, wanted to sell helmets, but her employer was a Harley-Davidson dealership in a state that did not have a helmet law. After noticing many riders coming in with their children, she started stocking children's helmets. When she would ask riders if they wanted to see a few of the new helmets, they would often answer, "I don't wear a helmet" or "I'm not interested." Her reply: "Fine, but if you are going to let your child ride with you, then you better put a helmet on him, because he isn't old enough to make that decision for himself."

A month or so would go by and the rider would be back in to purchase his own helmet, because the child was asking, "Where's your helmet, Daddy?" After that purchase, Susan would "reward" the rider with Harley-Davidson premium merchandise for the child. Susan's store effectively became their motorcycle store.

You may need to find an Internet niche search resource. One of the ways to hunt for potential niches is to find out what people are searching for on the Internet. There are some great tools for doing just that. Services that offer pay-per-click advertising also provide a great deal of keyword research "niche hunting." Many offer tools that allow you to type in a keyword, such as *software training*, and see how many people have searched that and related terms in the last month.

- **Offer**—Can you become known by an offer you make? I know an accountant who offers his tax preparation clients a 100 percent refund on their preparation fee when they refer four new clients. They are "the 100 percent refund tax guys."
- **Solve a problem**—Is there something that prospects in your

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

market fear or seem to believe is universal for what you do? If so, focus on communicating how you have the answer. (Painless dentistry, for example.) I know a remodeling contractor who found that what his clients appreciated the most was the way his crews cleaned up at the end of the day. He began to promote the fact that he owned more Shop-Vacs than any other remodeling contractor on the planet.

- **Communicate a message of value**—Many times there are things you do that don't get communicated, extras that you provide or services you think should be included. Your positioning may just rest in more effectively communicating what you do. I know an office furniture dealer that has adopted the message "We Make Your Business More Valuable" to communicate all the things they bring to the party. Now everything they do is focused on delivering on that statement. Everyone else in the industry sells furniture.

Steve Burbridge of Neal Harris Heating and Cooling has developed a consistent core marketing message that has successfully separated his company from the competition and positioned it with top-of-the-mind consumer awareness. The message is "Technicians You Can Trust with Your House Keys." This is used in all their marketing and even has a jingle with it for radio ads—the sound of keys jingling! How powerful is it? A stranger in a fast-food restaurant saw Steve in uniform and came over and jingled his keys at him!

Here are some great ways to communicate your core message.

- **Develop a unique habit**—I know a financial planner who has his clients' cars detailed right out in his parking lot when they come in for their annual review. They can't help but rave to their friends about this unique touch.
- **Offer over-the-top customer service**—Everyone knows



## Duct Tape Marketing

the story of the over-the-top customer service provided by Nordstrom's. Create your own over-the-top customer response system, and word-of-mouth advertising will flow liberally. One of the greatest ways to kick this off is to overdeliver on your first customer contact. Give them something more than you promised; give them a gift; give them a related service for free.

- **Get an edge over the competition**—Many times you can create your category niche by looking for holes in your competitors' offerings. If everyone in your industry fails to address a certain problem, boldly grab on to solving that problem and use your competition as the point of difference.
- **Find a one-of-a-kind way of doing business**—This might involve payment terms, how you deliver or package your services, or how you set up your office to serve clients.

Smile Dental Spa in Tucson, Arizona, wanted to give its patients a new outlook on dentistry. They pamper and relax their clients with a series of spa treatments before, during, and after their dental experience. There is something for everyone, even those who didn't think they liked spa treatments. Fear and anxiety are replaced with pampering and relaxation. The dental spa is disarming from the minute a patient walks through the door. The office is designed to look more like a resort than a sterile office.

- **Adopt a memorable personality**—This one isn't for everyone, but there are businesses that have made quite a name for themselves by adopting an odd or at least memorable behavior or character. When I was in college, there was a little restaurant that was famous for the rudeness of the owner. If you were a new customer and didn't order what he wanted you to order, he would demand that you leave. The place was always packed.

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

Deborah Read of ErgoFit Consulting, Inc., in Seattle, Washington, took the advice of her business advisory group and embraced a character she had been using in her e-mail, ErgoGirl, an injury prevention superhero who only occasionally shows herself in public. The biggest step toward doing this was to buy a shiny, red cape, which she began wearing intermittently at business networking events, including ones with Fortune 500 companies.

## Your Clients Know Best

So let's dig in and create a position for your firm.

In some cases, you may have already become known for a certain type of work or position. In those cases, your task may be to simply communicate what you already know. In most cases, however, it is not that obvious, so the best way to get at your positioning is to ask your clients. It is amazing how often your clients will be able to articulate the best positioning for your firm, even if you can't. In fact, many times I have found that business owners don't often fully understand what they do that their clients truly value.

My advice is that you ask, or hire someone to ask, your clients several telling questions. I suggest that you call up ten clients or so and ask:

- Why did you hire us in the first place?
- What do we do that others don't?
- What's missing from our industry as a whole?
- What could we do that would thrill you?
- What do you find yourself simply putting up with in this industry?
- What would you do if you owned a business like ours?

## **Duct Tape Marketing**

- What would you Google to find a business like ours?
- What companies do you admire and refer the most?

When you do this kind of informal survey, you may hear the exact positioning that your firm already owns. Many times your clients can describe what you offer much better than you can. Asking your clients for input is a great practice no matter what you are trying to learn. Clients are more likely to refer business to you when they feel you appreciate what they think and are interested in involving them in the building of your business.

## **Look to the Competition for Clues**

Many times you can find a unique position to claim by simply discovering gaps that no one else is filling. Study your competition as thoroughly as possible to see if you can find opportunities to stake your claim. At the very least, visit the Web sites of your closest competitors with an eye on discovering if anyone is really saying anything that's unique.

## **What You Really Sell**

Another way to gain some insight into a unique positioning is to figure out what you really sell. As stated earlier, you don't sell what it is you claim to offer. You sell what the eventual buyers think they are going to get from your product.

For instance, insurance sales folks don't sell insurance; they sell peace of mind. Chiropractors don't sell neck adjustments; they sell some form of relief. In some cases businesses have little idea what they sell. If you can come to think in terms of how buyers of your

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

products and services define what they are buying, you will be much better suited to communicate how your product or service is unique.

## Capture the Core Message

Once you conduct your customer interviews, and do your competitive research and a bit of business soul searching, you must move toward refining your unique point of differentiation into a *core message* to use in all of your marketing.

You can achieve this with something I call your *marketing purpose statement*.

## Your Marketing Purpose Statement

The purpose statement is not meant to be communicated to your clients, but rather is meant to be the basis for all of your marketing and customer service activity. Think in terms of this being your rallying cry in the boardroom. This is how you want to be perceived in plain English, not polished marketing rhetoric.

A good example might be, “We’re custom home remodelers, and we want to be known as the ‘we-show-up-when-we-say, no-mess, no-trash, we’ll-make-your-neighbors-happy, contractor.’ We have hired the most professional people in the industry, and they stand out whenever we compete for business or do work for a customer. We take our Shop-Vac into a sales call to help demonstrate clean!”

This exercise can be fun, but it also allows you to drop the mask and really articulate the ultimate purpose of your marketing. From this you may find it easier to craft a more creative marketing message, and everyone in the firm will “get it” without the marketing polish.

Your marketing purpose statement should become not just a goal

## Duct Tape Marketing

but the overriding *purpose* for the business. It certainly must become a key means by which you measure your success. Are you achieving your stated purpose?

A powerful marketing purpose statement should give you and your staff a vision for the future of the business.

The other very valuable use for this no-nonsense approach is that your purpose statement becomes the filter for every marketing or business decision. Does this decision, new product, ad, or whatever support the marketing purpose we are trying to represent? Post your marketing purpose statement on every PC in your office, and let it inspire everyone in the organization.

## Have You Identified the Enemy?

One of the most powerful driving forces in human nature is competition. The desire to overcome something or some company and the need to win can in many cases be more important than the day-to-day work of the company.

One key way for your company and your people to reach a higher level of greatness and purpose is to identify and focus on beating something, on creating and communicating a reason for being that trumps your competition.

Now, understand that when I say “enemy” or “competition,” I’m not suggesting something negative. While the folks at Apple will tell you that their reason for being is partially rooted in beating Microsoft, many organizations also draw motivation from rescuing things, ridding the world of things, creating peace, making life more enjoyable, teaching, sharing, spreading, and a host of other very positive things. The Apple brand stands for something positive: great design, functionality, and innovation.

And that’s the point. Small business owners often have no readily

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

identifiable group of competitors or Goliath to aim at, but they may find motivation in a great cause or reason for being, and connecting with that great cause can become the drive to play the game at the highest level.

Your cause can be grand or it can be humble, but find it and you will be much more prepared to market your business, run it with passion, and hire people who support the cause and help improve and realize the vision for your business. Great causes possess the power of attraction.

Think what you do isn't grand enough to call it a cause? What if you could rid the world of bad advertising, one ad at a time? Or prove that tax preparation can be fun? Maybe you can empower anyone to buy a home. You can make your customers so overwhelmingly thrilled they will refer their friends and neighbors willingly. You can ensure that no one will ever be afraid to go to the dentist again.

Are you starting to see how this kind of thinking and the notion of focusing on competition could help drive your actions? What if you could actually connect your beliefs and values to your reason for being? Would that provide motivation to do more? Would that start to feel like more than a job?

What is your organization's purpose for being? Aim high, and let your cause guide you, your people, and your clients to greatness.

## The Talking Logo—What You Really Do for a Living

From your marketing purpose statement, we move to crafting a very practical but powerful message that will eventually make up your ultimate core marketing message.

In order to really bring your core message to life, we will complete an exercise that answers the following question in a very powerful manner. And the question is this: what do you do for a living? The answer to that question is something that I call your *talking logo*.

When asked, most people will answer that question by telling

## Duct Tape Marketing

you their title or industry. This answer offers little or no marketing value. By changing how you think about what you do for a living and turning that thinking into a marketing tool, your talking logo creates impact everywhere you use it.

Like a traditional printed logo, a talking logo is a tool that allows your firm to communicate verbally the single greatest benefit of doing business with your firm.

Remember earlier in this chapter when I asked you to think long and hard about what you really sell? Well, the answer to that question, in the eyes of your market, is what you do for a living too.

How do you create your talking logo? Your talking logo must be a short statement that communicates your position—but leaves the listener wanting to know more. Think about your clients or potential clients . . . they want to know what's in it for them. Don't just tell them what your firm does—tell them in a way that matters to them.

"I'm in the insurance business." "I'm a painting contractor." "I'm a computer repair specialist." The only thing this type of response will get you is, "Who cares?" or worse. A talking logo may not really tell people what you really do, but it will force them to take note and want to know more.

Your talking logo is created in two distinct parts. Part 1 addresses your target market, and Part 2 zeroes in on a problem, frustration, or want that market has. You know you have a great talking logo when a person hears you deliver it and immediately says, "Really? How do you do that?"

I have an architect client that does design/build work with large construction firms. In order to get the attention of his general contractor clients, he put the focus of his message on them:

"So, Bill, what do you do for a living?"

"I show contractors how to get paid faster" (Bill's talking logo).

Now, if you're a contractor and you've just asked an architect that question, wouldn't you want to know more?

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

What about this one? “I show small service professionals how to triple what they charge.” Or, “I help recently divorced women drastically reduce their taxes.” How about these?

- “I create permanent memories.”
- “I show young, married couples how to retire richly on what they are currently making.”
- “I help contractors stay out of court.”
- “I make weight loss easy.”
- “I help wealthy individuals slash their taxes.”
- “I teach business owners how to get famous.”

Do you see a pattern?

Here’s the formula:

action verb (I *show*, I *teach*, I *help*) + target market (business owners, homeowners, teachers, divorced women, Fortune 500 companies) + how to X (solve a problem or meet a need)

When you read statements like the ones I just presented, don’t you find that you want to know a little more? That type of statement alone will get you referral appointments, especially when most businesses looking for new clients simply call and ask to meet so they can sell something. Who would you see: someone who wants to sell you his work or someone who wants to show you how to make more money?

Now that you have their attention with your first answer, though, it’s time to deliver the goods with a supplemental answer.

So now they utter, “Really? How do you do that?”

You must be equally prepared to answer this question. Once your prospect says, “Tell me more,” you go on to Part 2, telling your listener how you plan to solve his or her problem. The key to this tool, though, is waiting until you have their full attention with your talking logo.



## Duct Tape Marketing

Here's how Part 2 works. Again, the architect—"Well, we have developed relationships with every zoning board in the metro area and can make sure that your projects don't get hung up by red tape, ensuring that you get to that first pay request faster."

Again, by understanding your positioning and your target market and then communicating it through your talking logo, you will be miles ahead of most of your competition and well on your way to generating referrals from anyone you meet.

Step one: Create a compelling answer to "What do you do for a living?"—one that focuses on a benefit or solution and forces potential buyers to want to know more.

Step two: Prepare a simple supplementary answer that tells them the unique way you get them that benefit or solution.

## Your Core Marketing Message

Now that you have discovered the marketing purpose for your firm and answered what you do for a living, it is time to fashion the creative marketing messages you will use to communicate your purpose in a way that clearly demonstrates the benefit of doing business with your firm.

The idea, then, is to create a short statement that becomes your marketing message workhorse. Think FedEx—"On Time Every Time" or it's free.

Laura K. Frazier owns and operates a small coffee shop in Columbus, Ohio, called Espresso Escapes. It is located right across the street from a Starbucks, so the competition is tough. Laura struggled to find a way to attract more regular customers. The usual stuff they tried brought some people in once, but it wasn't bringing in the repeat business she was looking for.

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

While driving home one day, Laura started thinking about what it means to be a regular at her coffee shop. As soon as she got home, she created a coupon with a very happy woman on the front that says, “Nothing feels as good as being regular!” The back of the coupon lists her location and all the reasons why it’s great to be a regular at Espresso Escapes.

She left them in bathrooms all over downtown. At first, people were sort of confused by them, but the coupons have since attracted more attention and income than any other promotion she has done.

Take a good, hard look at the purpose statement and the “what you do for a living” statement you created earlier. What is the chief benefit of doing business with your firm? What words or ideas can help you easily communicate your difference?

In the following examples, I demonstrate how a firm progresses through taking a position and then creating a marketing purpose statement, talking logo, and core message.

1. My architect from earlier in this chapter realized that much of his work was design/build, a process that generally asked the contractor and architect to act as a team in the completion of a building. Contractors who brought them into projects liked what they offered the project team. The architect also noted that while contractors and developers vigorously embraced the idea of design/build, most architects only entered into this type of arrangement when required. In fact, while most of the larger construction firms advertised their design/build experience, no architectural firm did so.

The architect decided to position his firm as the design/build architects. They needed to convince contractors that they were “contractor friendly,” especially since contractors controlled many of the design/build decisions.

## Duct Tape Marketing

MARKETING PURPOSE STATEMENT: We want to be the architect that shows builders the only way to work with architects in design/build contracts.

TALKING LOGO: We help design/build contractors get to the first pay request faster.

CORE MESSAGE: “The Contractor’s Architect.”

2. An electrical contractor heard his clients complain about the quality of work of other contractors and the lack of timeliness in completing that work. His primary clients were new homebuilders. New homebuilders hate callbacks and really hate delays that disrupt the somewhat delicate building schedule.

MARKETING PURPOSE STATEMENT: We want to be known as the one electrical contractor who will show up when we say we will and do the work right the first time.

TALKING LOGO: We help homebuilders eliminate callbacks.

CORE MESSAGE: “Wired Right on Time.”

3. A window cleaning business realized that many of their competitors were very poorly operated, unprofessional, and not likely to be around for very long. They wanted their prospects to understand that not only was window cleaning something they were good at, but it was also something they were passionate about.

MARKETING PURPOSE STATEMENT: We want people to know that we treat window cleaning as a profession, and that our people are true professionals who treat the homes they enter as they would their own.

TALKING LOGO: We help homeowners see a better world.

CORE MESSAGE: “Your Pane Is Our Passion.”

## Discover Your Core Marketing Message

Some other examples:

- A remodeling contractor: “On Your Job Until It’s Done—Forever”
- A shopping center: “You Know What You Want, We Know What You Expect”
- A financial planner/CPA: “Full Circle Financial Advice from a CPA”

## How to Communicate the Difference

Once you find your chosen strategy or combination of strategies to differentiate your business, all of your advertising content, social media activity, and promotion should be centered on shouting about that difference. Commit to it, stay at it, and resist the temptation to wander off in the next new direction. Building your unique brand takes time and patience. The payoff, however, is what differentiates the winners from the losers in this big marketing game.

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## Action Steps

1. Revisit your ideal customer description.
  2. Interview up to ten clients to focus on why they buy from you.
  3. Complete the marketing purpose statement.
  4. Create your talking logo (the “What you do for a living” exercise).
  5. Create a core marketing message.
-

## Chapter 4

# Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

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**W**hen it comes to your business, a properly executed identity can set the expectation for your client or potential client's experience with your firm. I don't want to overdo this notion; this is nothing like "creating the optimum brand experience" or other mumbo jumbo that you might read in a branding book. I just want to communicate that the little things are big when it comes to small business, and while you don't need to spend a fortune on an identity consultant, you should take the time to get the details of your image right.

First impressions are vital, and when it comes to making them, the eyes are the first participants. The eyes consume vast amounts of information and relay it to the brain unconsciously, as Malcolm Gladwell has shown in his fascinating book *Blink*. It's this process that allows humans to (right or wrong) make snap judgments about whether something appeals to them or not. In many cases, this snap judgment is all that your firm will ever receive.

For the small business, the visual aspects of the firm are rarely given the attention they deserve. Intentionally choosing and defining your company's "sense of style" in a way that helps to support all of your marketing messages and introduce your firm to potential clients ensures that you make the right first impression. You should invest wisely in the creation of compelling identity elements that effectively wake the senses of your ideal client and communicate that your brand

## Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

means business. You only get one chance to make a first impression, and you need to take your best shot each time you get the opportunity.

### The Elements of Identity

If asked, most would list a company's name and logo as the primary elements of a brand. While those are indeed important elements, Duct Tape marketers expand this to include the entire scope of elements that could come under the heading of style. Anytime a client or a potential client comes into contact with your firm, they are experiencing your firm's brand or style. If you accept that definition, then you quickly see that any list of elements must also include:

Stationery	Business cards	Attire (uniform)
Forms	Invoices	Fax cover
E-mail signature	Newsletter	Facebook fan page
Telephone manner	Customer service	Advertising
Delivery vehicles	Salespeople	E-mail format
Printed materials	Signage	Web site
Office facility	Employee attitudes	Vendors
Smells	Sounds	Twitter background

All of the items listed above, as well as your firm name and logo, either support your company's image or detract from it.

### The Role of Your Identity Elements

The image elements of your brand perform very specific functions. Like many things related to your business, you must understand their purpose before you can determine which elements are right for your business.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Because your logo or an advertisement for your firm may be the first thing that a potential client comes into contact with, it must perform these tasks:

- Clearly identify your company
- Appeal to your target market
- Differentiate your firm
- Support the most important aspect of your core message

When defining image elements for your firm, you must ask if every element meets these criteria.

## What's in a Name?

The name of your firm goes hand in hand with your logo. In some cases, such as in a phone directory listing, it may be the only element that the potential buyer experiences.

The name of your firm has several functions and should be chosen with at least one of these in mind:

- **Recognition of your products or services**—Is it clear what your firm does? *Bob's Electrical Repair* is stronger than *Bob's Electric*.
- **Differentiation**—Does your firm name allow you to stand out in your industry? In the legal field, *Smith, Jones & Williams* could be replaced by *Traffic Violation Busters*.
- **Favorable association with the target market**—If the clients of your exclusive salon are primarily upscale women, then *Smitty's Hair Palace* might not make sense.

## What Does Your Logo Say?

The company logo is the cornerstone of your firm's branding elements. For many firms, the logo is the visual reminder of everything the firm stands for. While a great logo won't necessarily build your firm, it plays a vital role in representing it. Conversely, a weak or confusing logo can detract from the value that your firm brings. Here are the elements of a good logo:

- **It has a lasting value**—trendy logos don't hold up over time.
- **It is distinct**—some amount of uniqueness, as long as it doesn't confuse, is valuable.
- **It appeals to your target market**—if your target market is partial to blue, then it doesn't matter that you're not.
- **It supports your core message**—if you are trying to communicate your low, low prices, then your logo should support that image.
- **It is legible**—This seems pretty obvious, but many people use typefaces and images that can't be printed or carried to a large sign? Your logo should clearly identify your company, and it can't do that if people don't understand it.

## Can You Attach a Visual Metaphor?

While it is not always available, a logo or name that evokes a visual metaphor can be a very powerful tool. For instance, the name Duct Tape Marketing has the tendency to convey much more than the name of a company or service. The relationship to the concept of low-cost, effective marketing that works is inherent in the metaphor of Duct Tape.

In many cases, colors and powerful images can help drive an association to your business and help you stand out. Red trucks, catchy



## Duct Tape Marketing

names, a vivid image, or a mascot can all help when it comes to standing out.

Jennifer Katus of ClearLaunch Consulting, LLC, in Unionville, Connecticut, needed to build awareness of her company's name and contact information among executives with her former employer so they could reach her if they needed her services. She decided to capitalize on Daylight Savings Time, so she handed out mugs and notepads with a tag labeled "Spring forward with ClearLaunch," a reminder to turn their clocks ahead the following weekend, and her Web address. It reinforced her company's name, Web address, and image as a clever planner.

## Seek Professional Help

A professionally created logo is worth the investment. There are many ways to get a professional logo created for your organization, particularly after you've discovered your ideal customer and core message and can communicate these elements to a designer.

Look for local graphic design firms that can demonstrate a track record of small business work, or turn to online services such as LogoWorks ([www.logoworks.com](http://www.logoworks.com)) or crowdsourcing models such as Crowdspring ([www.crowdspring.com](http://www.crowdspring.com)).

### How to Collaborate with a Graphic Professional

Too often, small business owners abdicate important roles to so-called professionals with more experience. The problem with this approach is that nobody has your experience. By that I mean nobody sleeps, eats, drinks, and dreams your business like you. So, while it's usually a good idea to seek the help of professionals, you need to delegate and collaborate to get the best possible result.

One of the most important hats you wear as a business owner

## Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

includes the “guardian of all things strategic” hat. You can never give this hat to someone else!

The area of graphic design is one of those “leave it to somebody creative” areas that can be disastrous for the brand without proper collaboration. Experience with plenty of designers over the years tells me that the good ones know this as well and your “I want something that pops” or “I’ll know it when I see it” direction will effectively hobble them from giving you something that will provide the result your brand needs.

Design firms have long used something called a *creative brief* to help frame the needs of a design project and easily communicate to a designer the elements that need to be considered when doing the research and creation of a logo or other design element.

I developed my own creative brief over the years to use as a bit of a process to get closer to the best possible design for a given situation. While it’s not foolproof, I’ve encountered plenty of designers who asked if they could get a copy. You can find examples of creative briefs at Scribd ([www.Scribd.com](http://www.Scribd.com)).

The idea is to communicate everything a designer might need to know in your terms. This doesn’t mean there won’t be additional considerations, but complete your brief and you’ll be miles ahead.

The following elements should be given thought, documented, and discussed with your designer. (If they already know what you need, please fire them!)

### *Describe What and Why*

Describe what you think you need and why you need it. Don’t be afraid to listen to suggestions for what else you may need, but get the baseline down.

Example: We need a logo for our annual conference. We need it to tie in with our existing design elements, but also to be able to stand

## Duct Tape Marketing

alone, as we may create a separate event company. We will put it on brochures, T-shirts, bags, the Web, and banners.

### *List Your Goals*

What do you want this thing to do? Don't talk about your goals for what the logo should look like; list your goals for the project or element to be successful.

Example: We need this logo to convey a very professional, industry-leading position, get people excited about the event, and still make a clear connection to recognized elements of our brand.

### *Tell Your Story*

This is not so much your history, unless that's useful, but more the unique elements of your story that make up your mission, values, and vision—describe your culture.

Example: The boss wears Chuck Taylors to the office, and his chocolate lab greets everyone that comes to the business. We would rather eat uncooked meat than throw recyclables in the landfill.

### *Sketch Your Audience*

This is one element you should have a really good handle on anyway, but if not, take the time to draw a sketch, complete with real pictures, if you like.

Example: Our ideal customer is a 50ish woman who draws power and strength from knowing that she is free to make the choices in her life and can accomplish anything she is determined to do. Oh, and she thinks cats are evil.

## Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

### *Define Your Core messages*

This is another element that you should have already, but, if not, pick up the phone and call five of your best customers and ask them what you do that they value the most. Don't let them say, "You provide good service." Push them. "Tell me about a time we provided good service."

Now record those calls word for word, and capture the themes that come up. You'll be surprised how important this can be for a designer to hear.

I once had a remodeling contractor that kept saying, "We are more skilled than the competition." His customers kept saying, "Yes, you are skilled. But what I really like is how nice and clean your carpenters are when they work." Embracing that message changed everything about their brand.

### *Attach Meaning and Metaphor*

Is there a meaning or metaphor you want to capture? Be careful here, as this can head right into cliché land. But identifying a meaning or metaphor can also be a very powerful aspect of the project.

Duct Tape Marketing leans very heavily on the simple, effective, and affordable association that people make with the use of duct tape, but we try to avoid the idea of taping things together in a haphazard fashion. Thus you won't see rolls or pieces of tape slapped everywhere—although more than one designer has tried to go that route.

### *Explain What You Don't Want*

This is a category that few think to address, but it's sometimes easier for people to say what they don't want than it is to verbalize what they do want.

If you know that certain ways to portray your brand are completely out of the question, culturally, aesthetically, or otherwise, say so loudly. You can always have a healthy debate with the designer, but

## Duct Tape Marketing

you may have some very valid reasons for your bias, and the designer should have that data.

Insisting on a formal process, much like that described in this chapter, will help you and the professional you hire collaborate more effectively. It will also probably lead to a better design, reduce frustration, and potentially lower the overall cost.

### Your Identity Standards

Once you have established a look and feel for your printed materials and stationery, have your designer create a set of standards that you can publish and distribute to every person in your organization.

This set of “graphic standards” can be a simple document that describes the way your logo can be displayed, where logo files are stored, and the exact color usage and type styles that are to be used on ads, letters, and forms.

This basic set of standards can help slow the inevitable misuse and inconsistent use of graphic elements related to your brand. If you document these basic standards and share them with employees and vendors, your image elements will enjoy a consistent look.

### *The Telephone*

The way your phone is answered sends a marketing message, yet most business owners don't give it a thought. Prepare a script and set of standards for receiving calls, and stick to it. This may include a short sales message or tone when answering the phone.

Give serious thought to how a receptionist takes messages or checks to see if the caller is important enough to be sent on to the boss.

### *Your Voice Mail*

Create a script for your voice mail that reinforces a marketing message. It can be creative while getting the message across. Create one way

## Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

and have everyone in the firm adhere to it. Please don't tell me that you are either on the phone or away from your desk.

How about a short message about a new product, a tip, or relevant quote?

### *Your E-mail*

E-mail is a place where people really trip up their brand. Create an e-mail template complete with contact information and a marketing message-based signature, and make sure that everyone adheres to it. This is not the place for clip art and fun wallpaper to appear.

### *Sights, Sounds, and Smells*

Your work will generally represent the state of your working environment. Even if your clients don't visit your place of business, it should look as though they do. Set standards for your place of business (even if it's a home office) as though a new prospect were expected to show up at any minute.

### *Dress*

Do you need a dress code? Remember, dress, like every other element in this chapter, either adds to or detracts from the brand you want to portray. One of the great things about owning your own business is that you can hang out at your desk in your flip-flops with your favorite old dog at your feet and nobody can tell you to do otherwise. But know that how you choose to dress does impact your market's impression of your ability to deliver the goods.

So you may not have a dress code, but your market does. I heard a speaker on this subject comment that you should dress just a little better than your market. From a small business marketing point of view, I like that advice.

Logo apparel has also become a very acceptable small business uniform of sorts.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Process as a Marketing Tool

Any successful business got that way because they practiced systematic approaches to marketing, selling, manufacturing, implementing, consulting, delivering, and customer service. When I say “systematic,” in this case I often mean unconsciously systematic. A business or salesperson finds a strategy or tactic that works and repeats it, at least to some degree. Really successful businesses take this a step further—they document this successful system so it can be accurately duplicated by many other people.

When you begin to understand that your business is really a marketing business, you see these documented systems for what they really are—proof that you know what you are doing or, better still, a tool to help communicate how your firm is unique.

Every one of your marketing, fulfillment, delivery, and customer service processes or systems should become a marketing element. How about a name? Give each of your systems and processes names, and they will become valuable marketing assets.

A SALES CALL: Our Two-Step Internal Seminar

YOUR GUARANTEE: White Glove, We-Don't-Rest-Till-You're-Happy System

YOUR SERVICE CALL: Annual ROI (return on investment) Guarantee Evaluation

YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE: Postsale Satisfaction Checkup

YOUR DELIVERY OF A SERVICE: Ten-Point Value Implementation Process

YOUR REFERRAL PROCESS: 100 Percent Refund Process

YOUR CUSTOMER LOYALTY TACTIC: Birthday Surprise Bash

Naming a simple system may seem like overkill in some businesses, but it forces several very positive marketing activities. When

## Wake Up the Senses with an Image to Match Your Message

you give even the simplest system or procedure a name, these kinds of things happen:

- You will be more likely to actually document and utilize the promised system.
- Your prospects view the existence of such a system as proof that you do as you promise.
- Your prospects get a feeling of consistency and professionalism—both good things.
- You experience greater buy-in from your team members asked to operate the systems.
- You powerfully reinforce your core message and brand.
- Your documented and named systems and processes become a great starting point for industry articles and workshop topics.
- Your systems and processes become fertile breeding grounds for new products and services.

## An Identity Audit

One of the first steps to improving your image is to take a good hard look at where you stand. You accomplish this by auditing your existing materials and measuring the positive or negative impact they have.

If you are just starting a business, then this lesson will help you identify the best way to get your image off to a good start. If you already have a business, then an identity audit is the first step to strengthening your company's identity.

Much of your firm's identity or brand elements are experienced at the subconscious level. People don't sit around and analyze every detail of your marketing materials; they just know that they either like something about them or they don't.

One of the best ways to experience how much work your



## Duct Tape Marketing

subconscious mind does is to enter a place of business that you have never visited and conscientiously take note of everything you see, hear, smell, or feel. When you step back and do this, you can see just how much impact all of these factors have on your senses and consequently on your judgment of the business. This is the exact same process that your client goes through with your firm on first contact.

Now take a walk around your own business with heightened senses. What have you overlooked? Call your business, ask someone to fax you a document, visit your Web site, and mail a letter to yourself. It is imperative that you understand how much impact these seemingly little things have on the overall effectiveness of your marketing.

Do the same with your competition. Call them, write them, visit their Web site, and ask them to send you some information. Take note of how they accomplish these tasks and how they impact your impression of the firm.

It can also be helpful to gather opinions of a group of customers. I find that customers like to be asked what they think and will often offer very insightful information when given the opportunity.

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## Action Steps

1. Determine if your identity elements support your target market and core message.
  2. Create identity elements for your marketing, sales, fulfillment, and customer service processes.
  3. Complete your identity audit.
  4. Consult a professional graphic designer, with collaboration elements in hand.
-

## Chapter 5

# Create Products and Services for Every Stage of Client Development

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**S**o far we have looked at marketing in terms of a target market, core message, and image. In this chapter, we turn inward to take a look at the products and services you offer to this target market to get their attention, permission, and business.

Visionpace, a Midwestern software development firm, offers its prospects free white papers (technical podcasts and training from nationally known experts). Many of these prospects also take advantage of their software coaching process, and eventually some of these firms engage them to create custom software.

By having several ways for prospects to access the company's products and services, Visionpace slowly builds relationships with prospects and clients as it offers them more products and services.

### **A Different View of Products and Services**

Too often, businesses develop one core offering and hope to sell that and only that to a target market. This all-or-nothing approach is limiting from a marketing standpoint. Marketing is really much more like dating—first a movie, then dinner, perhaps dancing, and then, maybe, marriage, raising children, and spending the summers in your mountain hideaway.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Duct Tape marketers attempt to move their target prospects along a logical path toward a group of offerings geared to address the various stages of client development. This gradual, trust-building approach allows businesses to charge much more for their products and services while enjoying a much greater relationship with their clients. And the process of marketing becomes much easier.

### The Client Stages Defined

Once you define your ideal prospect and determine your target market characteristics, you really only have what I like to call a group of suspects. You suspect that they may need what you have to sell, but that's it. The point of your initial marketing to this group is to get them to identify themselves as a true prospect so you can gain permission to market to them.

Eventually, through continued systematic efforts, some number of these prospects become clients and then become repeat, premium clients and, eventually, champions and a prime source of referrals. But each stage is attained by applying specific marketing strategies and offers to gain an identified action.

So let's recap the stages:

**Suspects**—the list of people who fit your target description

**Prospects**—the list of people who have responded to an offer for more information

**Clients**—the list of people who have tried your product or service

**Repeat clients**—the list of people who have upgraded or purchased more

**Champions**—the list of people who tell others and sell for you

## The Marketing Funnel

You may have heard of the notion of a marketing or sales funnel. In this model you attempt to generate leads on a broad scale and then “funnel” them toward becoming a client with increased contact and content. This funnel concept is incomplete when it comes to the small business, as it leaves out the entire notion of what you might do with your clients once you get them to make a purchase.

## The Marketing Funnel Turned Upside Down—The Marketing Hourglass™

The greatest opportunity for real growth in most businesses comes from selling your existing clients more products and more expensive services and from the referrals generated from those clients. The marketing hourglass takes the idea of funneling suspects into your marketing machine and adds the intention of expanded product and service opportunities—thus the hourglass. This approach asks you to develop a very deliberate series of marketing, product, or service offerings with a specific intent, such as:

- automatically qualifying your prospects
- gaining their permission to allow you to market to them
- offering a low barrier or trial product/service
- focusing on overdelivering on the purchase
- moving the client to other opportunities or levels of service
- generating word of mouth or referrals

When you overlay my definition of marketing—“getting someone who has a need to know, like, and trust you” with the intentional act of turning *know*, *like*, and *trust* into *try*, *buy*, *repeat*, and *refer*, you

## Duct Tape Marketing

get the entire logical path for moving someone from initial awareness to advocate.

The key is to systematically develop touch points, processes, and product/service offerings for each of the seven phases of the hourglass.

1. **Know**—your ads, articles, and referred leads
2. **Like**—your Web site, reception, social media profiles, and e-mail newsletter
3. **Trust**—your marketing kit, white papers, and sales presentations
4. **Try**—Webinars, evaluations, and nurturing activities—the center of the hourglass
5. **Buy**—fulfillment, new customer kit, delivery, and financial arrangements
6. **Repeat**—postsale customer survey, cross-sell presentations, and quarterly events
7. **Refer**—results reviews, partner introductions, peer-to-peer Webinars, and community building

Far too many businesses attempt to go from “know” to “buy” and wonder why it’s so hard. By creating ways to gently move someone to trust, and perhaps even creating low-cost offerings as trials, the ultimate conversion to buy gets so much easier.

In order to start your thinking about the hourglass concept and gaps, it may help to ponder these questions:

- What is your free or trial offering?
- What is your starter offering?
- What is your “make it easy to switch” offering?
- What is your core offering?
- What are your add-ons to increase value?
- What is your members-only offering?
- What are your strategic partner pairings?

## Marketing Offers by Stage

The Duct Tape Marketing system involves the creation and promotion of offers that act as paid marketing tools to first turn suspects into prospects and then prospects into customers. That's right. Done properly, this process actually allows you to get paid to market your services. These marketing tools, in the form of free or low-cost information and workshops, can attract the interest of prospects and help begin to build trust while intentionally moving the prospect toward a buying decision—all the while as you produce revenue to fund your marketing machine.

### Marketing Offer for Suspects

Your suspect database responds to offers of complete information designed to help them solve a problem or answer a question.

These take the form of free reports, tips, white papers, workshops, demonstrations, evaluations, newsletters, books, guides, and checklists. We will look at how to attract your suspects to these offers in the next chapter, but you must begin to develop a product in the form of a free offering before you can move beyond this step. Examples of this type of offering might be free reports with these kind of titles:

- “10 Things You Must Know Before You Hire a Roofing Contractor”
- “Tax-Slashing Secrets of the Rich Revealed”
- “7 Simple Steps to Building Your Own Greenhouse”
- “12 Ways to End Back Pain Now”
- “How to Cut Your Software Training Costs in Half”

### Marketing Offer for Prospects

Once your suspects raise their hands and request your free report, they are giving you permission to market to them. Once they become

## Duct Tape Marketing

prospects, you have a much better feeling that they are qualified to become clients, and you can justify moving them to the next level by offering them some more. Your prospect list is now ready for an offer to become a client.

In many cases this requires a low-cost or trial service offering to gain the ultimate trust needed to become a premium client. You may need to create an introductory product or version of your service that can be priced low enough to offer a low barrier to becoming a client. Think of this as your foot-in-the-door offering.

### Your Clients Become Premium Clients

So now we enter the expanding shape of our hourglass—our marketing mix—as we move clients to deeper engagements and higher-priced products. Clients become premium clients when they respond to offers for repeat business, higher pricing, or custom services. You must develop products and services with the intention of creating premium clients. This may include membership offerings, upscale consulting engagements, or even service agreements and products and services from strategic partners.

Once your clients move to premium status, the focus is to also find specific ways to turn them into referral sources.

### Premium Clients Become Champions

Some amount of your clients will automatically become champions. These are repeat clients who voluntarily look for ways to promote your business. In effect, this potent group can become your informal sales force. With this group you need to develop promotions and offerings that will help them refer business or even come to see referring business as something that is of great benefit. Memberships and affiliate programs that promote and reward loyalty will work well to motivate this group. (In chapter 13 we will cover referrals in great depth.)

So let's bring this concept together by looking at an example of

## Create Products and Services for Every Stage of Client Development

what the marketing hourglass system might look like for, say, a consulting business:

**Suspects:** free newsletter, workshop, or teleseminar (a seminar that is conducted conference-call style)

**Prospects:** \$79–\$149 self-study training courses

**Clients:** \$500–\$2,500 group training program

**Premium client:** \$25,000–\$40,000 annual engagement

**Champions:** promote group training/strategic partners

## Ways to Create New Services and Products

### Service to Product

One of the most effective ways to market a service offering is to turn some aspect of that service into a product. In this way, you can give a complicated, sometimes invisible service the right name, a package, and a fixed price. When you are trying to get a client to know, like, and trust your company, offering them something of value that is easily understood and communicated can give you a leg up over the other service providers who are a little fuzzy about what they are offering.

Gabor Wolf of the Marketing Commando in Budapest, Hungary, employs a unique market research process to determine with laser accuracy what products his customers want to see developed next year. He tells his customers, “Next year we’re launching products A, B, C, and D. These products will be sold at full price next year, no exception. However, you can choose one, and only one, of them, and as soon as the product is launched, you can buy it at a significant discount. Please select the product that you want to buy at a discount next year!”

His company phrased the research question in a way that makes customers think a lot harder and makes it impossible to give the wrong



## Duct Tape Marketing

answer. They have found that customers consistently purchase the products they selected in their research.

### Extend a Product

On the other hand, your product offering may very well receive a boost down the road if you can find a way to attach a service to the product after, or in addition to, the initial sale. Many companies have found that their real profits come from servicing a product that they practically give away.

### Package Your Knowledge

Few things enhance your expert status and appeal more than information products that show or tell prospects how to do something. Again, it's proof that you know what you are doing and can allow you to build trust in very powerful ways. These information products can be used as marketing lead generators or as low-cost trial products. In some cases they can allow you to reach and serve markets that don't make sense for you or your staff to serve personally.

Joe Crisara created a promotion for his heating and cooling business called "The Oldest Furnace Contest." The promotion was such a success, \$367,000 in sales, that he went on to create an entire business, Big Time Business Development Services, devoted to teaching HVAC contractors how to create similar promotions.

### Bundle and Package

One way to create a new offering is to bundle several products or services together and offer special bundle pricing. Subscription services that include monthly fees or annual commitments in exchange for a new package offering are one way to bundle.

Complete offerings that include products and services from strategic partners can allow you to create a product or service with a broader appeal than you might otherwise create on your own. In some

## **Create Products and Services for Every Stage of Client Development**

instances, you can get strategic partners to add valuable products and services in exchange for the exposure they gain by being introduced to your clients.

### **Offer Levels of Service**

One way to extend your service offerings is to offer gold, silver, and bronze service levels that allow clients to purchase a particular level for a certain price. Some businesses find that they can offer group programs at a different level of price than individual programs. Another take on this strategy is to take larger, more complicated service offerings and break them into logical parts.

### **License Your Knowledge**

Many successful small business owners have found that they can ultimately increase their product offerings by allowing other businesses to learn their success formulas. This is particularly effective in vertical markets. If your dry-cleaning business has cracked the code for growing repeat business, there may be a market for hundreds of other dry-cleaning businesses that want to learn your secret. The opportunities that come forth by this type of industry leadership are generally astounding and well worth the effort to develop this type of offering.

### **Write a Book**

Matthew Kounkel of Kounkel Chiropractic in Leawood, Kansas, learned that writing his own book, *You 1.0*, allowed him to market through different mediums not previously available. By being a published author, he gained instant credibility and access to potential radio spots, newspaper features, speaking engagements, and other platforms. It also functioned as a marketing tool, further cementing why a customer should do business with him. Prospects see him as an expert in his field ([www.kounkelchiro.com](http://www.kounkelchiro.com)).

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Look for Holes in the Hourglass

What products or services, partnerships, entire new ways of thinking need to come to life in your business in order to have something to offer your clients at every stage of client development?

Like an ongoing theatrical performance, your business has many contacts with potential clients and clients on the way to a fully developed relationship. One of the surest ways to ensure that the play is flawless is to map every instance and manner in which your business touches its prospects and clients. This process also reveals the gaps and missing products or services you should be aware of at all times. By creating this map, your firm can then decide what it needs to do to deliver the experience that your marketing messages promise.

### Price Is a Function of Value

Almost every small business I have ever worked with doesn't charge enough for their products and services. This is due in part to a lack of confidence, in part to a feeling of competition, and in part because they have never strategically educated their clients on the value of what they have to offer.

Want a raise? Raise your prices. When you take the complete marketing hourglass strategy to product and service offerings, coupled with the education approach presented previously in the marketing kit, each and every one of your offerings becomes more valuable as it is enhanced by the complete offering.

For the most part your premium products will only be marketed to highly qualified clients who already know, like, and trust you. They will expect to pay a premium for these premium products, and if your products are presented correctly, clients will feel privileged to do so.

## **Create Products and Services for Every Stage of Client Development**

That's not a statement of arrogance as much as a statement of what people choose to do when they are allowed to appreciate value.

Raise your prices right now, today. By the time you finish this book, you'll feel confident that you have done the best possible thing for your business.

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### **Action Steps**

1. Understand the client stages.
  2. Develop marketing, product, and service offerings that address every aspect of the marketing hourglass.
  3. Map every point of customer contact and look for holes in the hourglass.
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# Produce Marketing Content That Educates

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Here's the current reality: people today have come to expect to find information about any product, service, company, individual, cause, or challenge they face by simply turning to the search engine of their choice. So if they're not finding that content you've produced provides them that information, even if someone referred them directly to you, there's a pretty good chance you won't be worthy of their trust. You've got to commit to content production. You have to make it a part of your overall strategy, and you've got to produce content with an eye on doing two things—*educating* and *building trust*.

These two categories of your content strategy must be delivered through the creation of very specific forms of content and not simply through sheer volume. Every business is now a publishing business, so you've got to start to think like one.

## Content That Builds Trust

### Blog

Yes, I think a blog is the absolute starting point for your content strategy because it makes content production, syndication, and sharing so easy. The search engines love blog content as well, and this is the place where you can organize a great deal of your editorial thinking. Content produced on a blog can easily be expanded and adapted to become content for articles, workshops, and e-books.

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

### Social Media

The first step in the social media content game is to claim all the free opportunities to create social media profiles on sites like LinkedIn and Facebook, but also in *Businessweek*, *Entrepreneur*, and *Inc.* magazine communities. Building rich profiles and optimizing links, images, and videos that point back to your main site are important parts of the “content as strategy” play.

### Reviews

Ratings and reviews sites such as Yelp, MerchantCircle, and Citysearch have become mainstream user-generated content hubs. Throw in the fact that Google, Yahoo! and Bing all allow folks to rate and review businesses, and you’ve got an increasingly important category of content in which you must participate. You’ll never have total control over this category, but ignore it and it may be extremely damaging to your brand. Get proactive and monitor this channel aggressively.

### Testimonials

Customer testimonials are a powerful form of content. Every business today should seek customer content in multiple forms—written, audio, and video. This content adds important trust-building endorsements and makes for great brand-building assets out there on Google and YouTube.

## Content That Educates

### The Point-of-View White Paper

Every business should have a well-developed core story that’s documented in the form of a white paper or e-book. This content must dive deeply into what makes your firm different, what your

## Duct Tape Marketing

secret sauce is, how you approach customer service, and why you do what you do. I wrote extensively about this idea in *The Referral Engine* ([www.referralenginebook.com/](http://www.referralenginebook.com/)). This is the primer for your educational content push.

### Seminars

Today, people want information packaged in ways that will help them get what they want. Presentations, workshops, and seminars (online and off) are tremendous ways to provide education with the added punch of engagement. Turning your point-of-view white paper into a 45-minute, value-packed session is one of the most effective ways to generate, nurture, and convert leads.

### FAQs

There are those who want to know one very specific thing about your company or approach, and these learners get the most value out of the traditional “frequently asked questions” approach. There’s no denying the value of information packaged in this format, but go beyond the questions that routinely get asked and include those that should get asked but don’t, particularly the ones that help position you favorably against your competition.

### Success Stories

Building rich examples of actual clients succeeding through the use of your product or service offerings is a tremendous way to help people learn from other individuals and businesses just like them. When prospects see themselves in a success story, we can more easily transport them to a place where they can imagine getting those same results. This is another form of content that begs to be produced in video.

All of these elements should be built into your marketing plan with a process to create, update, and curate each.

## How to Build a Content-Generation System

So, you're buying into the notion of content and publishing. Of course, this doesn't mean you get the game just to play. The idea behind all of this content creation you're being asked to do is to use it to build your business in the long term—to get more leads and sales.

The following systematic approach to content creation will help guide you in the most effective use of your limited time on the way to creating a momentum-building content lead generation system.

### Content Creation Strategy

Like all good systems and processes, your content lead system must start with strategy. With that in mind, there are three very important concepts to consider:

1. **The total body of work**—Think big picture when you think content. Pretend that you are outlining a book about your entire subject of expertise. Now, as you think about content, work through the outline and remember that you are creating a body of work that may take months—or even years—to finish.
2. **The purpose and repurpose**—As you create content, always think about the purpose you have in mind—like driving traffic, getting links, or drawing a reaction—and the repurpose opportunities—blending several posts into an article, using it as a seminar, creating an e-book from a category of blog posts, etc.
3. **Medium diversity**—One great way to get more bang for your buck is to republish your content in various forms. Record and archive seminars, transcribe audio and video, and offer multiple forms of the same content.

### Content Inspiration

Even with a big-picture approach, you can get blocked when it



## Duct Tape Marketing

comes to creating fresh and frequent content. It's a good idea to have ready-made sources of inspiration to turn to and help keep you up to speed on all the real-time happenings in your world.

- **Questions**—make a note of all the questions that prospects and customers ask, and get in the habit of posting answers to these inquiries.
- **Delicious**—use a bookmarking tool like Delicious so you can mark things you've found for later reading and so you can see what other people are bookmarking for categories you need to keep up on.
- **Google Reader**—subscribe to and browse fifty or so related blogs; you can do this on your phone while you stand in line at the coffee shop.
- **Alltop**—a convenient way to see lots of blog posts sorted by countless topics.
- **StumbleUpon**—the unique way to find off-the-beaten-path stuff about topics you choose.
- **Google keywords**—sometimes you just need to write about what people are searching for. Using keywords tools helps you know the best way to say it.
- **SmartBriefs**—daily digests of some of the best of the Web on a variety of topics.
- **Tools**—Moleskine notebooks to capture ideas, Dragon Dictation or CastingWords to transcribe audio and video to text, and iPhones or Flip cameras to capture video and audio.

## Content Automation

Few people are still as geeky about RSS\* as me anymore, but I still love what you can do with it. My favorite use is to create content automatically or on the fly by installing a bit of RSS magic. Using

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\*Really Simple Syndication

## **Produce Marketing Content That Educates**

this approach, you can create fresh content for your own site or even custom-filtered feeds just for your best customers.

Here's a quick tip: Bookmark mentions of your company in Delicious using a company name tag, grab the RSS feed from the tag on Delicious, and take it to FeedBurner. Use the BuzzBoost feature to create HTML code to publish this info to your "In the news" page. The page updates automatically every time you bookmark any news mention.

## **Advertising Content**

If you want your advertising to be more effective and your content to generate leads, don't sell your stuff; advertise your content.

Use your Facebook and other PPC advertising to point to your valuable free e-book, upcoming online seminar, or past seminar archive. Turn your advertising into a trust-building platform, rather than an expensive turnoff.

## **On-Demand Content**

One of the most dramatic advances in the communication of sales messages has come in the form of presentation platforms. With today's low-cost and easy-to-use video tools, you can create full-featured, highly engaging sales presentations and host them online to effectively generate and nurture leads night and day. Using a tool like SlideRocket allows you to also easily embed forms into your interactive presentations and receive alerts when people view the show and complete the form.

## **Content Partnerships**

And now for the big payoff for all your content creation.

Once you create a blog, e-book, white paper, podcast, videocast, or online and offline educational seminar, you can take these proven and practiced bits of content and start offering them to your strategic partners. Let them co-brand your e-book and offer it to their clients. Invite them to write guest blog content, and interview them for your

## Duct Tape Marketing

podcast. Offer to provide your awesome seminar free of charge to their customers.

While content creation may seem like a lot of work, using even a fraction of the ideas contained here will crush just about any other form of lead generation today.

## Educate, Don't Sell

Done well, marketing via content can eliminate the need to sell. In fact, no one likes to be sold anything, *but they do love to buy*. Your marketing materials can do the job of selling if you focus on creating a set of materials that provide an education for readers—an education that compels them to buy.

Most small business owners can't really articulate why someone should buy from them. This is a place where copycat marketing is at its worst. Lacking a compelling argument, many small business owners attempt to fill brochures with nice sound bites or product descriptions. This type of marketing, typically housed in the tri-fold brochure, does little to help you stand out in a crowd, let alone educate.

In the remainder of this chapter you will learn the steps used to create a tool kit of marketing materials that are flexible, affordable, personal, practical, and, most important, educational. The very process used to create these materials will provide you with a valuable education as well. The simple process of documenting your organization's most compelling features can, in itself, help bring clarity to the real benefits your firm has to offer.

## The Marketing Kit

Don't let all of the focus on online content overshadow the fact that there are still great reasons to have offline marketing tools as well. The

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

Duct Tape Marketing tool of choice for offline marketing materials is something I call a *marketing kit*. The marketing kit is a collection of carefully crafted, individual pages of information that help you present the best possible case for why a prospect would buy from you. The kit format allows you to create personalized inserts, frequently changeable and updateable inserts, and inserts tailored to the specific needs of a prospect.

The term *kit* helps describe the interchangeable fashion of the documents. The documents contained in the kit are assembled as needed in a carrier, such as a pocket folder, and then produced quite often in-house on the increasingly affordable high-quality desktop printer.

There are instances where higher-quality offset printing is called for, but for most small quantity needs, it is hard to beat the “on-demand” nature of the marketing kit. You always benefit from presenting a professional image, but the content is the most important aspect of your educational marketing materials.

I suggest working with a graphic designer to create a custom pocket folder and then create complementary design for a template sheet to be used when you print your individual pages in-house. This way you get the benefit of offset color printing for your base sheet. Among other things, the marketing kit contents should include your case statement, your difference summary, your ideal client/customer description, your marketing story, and your offerings.

In addition many people find that very cost-effective design templates from firms such as StockLayouts ([www.stocklayouts.com](http://www.stocklayouts.com)) can do the trick. This company features agency-quality market template designs that are perfect to incorporate into your marketing kit creation.

### Your Case Statement

A *case statement*, as the name implies, is a document created to make your case to the donor—your answer to why anyone should give you money. It may contain:

## Duct Tape Marketing

- a statement of a challenge, frustration, or problem that your target market experiences
- an image of what life is like when the problem is solved
- an explanation of how they got here in the first place
- a path for the donor to follow
- a directed call to action

Here's an example of a case statement for an expense auditing firm:

*A Case for Waste*

*Money is a terrible thing to waste.*

### **Do you know that there may be money hidden in your trash and energy bills?**

For the most part your business runs very well. You attract clients and provide a product or service as promised. What you may not know is that your operation could be leaking profits from some very unexpected areas . . . your trash disposal and energy consumption. It's a fact that profit comes from one of two places—increased revenue or decreased expenses. Successful firms rely on sales and marketing to increase profits and increasingly on industry experts to slash expenses.

### **But do you really know everywhere to look for hidden expense charges?**

What if there was a way to know for sure that you were maximizing every dollar of your trash disposal and energy consumption costs? What if there were a firm that had the specialized expertise to look for ways to lower your costs and increase your efficiencies, and what if the services of such a firm didn't cost you a dime? You would have to take a look, wouldn't you?

**Maybe it seems easy enough, but our experience tells us something different.**

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

Successful savings in the waste disposal and energy consumption business starts with an understanding of how these industries really work. There are firms out there today that might suggest that you can save money by switching your service to them. There are firms that act as brokers for large national services, but when you stop to think about it, is their motivation saving you money, or getting your business?

### **We don't get paid until we perform.**

Saving our clients money is our only motivation and the primary way we get paid. Our consulting fee arrangement is based on receiving a share of the savings we create for our clients. With that mind-set we had to develop a host of unique ways to save our clients money and help them recoup past overcharges. (A surprising percentage of our clients have been overcharged by vendors for years.) We are one of the only true waste and energy consulting firms in the country. Our consultants have years of experience in the waste and energy business and can analyze every aspect of your waste and energy expenses. We tailor our recommendations to your specific needs without any bias toward one service provider or another. Ask yourself, with this mind-set, *what do I have to lose by contacting Waste Stream Monitoring to learn more?*

### **Waste Stream Monitoring has the expertise and the tools.**

Waste Stream Monitoring has been helping firms control and reduce their waste disposal and energy consumption costs since 1995. We have developed proprietary savings strategies and a nationwide service network along with cutting-edge technologies and tools. If you would like to learn more about Waste Stream Monitoring or receive a free, no-obligation evaluation of your waste and energy expenses, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at 913-831-4800, or visit Waste Stream Monitoring on the Web at [www.WasteChek.com](http://www.WasteChek.com).

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Your Difference Summary

Use this page to hit prospects with the reasons you are different, and shower them with the benefits of doing business with you. Don't tell them what you do; focus on how you do it. Tell them about your unique approach, your processes, and the little things you do. If you have studied your competition and you know what your target market craves, make a point to summarize your solution. I like to keep this one to the top three or four things that you do that your target market will value.

### Your Ideal Client/Customer Description

People generally feel more comfortable working with companies that specialize in their unique industry, niche, or problem. Describe your ideal client. Describe why they typically hire you—what's going on that makes them reach out to you? Describe the factors that seem to exist for your most successful engagements. Outline the results they typically enjoy when they engage your services. By completing this description you will narrow your market in number but make yourself substantially more attractive to someone who fits your ideal description.

### Your Marketing Story

Many companies have interesting or even gut-wrenching histories. Tell them your story in an open, honest, and entertaining way, and you will win their hearts as well as their heads. The ability to connect by way of personal stories is one of the greatest advantages that small businesses possess over big businesses. The marketing story is an effective tool because it allows you to do several things that traditional marketing or advertising does not.

### Your Product/Service Offerings

This page should outline the various services, products, and packages that you have available. Clearly describe and detail the benefits of each.

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

### Case Studies

Pick representative clients or industries, and outline how your product or service solved someone else's challenge. Case studies allow readers to see themselves getting relief. An effective case study format states

- the situation
- the problem
- your solution
- the result

Case studies are even more powerful when they contain photos of your client, project, or solution accompanied by a testimonial quote from the client. Over time you can collect more and more of these and draw upon the ones that fit an industry or problem that is relevant to your prospect.

Video testimonials and case studies have become commonplace and should be part of your online strategy content.

### Involve Your Clients in Telling the Story

Case studies have long been recognized as an effective way to offer proof that your product or service does what you say it does. The idea behind this tool is that prospects can read how you helped someone just like them and come to the conclusion that you can repeat that performance. The only problem, though, is that most case studies I come across don't really do much—people know they should have them, but they really don't know how to create them.

Here's my advice. If you want to write a really good case study, involve your client in its creation. My method is to actually set up an interview with a client, with the communicated intent of getting their help in the creation of their story. (Oh, and in case you didn't jump to this conclusion yet, this is a great way to resell them on being your



## Duct Tape Marketing

client.) There are many ways to structure a good case study but, at the very least, I like my clients to answer these four questions:

1. What solution were you seeking when you hired us?
2. What did/do we provide that you value the most?
3. What has been the result of working with us?
4. What would you tell others who are considering hiring us?

Now package those answers in a one-page document and move on to about ten more clients for the same. This tool may become your greatest marketing weapon in a world of prospects looking for an authentic marketing story to latch onto.

It should be no surprise that the actual users of your services are better prepared to offer great marketing copy for other prospective users, but few business marketers take advantage of this resource.

### Testimonial Proof

Third-party endorsements are another way to add proof that you do indeed deliver as promised. Collect quotes from real, live clients and create a page titled “See What Others Have to Say About Us.” Try to get quotes that focus on the results you have helped them realize. These quotes can be some of the strongest selling tools you have. New technologies make it easy to create audio and video testimonials too. Here are some suggestions for acquiring powerful testimonials:

- Craft some proposed testimonial copy and present it to your clients for approval.
- Ask a prospect to obtain a testimonial from your clients (they will copy you).
- Photograph your clients using your product or associating with your brand.

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

### *A Simple Way to Get Great Testimonials*

The best time to get a testimonial is when you are standing face-to-face with a client and she tells you what a great job you have done. (Learn to pounce on this moment of truth.)

Here is a simple testimonial system that works every time. Purchase a two-column business card holder and ask your happy client to give you two business cards. Ask the client to write a brief testimonial on the back of one card, and then place one with the testimonial facing up and the other next to it. (Tip: When asking clients to write a testimonial, ask them to write it as though they were recommending your business to a friend who was considering hiring you or buying from you. You will get a much more powerful tool than if they are writing it to you.)

This little collection of cards will become your sales trophy case and will lend instant credibility to your claims. It is obvious that the testimonials are genuine because they are on the person's business card. This little trick also helps clients overcome procrastination because they can complete the task while you are standing in front of them. Over time you will build a very impressive showing of testimonials. (Obviously you can transfer these quotes to Web sites and other marketing materials.)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Some of your prospects will come to you with very specific questions. If you can address them in a succinct manner, you may not have to do much more. Start by going over the types of questions you receive from clients, sales prospects, and even e-mails.

Sometimes this can be a good place to start all of your marketing materials. After you answer some of the most persistent questions, go back and make sure that these answers run throughout your other pages as well.

Bill Caskey of Caskey Sales Training in Indianapolis, Indiana ([www.billcaskey.com](http://www.billcaskey.com)), gave me this tip. Create two sets of FAQs.

## Duct Tape Marketing

One is the basic list of questions that clients ask, and the other is a list of questions you wish they would ask. He called this second page “Questions That Should Be Frequently Asked” and found that this page helped him teach his prospects things they didn’t even know to ask.

### Processes and Checklists

With this page you should show the reader how you do what you do. Create detailed checklists and flowcharts that show your prospect how you keep your promise. In many cases, you have these anyway, but by making them part of your marketing, you can demonstrate how much more professional your organization is.

A documented process description will help justify why you charge a premium for your services. Many people underestimate how much really goes into delivering a quality product or service—so show them.

### Articles

Have you written articles for publications, newsletters, or internal distribution? Include relevant reprints and press clippings.

### Something for Everyone

At this point you may be wondering if everyone will really read all of this. The simple answer is no. Some will pore over it, some will skim, and some will take solace in the fact that you have it. People learn in many different ways, and the job of the marketing kit is to address as many of those ways as possible. Most prospects will need to know one or more of the following:

- how you work—process, case statement, FAQ
- the results you achieve—case studies, testimonials
- who you know—client list, case studies
- what you know—process description, articles

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

### Hire a Journalist to Help You Create Content

I owe this idea in part to a conversation I had with David Meerman Scott, author of *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*.

Most every business these days is really a publishing business of some sort, whether they think that way or not. The need to produce masses of educational content has become standard operating procedure in today's Internet search-driven marketing world. But, publishing content in blog posts, e-books and articles, while considered compulsory, is not the easiest thing for some to do.

A smart move that businesses should consider these days is hiring a journalist, rather than a marketing person, to act as their primary content producer. If you think of your business as a publishing business, the need for journalists becomes obvious.

- An experienced journalist will usually look at content in the objective, source-driven, and factual way he or she has been trained—precisely the way marketing content must be viewed and communicated these days.
- An experienced journalist knows how to start with the kernel of an idea and develop an entire story quickly—another key success factor in the “more is more” publishing business.
- An experienced journalist, particularly one who's worked in your industry, may possess key contacts throughout your industry and with publications that cover your industry, making the writer much more than a content production machine.

The good news, for you at least, is the growing pool of very experienced journalists finding themselves without a publication to write for as traditional publishing operations downsize and go out of

## Duct Tape Marketing

business. So now is a great time to snap one up, even if only for a few hours of work per week.

### How to Use Content to Increase Your Online ROI

The trouble with achieving some measure of success using content in social media is that it can feel pretty easy. There are plenty of well-intentioned, lonely, chatty, kind, disturbed, and bored people to be found at every social watering hole. These folks are ready to follow, friend, argue, retweet (RT), discuss, chat, and share as long and as often as you choose.

The problem, as I'm sure you've come to surmise, is that these people don't move along the path of becoming a paying customer, no matter how engaging you are, unless they are (a) the right people and (b) given a reason to want to know about what they can buy from you.

Both parts of this equation come together in the social media world through the production and promotion of content—plain and simple. If you're not producing valuable content and sharing or pointing to that content in digital gatherings, then don't expect any return on your efforts.

Show me a marketer questioning the ROI of social media, and I'll show you a marketer devoid of any means to create and showcase engaging content.

Now, before you roll your eyes at the thought of another “content is king” lecture, let me tell you I'm not simply talking about white papers and blog posts.

Content in the social world doesn't even have to be words, and certainly doesn't have to be words you write. Content is just a concept for a tool that educates, demonstrates, informs, filters, entertains, and gives people a reason to think you might have more of that hidden somewhere back at the ranch.

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

If I've expanded your view of content creation and amplification as the social media ROI creator, perhaps it would be helpful to explore some ways to get this done.

### Write Content Worth Reading

Of course, this is the toughest because it requires the most work, and perhaps the most talent. But, this is also the best way to build a foundation on which every aspect of your marketing online and offline can lean. Remember that a great blog post can usually be turned into a great article for the local business publication. A series of related blog posts can become a killer handout for your next “lunch and learn” presentation.

Great content you author is also the underpinning of your SEO efforts. Taking the time to craft articles with link baiting in mind can be enough to rank your Web site far ahead of your competitors, and links back to your site are a crucial component in search engine rankings.

Link-worthy content is rarely brilliant prose offering sparkling commentary. (Hey, if you can do that on a routine basis, go for it.) Some of the best business content is text that tells people how to do something they want to do or a list of tools or sites that tell them how to do something. (Search Top 10 on a bookmarking site like Delicious.com and you'll see what I mean.)

Another way to create relevant and link-worthy content on your own is by monitoring news stories coming out of your industry. Look for ways to create editorial stances on the news you find—even better if your stance is counter to the prevailing thoughts on the issue.

### Point to Content Worth Reading

You know the friend of yours who knows the best places to eat, shop, and hang out—what's new and what's now? He or she is your go-to person when you need to know.

Sharing other people's content is a bit like this. Knowing where to

## Duct Tape Marketing

find what's being said about a topic, industry, or challenge, and sharing that information is another form of content creation that builds trust.

Set up and subscribe to custom Twitter searches for your industry, and look for stories and angles to share on social networks. Also, get active on sites such as Digg ([www.Digg.com](http://www.Digg.com)), StumbleUpon ([www.StumbleUpon.com](http://www.StumbleUpon.com)), and Alltop ([www.Alltop.com](http://www.Alltop.com)) to quickly find and scan content worth pointing out in your tweets.

### Filter Really Good Stuff

The good news is, the Internet gives each and every one of us access to a vast warehouse of content. The bad news is, the Internet gives each and every one of us access to a vast warehouse of content. I mean, how can you read through all this stuff to find what you need and must know?

RSS technology is a marketer's gift from, well, I don't know. Let's give Dave Winer credit. The thing is, without knowing very much about the technical side of RSS, you can use this plumbing to create custom content that's worth sharing. Think how powerful it would be if you were the consultant who created custom information portals for each of the three market segments you served. Something tells me you could attract quite a following once people saw the specific nature of the feed you produced.

Using combinations of tools such as FeedBurner ([www.Feedburner.com](http://www.Feedburner.com)), Delicious, Twitter search, BackType ([www.backtype.com](http://www.backtype.com)), Pipes (<http://pipes.yahoo.com/pipes>), Google Reader ([www.reader.google.com](http://www.reader.google.com)), and Google Alerts ([www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)), even non-techie types can create automated, individualized RSS feeds to serve specific clients and industries. You can easily publish this content to Web pages so people can subscribe.

For dead-simple publishing, you could set up a series of posterous blogs (see <https://posterous.com/>) by market segment and then simply e-mail links, photos, videos, and alerts to the proper blog.

## **Produce Marketing Content That Educates**

Almost every social media practitioner touts the value of listening stations, but there's some real gold in filtering stations as well.

### **Make Exclusive Offers**

Hey, people get engaged by a deal. A special offer is content in my mind. Offers made exclusively through social media channels are proving very effective for brands that have built trust in other avenues.

The key is to use social media offers in conjunction with your other forms of communication so that your offers are received with enough context. No matter how great a deal is, you want to know you can trust the organization making the deal.

A tremendous way to create, or perhaps borrow, trust is to create opportunities for your networks to share exclusive offers with their friends. Get in the habit of creating promotions that allow your friends to get the benefit of passing the goodies, and watch how fast they can spread. Of course, find a way to track and reward them for their participation too.

This kind of content creation works a lot like a referral and differs greatly with the products or services being presented, but can be a powerful way to create immediate ROI from social media participation. Start with your existing customers and cocreate the right kind of promotion and motivation.

### **Teach Your Network to Do What You Do**

The final way to significantly amp up your content return is to recruit and equip your own private network to do the same thing you do. This is such a powerful play because it gives you a very solid reason to formalize your offline strategic partner network and, in effect, turn yourself into human link bait. (What do you think, should I trademark that term?)

The idea here is that if you do all of the things mentioned in this chapter, why not figure out a way to recruit a network and teach them



## Duct Tape Marketing

how to do the same for their businesses? In addition to creating a powerful referral network for business and leads, you can create content opportunities for all of your partners through interviews and guest posts and routinely look to share each other's content on bookmarking sites like Digg and StumbleUpon. Take this approach a step further and teach your first ten strategic partners to do the same and recruit ten each, and then they recruit ten each—all part of the club. It's similar to creating your own little MLM empire built on content. (No matter what you think of the history of products sold in that model, there's no denying the power of multiplication that can occur built on this type of network.)

### *The Easiest Way to Create Video Right Now*

Creating video for blog posts, landing pages, and other Web pages has become an important way to communicate a personal message and showcase your brand. And while there are many ways to get started using video, the key is to simply get started. So, while you may end up investing in HD cameras, condenser microphones, editing software, and green screens, I would like to describe the easiest way to get started producing your own videos.

Facebook and YouTube both have direct record video options, and while it may not be the most high-tech way to create a video, it surely is the easiest. The only thing you need is a camera. You can use a digital camera that plugs into your computer or the built-in camera common on most laptops these days.

For YouTube you log in to your account and hit “upload” and then choose the “record from webcam” option. You'll need to allow YouTube permission to access your camera and mic, and then hit record. Once you're finished, you can save the video and then grab the code that YouTube produces and embed the newly recorded segment onto your Web site.

Facebook works much the same way. You can record to your profile

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

page or business page. Log in to your account and visit the page on which you would like to post the video. Click the video link and hit “record from Webcam.” Then hit Stop when finished with your message. You can review the video and start over if you like. Once you are happy with the video, you can also describe it in the status update bar and hit Share.

Now, let’s say you want to record a client telling his success story or testimonial without taking the film crew across town. Skype video can be a great way to get this done. You’ll both need Skype accounts ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) and Webcams, but recording is a snap. I use an add-on called Call Recorder for Mac ([www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/](http://www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/)), or there is Pamela for PC users ([www.pamela.biz/en/](http://www.pamela.biz/en/)). They do a fine job and even allow me to split the two tracks (myself and the interviewee) so I have total flexibility when editing.

Probably the most important technical aspect of making video this way is lighting. For Webcams, it’s best to have lights behind the camera, pointing at your face or whatever subject you are trying to record. Be aware of windows and lights behind you, as they can create an overpowering glare.

Again, the primary reason for this section is to illustrate how easy it can be to get started with video so you’ll start to look for more ways to use it.

## One Way to Get All of This Done

Creating a marketing kit is a fairly large and important undertaking. Don’t try to do it in one day. Create an outline for each page you intend to create and then just start working away. You may also find it helpful to purchase a small digital recorder and start talking into it. Many people are better at communicating by talking than by writing. You can always get someone to interview you on tape and then hire a copywriter to turn it into well-crafted written pages.

## Duct Tape Marketing

- Create your outline.
- With outline in hand, pick a page and start writing.
- Don't edit; don't answer the phone; don't do anything but write.
- Once you complete this step, put it away and come back to it tomorrow.
- Go over your document again and rewrite and edit.
- Get someone else to edit and proofread.
- Consider getting feedback from several ideal clients.
- Move to the next page.

Today's marketing requires lots of content, lots of education, and lots of trust building via expertise sharing. You've likely concluded that all of that is a ton of work. It is a ton of work—well worth it in the long run—but work nonetheless. The secret to maximizing this content production play is to develop strategies that help you multiply your efforts, make it naturally easier to produce content, and employ technology and services to realize a huge return on your time invested.

One such strategy that puts all of the above into service utilizes the recorded word as the foundational tactic. For some reason many people find it easier to say what's on their minds than to write what's on their minds. Funny thing is, for most, the spoken story is much more authentic and personal too. When business owners sit down to write a marketing piece, they end up sounding like marketers trying to sell something. When they speak the same marketing piece, it comes off much more engaging and real.

So, get the Belkin TuneTalk stereo mic attachment for your iPod and start speaking your marketing materials and Web pages. Then get them transcribed by a service such as CastingWords ([www.castingwords.com/](http://www.castingwords.com/)), and consider a service like TaskUs ([www.taskus.com/](http://www.taskus.com/)) to “punch it up a bit.” This little content creation routine may just be the secret weapon that turns you into the content super-producer.

## Produce Marketing Content That Educates

But why stop with marketing materials per se? What about white papers, expert interviews, and customer success stories? Start recording this type of content via the phone using a service such as SkypeIn and Ecamm Call Recorder ([www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/](http://www.ecamm.com/mac/callrecorder/)). Take your interviews back to CastingWords, and all of a sudden you are creating content and information products on the fly.

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### Action Steps

1. Define the three or four key benefits that make your firm unique.
  2. Collect ten testimonials from satisfied clients.
  3. Develop four case studies that demonstrate results you or your products have delivered.
  4. Create your big-picture body of content outline.
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## Chapter 7

# A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

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In this chapter we are going to cover the basics of using the Web and the evolving set of new online tools to promote your business. Notice that I didn't say we are going to discuss whether or not getting increasingly active online is right for your business. There was a time not too long ago when I could warn business owners that they must have a Web site to truly be in business. Today I can say that if you aren't participating in social media and finding ways to find and engage customers online with a total Web presence, then prepare to become nonexistent.

### **Some Deadly Assumptions about Online Marketing Success**

Let me start this important chapter with a few false and sometimes deadly assumptions about the new online world.

It's not enough to have a Web site. These days you must create a total Web presence, but you've also got to create strategy based on overall objectives. This is another way of saying that unless your online activity ends in a sale, you've failed in the game of online marketing.

There are countless ways to fail on the quest to convert a pair of peering eyes into a paying client. Following are just some of the assumptions online marketers make that prove deadly when it comes to successfully building trust and converting sales.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

### **“An attractive Web site is an effective Web site.”**

I'm all for great design. Great design alone can help sell a product, but an attractive Web site that doesn't appeal, navigate, or communicate the right message is of little value.

Ultimately, great Web design comes down to combining elements in ways that make it easy for people to engage with the content, learn, and do pretty much what you want them to do without having to think about it.

While there are proven design conventions for the Web, testing is really the only way to get it totally right. [Usertesting.com](http://www.usertesting.com) is a great place to start. Get your customers to use your site while you observe and do plenty of A/B testing using a tool such as Google Website Optimizer ([www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=websiteoptimizer&continue=http://www.google.com/analytics/siteopt/%3Fhl%3Den&hl=en](http://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=websiteoptimizer&continue=http://www.google.com/analytics/siteopt/%3Fhl%3Den&hl=en)).

### **“I know what my customers search.”**

Business owners or anyone experienced with an industry can become blinded with knowledge. You know that the industry standard jargon for your widget is, “blah, blah, blah,” but do your prospects have any idea that's what it's called? All that matters is what they actually type into that box when they go to a search engine. Don't assume you know what it is. Do your keyword research using a tool such as the Google search-based keyword tool ([www.google.com/sktool/](http://www.google.com/sktool/)) and you may be surprised to find that people actually search for a wide variety of things related to your business.

Don't forget to *ask* your customers what they search.

### **“People will go to my contact page to find me.”**

Have you ever visited a site with the primary goal of getting a phone number or other contact information only to have to hunt around for twenty minutes for that one piece of data?

## Duct Tape Marketing

It's great to have a contact page that provides various ways to contact you, the departments within your business, and your team members, but it's also a good idea to have contact information on *every page* of your site. For local businesses, this can actually help your local SEO.

### **"No one reads blogs."**

A large number of business owners I encounter still falsely cling to the belief that if *they* don't pore over dozens of blogs each morning, then *nobody* must be reading blogs.

Here's the big problem with that thinking. Everyone reads blogs—everyone, that is, who has done a search in the last few years. You may not fire up a blog for reading enjoyment, but you are finding blog content when you go searching for answers.

Search engines love content that's featured on blogs because the software makes it easy to add new content, draws links more naturally, and is usually less sales-oriented than typical Web page content.

All of this leads me to tell you emphatically that your business needs an active blog.

### **"People will find my site by 'searching' for it."**

I know that's probably one goal, but relying on your SEO efforts alone may be putting too many eggs in one basket.

You've got to put your content in countless outposts and social networks to open up additional paths to your site. You've also got to promote your site through advertising, including pay-per-click and offline mediums. In fact, you ought to promote your content in every offline vehicle available.

### **"Traffic is the key."**

Marketers love to obsess over traffic numbers. I'll admit that I do it, too, but it's not really that important of a metric if those visitors get confused, turned off, and leave.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

Most site owners would benefit from spending half of their traffic generation efforts and dollars on conversion instead. Hiring a landing page consultant and testing every element of your site may pay off faster than hiring an SEO coach.

### **“People will come back because they like my site.”**

Let’s hope every visitor likes what he finds when he drops by, but give him a valuable reason to come back. Or, better yet, offer him something in exchange for his e-mail address and permission to send him updates.

Test landing pages for the specific purpose of gaining surfers’ trust to gather contact details or you will forever be left to *hope* they come back. Use great content, free seminars, and e-books to draw them back.

Social media gets most of the buzz these days, but few things surpass an e-mail campaign sent to a list of people who trust you to send them valuable content.

## The New Purpose of a Web Site

Many small business owners were originally seduced with the notion that all they had to do was put a Web site online and wait for the phone to ring. When that didn’t happen, some became disillusioned and either left the Web or left their Web site to languish as little more than a place to collect dust. For a Duct Tape marketer, the primary purpose of a Web site is to act as a hub to integrate and connect all of your marketing communication and education to the myriad of other outposts where you may participate and create awareness online.

The good news is that the educational content outlined previously in the marketing kit can be the perfect base of content for your Web site. You must drop that copycat marketing notion that tells you that you need a home page and an “About Us” page just like everyone else.



## **Duct Tape Marketing**

The purpose of your Web site is to allow your visitor to begin the task of more easily knowing, liking, and trusting you.

Much like your marketing kit, your Web site can educate, persuade, and motivate your prospects to take action. But a Web site can also provide a much richer set of benefits as well.

### **Benefits of a Content-Driven Site**

#### **Awareness**

These days you are expected to have a Web site if you are in business, and many prospects start their search for a new product or service online before they ever pick up the phone. This is even true of prospects that are referred to you.

#### **Shortened Selling Cycle**

In many cases, with a rich content-driven Web site, your prospects may feel that they can trust you before they even meet you. I have dozens of clients who have found so many answers on my Web sites that they were ready to hire me the minute I showed up at their office.

#### **Access to Your Information**

A Web site offers your prospects access to your marketing materials whenever they wish. You can and should save the contents of your marketing kit online and direct your prospects to your Web site to acquire the information.

#### **Tool to Refer Your Business**

A content-driven Web site allows referral contacts to share a great deal about your firm by simply directing referral prospects to your Web site. In fact, a great strategy is to create a page specifically for this purpose. If you have a referral source that consistently refers prospects, you

## **A Web Presence That Works Day and Night**

can even personalize a page on your site for them: “Welcome, friends of Bill Smith.”

### **Automate Distribution of Marketing Information**

As you will learn more fully in Chapter 12, a key component of the Duct Tape Marketing lead generation machine is to promote the distribution of free or low-cost information and tools that allow your prospects to get to know you. A Web site can provide a valuable interface for the automation of this process.

### **Capture Lead Data**

When someone reads an ad on a billboard, they may make note of a service, but they may not need that service for months. By that time, your billboard is no longer in sight. One of the fundamental tools of a Duct Tape Marketing Web site is the ability to exchange premium information for the visitors’ contact information. Once you capture this information, you have the key to begin marketing to this prospect for months and years, assuring that your ad is top of mind when it’s buying time.

## **Seek Professional Help**

There is no question that Web design, programming, and search engine technologies can be confusing. You may never have the desire to learn how to write HTML code or anything to do with how your Web site works. But your Web site is one of your most powerful marketing weapons, and you must be very involved in how it supports your business.

There are many, many very qualified Web designers and search engine experts. In most cases, your business will be better served if you seek out a professional to delegate this task. You cannot, however, abdicate this task simply because it seems too technical. If you do, you will wind up with an expensive Web site that does little or no good.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Learn as much as you can about the workings outlined in this chapter, and then go to a qualified designer with some very specific instructions. Make sure you are fully prepared to discuss your ideal target client, competitors, core message, identity elements, and any Web sites that you like when you first visit with a prospective designer.

## A Word about Design

Simple. That's it. Keep your Web site design simple. You can create or hire someone to create a very professional Web site that is focused on getting your content found and read. Many designers have a tendency to overdesign. You need to balance the need to look good with the need for search engines to find your site and visitors to consume your content. Don't present them with distractions.

Simple also applies to images. Search engines can't see images and only view them by a couple of very simple attributes. Images can add visual interest, but keep them simple and lightweight.

On the technical side, look for a designer who is very fluent in CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) design. I don't have the space to go into the full technical nature of this, but a designer using CSS for Web site design will be able to produce a site that more effectively takes advantage of the power of search engines.

### Page Layout

Start each page with a powerful headline. Follow each headline with a highlighted introductory paragraph. Your intent is to grab readers and quickly guide them into the rest of the page.

### Simple Navigation

At one time it was common practice to create images for navigation bars. Again, these images don't help in search terms and can bloat

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

the loading of the site. Ask your designer to use CSS techniques to create text-based but visually interesting navigation links.

Make sure that a six-year-old could navigate your site. In fact, that may be a good way to test it. Create links to every page and add text links within pages from one page to another to give the user lots of ways to jump from point to point.

## The Ultimate Small Business Web Site for Today's Social Surfer

Web sites have evolved significantly over the past few years, and the expectations of both surfers and spiders is driving much of what it takes to make a site work for your business today. Of course, content is still what gets people to a site and, long term, what it takes to draw links and return visits, but it's *heightened functionality*—the new must-have metric—that kicks off the process of engagement. It's not enough for your content to lie there, all flat and uninviting; it's got to stand up and practically beg people to interact with it. Your Web site must be more Web app–like than browser-like.

So, what does this mean for the typical site owner and builder?

### Get Feedback

People are getting used to sites that allow them to offer ratings and reviews. This type of functionality is easy to offer and can show social proof to visitors considering your company. Using tools like JS-Kit ([www.aboutecho.com/](http://www.aboutecho.com/)), you can install simple JavaScripts that make it very easy for visitors to rate content and products.

Using third-party survey tools like Survey.io ([www.survey.io/](http://www.survey.io/)), 4Q ([www.4qsurvey.com/](http://www.4qsurvey.com/)), and GetSatisfaction ([www.getsatisfaction.com/](http://www.getsatisfaction.com/)), you can allow your visitors to help mold your site and make it more user-friendly.

Don't overlook the use of polls as a device to create engagement.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Routinely adding simple polls by using a WordPress plug-in or SurveyGizmo for WordPress can add an inviting layer of content and give users a reason to return.

And it's always a good idea to test conversion on pages by using split testing scripts such as Google Website Optimizer or Unbounce ([www.unbounce.com/](http://www.unbounce.com/)).

### Beef Up the Forms of Content

In terms of traffic, Google is the number one search engine, but YouTube is number two. Adding video and audio content has become a must, as visitors expect it and consume it in ways that keep them on your site much longer than sites that feature only static text.

Video allows you to tell a story with emotion and lets the visitor more easily connect with the person telling the story. Research by Search Engine Watch ([www.searchenginewatch.com/](http://www.searchenginewatch.com/)) shows that video increases landing page conversion by more than 300 percent compared with pages lacking video.

The use of video and audio is also a great way to reinforce a message and help visitors understand what to do next or what to expect.

### Integrate Social Networking

Adding Facebook Like buttons that allow visitors to share your content with their friends is an effective way for Facebook visitors to interact with your site. Using plug-ins such as Sociable ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/sociable/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/sociable/)) makes it very easy for people to share, subscribe to, and bookmark content found on your Web pages. Also, bringing your social media participation on sites like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook from your site with tools such as a Facebook Fan Box or Twitter Tools Widget ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/twitter-tools/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/twitter-tools/)) is a great way to create interaction with your social profiles from your site and create a viral effect when visitors share or like something on your site.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

### Amplify for Awareness

A final important aspect is finding ways to amplify your content so people can interact with it. This includes promoting your site and all the online ways people can find more in your offline communication pieces. Adding your social profiles to business cards and printed literature is a good place to start.

Make your advertising much more about creating awareness for your online content and providing ways for people to interact, and less about selling.

### Using Blog Software for Your Entire Web Site

Blog software has a lot going for it in terms of dynamic content creation, ease of use, ease of update, content syndication, and built-in SEO tools. Many businesses are finding that this software is a great solution for creating their entire Web site.

I love WordPress ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)) and use it to power my blog. The WordPress software is very easy to use as an entire site management tool as well. WordPress theme designers are taking advantage of this move and now create themes that allow businesses to create pages that look very much like static home pages, product pages, and About Us pages in conjunction with traditional blog post content.

The first step is premium themes. Premium themes are great design templates that have become so flexible that they not only allow you to create and run your entire Web site; they allow you to do so without much fear that your site will look like everyone else's who uses the theme. In many cases this can be a tremendous solution right out of the box, for under \$100. But you can also hire a designer to create a great hybrid solution.

Great premium themes:

## Duct Tape Marketing

Woo Themes ([www.woothemes.com/](http://www.woothemes.com/))

DIY Themes (Thesis—[www.diythemes.com/](http://www.diythemes.com/))

wp remix—([www.wpremix.com/](http://www.wpremix.com/))

iThemes—(Flexx—[www.ithemes.com/](http://www.ithemes.com/))

StudioPress (formerly Revolution) ([www.studiopress.com/](http://www.studiopress.com/))

Theme Forest ([www.themeforest.net/](http://www.themeforest.net/))

Theme Spinner ([www.themespinner.com/](http://www.themespinner.com/))

Elegant Themes ([www.elegantthemes.com/](http://www.elegantthemes.com/))

ColorLabs Project ([www.colorlabsproject.com/themes/](http://www.colorlabsproject.com/themes/))

Gabfire Themes ([www.gabfirethemes.com/category/themes/](http://www.gabfirethemes.com/category/themes/))

Solostream ([www.solostream.com/](http://www.solostream.com/))

Using this approach allows you to easily create a very stylish Web site that can function as a content management tool, allowing anyone with permission to edit and create pages from any Web browser. Now, add some plug ins from the WordPress community and you have some very powerful functionality for very little money and time invested.

### How to Make Your WordPress-Driven Site Even More Useful

The WordPress blogging platform is one of the most popular software choices for adding this powerful content tool. Its wide adoption is aided greatly by its open-source architecture, which means that outside developers can create add-ons to extend the basic functionality.

Here is a list of ten plug-ins that can make any WordPress blog more useful for both the author and the readers.

1. **Wishlist Member** (<http://member.wishlistproducts.com/>)—This paid plug-in allows you to turn a WordPress blog into a paid membership or course site. Wishlist integrates with a number of shopping carts, payment processors, and e-mail marketing tools and offers many ways to protect and deliver blog and page content based on membership levels.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

2. Disqus ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/disqus-comment-system/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/disqus-comment-system/))—Disqus is a comment plug-in that adds a great deal of functionality to the WordPress comment function, including the ability to see the history of blog comments from anyone leaving comments, nested comments, avatars, and additional social media contact details, such as Twitter mentions of your blog post.
3. AddToAny ([www.addtoany.com/](http://www.addtoany.com/))—This plug-in makes it very easy for anyone to subscribe to a blog via their chosen RSS reader, such as Google Reader or Bloglines, or via e-mail.
4. podPress ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/))—podPress was built to make it easy to add a podcast and audio player. The plug-in also supports video podcasting features. Download stats, support for many file formats, and the ability to manage and view feeds to services such as iTunes make this a great plug-in for anyone posting audio or video content to their blog.
5. Custom Class Selector (<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/custom-class-selector/>)—This plug-in is a little on the techie side, but allows you to create unlimited numbers of CSS classes and then insert them on the fly to customize content styles in your blog posts. This can be very helpful if you want to create icons or styling for certain types of content, but don't want to open up and change the theme style sheet.
6. Author Exposed ([www.colorlightstudio.com/2008/03/14/wordpress-plugin-author-exposed/](http://www.colorlightstudio.com/2008/03/14/wordpress-plugin-author-exposed/))—Multiauthor blogs are becoming very commonplace. Sharing the load of blogging with other experts or employees is a great way to keep lots of fresh content coming. Author Exposed makes it very easy to create and show profiles for the author of an individual blog post.
7. Sociable ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/sociable/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/sociable/))—Sociable adds a list of sharing links to dozens of social media and bookmarking sites, like Delicious, Twitter, and Facebook,



## Duct Tape Marketing

making it very easy for readers to share your blog content on these sites.

8. Apture ([www.apture.com/help/install/wordpress/](http://www.apture.com/help/install/wordpress/))—The Apture plug-in adds a full library of video, audio, images, text, links, and references that can be added to any content. If you write about a concept, you can add a link to a YouTube video, Reuters audio, or Wikipedia article that further illustrates your point. If you talk about a book, you can automatically add an Amazon link and pop-up for the book. This tool allows you to draw from a library of publicly available content to add deeper levels of related content.
9. Related Content ([www.ajaydsouza.com/wordpress/plugins/contextual-related-posts/](http://www.ajaydsouza.com/wordpress/plugins/contextual-related-posts/))—This plug-in automatically searches through all of your past blog posts by tag and adds four or five posts related to your current post to the end of the post. This is a great way to get more exposure for past posts and have people dive in deeper to your content once they find something they like.
10. Facebook Fan Box ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/facebook-fan-box/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/facebook-fan-box/)) or Twitter Widget ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/twitter-tools/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/twitter-tools/))—These aren't really plug-ins, but rather tools that allow you to easily publish your Facebook Fan Page content or Twitter activity to your blog sidebar.

And don't forget those mobile readers—use the MoFuse plug-in ([www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/mofuse/](http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/mofuse/)) to automatically turn your blog content into a mobile-friendly version for those reading on their phones.

## Ways to View the Web Beyond Your Site

The Web just keeps gaining significance in the world of small business and it's no longer enough to think about your Web site as your Web strategy.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

Marketing today means building a great deal of your thinking around a total Web presence. I suspect you've heard this before because this idea is one that is being voiced by just about anyone who's online today, but I encounter business owner after business owner frustrated with trying to wrap their heads around this idea in a practical sense.

I would like to outline what I think is a very practical and doable approach to building your total online presence. You can build your Web presence out fully by taking action in each of the five stations of work below. Think of each station as a bucket. You need to start adding to each bucket in a systematic way, but don't try to fill one bucket before you move to the next—put a little in each bucket and keep returning. This way you'll build momentum in the short view, while building value in the long view.

### The Listening Station

Your online marketing will benefit greatly when you take the time to monitor what's being said by others. Creating an automated way to do this, something I call a *listening station*, is a base strategy these days.

- Create Google Alerts to monitor your brand, products, competitors, and industry.
- Use tools such as Social Mention ([www.socialmention.com/](http://www.socialmention.com/)) and Postling ([www.postling.com/](http://www.postling.com/)) to get deeper analysis of what's being said—even on review sites like Yelp ([www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)).
- Find and subscribe to industry or related blogs and feed them into Google Reader for quick scanning.
- Create Digg and Delicious accounts to quickly scan what's hot and what's new.
- Put key journalists in a Google Alerts track so you can participate when they write or blog.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Content as Hub

I'm working on the assumption that you have Web content that describes your business, tells your story, outlines your products and services, and maybe even showcases a few client success stories. That's a good start, but now you need to work on consistent content creation—the kind that builds trust, draws links, and educates.

- Add a blog. Sorry, you must do this. Better still, build your entire Web site with WordPress.
- Create a list of related or local bloggers using Google BlogSearch ([www.blogsearch.google.com/](http://www.blogsearch.google.com/)) and Placeblogger ([www.placeblogger.com/](http://www.placeblogger.com/)) as potential guest blog hosts.
- Submit keyword-rich articles to article directory sites ([www.vretoolbar.com/articles/directories.php](http://www.vretoolbar.com/articles/directories.php)).
- Keep a notebook of every question a prospect or customer asks and create blog post answers and FAQ pages.
- Stick a camera in front of your best clients and get them to share how important your business is to them.
- Turn your sales presentation into a slide deck, and post it to your site.

### Pushing out Assets

- Create YouTube, Flickr, and SlideShare ([www.slideshare.net/](http://www.slideshare.net/)) accounts and post your videos, images, and slides with complete, keyword-rich descriptions of each.
- Claim and enhance your Google Places, Yahoo! Local, and Bing Local profiles.
- Build a LinkedIn profile and LinkedIn Company Page, complete with lots of links back to your site, blog(s), and events.

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

- Create an Official Facebook Page (that's what they are calling Fan Pages these days).
- Claim and enhance your company pages on review sites like Yelp and Citysearch and start participating in the review process.
- Build profiles in social networks beyond Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Use your Facebook page as a way to create awareness about events and content and as another vehicle to reach prospects with fresh content.
- Ask and answer questions on LinkedIn Answers—it can be an interesting way to showcase your expertise.
- Use a tool such as Flowtown ([www.flowtown.com/](http://www.flowtown.com/)) to figure out which of your prospects and customers are the most active in social networks, and equip them to be ambassadors.
- Learn how to mine Twitter for leads and opportunities.

## Facilitating Community

- Create events and groups on MeetUp (<http://meetup.com/>), and bring like-minded people together.
- Use project and customer portal tools such as Central Desktop ([www.centraldesktop.com/](http://www.centraldesktop.com/)) to create a place where your customers can access information and collaborate.
- Get your customers involved in creating community through the use of a wiki that allows them to share and generate ideas.
- Create a group blog that features content contributed by your team of strategic partners.
- Set up Facebook Groups and add your customers and prospects so you can host live group chats and peer-to-peer discussions.

## Duct Tape Marketing

- Add the Social Bios ([www.socialbios.net/](http://www.socialbios.net/)) service to your directory so visitors can see who you mutually know in common social networks.

That should get you started, but expand your thinking beyond these action steps for greater exposure.

## 5 Social Media Hacks for Authentic Automation

One of the biggest dilemmas facing those using social technology as a business tool is the balance between authentic participation and automation for the sake of saving time. On one end, there are certainly tools and services that can actually take care of all of your social media participation and automate the process of posting your content to every known social network. On the other end is the desire to create personal engagement and a brand-building community through one-to-one content creation and participation. The first certainly lacks a human touch, and the latter can suck up too much time. In my mind, the perfect balance lies somewhere in between—the place where tools can be employed to facilitate intent and leverage time while still adding personal attention.

Here are five social media hacks that allow personal engagement fused with the use of tools that make it easier to do more.

### 1. StumbleUpon

StumbleUpon is my secret content weapon. It's essentially a social bookmarking site that allows people to bookmark and find interesting stuff. There's a very unique approach with StumbleUpon that makes it such a great tool, though. Once you create an account, you can pick categories of content that interest you or that may interest your readers. Then you install the StumbleUpon browser toolbar, and anytime

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

you want to find some potentially interesting content discoveries, just hit Stumble. The toolbar takes you to random sites identified by other users and is almost always a great way to come upon content that is unique and valuable from little-known sources. This is a great way to share super finds in your blog posts and tweets while spending a few minutes doing the research.

### 2. The Round-Up

This isn't a tool as much as a practice. People love digest content. One way to create and deliver that is to get in the habit of using a bookmarking tool like Delicious and simply tagging sites you come across (perhaps in the previous tip) with various tags, such as blog or newsletter or by client industry segment, and then going back at the end of the week and writing a post or creating a newsletter issue based solely on abstracts of the good stuff you found during the week. By installing the Delicious browser toolbar, you can tag any page with the right click of a mouse. Filtering content and delivering just the best of what you read (perhaps in your RSS reader) can make you a very valuable resource to people who just want the good stuff. By employing your own filtering tool, you can easily create the content on the fly.

### 3. Reader to TwitterFeed

TwitterFeed ([www.twitterfeed.com](http://www.twitterfeed.com)) is a tool that allows you to connect any RSS feed to your Twitter account and effectively auto tweet anything that is added to the feed. I don't find this very useful, and in some cases it's seen as spam, so that's not what we are going to do here.

Since you can attach any feed to it, you can have total control over what goes to Twitter, so it's really just a way to make it easy to tweet things you find. For example, the Delicious tags you created above also have RSS feeds associated with them. So, you run that feed through TwitterFeed and have it tweet anything you hand select and tag as you surf.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Another great use is to connect it to your Google Reader account, but only for the RSS feed associated with your “shared items.” That way, as you sit at the diner, reading the blogs you subscribe to on your phone app over lunch, you can find a great post that you want to share, and all you do is hit the Share button at the bottom of the post and that one item gets pushed out to Twitter. It’s still done by hand, but just skipping a few steps to save time.

### 4. RSS to HTML

There are any number of tools that will take the content from an RSS feed, one that you produce or one that you find and read, and turn it into dynamic HTML content that you can display on any Web page you like.

Creating content-specific pages and pushing the content you find as you surf to them can be an easy way to create content for your Web pages. Google has a free tool called Dynamic Feed Control Wizard ([www.google.com/uds/solutions/wizards/dynamicfeed.html](http://www.google.com/uds/solutions/wizards/dynamicfeed.html)), but also check out the great list of RSS to HTML Web publishing tools from Robin Good ([www.masternewmedia.org/how-to-embed-and-display-rss-feeds-on-any-Web-page-best-rss-to-html-publishing-tools/](http://www.masternewmedia.org/how-to-embed-and-display-rss-feeds-on-any-Web-page-best-rss-to-html-publishing-tools/)).

### 5. Blog to Fan Page

There are lots of plug-ins and apps that make it very easy to republish blog content to your Facebook personal wall, but many businesses these days are much more interested in publishing new blog posts to their Fan Pages. There are, in fact, a number of free and paid apps that allow you to do this, but the simplest (and in my mind, best) approach is to use the built-in Notes function. When you enable the Notes tab on your Fan Page, you can click on “Add a new note” and you’ll see that one option is to add a blog feed. When you do this you get a new tab (the name of your blog) and the last five or so blog posts, depending upon your RSS settings.

## **A Web Presence That Works Day and Night**

I like this approach because there's not a third party app involved—that's where most tech issues arise. Now, in addition to simply having a blog page, your new posts go right to your Facebook stream, when you publish them.

## **Basic Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Tips**

You may never actually get involved in the programming aspects of your Web site, but I think it is important for you to be aware of these basic terms and tips so you can communicate their importance to your Web designer or programmer. In fact, make a checklist of each of the elements that follow, and question your designer's intention to utilize each in your Web site's design. You know you have a very good fit when you find a Web design firm that asks you about these elements up front.

### **Keywords**

No matter what your business does, you must understand as fully as possible what terms your target market uses to find products and services like yours. There are databases that track the actual number of times certain search terms are used by surfers.

From these databases it is important that your Web page content, titles, and headlines contain the most important search terms. Search on the Internet for keyword database tools and you will find many varieties.

A good use of the idea of keywords is to think in terms of giving each of your Web pages a keyword phrase theme and then making sure the theme phrase appears in a number of the elements introduced on the next few pages.

### **Title Tags**

Title tags are part of the HTML structure of every Web page. Think of them as the informal name of the page. Search engines use



## Duct Tape Marketing

the content in a page's title tag as one of the primary ways to categorize what the page is about. It's an important page element, but many people waste or misuse it.

Use title tags or page names that are descriptive and search friendly. Instead of "Welcome to Bob's Used Cars" for a home page title tag, use "The Greater Muskogee Area's Best Deals for Used Cars Are at Bob's." The reason this is a better title tag comes down to how people search for Web sites. Unless they know the name of your business and search specifically for it, your company name as a page title isn't very useful.

### Links to Your Site

Search engines will give your Web site higher marks if they see that other Web sites in your related industry also find it worthy of linking to. Your site will benefit from trading links with like-minded businesses.

Don't get caught up in the link farm, though, trading with pages and sites that only want links in quantity. Focus on sites that you think would add value for your visitor. Only contact sites for link exchanging if you are certain that the site owner provides high-quality content that is relevant to your business and your target market.

When I find a site that meets these qualifications, I try to write a very personal note to ask to exchange links. There are software programs out there that automatically look for linking partners and even send out generic linking invitation e-mails. To have any success with link swapping, you need to be very personal. Link to the site in question first. In your note include your reasons for linking, and state something you really appreciate about the link prospect's site.

### Anchor Text Hyperlinks

Many Web sites have links to other pages on their sites, such as "Home" or "About Us." I guess these links get the job done, but

## A Web Presence That Works Day and Night

they don't really tell the search engines about your site. Use descriptive text and search phrases for links. Use "Great Used Car Deal" as a link to your Bob's Used Cars site or "Find a Construction Attorney" for your link to your roster of construction-related attorneys.

### Use Heading Tags

HTML, the Web's programming language, uses a series of *H* or *heading tags* to help structure a page like an outline: H1 for the most important headings, H2 for subheads, and so on. Each of your pages will do well to contain a keyword-rich headline, much like an ad for the page, and H1,/H1 markup in the code to let the search engines know that this is a really important part of the page. Then do the same with subsections with H2,/H2 tags. I know that most designers understand these tags when it comes to styling a page, but few get the important role they play in the search engine game.

### Create Site Maps

A site map is a page that has links to every page on your site in a structured manner. Visitors may not often find much use for this page, but search engines may use this page to find and index all of your site's pages.

Each of the major search engines has developed ways to submit and update your site map. If you work with a Web designer, make sure you inquire about each of the tips in this chapter. Take this book with you to meet with your Web design firm, and demand that they either address each of the elements in this chapter or explain why they don't think it is important. The world of Web sites and search engines is fluid and ever-changing. You must constantly pay attention to the shifting landscape or at least make sure that you are comfortable that your chosen Web designer is on top of the latest trends in Web design and search strategies.

### Action Steps

1. Rework your marketing kit content for your Web site.
  2. Consider adding a blog to your mix.
  3. Find a Web designer that understands search engine optimization.
  4. Locate sources for additional Web site content.
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## Chapter 8

# Get Found Online in Your Town

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**S**earch engines have become one of the primary ways that people find products and services right in their hometown. This growing reality significantly increases the need for local small businesses to master local search.

To state this a bit more plainly—if your business doesn’t show up on page 1 or in the first handful of local results when people type “[their city name + something they want]” into their chosen search engine or mobile browser, your business simply can’t compete. (To be fair, this is not 100 percent true for every category and market, but the reality is growing rapidly.)

Following are five areas that you should address to increase your chances of winning in the local search game. Win the search game now, before your competitors do. If you work through each section and apply a few action steps each day, you’ll gradually accomplish the entire list and put your business firmly on its way to building a strong local search presence.

1. Make your Web pages local friendly.

There are many ways to make your Web site pages much more localized. This is one of the underlying elements that tell the search engines that yours is indeed a local business.

Here are a few steps to consider:

- Add your physical address to every page.

## Duct Tape Marketing

- Add city names in navigation: e.g., Omaha Kitchen remodeling showcase.
- Add suburb and neighborhood names into your content in natural ways.
- Add a local event blog, and list festivals and nonprofit events.
- Find relevant local bloggers using a tool like Placeblogger to exchange links with.
- Do keyword research with local terms to find the best phrases to add to your pages. Try Google Keyword Tool or Wordtracker.
- Advanced—Explore “rich snippets” and hCard microformats to mark up HTML for address data.

### 2. Build out your local search profiles.

The local search directories at Google, Yahoo! and Bing want you to claim and build very information-rich local profiles. This makes their job easier when people search for local businesses.

If you haven't done it yet, go here right now:

- Google Places (data drawn from Google Maps) ([www.places.google.com/business](http://www.places.google.com/business))
- Yahoo! Local Business Center ([www.listings.local.yahoo.com/csubmit/cproc.php](http://www.listings.local.yahoo.com/csubmit/cproc.php))
- Bing Local Listing Center ([www.ssl.bing.com/listings/ListingCenter.aspx](http://www.ssl.bing.com/listings/ListingCenter.aspx))

Another related local search directory to pay attention to is Google Mobile Search ([www.google.com/mobile/](http://www.google.com/mobile/)). This is a separate directory with a great deal of crossover, but this is the tool that mobile users access when they type

## Get Found Online in Your Town

“coffee” into Google Maps on a smartphone. Yet another reason to make sure your listing is complete and up-to-date in Google Maps.

In each case, you will need to claim your profile through various means. After you complete this step, you will be given the opportunity to enhance your profile with appropriate business category, hours of operation, forms of payment, area served, and brands carried.

Take advantage of the ability to add images, video, and other product- or service-related elements. Increasingly, these local pages are what people will be directed to when searching for a business in their local market, so treat these as the important extensions to your business that they have become.

These local directories also feature paid premium listing and local advertising options, but that’s another subject altogether.

### 3. Get proactive in the ratings and review game.

Lots of local business directories exist with the added feature of user ratings and reviews. If you’re not paying attention to the major sites and monitoring what’s being said, you may be losing business because of one poor review.

Your action step here is to claim and enhance your profiles in each of these directories and start engaging your customers in ways that actively stimulate reviews.

Here are the primary review sites to check out first, although many industries also feature rating and review sites.

- [Yelp.com](http://Yelp.com)
- [Insiderpages.com](http://Insiderpages.com)
- [Citysearch.com](http://Citysearch.com)
- [Local.com](http://Local.com)
- [MerchantCircle.com](http://MerchantCircle.com)

## Duct Tape Marketing

The local search directories listed in the previous point, such as Google Places, also aggregate and show reviews from some of these sites and allow readers to add reviews directly.

My advice is to get very proactive about getting those positive reviews going. You should be collecting testimonials and success stories as part of your overall marketing activity anyway, so why not add teaching people how to do these reviews on sites like Yelp?

While the search directories won't confirm this, there does seem to be a correlation between sites that rank high on local search and those that have lots of reviews. There are other factors, but this is a big one.

#### 4. Get listed, cited, and mentioned.

Citations are mentions of your business and address that appear on other Web sites. These are a key component of the ranking algorithms because they help assure that your business is truly a local business.

The listings you completed in the previous steps help in this category, but now it's time to go even deeper.

The following companies pull data from print versions of white and yellow pages and provide a great deal of core data to local directories. While it is likely that your business is listed in these directories, it is a good idea to check for accuracy and add details that may not be listed.

- infoUSA ([www.infousa.com/](http://www.infousa.com/))
- Localeze ([www.localeze.com/](http://www.localeze.com/))

Getting listed consistently across the following Internet Yellow Page providers will also help with your local listing.

- Internet Yellow Pages ([www.yellowpages.com/](http://www.yellowpages.com/))

## Get Found Online in Your Town

- SuperPages ([www.superpages.com](http://www.superpages.com))
- SwitchBoard ([www.switchboard.com](http://www.switchboard.com))
- YellowBook ([www.yellowbook.com](http://www.yellowbook.com))

Having more natural listings in directories can also help you compete in the battle for top local placements. Get those association, alumni, and trade group listings filled out and up-to-date, too, as these citations can also carry a lot of local weight. Two very good sources on this topic are GetListed.org ([www.getlisted.org](http://www.getlisted.org)) and Universal Business Listing ([www.ubl.org/](http://www.ubl.org/)). This second site offers a service that will get you listed in numerous online directories and portals that are used by many applications and tools. It may be the best \$30 a year you spend.

### 5. Spread the local social love.

One powerful local play, and perhaps a good strategy to get some extra local links, is to start a local niche group and build a community of users around the local theme on social media sites such as Flickr, Facebook, LinkedIn, MeetUp, or Biznik. If you can find an area of interest to others, you may be able to build a useful and vibrant local tool while greatly enhancing your own local presence.

Here's a good example: The Boston Networking Club on LinkedIn was founded by Jeff Popkin, owner of BostonEventGuide.com. With more than 5,000 members, there's a pretty good bet this group serves as a conduit for Popkin's main business locally.

And last, don't forget to locally optimize all those YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, SlideShare, and LinkedIn profiles and videos, and any other social networking profiles, and point those profiles back to your main Web site. Every little bit counts in this very important and increasingly competitive world of local search.



## Duct Tape Marketing

### How to Get Rockin' Reviews

Reviews and testimonials have always been a nice way to offer third-party proof that your company does what it says it does and that your customers are happy campers and willing to talk about it. Reviews, however, have become even more important now that local search directories like Google Places and Yelp have made them a foundational element for ranking high in local searches.

Getting reviews and testimonials on a routine basis takes a proactive and committed approach if you are going to generate them both consistently and authentically. (Fake or over-the-top review generation campaigns can actually produce negative results.)

Here are five ways you can look at systematically creating reviews:

#### **Do the Reference Track**

I stumbled onto this idea quite by accident, but it's very effective. Every now and then, a prospect would ask me for several references. I would provide a list of three to four happy customers, and that was that. If a prospect reached out to these customers, most often they would copy me on their response. The amazing thing is that because they were basically telling someone else why they should hire me, it turns out these were the best testimonials I ever received. Instead of them writing them to or for me, they were writing them to and for prospective customers. This approach was so effective that I started requesting that future prospects contact some of my customers.

#### **Repurpose Testimonials**

When you get that unsolicited testimonial, no matter where it comes from, make sure you are using it in several ways. If a happy customer writes a review on Yelp, post that review on your Web site, in your store, and in next month's newsletter. If a customer sends you

## Get Found Online in Your Town

a raving review by letter, phone them and ask if they would provide that review for your Google Places page too.

### Teach the Review Process

Since online reviews are so important these days, make sure that all members of your sales staff know how to show customers how and where they can post reviews. Create a page that walks people through the process of creating a Yelp or Citysearch account. If your clients are all businesses, hold a workshop to teach them some of what you've learned about the importance of rating and review sites.

### Give Reviews

Of course, the “give to get” concept works here too. By making reviews, recommending your network on LinkedIn, and reaching out to companies with whom you do business, you lay one powerful part of the review and testimonial foundation. It's always a great way to show how you value the process and in turn benefit from authentic reciprocation.

### Hold a Review Party

I've written about this idea before, but it's such a fun one that I had to include it here. Invite your customers to a nice appreciation event, serve up some wine, and then ask them if they would like to record a video testimonial or review with the camera crew you've hired for the night. People love to get on camera, and you can further incentivize them by offering up a five-minute video where they can talk about their businesses. This video content will be gold for your Web site, and you'll provide a great service by helping others create something for their sites.

Find some way to install one or more of these options and collecting reviews will simply become a part of the system.

### Getting Other People to Promote Your Local Content

I've said it here many times—winning high rankings in search engines is not that hard for local businesses. There are some categories of business that are very competitive and certainly require the investment of a high-caliber SEO firm, but do-it-yourself types can do well if they focus on two activities: creating content and acquiring the right kinds of links back to your site.

I specifically say “the right kinds of links” because there are still some folks out there promoting the easy way out, suggesting you buy hundreds of links, but there is no easy way out, and this can even lead to getting your hand slapped—or worse—by the search engines.

Here are seven of the best ways to acquire those all-important links:

#### Write a Blog

Without question, creating a blog and consistently writing keyword-rich content is the number one SEO activity for the small business (or any size business, for that matter). This is no longer something to debate; blog content will improve your chances to compete in the search engines many times over and draw links from other blogs and sites that syndicate content.

#### Guest Post on Blogs

A variation to writing on your blog is to seek out other blogs and offer to write content that is useful and relevant to their audience. Make certain that you get to place a link back to your site in the body of the post, and look for blogs that are well read. You might also look for other local blogs using a tool such as Placeblogger.

#### Submit Posts and Articles to Directories

Article directories present a great opportunity for acquiring links. By submitting articles to sites like EzineArticles.com, Articlesbase

## Get Found Online in Your Town

.com, Suite101.com, and Buzzle.com, you can begin to acquire more links and traffic to your site. You may also look into services like HubShout ([www.hubshout.com/](http://www.hubshout.com/)) that provide turnkey content writing and submission.

### Write Social Press Releases

Consistently writing news releases for even seemingly minor announcements is a great way to build up some extra traffic and links, particularly if you use the social features of tools like PRWeb ([www.prWeb.com](http://www.prWeb.com)) or Pitch Engine ([www.pitchengine.com](http://www.pitchengine.com)). As a bonus, print your press releases and mail them to your clients and network. You'll be surprised how much bounce you get from this little contact tactic.

### Leave Lots of Relevant Comments

Leaving relevant comments on other blogs does a number of things for you. In some cases, not many though, you may actually benefit from a link to your site, but the real value is that you may get the attention of other readers and the owners of these blogs in ways that could prompt them to point to some of your content via a blog post. I hope it goes without saying that this won't work if your comments are basically spam. Use a service like BackType ([www.backtype.com](http://www.backtype.com)) to track when comments related to your topic get hot.

### Create Profiles

There are hundreds of places you can create social profiles on the Web and most allow you to place numerous links back to your site. You probably won't get a ton of juice from the search engines for these because many are what are called "no follow" links, but some are not and many will build extra pages and links for the big picture. You should be claiming this real estate and filling it with content and brand assets. You can even use a service like Knowem ([www.knowem.com/](http://www.knowem.com/)) that will create hundreds of profiles on lesser-known networks.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Use Social Bookmarking

Social bookmark sites such as Delicious, Digg, Reddit, and StumbleUpon offer great ways to create valuable links and search engine juice. By bookmarking and tagging your blog posts for relevant keyword topics, you can get your content seen by the millions of people looking for content related to your tags. This can often lead to tweets and posts pointing out your content.

By creating a systematic approach that allows you to focus on a couple of these items each and every week, you can start to build hundreds of links to your Web pages and virtually lock out the competition for your key terms.

## How to Get Your Business in the New Location Game

Location-based check-in-type services are this year's overhyped topic—with good reason. While you may not understand why someone wants to be the mayor of his barber shop, you do need to recognize the behavior that social location services such as Gowalla ([www.gowalla.com/](http://www.gowalla.com/)), Foursquare ([www.foursquare.com](http://www.foursquare.com)), Yelp ([www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com)), and Facebook Places ([www.facebook.com/places/](http://www.facebook.com/places/)) represent for the local business.

Shoppers these days are using the Internet to find everything locally and increasingly using mobile devices, services, and apps to effectively bypass even the Web to find a merchant. What that means is that local small businesses need to find ways to tap into the behavior and not necessarily try to ride the hype wave to Foursquare fame.

Below are five ways that local small businesses can capture their own personalized version of social location behavior and tap what may be the ultimate online to offline combo to produce sales.

**Create virtual rewards programs**—Rewards programs such as those offered by most coffee shops via punch cards or large

## Get Found Online in Your Town

retailers like Eddie Bauer have been around for years, but smart offerings by folks like PlacePop ([www.placepop.com/](http://www.placepop.com/)) are making the punch card concept an easy virtual or online play. Merchants can offer their own version of a check-in—and capture rich data on their most loyal customers.

**Ride the group buying craze**—If you're not familiar with group coupon buying services like Groupon, then you're probably not reading this book. Facebook app maker WildFire ([www.wildfireapp.com/](http://www.wildfireapp.com/)) offers small businesses the ability to create their own group buying offers and take advantage of the viral and social nature of this play to create local Facebook engagement.

**Google Places coupons**—When local shoppers do turn to a search engine for local shopping, they often uncover your Google Places page (or at least you should be working to make sure they do). Google has a handy coupon tool that automatically creates mobile versions of your coupons and offer.

**Advertise on mobile coupon networks**—You can also place your ads on Mobile coupon networks ([www.getyowza.com/learn/merchant](http://www.getyowza.com/learn/merchant)) and get distribution of your coupons across many local sites.

**Make your own game**—The game-playing aspect of many social location biggies is an aspect that should not be overlooked when trying to develop your own strategy. The Web app SCVNGR ([www.scvngr.com/](http://www.scvngr.com/)) is a tool that allows you to create your own game and have it related to verified check-ins for a specific QR code. This would be pretty cool for a merchant association to use to create a scavenger hunt check-in game.

And, of course, make sure your business is listed with the major players—Foursquare, Yelp, Gowalla, and Facebook Places.

## Chapter 9

# Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

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Okay, we've come to a pretty significant juncture in the process of laying the foundation for truly sticky marketing. If you've completed a number of the key exercises and suggestions so far, you've begun to collect a set of very powerful marketing assets. These assets will allow you to venture out into your market and confidently declare, "Come and get it!"

The next section of this book is dedicated to the act of lead generation or getting your prospects to contact you. This is all about turning your stickiness into a system that works for growing your business. But before we move to this next all-important step, it's vital for you to take the foundation you've built in these last few chapters and share it with your team—even if that team is only one other person.

This chapter suggests several ways to infuse your entire staff with a firm understanding of the core components of your new marketing business and to excite them, perhaps for the first time, about playing a role in the launch and growth of your marketing business.

### Marketing Is Everyone's Job

If you accept that your business is essentially a marketing business, it's not much of a leap to grasp that marketing is, to some degree, everyone's job.

## Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

Most of the time, small business owners completely disregard the idea of what might be called “marketing training.” But then they wonder why no one in the organization gets pumped up about providing over-the-top service. Or why no one really has a clear picture of who and what makes an ideal client. What if everyone in your company was made to understand that part of their job, no matter what else they did, was marketing? Can you imagine an organization with a culture like that?

Here’s the scary part. Everyone in your organization that comes into contact with your clients or prospects is performing a marketing function. The question is whether they are performing it with a marketing intention or not.

Conference Calls Unlimited, a telecommunications firm in Fairfield, Iowa, did something that set them apart from their competitors, not only in the conferencing industry, but also in most retail operations. They focused a great deal of their marketing education efforts on inspiring their employees and contractors. By focusing on employees, they ensured those employees would be inspired and enthusiastic with each interaction with a customer. They worked on making the workday fun, productive, and inspiring.

They streamlined everyone’s responsibilities to focus on priorities: (1) making the customers happy, (2) making the prospects happy, and (3) making each other happy. The goal for the employees when answering the phone was to give callers more than what they asked for and to play nice with each other. Everyone focused on the objective, not their personal convenience.

They found that this employee-based focus worked wonders! For the customers, their calls or e-mails were answered promptly, which translated to a consistently fun, productive, and inspiring experience when they called.



## Duct Tape Marketing

### Marketing Is Mostly Your Job

Before I can dive too far into the idea of a systematic marketing training program for your staff, I've got some bad news. No amount of training for your staff will help if you don't take responsibility for owning the marketing function in your business. You've probably come to realize that your staff will do as you *do* more readily than as you *say*.

The only way you can sell your internal clients—your staff—is if they recognize that you actually believe in and enact what you are selling. What have you done to really light their fire about what your company does, about how it is different, about the unique value you can bring to a service relationship?

So now that you know who the first target market is, your marketing purpose needs to get out there and start pounding the aisles, cubicles, break rooms, and conference tables, looking for prospects who are just dying to be sold on the vision you have for the business.

If you meet resistance to this notion, it is because you have not made it a priority in the past, and people will always resist change. The key is that you make sure they understand that this isn't just another chapter from the latest business book you read. You must make the newfound emphasis on marketing an expectation and a requirement.

### Create a Marketing Roundtable

While the primary marketing function may necessarily fall to you or some other person in your organization, you need to raise the level of marketing awareness systematically through focus, emphasis, and education.

## Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

One tool that many small businesses have discovered is something I call a *marketing roundtable*. A marketing roundtable is a formal internal committee that meets to review and move marketing decisions and actions forward. Part of this roundtable's responsibility is to also raise the overall level of internal marketing awareness.

## Routinely Educate

The only way to keep the internal marketing message alive is to keep the message in view through routinely scheduled education practices. Every member of your staff must receive an orientation in the foundational marketing steps presented earlier in this book:

- **Your ideal target client description.** They must fully be able to picture who you work with and who you want to work with. From a practical standpoint, this will make them much more prepared to spot a potential new client.
- **Your marketing purpose.** What would it mean if they really understood and then found a way to connect their purpose to this?
- **Your talking logo.** Each staff member should be able to use this tool by connecting their function in the business to the ultimate marketing function.
- **Your core message.** This is everyone's core message.
- **Your marketing kit.** Your marketing kit provides so much information that it is likely to become one of your best hiring tools.

## Part of the Hiring Process

Make marketing education and the emphasis on marketing part of your hiring process.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Put It on Business Cards

What if everyone had a supplemental title that addressed marketing functions? Think “vice president of operations and customer service fanatic.”

### Employee Manual

Make your marketing core message and story a chapter in the employee manual. Put your marketing materials in your employee manual.

### Quarterly All-Staff

Hold quarterly all-staff meetings, and allow your marketing roundtable members to share current marketing initiatives and results. Ask one member of your staff to deliver a presentation on one element of your marketing kit. This will take some pushing on your part, but people learn best by teaching. Keep at it!

### Talking Logo Practice

I find that each staff member will connect to the idea of a talking logo in different ways. For some, using the company version will be uncomfortable because it may not feel authentic, depending upon the person’s job. A printing press operator may not be able to deliver the exact same talking logo as the sales manager. It’s vital that each member of your team have a talking logo that feels right to him or her *and* allows that individual to tap into the marketing message.

Break your team up and facilitate some sessions that will help them create a “company approved” talking logo, and then help them practice using it.

Picture this: Your head of operations is at a cocktail party, and someone asks him what he does for a living, and instead of “I’m the head of operations for a small electrical contractor,” he utters these words: “I make home builders look brilliant.”

Or what if a field technician was confronted with a problem and

## Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

instead of passing that problem on, she saw to it that the problem was addressed? *Then* she called the client back and made sure he was happy and offered to send the client some movie passes for his trouble?

### Telephone Training

The telephone is often the portal to the prospect world for the small business. Everyone who answers the telephone for your organization should be trained to do it in a manner that represents and communicates your core message. This may require a script, practice, patience, and a zero-tolerance policy, but it's that important.

## External Marketing Training

Often, small businesses must rely on a series of contractors or vendors to deliver the results their clients expect. For instance, an office furniture dealer uses an external installation staff, or an advertising agency uses a courier service to deliver proofs to a client.

Guess what? Those outside or external partners are performing a marketing function on your behalf, no matter what the logo on their shirt says. While your clients may allow you some leeway due to the circumstances, they won't put up with shoddy service or bad manners consistently.

Kevin Lankford, the Authentic Success Coach, feels that the biggest aid to his business has been organization through documentation. He has developed his own operations manual that explains on a step-by-step basis the objectives for his business. The manual is broken down according to administrative, sales and marketing, and production tasks. The manual also includes a page called "This is how we do it." It's a step-by-step guide for those times when he needs to hire external help. It's better than a to-do list!

It's imperative that you choose vendors and partners who share

## Duct Tape Marketing

your definition of customer service, but you can and should take it one step further and include them in some formal training. In some cases, it can be as simple as outlining and communicating your expectations. Over time, this simple step will help you define and attract your ideal strategic partners and vendors.

I worked with a remodeling contractor that hosted quarterly meetings for subcontractors to present actual scenarios of how to handle situations that might occur on a job site. Expectations and processes were presented as well. In order to be considered for projects, the subcontractors had to attend these sessions. Field managers also graded each subcontractor on a set of performance expectations. This contractor was more performance sensitive than price sensitive. Needless to say, he attracted only the best subs, and his business and profits soared.

## Your New Marketing Business Kick-Off

If you've been in business for any amount of time and have finally decided, by virtue of reading this book, to commit to a marketing point of view for your business, your staff will be in for a shock. After all, you're changing the rules.

I have found that one of the best ways to accomplish the kick-off of your new marketing attitude is to make a big deal out of the announcement of your marketing training and education program. Depending on how much change you are prepared to ask your team to make, you should do everything you can to make sure they realize you are serious about this initiative.

You should consider holding an all-staff meeting off-site, for a designated period of time. Create a packet of materials, hype the event, and build an air of expectation. Make sure that you have completed most of the steps presented previously in this book so that you can "roll out" the new look, new message, new logo, and new attitude in

## Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

a stunning way. Treat this meeting as one of your most important sales calls for your new marketing business. Think balloons, T-shirts, cake, and logo apparel. Paint the new picture, outline the new future, present the new expectations, and commit to the next steps in this education process. Most of all, commit the resources to launch powerfully.

## A Marketing Board of Directors

Another very powerful marketing education tool is a marketing board of directors. Many times small business owners feel they don't have access to strategic thinking resources, that much of the work within their marketing world is tactical in nature. The focus is spent on writing the ad, ordering the list, or working with the designer.

A marketing board of directors, made up of members who can offer a strategic perspective to your marketing business, can be a great way to get outside advice to help drive your marketing decisions. Create a board mixed with clients, vendors, partners, and a community member or two, and ask them to commit to a quarterly meeting with the intent of reviewing and commenting on your marketing plans and progress.

The benefits to this approach make it well worth the small amount of work it may require to recruit your board. Clients of mine have found that a marketing board offers several benefits:

- It gives them someone to hold them accountable—most notably, the quarterly report of results drives them to focus on achieving goals.
- It provides creativity beyond what the owner or staff could muster while working in the business.
- It creates a loyal group of external champions—board members often feel compelled to champion a business they become this deeply connected with.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Make a Database with Your Customers

Standard marketing CRM-type practice suggests that you should create and supplement a database of customers and prospects with the idea that you build more and more information to use to help build deeper relationships and create additional selling opportunities.

What if you look at database building as a service you provided for your customers? Now, in some cases, that might be a good service offering as a profit center, but I'm talking about providing a service that simply allows you to differentiate your business by adding value in ways that your competitors aren't even thinking about.

RSS, search technology, and a slew of online apps have made the creation and streaming of database content a pretty simple affair. Following are some examples of the kind of information this way of thinking might produce.

#### *1. The knowledge database*

Create a custom RSS subscription database of blogs and news sites your customers would find interesting, either by virtue of information they provided you or based on an industry they should follow. You can set up an RSS reader or upload an OPML file to the reader of their choice and magically create a hand-crafted set of blogs they should follow. OPML files may sound a little techie, but essentially it's a list of RSS feeds that can be imported to an RSS reader to create lots of subscriptions at one time.

#### *2. The "best of class" database*

Build a list of "best of class" service providers that can deliver all the products and services you know your customers may need that are unrelated to your actual offerings. Create a database with all of the contact information and notes about each provider. Offer this to your customers as a service to help them find great companies for everything they buy. This strategic partner-type of database is something

## Get Your Entire Team Involved in Marketing

you should be building and maintaining for your referral and lead generation activities anyway, but take it a step further and make it a formal offering using a tool like Central Desktop to invite your partners to build and maintain their listings, including monthly specials.

### *3. The real-time roundup database*

Create custom social media and reputation monitoring databases for your customers that include all brand and competitive mentions in real-time streams such as Twitter, Facebook, and media distribution sites, and teach your customers how to monitor this database. This may be totally unrelated to your services, but it's such an essential bit of marketing wisdom that you can create incredible brand loyalty by being the organization that shows them how to do it. Use a tool like Trackur ([www.trackur.com](http://www.trackur.com)) to create your own white label social media monitoring service.

### *4. The cutting-edge B2B database*

Create a database of Web apps that can help your business customers do more with less using free and low-cost tools for things like design, file backup, file storage, file streaming, collaboration, online meetings, CRM, finance, and HR. This is another play that can allow your organization to be seen as an online thought leader and go-to person for emerging tools. Simply gaining this reputation can open some doors to many other teaching and exposure opportunities in your industry—regardless of what you actually sell.

### *5. The reminder database*

What if you offered a service that could help remind each customer of important dates? Give them the opportunity to put all the birthdays, anniversaries, and other important dates in their lives into a database with the promise to remind them to take action when the date was coming up. Obviously, this is a no-brainer if you also have a



## Duct Tape Marketing

product or service to offer as something for that date, such as flowers or gifts, but it also works for just about any business as a way to stay top of mind. The heating and cooling service could offer a monthly home maintenance reminder tied to the season and featuring a different partner each month. The key is to provide value and personalization. You might also get some inspiration from LifeHacker's Top 10 Reminder Tools for Forgetful Minds ([www.lifehacker.com/5377398/top-10-reminder-tools-for-forgetful-minds](http://www.lifehacker.com/5377398/top-10-reminder-tools-for-forgetful-minds)).

## A Game Worth Winning

Finally, find a way to turn your marketing into a game. If you can find ways to motivate everyone in the organization to help grow the enterprise, think of what a machine you could create. This motivation may take the form of goal setting, score keeping, incentives, and a significant commitment on your part.

If you find that you have people who don't want to play the game, do them a favor—let them seek other opportunities. Let your folks know from day one that they are part of the marketing team.

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## Action Steps

1. Create a list of people who could serve on your marketing board.
  2. Complete the core marketing exercises in the first seven chapters.
  3. Plan an all-staff marketing kick-off.
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## Part II

# The Duct Tape Lead Generation Machine—Turning Stickiness into a System That Works for You

(Turning Know, Like, and Trust  
into Try, Buy, Repeat, and Refer)

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**T**hink back to high school physics class for a moment—if you can. (I didn't do so well in that class, so I'll simplify!) We learned in the laws of physics that it takes a whole bunch of force to get something moving, but once you get it moving, you can keep it moving with less force. To apply this lesson to marketing, think of force as exposure.

One of the great ways to build momentum is through lots of exposure. And for the small business without a big, fat budget, exposure is delivered by coming at your market from many angles. You can't rely on one form of advertising or communication to get the job done. You need to deliver a core message through as many vehicles as you possibly can.

You must have a referral promotion, an advertising promotion, a public relations promotion, a strategic partner promotion, social media campaigns, an e-mail promotion, a speaking promotion, a writing promotion, a newsletter promotion . . . you get the point, right?

Again, think of it as applying layers of duct tape. The more you apply, the stronger the hold. In the next five chapters I will reveal powerful ways to generate leads by carefully integrating and layering

## Duct Tape Marketing

various advertising, public relations, and referral marketing tactics to create tremendous momentum in your marketing system.

How will you know you've pulled off momentum? When you walk into a prospect's office to make a sales presentation and they are already sold. Marketing momentum does away with the need to sell!

By implementing the advice and strategies in the first section of the Duct Tape program, you have now built a solid foundation for helping your ideal clients *know, like, and trust* you more. Along the way, you've learned a thing or two about the basics of truly sticky marketing, so now it's time to move from the foundation of a sticky business identity to create a system of lead generation that will take stickiness to a whole new level. Just like adding new layers of duct tape, by adding the strategies in the coming chapters, you will solidify your marketing efforts firmly in the direction of creating clients and customers. That's what you've been waiting for, now, isn't it?

# Run Advertising That Gets Results

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## Why Most Advertising Doesn't Work

Small business owners are often leery of advertising. And that's because it's expensive and it doesn't work, right? Well, not exactly. Most small businesses, particularly those adept in the art of copycat marketing, run advertising that rarely produces results, and therefore conclude that advertising is not a good way to generate leads or sales.

Advertising, when viewed properly, can be a very effective way to grow your business. In fact, when a small business lands on an effective advertising promotion, few things can match it for quickly generating a flood of new business. The key lies in understanding what advertising really is, or at least what it should be.

Advertising is salesmanship in print. I'm certainly not the first to define advertising as such, but I think that definition fits perfectly and should help clarify how to use advertising as a lead generation tool. So think about that. If advertising is your salesperson in print, what does your ad need to do to be an effective salesperson?

## Why You Still Need to Include Advertising in the Mix

Sending e-mail is free, creating a Facebook page is free, Twitter outreach is free, cold-calling is free, publicity is free, referrals are free, and advertising costs money. So why is it that, even with all of these

## Duct Tape Marketing

wonderfully low-cost and free ways to promote your business, I contend that you must make advertising one of your core lead generation tactics? (Actually, one could argue if anything is truly free, but the items I just listed don't come with a direct cost.) Advertising is, in fact, one of the marketing tactics that comes with an invoice. You must write a check to run ads or send direct mail, often before seeing any results. In my experience, people shy away from advertising, not because of the cost, but because they don't know how to get results and they don't understand the long-term residual effects. Think about it: if you knew that for every \$100 you spent you could produce \$200, you would get out your checkbook and spend away, right?

### To get results from advertising today you must

- be laser focused on a specific ideal client
- create awareness for valuable content with a call to action
- measure leads and conversion fanatically

But that's a topic for another book. I want to first get the leverage to help you understand why you must add advertising to the mix, and then we can start to talk about how.

When done effectively advertising is an essential part of the mix because:

- advertising is the only medium you can control—if you want your message to hit on the day a product launches or event is about to happen, this is the only vehicle you control completely.
- advertising allows you to target ideal customers only—when you match a very personal message to a very select audience, you get far greater connection.
- advertising creates awareness for your content—the force that

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

drives a great deal of conversion and trust building these days is educational content—e-books, seminars, and blog posts.

Advertising is a great way to help get that content found and consumed once you've gone to the effort to produce it.

- advertising adds credibility to your message—don't ask me why this is exactly, but every time I run advertising, people comment that my business must be doing well. The perception that you can afford advertising is often enough to sell and resell prospects and customers alike and makes it easier to get attention for your entire message.
- advertising amplifies everything else you're doing—when you are using advertising to create awareness for your content, you automatically create more awareness for everything you are doing. Journalists find companies that advertise, referral sources remember companies that advertise, people “fan” and follow and “friend” from ads, and employees can point to well-placed ads as a source of pride in the place they work.

## Introducing Two-Step Direct Response Advertising

As the name implies, two-step advertising is simply a form of advertising that motivates readers or listeners to take a step or action (step one) that essentially signals that you have their permission to begin marketing to them (step two). Step one by the prospect signals step two by you, and the marketing dance is begun.

This powerful process is set in motion by advertising that offers the reader free or low-cost information or services only. The sole intent of a two-step ad is to generate a qualified response or action—not to make a sale. When you offer a free how-to report, tip sheet, industry insider scoop, or other valuable information, you start the process of building a relationship, building trust, with your prospects.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Once a suspect responds to your ad, you now know that you have a highly qualified lead and one that, through your special report filled with lots of reasons to hire you, already knows a great deal more about what makes you different from everyone else in your industry.

Step One: Run ads that offer the reader a free report, sample, or something of high perceived value.

Step Two: Send the report to all who respond, and market to this group like crazy.

When someone responds to your two-step ad, you have a lead that is ready to receive your full marketing kit. (Remember that from chapter 5?) Essentially, you have a lead that has said they want you to educate them. In some cases, you may find yourself with a lead that is already sold on your product or service before you ever really contact them.

Lewis Green of L&G Business Solutions attributes most of his business growth to direct advertising that employs a two-step process. First, he mails a seven-page, detailed marketing letter. He follows up by sending a postcard several weeks later. He uses both his own mailing list, built through networking, and purchased lists that are narrowly targeted. The marketing letter offers a guarantee, details about the results he can produce, testimonials, brief case studies, a client list, and a menu of services ([www.l-gsolutions.com](http://www.l-gsolutions.com)).

The reason two-step advertising is so effective is that it allows you to make a very compelling offer to your suspects, in very simple terms, with little to no risk on their part. The typical two-step ad asks readers to visit a Web site or call a phone number and exchange some basic contact information in return for what they hopefully perceive is very valuable information.

The two-step concept has been around for ages. In fact, I venture to say that you have probably responded to an ad much like this at some point, but few small businesses apply this very proven advertising approach to their lead generation efforts. Any business, no matter

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

what the product or service, can create and offer some sort of free information or trial sample.

When it comes right down to it, most small businesses are really in the information business. Properly serving your customers requires exchanging information, even if that information is simply showing a customer how to use your product. Documenting and sharing the information you communicate, use, distribute, or otherwise employ to serve your clients just makes perfect sense.

### The Benefits of Two-Stepping

For the most part, when you run a two-step ad, you can think in terms of much smaller ads and much smaller ad costs. If all you are attempting to do with your ad is get the reader's attention and lead her to a Web page or toll-free number, you may be able to run a much smaller ad. Let your free report do the educating.

The entire fulfillment process for your free report can be automated, leaving you the time and energy to focus only on prospects that have proven they need and want what you have to offer.

Two-step advertising is very trackable. Every time someone calls or visits a Web page to get a report, you can track exactly where that lead came from. This is a great tool for advertising negotiations and allows you to fine-tune your advertising budget.

Because the value to the reader is very high and the risk is very low, you will generate a much higher rate of response to your ads, and, if educated properly, many more of those who respond and become prospects will eventually become clients.

Your sales calls will be much more productive, as your prospects will have been properly exposed to what you do, how you do it, and what makes your approach so valuable. This educational approach to your advertising generally leads to a much shorter sales cycle.

You can effectively eliminate the need for cold-calling. By producing and promoting your free report, your sales team will find a



## Duct Tape Marketing

renewed source of leads that are highly qualified and at least partially sold.

The use of special reports, teleseminars, articles, and how-to tip sheets in your marketing efforts will automatically help differentiate your business from others in your industry and move you and your firm to expert status.

### What the Heck Should You Offer in Your Two-Step Ads?

You may recall that I introduced this idea of a free educational marketing report way back in chapter 5 as we discussed the marketing hourglass, but let's go into a bit more detail here.

The free information you offer can take many forms. The main thing you need to consider is that the information you are offering be perceived as valuable. If all you offer is a thinly veiled sales brochure, your efforts will suffer.

To develop or identify a good information product, think in terms of topics that will help your readers avoid the pain of paying too much, wasting their time, losing something they value, or encountering frustrating situations. It's just human nature that people seem very interested in topics that will help them avoid pain. So your information product could be titled in one of these ways:

“The Secrets of Hiring a Roofing Contractor Without Getting Burned”

“The Legal Tax Cuts Your Accountant May Not Even Know About”

“101 Ways to Get More from ACT! Software”

“What Your Pediatrician May Not Be Telling You about Car Seats”

“10 Surefire Methods to Help You Evaluate Your Auto Mechanic's Ethics”

“How to Buy Everything at 50 Percent Off”

“How to Squeeze Every Drop of Value from Your Attorney”

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

- “Professional Mover’s Secrets to Packing Your Household Possessions So Nothing Gets Damaged”
- “10 Must-Know Health Tips for People Over 40”
- “How to Be Sure You Pay the Absolute Lowest Health Insurance Premium”
- “10 Things You Must Know Before You Lease a Car”
- “How to Create a Flood of New Business in 7 Simple Steps”

I am guessing that you can see that these titles all have a bit of drama associated with them. Your report title and subject need to get the prospect’s attention and grab him quickly.

Up to this point, I have referred to this two-step advertising tool as a free report. Typically, this type of information product can take the form of a written eight-to-twelve-page document, often referred to as a *white paper*, which can be printed and mailed or housed on a Web site as a PDF document and automatically distributed upon request.

However, don’t limit your thinking strictly to the white paper format. Often your message can be very compelling in a number of formats. This can take the form of a teleseminar, audio CD, workshop, recorded phone message, or e-mail series.

The teleseminar is a very interesting concept, as people are finding it harder and harder to get out of the office for seminars and workshops. With a teleseminar, you simply advertise your hot topic and allow people to sign up to call in through a conference setup and listen to your presentation. This can be a great, low-cost way to introduce your concepts and expertise to potentially large audiences.

## Elements of an Effective Two-Step Direct Response Ad

As I stated previously in this chapter, a direct response ad is salesmanship in print multiplied. Your ad can reach thousands of prospects at a

## Duct Tape Marketing

time, but remember that the ad is read by each prospect one at a time. So write your ad as though you are talking to one prospect sitting across the desk from you.

Like a good sales call, your ad should lead readers through a series of steps toward the logical conclusion that they must contact you to receive their free report. From there the act of turning this lead into a client becomes a somewhat predictable game—but we'll go into much greater detail on that point in a later chapter. It's the message that counts.

One of the things that often hampers the effectiveness of an ad is the aspiration to make ads look pretty. Or worse, make them pretty and make them clever. Know this: your prospects are probably not coming to you to be entertained. This is a tough one for some to swallow, particularly those who come from industries where their peers place a high value on image or looking good (you know who you are).

The purpose of an ad is to convey a message and make an offer. I'm not saying that your ads should be ugly, but I'll take simple and ugly with the right message over breathtaking but "not really even sure what you sell" every day. The most effective small business ads focus on grabbing and keeping your readers' attention, offering them a host of benefits, and inspiring them to do something—*one* thing. At times this isn't always art-school elegant, but a confused prospect is no prospect at all.

### Single Most Intended Response

Don't try to do too much with your ads. Don't try to explain every possible service or combination of services or divisions of service that exist. It's tempting to think that if you spend the money on the ad, you want to get your money's worth. Of course when you take this approach, the opposite is what generally occurs.

In all of your ads, you must decide the one thing you want your readers to know or do the most and then focus every word in your ad in directing them to that and only that.

## The Duct Tape Marketing Ad Formula

Okay, now that we've swept away all the bad ad stuff, let's get at that art of crafting an effective ad for your business.

You should attempt to include the following five elements in each ad you create: headline, benefits, proof, offer, and call to action. In some cases, for instance a classified ad, you may not have the space for each, or you may need to combine elements.

### Headline

The headline is the heart and soul of an effective ad. Every ad needs a headline—it's that simple. Think of this as the audition for your ad. When someone is flipping through a magazine, the decision to stop and read your ad is made in one to two seconds or less. Your ad must grab them by the throat, and a powerful headline is the only way to do that.

You should spend more time writing headlines for your ads than any other element. That's how important the headline is. Did I mention that every ad starts with a headline? This includes ads that don't typically have headlines—such as phone directory ads and sales letters.

The best headlines contain some aspect of the offer you intend to make or specifically name the prospect the ad is targeting.

*Free report reveals legal tax cuts that most accountants don't even know about.*

*Headache sufferers finally get relief from pain—free report provides little-known steps.*

### Benefits

Sell your report, the action you want the reader to take, by pointing out the benefit of reading the report. "You will finally know when . . ."

## Duct Tape Marketing

Don't talk about what is in the report; explain what problem the report solves, what readers will get or have once they know this content.

### Proof

Tell readers about someone who made a brilliant discovery or avoided a terrible mistake because of the information you are about to share with them. Testimonial quotes from happy clients often fill this need.

### Offer

Make them the offer of your free report. Depending upon your particular business, your offer can be a free class or special giveaway or contest, but your ad must give a reason to act.

### Call to Action

Tell them what to do now. Make it easy for them to contact you or take the next step. Offer several ways for them to take advantage of your offer. Give them the option to visit a Web page or call a toll-free number.

As you can see, following this formula will make for a copy-heavy ad, and that's just fine. If you compose a headline that gets the attention of readers and pulls them in, then the more copy, the better. There is very little value in having your logo dominate your ad.

If you are offering a free report or audio CD, then an image of the report can add to the sense of value. Try to strike a balance between design and content, but make sure that the content is king. Remember to state the dollar value of your free report.

## What Forms of Advertising Make the Most Sense for Your Business?

This is one of those questions that can only be answered in a very frustrating way. The best form of advertising for your business is the one(s)

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

that works. It is nearly impossible in the context of this book to tell you exactly where you should place your advertising, as every community, industry, and market segment has different advertising opportunities.

You should, however, look at your advertising from a return on investment (ROI) point of view. You want the greatest bang for your buck when it comes to advertising. So often advertisers can't tell you what the return on their advertising is. One of the greatest things about the two-step approach outlined in this chapter is that it offers a chance to understand exactly how your advertising is performing. Three principles come into play when trying to analyze your best advertising ROI.

### Target Your Ads

Does the advertising you are considering deliver a very high amount of your target market? Most advertising is priced based on readership, viewers, subscribers, or market share. If your ideal target market only makes up 5 percent of the base readership of a magazine you are considering, you still pay for the other 95 percent.

### Test Your Ads

You can and should test your ads on a small scale whenever possible to help determine the effectiveness of the ad itself as well as the chosen advertising medium, such as a magazine or newspaper. Once you find ads and advertising vehicles that produce results, you can begin to explore ways to expand your advertising message into other vehicles.

The idea is to find something that works and then test ways to beat the ad that works. Your best-performing ad is known as your *control ad*. Stick with this control ad as long as it is working.

Advertising is a repetition game. One-shot ads in publications or on air are not going to bring you the ultimate response that repeated exposure to your market brings. For this reason it is essential that you test and find a message or offer that generates a predictable response.

## Duct Tape Marketing

(Advertising is often discounted when you can commit to a once-a-month ad as opposed to a onetime ad.)

### Track Your Ads

In order to effectively test and evaluate the ROI of your ads, you need a system to track where a lead comes from. If you only run one ad at a time, this could be a pretty simple system; but when you have ads placed in numerous publications, running on the radio, on the Internet, and through direct mail, it is helpful to devise a system to code and track your responses. There are some very powerful tracking software programs and Web-based applications that make tracking online responses to an ad a snap. You simply code every ad or mailing with a different URL that identifies the ad and then view your results.

You can, and should, also run what are called A/B split tests where you may have identical offers sent to two different lists or run on two different radio stations to test which performed the best. You may also do an A/B split test by sending one half of a list a mailing with one headline and the other half of the list with a completely different headline. Track the results, and go to work beating the one that had the best results by changing and testing some other element such as price or offer against the winner.

Finally, at the very least, ask your prospects, and even your Web site visitors who fill out a form to request a free report, where they heard about you. Just tape this question near the phone of everyone in the office, and tally the results often.

## Creating a Small Business Advertising Plan

### Beware: Media Sales Reps Ahead

To get started with your small business advertising plan, I suggest that you contact the television stations, radio stations, newspapers,

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

magazines, and other media outlets that you feel serve your target market and ask them to send you a “media kit.” An advertiser’s media kit consists of a description of the medium, demographics of readers or listeners, editorial calendars, and advertising rates. This collection is where you start to analyze opportunities to promote your business through advertising.

Most small businesses can create a simple spreadsheet to log the majority of the possible advertising opportunities. This spreadsheet should consist of the name of the medium, contact information, distribution or number of subscribers, cost of an ad, and a calculation of the cost of the ad per 1,000 listeners, readers, or viewers. This last number is known in the ad world as cost per thousand, or CPM (*M* being the Roman numeral for 1,000).

When comparing each of the advertising mediums that follow, it is important to understand that most advertising is sold on a cost per thousand basis (CPM) and that when you are trying to compare pricing, it’s very important to understand the CPM of an ad when evaluating one against another.

A low-cost ad that doesn’t really reach anyone may actually be more expensive in the big picture than an ad that is more expensive per insertion but reaches a greater audience.

### Typical Small Business Advertising Opportunities—Pros and Cons

The following is a list of the typical advertising mediums available to the small business in most communities. While this list may not be exhaustive, it does cover the primary advertising tools that you can employ in your lead generation work. I am admittedly a bit biased toward several of these but try to offer the pros and cons that each may bring your business.

**Network television.** While television advertising offers very high impact, it is possibly the most expensive advertising buy and becoming less and less effective for the small business with the advent of so many other forms of television and television-like media.



## Duct Tape Marketing

**Cable television.** Cable TV does offer more ability to target certain market niches or demographics, with specialty cooking, gardening, furniture building, and sports-only programming.

Recently, a new breed of television ad agency has cropped up that allows local small advertisers to choose an industry-specific, professionally produced ad, customize it, and place a media buy all in a matter of minutes. The most successful is a California company called Spot Runner ([www.spotrunner.com](http://www.spotrunner.com)). The lower cost associated with this approach is making television more attractive to local small businesses.

**Radio.** It's a good way to target with the right station. Every station has a pretty narrow demographic set of listeners. Radio is also a good way to get repetition in your message as listeners tend to be loyal both to stations and parts of the day. Radio is a very good tool for a sale or promotion announcement.

Don't forget public radio. Public radio does not have the same commercial clutter of a typical radio station and offers a very strong demographic of upper management, well-educated, higher-income listeners. No ads are available, only sponsorship mentions that have become increasingly advertiser friendly.

**Local newspapers.** This is a good choice for many retail businesses, but it's a medium that is increasingly ineffective for most other forms of business due to a lack of targeting. Some weekly newspapers can be well-read in certain communities and allow you to connect to certain demographic groups.

Almost every major city also has what is known as an *alternative newspaper*. These publications generally focus on entertainment and can be an effective way to reach a fairly defined demographic.

**Business newspapers.** In some communities these publications can be good ways to communicate with business-only markets. It is very important to have a way to measure results.

**Magazines.** Magazine advertising is probably the riskiest choice for a small business, as the cost of advertising is generally significant

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

and the time before an ad may appear can be as much as ninety days. However, magazines do offer high-impact exposure for some industries and even national publications, such as *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Newsweek*, offer regional advertising options. This kind of ad should only be run after you have an ad that you have fully tested. The image impact of a full-page ad in a national publication can be valuable but must be weighed against the cost.

**Yellow Pages.** The good news about the Yellow Pages is that when someone picks it up, they are typically looking to buy what you sell. The bad news is that when they get to your ad, it is surrounded by all of your competitors. Yellow Pages will continue to lose effectiveness to the Internet alternatives. If your ad appears in a Yellow Pages directory, it is imperative that you offer the reader a compelling reason to call you, other than to get a price quote comparison.

**Outdoor.** Billboards have limited appeal for most small businesses and certainly must be run in conjunction with other forms of advertising, but they can be very effective as a direct response vehicle if your business is location based. “Exit here for great food” is a call to action available on a billboard. Billboards are also a great tool to announce a new product or enhance a trade show.

**Direct mail.** From a targeting standpoint, direct mail is likely the best option for most small businesses. You can purchase very targeted mailing lists and fully control who receives your message. Small tests can help you quickly determine what works and what doesn't.

**Telemarketing.** Almost completely ineffective as a lead generation tool, telemarketing still can offer impact when used to follow up other forms of marketing, such as a direct-mail campaign.

**Internet.** Depending on the type of business and scope of operation, this form of advertising offers some interesting and ever-changing opportunities. As Internet surfers continue to use the Web as the new phone book, local Internet advertising options will flourish.

Pay-per-click advertising (PPC) ads, run on Web sites and sold

## Duct Tape Marketing

based on a click, have grown into a major form of local advertising. Google, Yahoo!, Bing, and AOL all offer the ability for any business to bid on specific search terms in an effort to attract Web surfers to a classified-type ad. Ads can be targeted to specific local terms and geographic locations.

PPC also offers a tremendous opportunity to test messages and headlines very quickly and inexpensively. An ad placed on a system like Google AdWords can start appearing in a matter of hours after it is placed. The system also allows you to test multiple ads. Each ad and ad response is automatically tracked. In a couple of days of testing and at a very low cost, you may be able to determine that one headline gets far better response than another. While not every business can rely on PPC advertising to generate sufficient leads, it is one of my favorite testing grounds regardless of where you plan to run your ads.

**Neighborhood.** Almost every community has coupon ad packs, flyer distribution services, and other co-op type opportunities that may make sense for your business. Again, the question is always, who does it reach? not, how cheap is it?

**Create your own advertising vehicles.** Bob Hamilton Plumbing created some yard signs during an election and convinced some customers to put them in their yards at the height of the electioneering cycle. These signs promoted “Bob Hamilton for Plumber.” They were cute and likely generated some positive buzz.

I’ve long considered the yard-sign idea to perhaps be more powerful than the casual, onetime use might imply. What if you were to find a few well-placed homeowners—that would mean on high-traffic residential through streets—and offered to buy some advertising in their yards? The stipulation would be that each household would agree to place a sign promoting your business or service in its yard and to leave it there.

I know some of the homeowner association types might be rolling their eyes, but like anything you do, if you take care to select homes that have side yards and maybe only use a thirty-day term, who

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

knows? This is an ideal approach for home services folks—window cleaning, landscaping, plumbing, HVAC, and the like.

Now let's expand our thinking a bit. What about delivery vehicles, statement stuffers for complimentary businesses, printed trash bags, recycling bins, pizza delivery boxes? There's really no limit to this idea of creating your own advertising vehicles.

**Strategic partnerships.** While this isn't really an advertising medium, I want to mention it here. There is quite likely a host of companies that serve your very same target market that could be enticed to participate in some form of joint marketing. This can take the form of mailings that endorse your product or service, cooperative marketing efforts, or simply distributing the marketing materials of other related businesses. I'll cover this idea in greater detail in the chapter on referrals.

### How to successfully engage prospects with Facebook advertising

Currently, Facebook boasts somewhere in excess of 500 million users, and that number is growing every day. You've probably heard this line by now, but if Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest in the world, behind China and India only. There's a pretty good bet that some members of your ideal target customer reside in and visit Facebook land, but the trick is to find them.

Facebook's advertising platform is a vehicle worth exploring. The tool allows you to place small display-type ads in the right sidebar of Facebook pages and profiles. At this point it's not as effective in pure response as well-targeted Google AdWords campaigns, but it's not really the same kind of vehicle, and you won't find AdWords in Facebook, at least for now.

Like many things, with Facebook, setting up and running successful campaigns isn't as straightforward as it could be. Following are five steps to consider as you explore Facebook advertising.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### 1. Target

One of the best things about Facebook advertising is the ability to select who sees your ad using a number of variables, including keywords. You can target by geography, age, gender, education, relationship status, workplace, and keywords. (I know someone who wanted to send a birthday message to his wife and targeted so narrowly that she was the only one who would see the ad.) Demographics are pretty straightforward. The real trick is expanding your keywords to the point where you have a large enough audience to get the job done. Facebook used to have a tool that let you search for the hottest topics being discussed, but they shelved it as they continue to build a more robust analytics package.

### 2. Attract and engage

The first thing you must do is decide whether you want people to be directed to your own Web page or something on Facebook, such as a Page, Application, Group, or Event. If you are already the administrator of your Facebook Page, Group, Event, or Application, you can select it from the drop-down menu. The thing that's nice about using ads to promote your pages and events is that Facebook puts a "Become a fan" or "RSVP to this event" button right in the ad. People don't even have to visit your page to take action. There are some pros to sending them to a link on your Web site (better tracking options), but by sending them to assets on Facebook, you have the ability to multiply their actions through the natural social wall activity that occurs when someone RSVPs to an event. (All their followers automatically see that action.)

Some users find Facebook ads a good tool to promote events or get new fans to pages. From an engagement standpoint, think in terms of using the ads to promote content and value and not so much to sell something. The most successful

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

use of ads on social networks is to create deeper engagement so you have the ability to sell once trust is built. Think about putting white papers on your Fan Pages and promoting that content or creating a free event, like a Webinar, and advertising that event. In both of these cases, you'll have the opportunity to sell a bit once you've proven you know your stuff. (One quirk of note: when you promote an event created with the Facebook event app, the title of the ad will automatically default to the title of the event, so name your event carefully.)

You don't get much space in these ads, so use it wisely. Your headline (25 characters) should grab attention immediately with a benefit. You'll get another 135 characters to describe and entice in the body of the ad. You also have the option to upload an image. Take this option. It may be the most important aspect of your ad, so choose your image with care. Facebook users are very image driven (it's the largest photo-sharing site in the world), and the visual graphic you choose will make or break an ad. This is an element you must plan on testing.

### 3. Budget

Facebook advertising works similar to AdWords in that you bid for keywords and compete to get your ads shown. How effective you are at this depends on the competitiveness of your keywords. You can choose between a cost-per-click (CPC) model where you pay only for clicks, or a cost-per-thousand (CPM) model where you pay per 1,000 ad views. Most research I've read suggests that the CPC model is slightly more effective in terms of ROI.

To start your campaign, you must determine a bid per click and daily budget. You can set both of these numbers very low, but don't expect much. Initially, you are just testing. You'll want to set your click bid somewhere around the Facebook suggested

## Duct Tape Marketing

amount and a daily budget you can live with, something like \$50 or more to start. You can always adjust these.

### 4. Test

No matter what, you should always test your advertising. Online applications like this make it pretty darn simple. You can and should create multiple ad versions. Once you create an ad, you will have the ability to create similar ads and run those as well. You'll be able to easily view which ad is performing the best based on clicks. Facebook does need to approve your ads, so make sure you are familiar with their guidelines.

The simplest thing to test is your image. I've seen ads go from no response to mega response with a better picture. Mind you, I had no idea it was a better picture or I would have used it in the first place, but testing told me so.

### 5. Analyze

Once you create and launch your campaigns, you need to start tracking and tweaking. Facebook has a tool that gives you some information on actions taken inside the Facebook platform. So, if you are running an ad for an event or Facebook page, you can use the Facebook Insights tool to monitor interaction.

Facebook Insights is a nice reporting tool, as it can give you information about the actual—not targeted—demographics and interests of the people clicking on your ads and keywords that drew that interest. This will help you narrow or broaden your targeting. Page admins can access Insights by logging in and viewing the box titled Insights in the left sidebar. This is only visible to page admins. If you click on “See All” you will get full reporting.

Facebook does allow you to run ads that point people to links outside of Facebook, and in order to track these ads, you simply monitor them using your own analytics tool, such as Google Analytics ([www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)). If you are using Google

## Run Advertising That Gets Results

Analytics, simply use the URL builder tool in Analytics to create a link to your page that contains tracking parameters, and place that in your Facebook ad as the destination link.

## Duct Tape Marketing Chapter Resources

The following list of Web sites may help you locate various local media outlets in your community and across the country.

### Television

Find TV ([www.tvfind.us/](http://www.tvfind.us/))

Newslink ([www.newslink.org/broad.html](http://www.newslink.org/broad.html))

Spot Runner ([www.spotrunner.com](http://www.spotrunner.com))

### Radio

Radio locator ([www.radio-locator.com/](http://www.radio-locator.com/))

Radio directory ([www.radiodirectory.com/](http://www.radiodirectory.com/))

Newslink ([www.newslink.org/broad.html](http://www.newslink.org/broad.html))

### Newsprint

Hometown News ([www.hometownnews.com/](http://www.hometownnews.com/))

Newslink ([www.newslink.org/news.html](http://www.newslink.org/news.html))

State newspaper associations can place ads in many newspapers at one time.

### Business Newspapers

Newslink ([www.newslink.org/biznews.html](http://www.newslink.org/biznews.html))

BizJournals ([www.bizjournals.com/](http://www.bizjournals.com/))

### Classified Ad Networks

Nationwide ([www.nationwideadvertising.com/](http://www.nationwideadvertising.com/))



## Duct Tape Marketing

### Magazines

Newslink ([www.newslink.org/mag.html](http://www.newslink.org/mag.html))

Wikipedia list ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_United\\_States\\_magazines](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_magazines))

### Outdoor (Billboards)

Outdoor Advertising Association ([www.oaaa.org/members/roster/](http://www.oaaa.org/members/roster/))

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## Action Steps

1. Contact every media outlet in your market and request a media kit to start comparing different forms of advertising.
  2. Look to your clients and their problems and frustrations to create one or more “hot topic” information products to offer your market.
  3. Ask your current clients what publications they read to help determine where you should consider placing your advertising.
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# Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

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## Why Is Direct Mail an Ideal Target Medium?

So, I'm a homebuilder, building homes in the posh new Platypus Creek development, and I get two pieces of mail from a home stereo equipment provider. One has a headline that says: "We have the home audio products your customers want." The other provider says: "Homebuyers in Platypus Creek are demanding whole-house stereo—we'll show you how to profit from that demand."

Now, in this scenario, who would the homebuilder consider calling first? In this chapter you will discover how to tap into the power of one of my favorite forms of advertising for the small business—direct mail.

The reasons I like direct mail are pretty simple, but it all leads back to my prevailing principles when it comes to analyzing any form of advertising.

1. Does it allow you to specifically target your ideal prospect?
2. Does it provide a high return on investment?

Properly executed, direct mail offers a resounding yes to both of these questions.

Few advertising mediums are targeted enough to offer the small business a high enough return on investment, but the primary reason I believe direct mail is the best choice for most small businesses is that

## Duct Tape Marketing

you can start very small, test very quickly, and easily expand your efforts when you have a winner.

My advice to almost every one of my clients is to start with direct mail campaigns, focus on creating letters and offers that deliver a predictable response, and then—and only then—look to add other forms of advertising to expand and enhance your message. It is unreasonable to believe that a marketing message that does not pull any response in a direct mail letter will fare much better in a half-page ad in a newspaper. However, an offer that does well in direct mail will often also do well in other forms of media.

### Personalization Builds Trust

Another very compelling aspect of direct mail is the ability to personalize each and every piece sent. You naturally start by personalizing an envelope with the recipient's name and address, but other forms of variable printing allow you to address specific industry needs, provide geographic or neighborhood references, and list variables or headline variables such as *headache sufferers vs. back pain sufferers*.

There really is no end to the ways that you can creatively craft and personalize a direct mail piece to the point that it feels almost as though you created that one mailing just for the person who received it.

### The Perfect Testing Platform

Direct mail also offers the best opportunity to test and track your advertising efforts. You can send as few as one hundred pieces of mail and assess with a certain degree of accuracy whether you stand a chance at meeting your lead generation goals. Further, you can send a hundred pieces of mail to a member of five different mailing lists, or with five different headlines or offers, and get an immediate sense of which is the best. The low-risk, quick response, and low-cost nature of this form of testing makes it the best place to start your advertising efforts.

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

Donald Levin of Levin Public Relations in Larchmont, New York, uses what he calls the “Levin 10 Letters a Week” method to gain new business. First, he researches ten companies for whom he thinks he can provide profitable service—profitable to the company and profitable to his business. He studies their Web sites and calls them to confirm the single best person to write to. Next, he writes all ten a concise letter that explains exactly what he can offer them and how and why they’ll benefit. He closes the letter by saying when he will call to arrange a meeting. Then he makes the calls. If he can’t arrange a meeting, he finds out when he should call back (three months, six months, etc.). He keeps this information in a database and acts on it. The following Monday, he starts the whole process again ([www.levinpr.com](http://www.levinpr.com)).

### The List

While I have spent considerable time going on about the virtues of direct mail combined with the effective elements of an ad, I need to point out that one of the primary factors in the success or failure of a direct-mail campaign is the list of recipients. We’ve already learned a lot about developing the right message, but if you mail the right message to the wrong people, your campaign is doomed to fail.

It is safe to say that you can purchase just about any mailing list or set of qualifications for a list that you could imagine. To develop your ideal mailing list, you should start by taking the work you did in developing your ideal target client and determine if you can buy a list of prospects that match that profile. The thought here is that if you do a good job of defining those who make up your ideal client, then you simply try to find more of them.

Mailing lists generally fall into two categories: (1) lists compiled from public records and (2) lists of subscribers or enthusiasts. And you are going to go list shopping for both.

Simple list “selects,” such as companies in a certain metropolitan

## Duct Tape Marketing

area with fewer than one hundred employees, can be acquired from a host of national list resources, such as InfoUSA. These types of lists are often available at very reasonable rates.

Lists of subscribers of specific publications or buyers of specific services and products are also available but generally at substantially higher prices. A publication called the Standard Rates and Data Service (SRDS) lists more than ten thousand mailing lists of all shapes and sizes available for rent. It is possible to find lists in the SRDS of credit card–holding doctors who subscribe to hunting magazines. Okay, this particular example may not fit the bill, but I hope you see the potential here.

Mailing lists are sold on a cost-per-thousand basis, and most list owners have minimum list rental requirements, although I have found that many will waive the minimum to allow you to test a small portion of the list.

## The Perfect Mailing List

Both the compiled list and the publication or purchaser list have value, but I believe the perfect mailing list is created by carefully merging several types of lists. To create your perfect mailing list, start by getting a list from a source like InfoUSA that meets your very strict demographic profile of your ideal client. Then find a list from a magazine or catalog from SRDS that demonstrates a purchasing or enthusiast behavior that matches your product or service and join the two lists to find prospects that reside on both lists. Anyone who appears on both lists is your ideal target. This way you narrow the list to only the most highly targeted suspects possible.

The trick is to identify some behavior or reason that someone would be on a certain list that would help better qualify a person for your offering. (Remember the work we did back in chapters 1 and 2

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

on profiling your ideal client?) Let's say, for example, that you are a home remodeler. Would the fact that someone in your target market also subscribed to a publication all about upscale home design trends make that individual more likely to be a prospect for your service? Or how about a commercial insurance provider? Would a group of people that fit your demographic profile who also subscribe to a publication that keeps them up-to-date on worker's comp issues be potentially interesting to your marketing effort?

There is a generally accepted notion in direct mail circles that you can tell a great deal about what people think, how they act, and what they value based on what they buy. Your mailing list work is as much about understanding the culture of your ideal client as it is about finding people who seem to belong on your list. It is very difficult to convince someone that he or she should spend money on what you have to offer. There are lots of businesses and individuals that need what you do, but when you analyze your suspect list, you need to focus on suspects who have demonstrated a past behavior that demonstrates that they value what you do or sell. This is essential to your mailing list research. If you sell consulting services, you need to look for companies that have demonstrated that they hire professional consultants. In this case, you can't afford to waste your time on businesses that don't seem to value professional service providers.

Your list cost may initially increase fivefold with the approach I just described, but since you will ultimately shrink the overall size of your list with this approach, you will mail far fewer prospects and receive a much higher return on each mailing. In some cases, you may have to expand your list selection a bit or resort to custom list-building tactics to come up with a list of adequate size, but this practice will still deliver a better list in the end.

Doug Antonacci of Daddy O's Music Shack, a small music store in Springfield, Illinois, discovered a very low-cost, highly qualified list-building strategy. Each week, he goes online to view the classified

## Duct Tape Marketing

ads in the local “penny paper” for bands or people selling used music gear (guitars, drums, etc.). Next, he copies their phone numbers on an Internet reverse look-up site and gets their mailing addresses. Then he mails them each a flyer offering features and specials. The only real cost is a stamp and some printing. The best part is that he knows his mailing will get directly to a musician.

### **Your *Hot Suspect List***

Once you have done your list research and identified some number of qualified suspects, it is time to put these suspects into a contact database such as ACT! You can also simply save this list as a spreadsheet type of file, but it is best that you save your list in a way that will allow you to mail to the members of the list frequently and keep track of your response and follow-up activities. At this point, I suggest that you carve out a budget that allows you to mail to this list at least six times in the next six months.

The idea is to work with the number of suspects that your budget allows you to impact. By *impact*, I mean put your message in front of qualified suspects frequently enough to get noticed. Much of the lead generation tactics explained in the next two chapters will allow you to broaden your marketing efforts, but your initial hot suspect list should be manageable enough that you can flood them with your advertising offers and test and track messages frequently. Because advertising is often the biggest marketing “real dollar” expense, it is best if you can focus on this group in such a way that they will receive your messages six to eight times in a matter of months.

Depending on your marketing goals and needs, a list of five hundred very qualified suspects may be more than enough to focus your entire marketing effort on. This decision starts with a determination of how much business you need to grow your business.

In some ways, your available budget may dictate the size of this

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

initial group, but as you land upon successful campaigns, you can confidently expand this initial group to whatever size you can realistically serve. That's how powerful this narrow-focus, direct-mail approach is. Don't worry what the rest of the universe is doing. Set your marketing goals (how many new clients you want or need) and work with a group that is manageable enough that your direct-mail campaign can begin to get their attention. Generally, it is better to mail the same five hundred suspects six times a year than to mail three thousand suspects only once.

### A More Qualified List

It is always better to mail your marketing letters to the most qualified person within any company you have targeted. Mailing lists, even those from the most reputable companies, contain errors and out-of-date information. Your letter sent to the VP of finance who was fired three months ago probably won't have much impact. Regardless of the size of your suspect list, it is well worth the time to call each company and locate the name of the person most qualified to purchase your products and services. Most company receptionists will provide a name when asked.

Martin Jelsema of Signature Strategies in Denver, Colorado, targets Colorado-based, high-tech companies about to launch a new product (because they need to brand the new offering). He uses the Sunday newspaper, help-wanted display ads to find companies needing design and test engineers, project managers, systems developers, and so forth. Once he identifies the companies, he calls to find the top marketing person at these firms. On Monday, he mails each company a one-page letter suggesting that he can help them "brand smart from the start," and that he has experience with high-tech product introductions. He also encloses a list of customers that he has previously assisted. Then he promises to call them later in the week to discuss their interest.



## Duct Tape Marketing

Because he identifies prospects with a need, demonstrates his professionalism in his personal letter, and establishes some credibility, he gets through to more than 50 percent of those he writes and sets one or two appointments each week using this strategy ([www.signaturestrategies.biz](http://www.signaturestrategies.biz)).

### Your Sticky Sales Letter—Don't Leave Home Without It

The very first advertising piece you must master is the sales letter. Your sticky sales letter is always a work in progress, but it is also the foundational piece for all of your advertising. To effectively launch your Duct Tape Marketing lead generation system, you must write and test a sales letter that generates enough leads to help move you toward your client and revenue goals.

You will eventually adapt components of this letter to use in other advertising vehicles and in other ad formats and mediums, but you can't pass Go without this tool. The reason for the emphasis on this tool is fundamental. If you agree that direct mail is the most effective way to target your suspects, then a sales letter is the most effective way to turn those suspects into prospects and eventually into clients and referral sources.

#### Sticky Sales Letter Formula

Your sales letter should contain an element from each of the following:

**Headline.** I've already covered this pretty thoroughly, but yes, even your sales letter needs a headline.

Your headline is the ad for your ad. Your headline must scream, "This letter is worth your time!" John Caples, who some consider the best copywriter ever (that's why the highest award a copywriter can win is called a Caples Award), said this about headlines: "I spend hours on headlines—days if necessary. And when I get a good headline, I

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

know that my task is nearly finished. Writing the copy can usually be done in a short time, if necessary. And that advertisement will be a good one, that is, if the headline is really a ‘stopper’” (from his book *Caples on Advertising*).

You must have a good story and a compelling offer in your body copy, but without a good headline, you don’t stand a chance. Here are my three favorite headline starters:

1. Ask a compelling question: “Do you know why . . . ?”
2. State your offer: “Free report reveals 101 ways to . . .”
3. Identify the target: “Mechanical engineers find that . . .”

Place your headline directly under the salutation in 18- or 24-point type.

**State the problem.** Let your readers know up front that you realize the problem they have and you understand the frustrations they are going through.

**Stir up the problem.** Draw a picture of what this problem is likely costing them in terms of money, time, frustration, or status.

**Paint a hopeful future.** Begin to reveal what life could be like or what it is like for some others like them.

**Outline a solution.** Show them that you have an idea how they can get relief. Layer on the benefits of your solution.

**Answer objections.** Address the objections that you know your prospects have posed in the past.

**Make an offer.** Offer your free report, workshop, CD, or other free or low-cost information product.

**Create a call to action.** Tell them why and how they should contact you to get this offer.

**P.S.** Always end with a P.S. Some people call this the second headline because after the headline, this is the most-read part of a letter. Make sure that you restate your offer or chief benefit in a P.S.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### How to Get Your Letter Written

Here are my suggestions:

Outline your letter using the formula.

Write a rough draft in one sitting.

Leave your letter alone for a day.

Edit your letter for impact.

Let a professional proof your letter for errors.

Edit one final time for passion.

## Copywriting Tips for Small Business Marketers

There are hundreds of books, courses, and Web sites that will help you become a better writer, and I recommend that you acquire and read as much as you can on the topic. You can't know enough about what I think is the master marketing skill. I now want to share a couple of tips that will immediately make you a better marketing writer.

### Writing Is a Master Marketing Skill

Few things are sold without a prospect reading a written word or two. Business owners often ask me what they should be looking for in a marketing assistant, and I always tell them to find someone who can write. What I really mean is find someone who *will* write.

Many people claim that they are not good writers, and my take is that they simply don't write. To become a good writer in order to use writing as a marketing skill, you must write. You can always have someone edit what you write, but it's the act of writing that starts the marketing ball rolling. (I know my editor friends out there wish I would take that editing advice.) Here's what I have found.

- Writing creates ideas. It's rarely the other way around. Many times I have no idea what I am going to write, but once I start,

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

ideas just happen. What comes about is often far greater than anything I could have simply thought and then transferred to paper or screen.

- Writing helps you have something to say. The more you write, the better you will sell.
- Writing helps you listen more actively.
- Write speeches; write notes; write essays unrelated to your business.

**Create a swipe file.** This is just a file of letters and offers you receive and hang on to for ideas of what works and what doesn't work. You may want to get yourself on some direct mail order lists so that you receive some of the better sales letters out there. Three companies that send out very good direct mail letters are Nightingale Conant, Guthy Renker, and Bottom Line Publications.

**Tell them why.** If you are making a great offer in your copy, tell readers why you are making it. Don't assume they know. Tell them why you started your business, why you hope they fall in love with your products, why you are having a special sale, and why they should buy from you now.

**Write as you talk.** This one always drives my English major readers crazy, but your sales copy is meant to be a form of conversation with the reader. Say what you believe, how you believe it, and you will connect with your reader. Few things sound less sincere than when you try to be or sound like a really smart marketing person.

**Use subheadlines in your copy.** Some readers will pore over your copy word for word; others will scan and jump to visual clues. Subheadlines that emphasize key logical points will help readers scan your letter.

**Use quotes.** Quotes, either from you or in the form of a testimonial, add another voice to your copy and allow for the conversation that you are trying to start.

## Duct Tape Marketing

**Use active voice.** I'm not trying to contradict "write as you talk," but active verbs can make your copy stronger. Have someone edit your copy, looking specifically to change passive verbs to active ones. You will be amazed how this little edit can add punch.

**Passive:** "Just call day or night and your application will be picked up by our representative."

**Active:** "Just call day or night and our representative will pick up your application."

**Tell stories.** People love stories. Often even complicated ideas can be made simple through the use of a story. Talk about how your clients use your products or services. Talk about the day you realized that there was a need for what you offer.

### Pretest Your Letter

Now that you've written your sticky sales letter, and you are happy with it, I recommend that you pretest it for readability. Here are a few tips to help you get this process started:

- Read your letter out loud to get a feel for how it sounds.
- Round up a twelve-year-old or two and see if they understand what you are offering.
- Show a copy to some of your best clients or prospects and ask for their input.

## Your Sales Letter Package

Before you send your letter out there to your suspects, there are a couple of other considerations.

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

### Outer Envelope

Theories abound on what works and what doesn't when it comes to getting your letter opened. Some of the variables in the mix have to do with the industry you are in, but as a rule, a simple #10 standard envelope, laser personalized, featuring your company logo, your return address, and a real stamp, is the best package.

There are direct mail gurus out there who will tell you that you need clever teaser copy to get your mail opened, or you need to make your envelope look very official or like an invoice. While these ploys may indeed get your mail opened, they can backfire, as they are a bit dishonest. Make your envelope look very important, and make it look as though the recipient is the only person you sent the letter to.

### What Postage Rate?

Again, if you want your letter to look as though it was sent solely to the addressee, you are better off with a real stamp over a mailing permit. Depending on the number of people you are sending your letter to, you may also find first-class mail postage to be your best bet. No one can officially verify this, but studies have shown up to 25 percent of presort standard (bulk) mail does not reach its destination. This statistic, coupled with the fact that a bulk rate stamp signifies, well, bulk, makes first-class stamps an attractive choice. (This, of course, is a variable that you can test!)

I guess this is the point where I must add a caveat. Everything I have said about the right way to prepare your direct mail package is wrong—if your testing can prove it so. I can't overemphasize the need to test many elements of your direct mail package. I have personally experienced 300 percent response increases by changing the headline of a letter.

### Great Things Come in Small Packages

When comparing various forms of direct mail advertising, don't overlook the humble postcard. There are so many things to love about postcards, but low cost is one of the best. You can send an attention-getting message to a very targeted audience for around thirty cents each. This includes all of the benefits of using first-class mail.

I've already stated the value of repetition in your advertising. How about sending an attention-getting message, once a month, to your entire list of suspects and prospects for around \$4 per lead, per year? Few things can compete with that potential ROI.

I love the direct mail letter for the heavy lifting, but postcards are a great way to supplement your primary offers and remind your current clients that you still care about them too. With a postcard, there is no envelope to open, so it is likely that your message will at least be seen, even if the reader only casually scans his or her mail.

#### The Use of Color

Digital printing has made color printing, even in small quantities, very affordable. There is plenty of scientific evidence to support the fact that color is more memorable, and the postcard offers a great opportunity to effectively use full-color images in your advertising. As in all of your ads, you should use a short, impact-filled headline on your postcards. You only have a small space to get your message across. Grab your readers by the throat, and make them sit up and listen.

#### A Couple of Other Uses for Postcards

While I really like postcards for generating prospects, there are many other great uses with your existing clients:

- Special client offerings
- Coupons

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

- News announcements
- New product announcements

Take your postcards to your next networking event. Everyone else is passing out business cards like crazy, and you can stand out by passing out your postcard ad with a dynamite offer on it.

There are certain postal regulations that relate to postcard mailings, so to be on the safe side, check with the post office before you print.

## The Post Office Is a Great Small Business Resource

In recent years the good old United States Post Office has discovered a little concept called *customer service*. Now, competition can do that to an organization, but the post office isn't just any organization, so I think it has responded nicely and turned itself into a valuable resource for small businesses.

One of the latest innovations is an online service that allows you to design business reply cards and envelopes (BRC and BRE) suitable for printing. The very precise process of creating these automated mailing tools used to be very tedious. Now you can visit ReplyMail.com and create one in several simple steps. You will need a permit for most, but you acquire that online as well. Business reply (the sender pays the return postage) can dramatically increase response rates for certain types of mailing promotions. I like to use it whenever I am trying to drive inquiries for information or samples.

### Don't Forget about Handwritten Notes as a Direct Response Tool

Lori Chance of Destination Words in Portland, Oregon, uses a good, old-fashioned note card as one of her key marketing tools. She says, "They're fun to write, simple, and the receiver absolutely loves



## Duct Tape Marketing

them!” On more than one occasion, she has gone to meet someone months after having sent that individual a card, only to find the card still sitting on the recipient’s desk or tacked to a bulletin board because it makes the person smile.

### Small Batch, Handcrafted Direct Mail Is Still Very Effective

The secret to making an advertising or direct mail campaign work these days is to think small, think personal, think value, think follow-up. If you can’t plan and implement each of these steps, then your campaign success will be limited.

**Small.** Create the smallest, most information-rich list you can—even if you have to build it yourself from resources at a local library. This way you know that every name on your list belongs to the right association, reads the right magazines, or has the right demographic profile.

**Personal.** When you do your research, you might think to include personal details in a mailing that were acquired by a little bit of social media research. Look, getting noticed these days takes work, and depending on the type of client, you may be better off writing five handwritten letters with specific details than mailing truckloads of generic stuff.

**Value.** Advertising works when you combine it with a call to action that has value for the reader. Use the Web to offer free content, free evaluations, free trials, and access to special events, and you’ll start the process of building trust before you try to sell something.

**Follow-up.** Small-batch, outbound marketing works best when combined with a personal follow-up mechanism. In your letter, tell the reader you are going to call and ask permission to send some information or provide him or her with something of value, and then do it.

The thing about adding this kind of outbound marketing to the mix is that, while it comes with a cost, it also offers a great deal of control. It’s hard to know when your inbound marketing is going to kick in or when a journalist is going to profile your business, but with

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

a small-batch, outbound marketing approach running at all times, you know exactly when and how a prospect is going to receive your message.

With all the chatter about inbound marketing and social media, it's easy to overlook some ways to round out your entire plan with some good old-fashioned hand-to-hand direct mail.

One of my Duct Tape Marketing consultants provided a case study for a campaign she conducted for her own business.

First, she built a list of 150 chiropractors in her area from a state board list.

Next, she sent a personal letter to each, citing various things she noted about their Web sites.

She followed up by phone and booked 18 appointments.

From those appointments, 5 became clients.

The total cost of the program was about two days of time and \$100—revenue generated from the approach is initially in excess of \$100,000 and lifetime value, significantly more.

## Lumpy Mail Always Gets Opened

When it comes to your gravy, lumps are bad. When it comes to getting your marketing message through the mailroom, past the gatekeepers, and onto your potential buyer's desk, lumps are just the ticket. While I do love the direct mail letter for small business lead generation, in the right circumstances I'm also particularly fond of something I call "lumpy mail." Lumpy mail is a direct mail piece or package with some dimension or lumps to it. A box is lumpy mail. A balloon arrangement, a kitten, and a hula hoop are all examples of a lumpy mail package. You name it. The point is, you just can't ignore a piece of lumpy mail.

Some prospects are next to impossible to reach with traditional mailings. So, sometimes you need to up the ante and make a real statement. A lumpy mail package screams, "Notice me! Open me!"

## Duct Tape Marketing

Lumpy mail is a piece of Duct Tape Marketing that Kandy Meehan of Home Rental Services in Overland Park, Kansas, “grabbed ahold of.” Her business needs to pull such a specific market that mass-mailing paper of any type is usually a total waste of time.

She finds that putting something lumpy in the mailing at least gets the recipient to open the piece. Now she takes this one step further. Once a month, she prints colorful flyers, glues individual Hershey kisses to each one, and delivers them to the offices of prospective customers. She states, “It is rare that someone turns us away when offering this tiny gift. People started to remember us and watch for their ‘kiss.’ We even have customers walk into our office with the flyer in their hand—minus the kiss, of course” ([www.home4rent.com](http://www.home4rent.com)).

### How to Run a Lumpy Mail Campaign

To create an effective lumpy mail campaign, start with your core marketing messages, core point of difference, or benefit. These are the primary things you promote when you want to tell your prospects why they should hire you, and these are the elements that you can use to create an effective lumpy mail package.

Now think of some unique items, trinkets, or packaging that you can use to help communicate your core message. “We’ll jump through hoops to get your business”—the hula hoop. “We’re the key to your success”—a box of keys. “We provide total solutions”—a box of Total brand cereal. “We’ve got the tools to help you get the job done”—a box of play tools. It’s important that you create a strong image and metaphor for the message you are trying to communicate.

### Repetition

Like any good direct mail campaign, repetition will improve your results. I usually suggest looking at three installments in your campaign. If done correctly, this will usually leave the recipient eager to perform whatever call to action you request at the end of the campaign.

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

### A Building Series

A very powerful way to construct your campaign, particularly if your audience is not too familiar with you, is to create your three pieces in story fashion. Each piece should build on the last and deliver an integrated message. You can use this method to build intrigue. Many times I will send the first piece in a lumpy campaign without a company name, logo, or return address. In each piece, I will imply that there is more to come. The impact of this technique can be strong. In some cases your prospects will actually look forward to getting the next piece. People love a good mystery.

### The Call to Action

Like any direct mail advertising campaign, it is important to determine what you want the final outcome or call to action to be and deliver it in the last piece. If you want the recipient to call your office, take your call, visit a Web site, or attend a workshop, make it painfully clear what the point of the game has been.

I've actually had clients tell me that prospects who wouldn't even return their phone calls eagerly made appointments and sometimes still displayed in their office the items they were sent throughout the campaign. I think people don't get this kind of attention much in their lives—and they want it.

### How Much for Those Lumps?

It is true that a lumpy mail campaign can get relatively expensive when compared to, say, a postcard mailing, so it's important for you to consider two things when you are designing yours: How many clients do you need, and what is the lifetime value a new client has to your business? In other words, if you can determine that a new client is worth \$10,000 annually to your business, then you can more effectively justify spending a certain amount to acquire a new client.

Most small businesses only need a handful of new clients at any

## Duct Tape Marketing

given time to thrive. Lumpy mail is perfect for that kind of growth. Carefully target ten new businesses at a time, throw the kitchen sink at them, and watch your appointment rate soar to about 70 percent.

### A Consistent Contact Strategy

You've worked on your Duct Tape Marketing system diligently to this point, and you know your prospects need what you sell. You know they want what you sell. Heck, you know that they even sent away for your free information report. But, even with all of that, you are still missing one major piece of the puzzle. No matter what else you know, you may not know the precise point in time when your prospects finally decide to make a purchase of the kind of product or service you have to offer. People search for information and solutions in many different ways and on many different timetables.

Some will buy immediately; some may take a year or more, depending on the complexity of the purchase. One of the keys to solving this dilemma is consistent and repeated contact. You must build a marketing system who guarantees that your prospects (particularly your "A" prospects who have responded to your two-step ads) are contacted at least eight to ten times a year. This single strategy alone can significantly increase the odds that your name will jump to the top of the list when they actually do decide to purchase.

Dropping useful information, month after month, to your prospects and customers is one of the best trust-building strategies you can employ.

### Contact Management Software to the Rescue

David Norcross of 1 Source Graphics, located in Southwest Virginia, feels that contact management software is key to his consistent

## **Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium**

marketing efforts. First, he determines the types of businesses and industries that would probably purchase his products. He gets this information through the Internet, chamber of commerce guides, or the Yellow Pages. He then plugs these organizations into his contact management software.

Next, he calls the receptionist of that organization, gets the name of the person who can make a purchasing decision for his product, and sends that person a letter. He does not ask to speak to him or her at this time. He follows up the letter in one week with a phone call and works to set an appointment.

He finds that this steady approach allows him to set one appointment for every five letters. He sends five of these letters every working day, which means he makes five follow-up phone calls every day. Therefore, he typically generates one appointment with a new client every day.

If for some reason this person does not want to see him, he puts them on his mailing list to receive a custom activity series set up within his contact management software. Every ten days he sends out a targeted postcard to that person, detailing a unique service he provides or giving more information about his work for other clients. After four to six postcards go out to that prospect, he follows up with another call. Frequently, though, he receives calls from his postcard mailings. Why? Because they are targeted.

He also uses his mailing to point the potential client to his Web site, where he has developed an e-mail autoresponder series that provides additional information to his prospects.

## **A Consistent Pattern of Contact**

So, what will you send to your prospects and customers on a monthly basis? Here is an example calendar of contact points:

## Duct Tape Marketing

- Month #1—Letter announcing a new service (change to existing service)
- Month #2—Newsletter highlighting tips and company news
- Month #3—Phone call to discover opportunities
- Month #4—Reprint of an industry magazine article of interest
- Month #5—Case study of a successful client solution you provided
- Month #6—Request for critique of a proposed sales letter (you won't believe how valuable this can be)
- Month #7—Time for another newsletter
- Month #8—Reprint of an article you contributed to an industry magazine
- Month #9—Announcement of a new service
- Month #10—Invitation to a workshop
- Month #11—Phone call to introduce someone in your referral network
- Month #12—Checklist of helpful tips for your industry/service

Notice that this schedule includes a couple of phone contacts. This can be a very powerful research tool as well as a business-building tool. Sometimes you will learn what your prospects really want and how valuable the materials you are sending them really are to them.

You may want to consider breaking your prospect list into groups based on potential opportunity. Your twenty or thirty “A” prospects might get a copy of your favorite book or some homemade cookies in a tin with your company logo. And if you really want to make a hit with your “A” prospects, take the time to find out some background on them and personalize your marketing materials. If Ed Jones over there at Acme Industries went to Notre Dame (not such a hard thing to find out), you will score major points by simply sending a clipping from some magazine about his favorite subject—the Fighting Irish.

You can even set up Web-based news searches through Google

## Direct Mail Is an Ideal Target Medium

and Yahoo! alerts that will automatically find and send you everything that is being said about a school, industry, company, sports team, you name it. So an industry guru makes a prediction for the future of your prospect's industry, and you drop the article in the mail to him. Now who do you think he is going to remember come order time?

Use your contact database of ideal prospects, set up a schedule of different types of contact points like the previous example, and then stick to it. And don't forget to include your current clients on that list. Reselling them can lead to more and more business and referrals.

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## Action Steps

1. Start a swipe file—study and collect successful direct mail letters.
  2. Research sources for your perfect direct mail list.
  3. Craft your primary sales offer.
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## Chapter 12

# Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

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### Defining Public Relations for the Small Business

Let's start this PR journey with a textbook kind of definition just so we are all on the same page. According to the Duct Tape Marketing system, *public relations activity for the small business consists primarily of gaining positive mention of your company or your products in newspapers, magazines, news shows, newsletters, Web sites, and journals read or viewed by some portion of your target market.* There are other activities that fall under the heading of public relations, but for our purposes, this is the definition we will use. PR is also a primary plank of your overall lead generation foundation.

Press coverage can come in the form of a feature story, news brief, announcement, or even a quote in an industry-related story. Many people refer to this as free media, but I like to refer to it as *earned* media because it does take some systematic effort to make it happen.

In this chapter, I will cover some of the strategies and tools employed by professional public relations firms to help you gain positive press and avoid the pitfalls that cause most business owners to fail in this arena. Obtaining media coverage for your firm is not necessarily difficult, but there are some strategies and tactics that you must understand in order to achieve the greatest success.

## Why PR Is So Powerful

Used in conjunction with the other marketing tools presented in the Duct Tape system, PR can help you produce some very impressive lead generation results. Successful placement of a feature story about your firm may produce more actual customers and business than an entire year of Yellow Pages advertising.

Before I spend time trying to educate you on how to generate media coverage for your business, I want to make sure you fully appreciate why it is so important for you to put in the effort to make it happen.

### **More Credible**

People have grown tired of what they see as advertising and consequently tune a great deal of it out. When someone reads about a great new service in a newspaper, they are much more likely to believe that a story is true since the story was written by an objective third party, the reporter.

### **Great Return**

A full-page ad in a magazine that your target market might read can cost thousands of dollars. A story in that same publication may not cost anything at all. But please don't think that you can simply fire off a press release and wait for the phone to ring.

### **Great Brand Building**

A story about your firm or your people or some way in which your firm overcame adversity can help your target market connect with your firm in a much more personal way than any form of advertising or promotion can. This can be a very positive way to help the world understand how your firm is different.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Resells Your Clients

One of the surest ways to grow your business is to do more and more business with existing clients. A favorable story about your firm can help convince your current clients that they made the right decision to hire you after all. This can go a long way toward the amount of business you do with them in the future. Never underestimate the power of someone seeing a story and realizing that she discovered you first! This is the kind of recognition that generates word-of-mouth testimonials.

### Resells Your Staff

There is a similar impact on workplace pride, which is one of the most important aspects of employee satisfaction. Generating positive press coverage for your organization and your people makes them proud to be a part of your team.

### Automatic Marketing Content

In many cases you can reprint articles that appear in newspapers, magazines, and newsletters and use them as additional marketing pieces. While an industry newsletter may not be read by your potential target market, prospects may be impressed when you send them a copy of an article about your firm, even if it appeared in *Modern Plumbing*.

## A 5-Step Small Business PR Plan for Today

Getting a great write-up in a publication your prospects and customers read is still one of the most powerful marketing opportunities going. From a trust standpoint, few things beat the mention of your firm by what is seen as an unbiased third party. In fact, and I can hear the PR folks cheering now, a well-placed article just may be worth five to ten times more than an ad in the same publication.

## Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

But—and I can hear the PR folks groaning—the game has changed dramatically. Like most forms of communication, the Internet has changed how we get information, who we have access to, and who controls what’s said. Since anyone and everyone is a potential publisher, it’s kind of democratized the process of media relations.

Major media outlets are still important, but their importance has been diluted by a million bloggers and the flow of information that marches directly to the end user. Both of these trends spell opportunity for small businesses aiming to tap the awesome lead generation and customer loyalty-building power of PR.

Here are five steps that any small business can take to create a systematic approach to PR generation.

1. **Listen.** Journalists and thought leaders are so easy to hear now that it borders on insanity to think you’re going to get their attention without demonstrating that you know a lot about what they cover and care about. Make a list of 10 journalists and/or bloggers who cover your industry or town and get their names into Google Alerts and their blogs into Google Reader. Read what they write, and get to know what seems to get their attention. This used to be a fair amount of work back in the day, but now it comes to you.
2. **Network.** Because journalists can’t really do their job these days without Internet use, blogging, and social media, you have unprecedented access to them. In the old days, they could simply ignore your e-mails and faxes, but now you make relevant comments on their blog posts, send them links publicly through Twitter (where other journalists are watching), and engage them in online industry chats and forums or on Facebook events. Networking with your list of key journalists, in a way that demonstrates that you know what you’re talking about, is how you become a resource for their next story. Don’t

## Duct Tape Marketing

sell; build relationships. That kind of sounds like real networking doesn't it?

3. **Pitch curves.** Resist the urge to lob press releases at your A-Team list of bloggers and journalists. If you've followed through on steps 1 and 2, you've probably earned enough trust to have a conversation that starts like this: "You know, I saw your story on the blah, blah, blah, and I think blah, blah, blah would be an interesting piece for your readers, and here's why, and here's an example of how we did it, how a customer of ours did it."

Pitch curve ideas, kernels of stories that may have some impact, tie positive angles tangentially to your company, but don't pitch your new widget unless it cures a rare disease. When you truly build trust with journalists, you will come to understand that they need your stories, but they get pitched so much crap, you've got to stay uncrappy or you won't get heard.

4. **Release.** Okay, this one might seem to run counter to step 3, but another layer of your PR plan is the monthly, or more, press release briefly outlining some big gig you landed, a new special recognition, events, special promotions, and general news. This isn't the kind of stuff that makes the front page, but it's the kind of stuff that your prospects and customers may find interesting on their way to getting to know you.

Each month, make it a habit to distribute these one-page announcements through online distribution services such as PRWeb or PitchEngine. In some cases your story will reach thousands of end users at the hands of news and industry sites picking up new releases. Your media releases will be picked up by news aggregators and real-time search alerts and offer some amount of backlink building to your Web site.

5. **Amplify.** Post your press, however small it may seem, to your online profiles. Tweet your press releases (please, do more than that on Twitter, but this should be one thing). Create an "In the

## Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

news” section on your site and keep it updated with mentions and press releases. If you use Google Alerts, you can grab the RSS for your company name or set up delicious RSS feeds that automatically post. Print your one-page release in press release format, and send it to your clients and network. You’ll be surprised at the accumulated impact this little action has.

## How to Use New Rules and New Tools to Create a Media Storm

Getting a feature story about your products, services, people, or company can be a tremendous boon for your business. Publications rely on the trust of their readers, and that trust can be transferred to you in the form of leads, referrals, and awareness when a third party, like a magazine, endorses what you are doing.

A great deal has changed over the last few years in terms of how you garner media attention, but the fact remains, it should be a major leg of your lead generation push. By employing new rules of media and public engagement, made possible in part by the new breed of online social tools, you can create a steady surge of coverage that just may turn into the good kind of PR storm.

Here are a couple of practices that should be worked into your PR generation system.

### **Rule 1: Monitor in Real Time**

Keeping tabs on what’s being said by leaders in your industry, competitors, and even the daily news—monitoring the Web in real time with tools such as Google Alerts or Collecta ([www.collecta.com/](http://www.collecta.com/))—is a great way to help identify times when it makes sense for you to seize potential opportunities and jump on trending stories.

When a video surrounding a news topic goes viral or a trending topic gets hot on Twitter, you need to be able to create relevant ways to

## Duct Tape Marketing

insert your brand, product, or expertise into the conversation quickly through on-topic blog posts or related videos. Journalists may be asked to cover a particularly hot story and often turn to search engines to find a source. If your keyword-rich blog post pops to the top of the list, your chances of being quoted go up dramatically.

Tools: Google Alerts, PopScreen, Collecta

### **Rule 2: Build Relationships**

The days of garnering media coverage by buying a media list or hiring a PR firm with a media list to send out press releases are forever over. In the old days the PR firms and journalists held all the cards because, to a large degree, they determined what got covered and who got access. Now everyone is a publisher, and companies can more easily create their own news, forcing journalists to pay closer attention or miss a big story. Access to journalists through social media and their publications' online blogs has never been greater.

The key to tapping these two dynamics is to work at using this access to create relationships instead of posting press releases. Go to Google Alerts and create alerts for the names of the top five journalists who could impact your business with coverage. Find and subscribe to their blogs (Bloglines) and follow them on Twitter and other social networks (Flowtown). If you like, you can even set up a dashboard in a tool such as NetVibes and pull all the data on each journalist to a tab, giving you an easy way to join and create conversations with your key journalists.

Tools: Google Reader ([reader.google.com](http://reader.google.com)), Bloglines ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)), NetVibes ([www.netvibes.com](http://www.netvibes.com))

### **Rule 3: Expand the Base**

These days it's not uncommon for a popular niche blog to have a larger and more active readership than a daily newspaper.

It's become very important to add key industry or local bloggers

## Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

(e.g., Twellow, Placeblogger) to your media list. You don't need to stick to high-profile, large blogs; you may actually find better luck getting coverage on more specific niche blogs (e.g., Google BlogSearch).

There are a couple of keys to pitching bloggers. Read the blog; start a dialogue through comments or on Twitter; pitch a story or guest post idea only if you can create a very compelling argument as to why this would be valuable for that blog's readership.

Tools: Twellow ([www.Twellow.com](http://www.Twellow.com)), Google BlogSearch ([www.blogsearch.google.com/](http://www.blogsearch.google.com/)), Placeblogger ([www.placeblogger.com](http://www.placeblogger.com))

### Rule 4: Go Direct

There still are some pretty good reasons for crafting press releases, despite how hard I seem to be pressing against them.

Tracking a media alert service such as Help a Reporter Out (HARO) is another way to go direct to reporters and bloggers in need. Journalists post their story needs with HARO, and subscribers can submit themselves or others as potential sources. (Hint: This could be a good way to get some of your clients a little coverage too.)

Tools: PRWeb ([www.prWeb.com](http://www.prWeb.com)), PitchEngine ([www.pitchengine.com](http://www.pitchengine.com)), HARO ([www.helpareporter.com](http://www.helpareporter.com))

As with most effective marketing plays, consistency and personalization are keys to making the system pay off as a long-term momentum builder for your business.

## What Makes a Good Story?

Here is a good rule of thumb to follow when searching for a story angle to present to the media. Ask yourself this question: will the readers of this publication think this is interesting, entertaining, informative, or useful? Self-interested, veiled attempts at promoting your business will fall flat. The media does not care about your company's success



## Duct Tape Marketing

unless their readers care about it. The media does not care about your new product unless you can help them understand how their readers are longing to know about the problems it solves.

Following is a list of tips that will help you get a reporter's attention. If you can position your potential story ideas using one or more of these tips, you will have a better chance of success.

### **Have Real News**

There is nothing that gets the media's attention like news. Now, what you think is news may not actually be newsworthy, but if you have won a significant contract or licensed a new technology, you may indeed have a story that provides a reporter with a news angle.

### **Be First**

Everyone seems fascinated with things that are first: the first company to feature a technology, the first company to do a certain type of project, the first company in the area to win a national award. Of course, there are ways to be a new kind of first: becoming the first woman- or minority-owned business in your industry to do something of note is newsworthy.

### **Be Unique**

Sometimes you can receive positive publicity simply by doing or offering something that is unique. An unheard-of guarantee, service technicians in tuxedos, or balloon telegrams for marketing are all examples of unique practices.

### **Offer Local Angles on National Stories**

If some aspect of your business is making national headlines, you may be able to weigh in with the local press on a local angle of the story. Local news reporters often prefer to quote local sources even when they are covering a national story. Has some legislation recently passed

## **Earned Media Attention and Expert Status**

that impacts your industry? Has a major lawsuit been settled? Is a new product, service, or innovation receiving coverage? It is critical that you watch the national news trends to stay on top of these opportunities.

### **Capitalize on Your Ties to a Trend**

Your association and industry publications often report on industry and marketing trends. Reporters love to get a jump on a coming trend. You can put yourself in the middle of a story by simply pointing out something that may be happening in other parts of the country that ties your company or product to a recognized trend.

### **Take Advantage of Stories about Overcoming Adversity**

Everyone loves a story with a great ending. If you or your firm has overcome some adversity, this may be a great source for a story.

### **Keep an Eye Out for People Stories**

Promotions, new hires, awards, board appointments, weddings, births, and all other manner of events that involve people in your firm and what they do on and off the job can be a good source for story ideas. Maybe your company's softball team hasn't won or lost a game in ten years. Maybe your firm has repaired eight houses for a charitable organization this year. Perhaps your firm has a college tuition reimbursement program that is far better than most, and you have four new college graduates at the firm to prove it. Make a story out of it.

### **Solve a Common Problem—and Then Tell about It!**

If you have discovered a unique way to solve a problem your target market has or that impacts other firms in your industry, you may have a story idea. Business publications in particular are always on the lookout for innovative business practices. Don't just think in terms of some solution to a client need. Maybe you've discovered a successful way to attract prospective employees. These stories will often be read

## Duct Tape Marketing

by potential clients and really help tell how your firm is different. In addition, it is easy to show how these types of stories can benefit the readership of a publication without appearing too self-serving.

### **“Contrary to Popular Belief . . .”**

A little-understood PR approach that has worked wonders over the years is to sit back, view the current landscape, and then find a way to present a marketing argument that goes against a current fad or perception.

This strategy can be a great way to win occasional media attention. Media folks are commonly taught to get both sides of the story. So, if everyone is preaching the merits of X, they will search high and low for someone who says Y. The point is, you should look around your industry for ways to buck trends or start trends and then publish an article, letter to the editor, blog post, or ad to help differentiate your way of thinking. Be careful, though; contrariness for contrariness’s sake or bucking a belief that is so firmly established as to be beyond a trend can end up making you look foolish.

## **The PR Toolbox—Creating Sticky Pitch Letters, Press Releases, and PR Kits**

The primary publicity tools in the Duct Tape Marketing PR system are the pitch letter, the press release, and the publicity kit. Here’s how to create and format each to put them to work for your business. (Later on in this chapter I will show you how to use each of the tools systematically to earn media attention.)

### **The Pitch Letter**

A pitch letter is a very effective way to interest a reporter in your story idea or present yourself as a perfect guest for a show. The pitch

## Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

letter is a bit like an ad for your story idea. It is typically written much like a short letter and sells your story to the reader. Later in this chapter, I introduce the press release and a way to use the pitch letter with a press release, but at this point it is important that you understand that a pitch letter is not a press release. A pitch letter should simply set the table for your idea, not present the specific details of your idea. Ideally, the reader of a pitch letter should be led to think, *This sounds like something I should find out more about.* Here are some ways to write a powerful pitch letter:

- **Don't waste a word:** Hit journalists with your best shot right off the bat. In the first sentence, give them the angle for your story idea that makes it worth their attention.
- **Customize it:** It is very important that you tailor your pitch to the people who will receive it. Let them know you understand that your story could fit their readers. In fact, you may want to emphasize the specific aspects of your story pitch that would be most appropriate for their publication. If you know that the readers of a certain publication are seniors, then point out why your pitch is of particular interest to seniors.
- **Prove that it fits their readership:** The first question that an editor or reporter is programmed to ask himself or herself when encountering a story pitch is, "Why would our reader care about this story?" Your pitch should complete this statement: "This story would make a valuable addition to your coverage on the recent trend of . . ."

### The Press Release

The press release is still the workhorse of your PR program, but in order to have success with it, you must follow certain guidelines. Keep in mind that you cannot simply write a press release and send it off to the media and expect coverage. The press release is just a piece of your

## Duct Tape Marketing

entire PR system, but very little will happen until you understand how to craft an effective press release.

Media outlets will rarely use the content in your press release for a story, but you can bet they will dismiss your pitch for a story if they feel you don't understand how to write a press release.

### One Page, One Subject

The point of a press release is to get the attention of a reporter and editor and make them want to know more about your story or firm. Many people believe that writing a press release is like handing a reporter a story. This single assumption will ruin your PR efforts. There are some isolated cases in which a publication may use the facts in your press release or announcement to fill some space, but we repeat for emphasis: the purpose of a press release is to get attention so you can talk to a reporter who wants to know more. That's it.

Keep your press release to one page, and focus on one topic. Some reporters get hundreds of story ideas every day. If your press release is three or four pages long, chances are they won't even look at it. Get their attention; then offer up a story when they call. In fact, if you can leave them hanging and wondering just a bit, all the better.

### Your Publicity Kit

Your PR program will benefit from the careful creation of a publicity kit. This is essentially a fancy term for a pocket folder filled with a collection of press releases and relevant photos. If you have read the information contained in the marketing kit chapter, you are well on your way to understanding what you need for a press kit. Much of the information is similar to your marketing materials, only formatted and presented in a slightly different manner.

After you complete these documents, you should assemble a handful of kits and have them on hand. If you are presenting a specific topic or press release, you can always add it as needed. It is a good idea to

## Earned Media Attention and Expert Status

send the entire press kit to reporters even if they only request one piece of information. You never know what may get their attention.

The following is a list of some of the essential press releases that your publicity kit should contain.

**Backgrounder.** This release should give the reader a full accounting of the history and background of the firm, including the types of clients you work with and projects you typically complete.

**Your core message.** The core message release should highlight the primary benefits of doing business with your firm. This is where you can promote the ways your firm is different. When writing a press release, keep in mind that it cannot read like an ad for your firm. Stick to facts and stay away from hype. Think of this release as a document that announces how your firm is different.

**Service descriptions.** Describe the services that your firm specializes in.

**Process descriptions.** Describe any unique processes that your firm has implemented. If you have a 24-point daily job site cleanup routine, then explain it.

**Case studies.** Outline the specifics of some recently completed projects. Again, don't sell; just explain the type of job, any challenges you may have encountered, and the overall result of the project. If you work with several distinct markets, you may consider one for each market.

**Founders.** Include a page or so on each of the firm's owners or partners. Tell about industry background and experience.

**A word about photos.** Each founder of the firm should have a recent 5 x 7" black-and-white print or high-quality digital photo on hand at all times. In your press kit, you should include a photo of each, as well as some representative product photos. If you have a digital camera and can take photos that are professional in nature, and at least 300 dpi, then do so. If not, it may be wise to hire a photographer or visit a studio to have professional photos taken.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### The Media Interview

So, what happens when all of your PR activity actually prompts a reporter to call for an interview? Getting the interview is only one half of the deal. Follow the steps below and you are more likely to turn your interview into a powerful marketing tool.

#### **Set Goals for the Interview**

When a reporter calls to schedule an interview, either by phone or in person, ask a couple of innocent questions. Find out the nature of the story he is working on, who the audience is, and when he expects it to run. The answers to these questions will help you better prepare your responses.

#### **Never Wing It**

The primary point of almost any interview you will be asked to give is to get your company's core message communicated in a compelling manner. To do this in the context of an interview, you should script very quotable core message sound bites, no more than twenty seconds or so in length, and be prepared to deliver them word for word at the appropriate time.

#### **Break the Ice**

When a reporter you may not know calls to interview you, there is often a bit of a control issue. The reporter is asking all the questions, so she is in control. You actually want to wrestle some of this away right up front. Think about this as you would a sales call. In order for you to get your message told, you may need to interject it into the discussion. I find that asking a couple of ice-breaking questions can be a great way to settle your nerves and open up the reporter. My favorite questions to ask reporters are "Where are you from?" and "What brought you to this publication?" Establishing a little personal ground seems to make everyone a little more relaxed.

### Redirect

Sometimes reporters just won't get what you are trying to communicate. Or worse, they seem to want to talk about everything but the key points you are trying to communicate. It's not that they are intentionally being difficult; most of the time it is because they may not really know much about your industry. In these cases you need to have a few redirecting phrases that allow you to answer their questions with your answers. Here are several that work wonders:

“What's important to consider in this case, though . . .”

“Let me make that more relevant for your readers . . .”

“What we can take from that point is . . .”

“That's a good example, but I think you'd also be interested in knowing . . .”

The key to redirecting a question from a journalist, of course, is to have a plan and preset answers. Then all you have to do is be alert for the proper way to direct the journalist to your message.

### Don't Panic

Sometimes you will get a question for which you don't have an answer. Don't panic and don't make up an answer. Simply tell the journalist that you don't know the answer, but promise to get it. This can give you a great excuse to follow up with a reporter. Often, you will remember some other points you wish you had made, and you can add them during a follow-up call.

### One Last Thing

I find that it's good to get the last word. Many journalists have been schooled to finish an interview with an open-ended question like, “Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about . . . ?” This is a great sound bite opportunity, and you should always have a prepared



## Duct Tape Marketing

comment that is very powerful. Even if the reporter doesn't ask, I like to interject this last statement, "You know, there's one more thing I'd like to point out . . ."

### Prepare a Takeaway

Make it as easy as you can for the journalist to get the facts and figures right. Prepare some sort of takeaway that will help your story and make sure that all of your contact information and your Web sites and other places to find more information are included.

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## Action Steps

1. Target your media sources, including a growing list of Internet-based media and news resources.
2. Create three or four central media themes for the year that support your core marketing message.
3. Create a list of ten to twelve minor, but interesting, marketing-related themes for ongoing PR.
4. Create a PR calendar, and assign a PR theme and goal for each month.
5. Write a fully developed pitch for each of your major themes.
6. Formulate one-page press releases with catchy headlines for each of your minor themes.
7. Once a month, target your core media list and distribute a press release or pitch for a major theme.
8. Follow up with your core media list by telephone, and offer some new piece of news or trend angle that you did not include in your pitch or press release.
9. Track media coverage in local and trade press, set up Google Alerts for a number of key related terms, and

### **Earned Media Attention and Expert Status**

reprint for marketing purposes any media coverage received.

10. Send handwritten thank-you notes (or T-shirts) to members of the media to thank them for an interview or mention.
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# Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

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**O**ur lead generation system is coming along nicely, but without a fully functioning referral marketing system, we're missing the important third leg of a lead generation machine. When we combine a referral marketing system with the advertising and PR systems presented previously, our lead generation machine will be a fully operational, very firm, and powerful foundation.

## What Is Referral Marketing?

Simply put, referral marketing is a specific set of strategies and tools designed to bring the small business owner new clients, qualified leads, and repeat business without the aid of, or in addition to, other advertising methods.

Many business owners have built thriving businesses entirely upon referrals. Almost all businesses get started this way. The business lands a client, does some good work, and that client tells his or her family and friends. Before you know it, this kind of word-of-mouth marketing creates a steady stream of projects. The sad thing, though, is that many of these same businesses never realize they could generate even more business if they actively participated in the generation of referrals.

Some professionals, such as lawyers, doctors, and accountants, are particularly suited to referral marketing. Very few people feel comfortable hiring a doctor based on that doctor's ad in the Yellow

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

Pages. When looking for a professional of this nature, most ask someone they trust for a referral.

As a rule of thumb, the more personal or the more expensive a service is, the likelier it is that a potential client will seek the advice of another. A window washing company, for example, whose crew may spend a great deal of time going from room to room in a client's house, will benefit greatly from referrals.

## Why Referral Marketing Is So Powerful

Experience tells me that there are two things that often hold small business owners back from taking full advantage of referral marketing: the lack of a system and the presence of fear.

Most of this chapter is about building a referral marketing system, so I want to spend some time up front helping you get over the fear of making referrals a core part of your marketing.

When I say *fear*, I mean things like fear of being rejected, fear that you will appear to be begging for business, or fear that your existing clients don't really care about helping you build your business. All I can say to you is this: get over it. If you provide a product or service that helps people solve problems and meet needs, then you are doing a disservice to your customers and the world in general if you don't actively seek referrals. I don't think I could say it much more passionately than that.

If you think that your clients will be put off by your desire to involve them in helping you grow your business, you aren't thinking about the relationship the way you should. The entire act of generating a referral comes down to two simple things:

1. Providing a product or service that people like
2. Managing the referral expectation

## Duct Tape Marketing

With a Duct Tape Marketing systematic approach to generating referrals, part two of that equation is done, but let me give you some more reasons why you should bring referral marketing to the top of your marketing thinking.

### **People Love to Give Referrals**

If you have any resistance to asking for referrals, you need to know that people just love to give referrals. They like to feel that maybe they helped another person grow his or her business. It feels good.

People also like to demonstrate how smart they are. When clients find a business that provides a solution, makes their life better, or just plain saves them money, they like to talk about it. They like to tell anyone who will listen that they got a great deal. So don't hold back—ask for referrals. You're actually doing them a favor.

### **Great Return on Investment**

From a financial sense, referral marketing can get you the best bang for your buck. Depending on the specific methods you choose, a referral marketing system can be implemented at very little, if any, cost. Done correctly, there will always be some cost involved, but compared to traditional advertising, referral marketing can provide the greatest return on your investment of time and money.

### **More Qualified Clients**

As long as you have developed your ideal target market and communicated who your ideal clients are, then the referrals you receive are likely to be a much better fit than those generated from some advertising campaigns.

### **Borrowed Credibility and Trust**

Potential clients are looking to work with firms they can trust. Frankly, they don't trust your advertising. They expect that you will

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

say great things about your firm or your service. When someone they already trust says you're all right, then you, in effect, borrow that trust.

### **Fewer Issues Regarding Price**

When clients come to you because their best friend said you would be the tops at providing something they needed, they not only expect to pay a premium for your services, but are willing to do so because they attach a higher value to your service due to your relationship with that best friend.

### **It Makes You Better**

If your firm is going to make referral marketing a key marketing strategy, then the primary objective for everyone in your firm will become making every client so happy that they are dying to send their friends, family, and associates your way. If that were everybody's job, including yours, would that change the way you served your clients? Would that have an impact on your business?

I have seen companies change completely by simply adopting this mind-set.

## **Rules of Referral Marketing**

There are two key sources to draw upon when looking for referrals. Many business owners find the best sources of referrals are existing clients. Existing clients, after all, know your business and should be some of your best word-of-mouth advertisers.

There are many professions that also count on networks of professionals to supply referrals. Accountants often refer new clients to attorneys, financial planners, and even payroll services. In my experience, it doesn't really matter what business you are in; you should develop referral tactics that allow you to generate referral

## Duct Tape Marketing

leads from both your existing clients and a targeted referral network. Often, you will find that the right strategic referral network partners have the ability to generate significantly more referrals than your customers.

While your existing clients can appreciate your work, they may not be as motivated as a strategic partner. In other words, a business that serves your same market and has several hundred existing clients may be highly motivated to refer their entire client base in order to help their clients get the great service you can provide.

### Deserve Referrals

I suppose it goes without saying, but if your current clients are not satisfied with the level of service they receive, then you can bet they will not refer many new clients. Sometimes you must fix your internal business in order to wow clients and turn them into referral machines. Start by asking yourself this simple question: “What could we do that would make our clients so happy they would look for ways to refer new clients?”

### Target Your Referral Sources

Just as you must define and target your best customer prospect, you must also have a very specific profile of the best referral sources. In many cases, this is simply the profile of your best customer. The idea is that if your top customers could help you land one or two just like themselves, then your business would exponentially explode.

As I stated previously, in addition to a target list from your client base, you must also develop a target prospect list made up of other professional contacts who have already earned the trust of members of your target market.

Attorneys are often great referral sources for accountants or financial planners, and vice versa. Many painting contractors work with roofers and gutter specialists. The point is that you must target these

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

types of referral sources and create a system that allows you to develop these relationships much like client relationships.

Jason J. Culbertson of the Culbertson Team Real Estate Solutions in Paola, Kansas, gives his top fifty referral prospects an empty, two-inch, three-ring binder. (He hand delivers the binders to save on shipping and gets another one-on-one contact.) Included with the binder is a letter that states the binder is to be used for the marketing materials he sends to them, including but not limited to newsletters, postcards, letters, and holiday and birthday cards. The letter also says that anyone who keeps everything in this binder, all year long, will be entered into a drawing for a gift certificate to the restaurant of their choice. He personally checks the contents of each binder in December and chooses ten winners. The ten winners have turned into his raving fans and his best referral sources because they are constantly saving and reading his mailings ([www.TheTCTZone.com](http://www.TheTCTZone.com)).

### **Make It an Expectation**

One of the best ways to leverage the power of referral marketing is to make the providing of referrals an expectation of every client relationship. With every new client or networking relationship, you need to introduce the ideas of referrals. In fact, the most effective referral marketing systems start with this as a stated expectation.

This method of generating referrals becomes easier as you implement it. More and more new clients will come to you in this same way and will already understand this expectation.

### **Do It during the Honeymoon**

Your referral marketing system should be designed to acquire referrals as soon as possible. No matter how great your service is, your firm will never be thought of as highly as when you first provide a solution.

Over time, even though you may provide the same great solution



## Duct Tape Marketing

over and over again, your value fades with familiarity. Ask for your referrals very early in the relationship.

### Educate Your Sources

Much of the work you did at the beginning of this book, describing your ideal prospect and carving out your core message, will be the foundation for the referral marketing education component of your system. One of the keys to systematically generating high-quality referrals is to create a simple tool that helps educate your sources. This tool does not need to be anything complicated or glamorous. One sheet of paper with the following bits of information is more than enough.

**How to spot your ideal client.** Your referral sources need to know precisely the type of referral you are looking for. (Think of your best customers.)

**Your core message.** Even your best clients may not understand the full range of products or services you are capable of providing. Business owners sometimes complain that they get too many leads that don't match their business when they ask for referrals. A tool to properly educate your referral sources can all but do away with this constraint.

**Your referral marketing process.** In other words, let your referral sources know how you intend to contact the referral, what you intend to say, and how you intend to follow up. Some referral sources are reluctant to recommend friends and family because they aren't sure what you will do with the referral. The last thing anyone wants is to be known as the person who unleashed the "never say die" salesperson on Uncle Bob.

Remember, when people give you referrals, particularly the types described in this publication, they are, in effect, lending you some portion of the trust they have developed with their contact. They may be risking some aspect of their relationship with that referral, so your referral marketing system must make them feel comfortable. The best

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

way to do this is to simply show them your system. This simple step may also help resell them on continuing to work with you.

**A call to action.** Your referral marketing education tool should end by instructing your source on the best way to refer you. Give them the actual words you would like them to use, the way to turn over a lead, or a Web site address that they should send referral prospects to.

### The Perfect Introduction in Reverse

Now that you have developed your education and introduction piece for your referral marketing system, I want to introduce you to one heck of a powerful twist on using this tool. Create a blank form based on your education process, send it out to a list of potential network resources (people who serve the same target market), and ask them to complete it for themselves and send it back to you so you will be better prepared to refer them.

One client got a 65 percent response rate to this very tactic and found referrals coming at him from places he had tried long and hard to penetrate.

### Make It Easy for Them

Your referral sources want to give you referrals, but you've got to make it as easy as possible. Everyone is stretched in a hundred different ways. Don't make your referral sources jump through hoops to give you referrals. Make it as easy as possible for them, and you will receive many more referrals.

I've already said that you need to educate them on *whom* to refer, but you may also need to show them *how* to refer. This may mean giving them a script, writing them a recommended referral letter, or even plopping a list of your hottest prospects down in front of them. Create a whole series of referral tools, and put them in the hands of those you know can best refer you to others.

Here are some of my favorite examples:

## Duct Tape Marketing

- Mail a personal letter and enclose a “proposed letter of referral” that simply needs to be copied onto their letterhead.
- Send four referral-type postcards, already stamped and ready for them to send.
- Send them a supply of business cards.
- Give your referral source a supply of pens with your company logo.
- Put a list of prospects in front of them and ask them if they can help you with anyone on your target list.

Be easy to refer and you will be the provider of choice when the referral moment arises.

### Follow Up!

It’s always a good idea to keep your referral sources involved and motivated. Let them know when you have contacted a referral. Let them know how it went. And by all means, let them know when one of those referrals turns into a new client.

Your referral sources provide referrals because they want to see your firm prosper. The bigger the role they see themselves playing in that, the more involved they will become. Thank your referral sources in meaningful and genuine ways.

### Create Win-Win Motivation

If you’ve found an effective way to generate business, teach your referral resources how to do it as well. Help them get what they want before you ever ask for a referral, and you will find referrals coming your way in droves.

Kris Gay of Making Memories Photo & Video in Fort Wayne, Indiana, markets her photography services to bakers, caterers, florists, bridal shops, reception sites, nail salons, and beauty shops—all places where her brides are sure to shop.

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

When she shoots a wedding for a client, she also shoots photos of the cake, flowers, dresses, reception room, hairdos, and buffet tables. Then she visits shops with example photos from weddings using that shop's services. She gives the shop a framed enlargement (with her logo and Web address on them, of course) and copies of an information binder that they can use to present her services to potential clients. The promotion is so successful that she doesn't even bother asking if the store wants the photo. When she shows up with a framed print, they are usually so bowled over that they start looking for somewhere to hang it right then and there.

### **Reward Your Sources**

There are many ways to provide incentives and rewards to your referral sources. Some industries regulate this very strictly and disallow any form of compensation for referrals, but many do not. You should also note there are many forms of compensation in addition to a straight monetary offer.

You can offer a lower price to clients who refer. You can thank them with gifts. You can reward them with products, or you can simply recognize them at a referral appreciation dinner. You can acknowledge their contribution to your company online and in a newsletter. You can refer business back to them. Use your imagination.

### **Look for Moments of Truth**

There is no perfect time to ask for referrals, but there are some milestones or "moment of truth" events that present perfect opportunities to maximize your ability to receive referrals:

- When you complete a project well done and a client tells you how pleased he or she is
- When you go over and above in some customer service aspect and your client suggests that you just saved his life, or at

## Duct Tape Marketing

least his job (doesn't that sound like a good time to ask for a referral?)

- When you deliver a new product
- During a review or checkup process as part of your service

Make a list of all of the instances in which your firm comes into contact with its clients and referral sources, and look for natural opportunities to systematically insert some aspect of your referral marketing system.

## The Simplest Referral Tactic on the Planet

The easiest way to generate referrals from your base of clients is to make it part of the deal. I stated this at the outset of this chapter, but now I want to give the actual process I use to make this happen.

When you begin a client relationship, simply explain that you offer great service at unheard-of prices because each of your clients understands that a part of the deal is to refer three new clients within three months of becoming a client. It doesn't matter what number you use here; just create something that sounds workable.

When you meet with a new client, simply add some variation of this statement to your lead conversion process: "We know that you will be so thrilled with [our promised result] that at the end of ninety days we intend to ask you to help us identify three other people who, like yourself, need this kind of result." This strategy sends such a strong marketing message that almost every client to whom you present this will agree.

Some businesses use this strategy so effectively that the only way to become a client of their business is by way of a referral. Do you think these businesses can charge a premium for their services?

Jan Myers, a real estate agent in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, sets up

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

every sale by telling her prospects that her business survives on referrals, and in order to earn those referrals, her firm is going to give them *wow* service. This way, when she asks them for referrals to build her business, they are delighted to give them. She is now turning what she heard frequently, “You guys are the greatest!” into new business. They expect her to ask for referrals because she tells them up front that she will.

There is something very powerful about setting expectations for referrals. When they are agreed upon and all aspects of the deal are met, people don’t have a problem living up to the commitment. It is much harder to go back after you have established a relationship with a client, based on a certain set of expectations, and ask for referrals.

### How to Create a Killer Strategic Referral Partner Network

Everyone needs a little help from his or her friends. Businesses large and small can benefit greatly from the partnering mind-set, particularly hyper-local businesses.

The partnering mind-set is simply a business point of view that suggests that a great deal of the organization’s marketing mix will involve seeking out and activating business partners with the same ideal client target. Understand, though, that this thinking in full form takes on a bigger view than simply referring business to each other. A total local partner mind-set is an approach that starts with your product and service offerings and carries through to both making and giving referrals as a total team effort. There are a number of components involved in the creation of an effective program.

**Recruit and introduce.** The first step is to recruit your team and introduce them to your program and business. One of the best ways to identify good teammates is to ask your current customers to name other businesses they like to buy from. You don’t want just anyone as a partner; partners need to be people to whom you can also confidently refer business.

Next, send them a letter outlining your plans and inviting them to

## Duct Tape Marketing

tell you the best way to introduce their business to your customers—that usually gets their attention.

**Create content opportunities.** Invite your partners to contribute to your newsletter or act as a guest on your podcast or blog. Giving your partners exposure by way of content gets them exposure and you content. Consider taking this up a notch and create a group blog optimized for all of the partners.

**Conduct video interviews.** Set a meeting with your partners and use the opportunity to record an introduction video so you can have content to run on your Web site, letting the world know about your partners. This will show you mean business.

**Acquire special offers.** Get your partners to contribute a product or service that you can use as a way to enhance your offering. Free business cards for every logo purchased or free flowers when you make a reservation for dinner, free tickets to give away in your marketing, or a free HVAC checkup when you get some plumbing work. This is a great way to promote your partners while adding real appeal to what you're marketing. Make sure you create real perceived value here.

**Make referrals.** Make it a habit to consciously go out of your way to refer business to your partners. Don't wait for people to ask; do it as part of your Monday routine. This is how you become someone lots of great providers want to partner with, but you also increase your value to your customers by consistently helping them get what they need in every aspect of their life.

**Rate and review.** If at all possible, become a customer of every one of your partners. This will make you a much more authentic referral source (as a user) and allow you to test and filter the truly great experiences. Follow up on this by actively writing reviews and ratings on Yelp and other online sites.

**Create events.** Figure out how to bring your partners together to network and create deeper engagement. Let each partner have a day when they educate everyone in the network. Create workshops and

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

offer to conduct them for your partners' customers. Develop a day devoted to topics on which your partners can present useful information, and have everyone promote the event.

With just a little bit of creativity, any organization can tap the awesome power of a partner network as a substantial lead and customer generator.

### **The Value-Added Referral Machine**

Want a powerful way to add value to your product or service or gain some new customers in a real hurry? Pump up the value. Go out and find businesses that serve your very same target market, and get them to agree to give you some sort of free product or service that either complements what you sell or, at the very least, is of interest to your target market. It can even be a trial version of a product.

Let's say you are a graphic designer. Do you think you could generate some new clients if you advertised five hundred free business cards with each new logo design? Trust me; there are quality print shops out there that would love to partner with you on this. Five hundred business cards cost them about \$15 to print. A savvy print shop owner will understand that is a fair price to pay to acquire a new client.

### **Gain New Clients**

So put the shoe on the other foot. Go out and offer to provide a service to businesses that serve your market, and prepare to be introduced to some new business immediately. Let's say you are a marketing consultant. Go to some local, small accounting firms and offer to complete a small-business marketing audit for each of their new small-business clients for free. It's a pretty compelling offer.

If you got really aggressive about this, imagine how much value you could build around your products or services. This tactic alone could make you the obvious choice when a prospect goes out shopping.



### Five Core Referral Offers

Your referral marketing effort may benefit from specific offers and promotions that take advantage of some creative ways to generate referrals. Following are several classic referral offers. Think of ways to integrate one or all of these into your referral marketing. (Many times it is wise to have your “expectation strategy” in place for new customers, but installing one of the following will get the interest and participation of your past clients or strategic partners too. You can also rotate your referral offers and promote one or more to find the ones that work the most effectively.)

1. **Offer special pricing.** If you are looking for referrals from your existing clients, you can develop a special price for those clients who refer a set amount of new business. Then, when a new client asks what the price of a product or service is, you can respond, “Do you want the full price or the special referral price?” This encourages repeat business and can provide a strong incentive to refer on the spot.
2. **“Will work for referrals.”** If you can target a referral source who has influence with your target market, you can offer him or her a trial service or product in exchange for an endorsement of your products or services, a testimonial, or a place in the next association speaker panel.

Seek out the leaders in trade groups and organizations that you would like to target and offer to perform a service or let them try your product free of charge. Get them to agree that if they like your product or service as much as you know they will, they will send a letter to the membership of the organization promoting your offer. Then write the letter for them.

3. **Help a worthy cause.** Donate a percentage of business acquired by way of referral to a nonprofit agency. By offering to help a

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

worthy cause, you can increase referrals while improving your community.

There are many variations on this referral strategy. You can make donations to a designated charity in your referral source's name. You can allow your referral sources to designate a charity of their choice. If you have a product or service the nonprofit agency uses or buys, you can donate that.

One of the hidden powers behind this strategy is that the nonprofit agencies can become strong referral partners. If they benefit from referring clients, then they may be highly motivated to provide referrals. In many cases, nonprofit agencies have loyal donors, board members, community activists, and volunteers who would be happy to do business with a firm that was providing funding for the nonprofit agency through a referral marketing program.

4. **Give away gift certificates.** Although the use of gift certificates isn't a true referral marketing strategy, it can be a great way to generate referrals. If you have a product or service that lends itself to this, you can provide your clients or referral sources gift certificates to use as a referral tool. The idea is that your clients would give the certificates to people they feel would enjoy receiving them. In most cases, these recipients would be new clients willing to try your service by using the certificate.

A consultant might give certificates for a one-hour assessment. The value of the assessment, if purchased, might be \$150. It is important that the certificate communicate this value. Make sure that what you are giving has a high perceived value. A plumber could give free service call certificates at each stop and ask the client to hand them out to neighbors.

5. **One hundred percent refund for referrals.** This is one of my personal favorites because not only is it a terribly powerful referral strategy; it presents such a strong offer that it can

## Duct Tape Marketing

become a core point of differentiation. In other words, the sales message is so strong, you become known for it.

In this strategy you show your clients how they can receive a 100 percent refund on a specific purchase by simply referring five other people who become clients or make a similar purchase. (Again, you work out the numbers that apply to your business.) The power behind this is three-fold.

1. First, it helps you land clients, because people think, *What the heck? I can get all my money back*, and because it becomes a game for them. Structure your offer in such a way that they get a 20 percent refund (up to 100 percent) every time they refer someone. That way they can keep score. It usually makes sense to put a time limit on the offer as well.
2. Another very important aspect of this particular strategy is that it has a viral component to it. Anyone who can earn a 100 percent refund will talk about it.
3. Finally, everyone who comes to your practice by way of this method will already understand the rules of the game and may very well be ready to play the day they become a client. So that's 5 x 5 x 5 x 5 and so on. You do the math!

Reread that last paragraph because it is true of just about any referral marketing strategy you create. That's one of the reasons referral marketing is so powerful.

## A Referral by a Different Name

Hopefully, by this point you are beginning to realize just how powerful a referral system can be. When generating referrals becomes a mind-set

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

for you, you will begin to look at almost any other marketing strategy that you may have employed in the past as a way to generate referrals.

There are many ways you can form partnerships with your clients and referral sources that will help all parties generate lots of referrals. The following strategies can be initiated in ways that are mutually beneficial.

### **Distribute Your Marketing Materials**

Create partnerships with firms that serve your target market. Ask these firms to distribute information about your firm or products at their store, in their invoices, or on their Web site. For instance, when electrical contractors go out on a call, they hand clients a coupon for \$10 off their next plumbing repair call. The plumbing contractors they have referred do the same in reverse when they make calls.

Alan Schmidt, a retail shop owner in Boonton, New Jersey, created a “coupon special” co-op with local retail businesses by contacting fellow retail and service businesses about working together to promote their respective concerns. Each participant contributes their best loss-leader coupon specially designed to entice customers to either make a purchase or claim a free “no strings” gift just for walking in their store. Each customer must fill out a coupon with his or her name, address, and e-mail address to qualify for the special offer. This also creates the mailing list for future marketing. Each coupon is coded so the origin of sale is known, and an agreed-upon finder’s fee is paid to the originator. This offers an incentive for merchants to pass out their colleagues’ coupons.

### **Send an Endorsement**

Asking your referral sources to send letters of endorsement to their clients or network is another way to generate highly qualified leads and referrals.

Imagine striking a deal with another business that has more than

## Duct Tape Marketing

ten thousand contacts or clients in a database. This business knows that their client list could really use your product or service, so they agree to send out a letter to their list in return for a percentage of all sales produced from the mailing. This type of endorsement or joint-venture strategy can produce one of the quickest increases in new business possible from any form of marketing.

Even if you have to offer a significant portion of the revenue generated from this offer, you will benefit from the long-term possibilities with these new clients. (Remember, you are going to sell them more products and services.) This type of referral can also substantially increase your credibility with a market. If well-connected leaders in a certain industry are willing to publicly refer you, then you can bet that others in your industry will see this as a sign that they should get to know you as well.

### Give and You Shall Receive

As with so many things in life, the best way to get what you want is to give it. This proves true for referrals as well. Get in the habit of referring others, and you will start a cycle that inevitably returns. Creating your own network of vendors and professionals that can help your clients is a great way to make yourself more valuable to your clients as well.

One of the best ways to start a potential strategic partnership with another business is to first become a client of that business. Buy their product or service, send them a testimonial, and then contact the business owner. It's amazing how this little investment on your part will pay off when seeking high-quality partnerships.

## Ways to Generate Referrals Without Asking

In some cases, businesses can generate a great deal of their referrals without ever directly asking their clients for them. Many businesses,

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

such as home or office service businesses, send their technicians to do their work. In these cases, it can be difficult to receive direct referrals from clients, but smart business owners can tap into what I call *implied referrals*.

An implied referral involves letting your potential clients know that someone they know is a client of yours or is using your service to fix a problem they are experiencing. For example, an electrical contractor goes out to make a service call in a neighborhood and hangs a tag on the doorknob of ten to twelve neighboring homes. There's nothing too exciting about that, but the powerful twist is that the technician adds on the tag, "I was doing work for the Johnsons at 822, and they wanted you to have a \$10 coupon good for your next electrical service need."

Here's another example. Bowers Technology, a computer and network repair firm, goes into an office building for a service call and leaves a note at every business on the floor. Again, they reference the company for whom they are currently doing work and leave a card in the name of that business.

This tactic is powerful because it is personalized. Even though your client has not actually made a traditional referral, the implication that someone else in the building or neighborhood used your service lends credibility to your marketing effort. It should go without saying that the homeowner or business that you are already doing work for had better be happy with your work.

You can print many types of door hangers and cards to use in your implied referral efforts, but I can't stress enough the importance of taking the time to personalize them with the name of a client or project. Without this step, you are simply distributing advertising materials.

### Pardon Our Dust

One of my favorite examples of this tactic comes from a remodeling contractor. When she starts a new job, she sends a personal "Pardon our dust" letter to the owners of the homes surrounding her client's. The

## Duct Tape Marketing

letter introduces her company and urges the homeowners to call any-time day or night if there is a problem with noise or trash or anything. She does occasionally receive a complaint, which she immediately takes care of. But more than anything else, she receives appreciation from her clients, as well as the neighbors. And she gets a lot of referral business from one simple letter.

You can do a series of letters keeping the homeowners up to speed on the progress or showing a photo of the completed work.

## Networking

Networking events are not just ways to meet new potential clients; they are ideally suited to expanding your network of resources, as well as referral sources. Many people attend networking events to pass out business cards and introduce themselves to potential new clients. Take advantage of this fact and invite other attendees to tell you what they do. Make note of how these folks might be of service to your clients. Remember the golden referral rule: you will receive more referrals if you give more referrals. When you view and use networking events in this manner, you will find that they are much more productive. Instead of being the salesperson, you become the buyer, and people will flock to find out who you are.

I might add that almost every major city has one or more chapters of a group called Business Network International ([www.BNI.com](http://www.BNI.com)). This is a group of business owners and marketers formed for the primary purpose of building powerful referral networks. Each group limits membership to one person per industry to avoid competitive situations. While every chapter is independently run, they can network for referrals.

## Network with the Rich and Famous

One of the quickest ways to get exposure, promote a book, gain an introduction, find a mentor, generate traffic, or launch a product

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

is to gain the endorsement of someone who already has all of those things.

Here's an often-forgotten tip. Famous authors or other celebrities in your industry started out as people. Okay, some are still people, and that's the point. Approach them as such and you may find that your project or organization can gain some very favorable support.

If you read a book that you loved, write the author and say so. (Almost all authors have blogs these days too.)

If you liked a product, write someone in the organization and offer your testimonial.

If you find a particularly well-written article in a magazine, write the author and comment on the topic.

You can build a very powerful, high-profile network of mentors, contacts, and champions if you approach it in the right fashion. First off, give before you ask. Prove that you aren't just some stalker looking for an author's private e-mail address, and you will get much further. Buy the writer's book, link to his or her blog, or send the author an article or resource that pertains to his or her work. Build a relationship or at least get on the radar screen. Don't just send off an e-mail asking someone to endorse your product. (You may not be the first person that day to do so.)

A couple more tips. Be bold, but be realistic and polite. Before you hit pay dirt, you may have to hear a time or two, "I'm sorry, Mr./Ms. Big can't talk to you right now. Call back when you're somebody important."

One of my favorite responses was from someone I won't name. I asked this author to do an interview on a radio show I hosted at the time. I promised that we could tape the interview whenever it was convenient. The response was simple and to the point: "I'm sorry. I don't think I'll ever be available."

If you have a plan, and you are personal and sincere, you just might catch your celebrity when she is in a good mood and remembers



## Duct Tape Marketing

when she was in your shoes. Above all, be creative. Propose something very specific, and try like heck to propose something that will benefit your prospective big fish.

Make up your target list of people you would love to have in your network and devise a plan to make contact. What's the worst that can happen?

### Online Referral Networks

In recent years, a new breed of networking community has cropped up that allows online users to network with other business professionals and potentially find resources and generate referrals. At the very least, these networks allow members to meet like-minded professionals. The two biggest business-related social networks are Ryze and LinkedIn. These sites allow you to build a profile of your expertise and then network with other members in an effort to expand your contacts based on the profiles of other members.

### Mining Online

John Hollner of Hollner Promotions in Atlanta, Georgia, has discovered that one of the best ways to find potential referral sources and joint venture (JV) partners online is through advanced Internet research techniques provided by search engines and other sites. He uses the "similar pages" link (or Related Searches list) when searching in Google. Once he has identified one customer or JV partner through this method, it usually leads him to others.

He also researches sites linked to a prospective joint venture partner or customer by using the "link:" command before the domain name in a Google search (link:www.ducttapemarketing.com). This shows potential directories where similar people can be found. It can also list other people interested in what his JV partner offers.

If he is looking for local contacts, he uses his keywords with the area code or zip code (e.g., "marketing training 64105") to narrow

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

his search down quickly. Including the word *list* or *directory* can also increase results ([www.hollnerpromos.com](http://www.hollnerpromos.com)).

## Speak and Grow Opportunities

### Let's Hold a Workshop

Workshops are a great way to spread your expertise and build trust with a target market, but they are one of the best referral tools around as well. When you can convince a trade group, client, or related business to sponsor a workshop featuring you as the guest expert, you have effectively created an endorsement from the sponsor. When the sponsoring bank or chamber of commerce markets the event, they are essentially stating that you have something worth hearing and that they trust you.

The other very powerful aspect of a workshop is that it allows you to present your specific expertise to an entire group of prospects all at the same time. And you're in charge of the presentation. Done correctly, you may come to view this type of marketing tactic as an orchestrated sales call.

You can, of course, put together workshops on your own, but I have found that when you take a "hosted workshop" approach, your marketing by way of speaking will be much more effective and much less expensive. With the Duct Tape Marketing position of workshops as referral vehicles, you move the risk of promoting the workshop to your host group.

You can start your workshop marketing tactic off by contacting businesses and groups that serve your target market and offering to hold a free workshop that will benefit their clients or members. Be prepared to demonstrate why this makes a good topic, but also understand that there are lots of groups that need speakers for lunch and dinner events. You may need to do a few of these events to get better at them and to start making a name for yourself. My advice initially is

## Duct Tape Marketing

to take any speaking opportunities that you can as long as they make some sense for your topic.

Every time I have spoken at an event, I have received several invitations to speak at other events. It's not that I'm the world's greatest speaker; it's that there is a need for speakers who can present good information. Eventually you will want to start analyzing the potential audience for events to make sure that it aligns with your ideal client.

Of course, you must be able to deliver something of value to those in attendance. You can always introduce your firm and what it does, but you must give good, useful information first. Jump back to the free report I spoke about in the chapter on advertising. If you can create a white paper that your target audience finds useful, you can easily turn that topic into one or more mini-workshops.

Here's how it can work: a painting contractor contacts a large general contractor and proposes a seminar to teach architects how to write better painting specifications and standards. The general contractor gets better-educated architects, and the painter is seen as an industry leader.

For each of these events it is a good idea to have some prepared materials for note-taking purposes as well as some very brief information about you and your products and services. Most organizations are happy to let you do a bit of self-promotion at these events, as long as you are subtle.

Joe Costantino of Business Marketing Success, Inc., in Abington, Massachusetts, claims that the most effective tactic he has found to build his consulting business is speaking engagements. When he first started his marketing consulting practice, he joined the local chamber of commerce and immediately volunteered on some of the committees. As he became better established, he let it be known that he would provide marketing seminars to other business owners for free.

After each presentation, he provided an offer to each attendee

## **Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine**

that is difficult to refuse—a free business-building consultation (forty-five minutes' worth) with absolutely no strings attached. Each time he conducted a free presentation, he acquired four or five paying clients within two to three months of his initial presentation ([www.businessmarketingsuccess.com](http://www.businessmarketingsuccess.com)).

### **Win-Win-Win**

One of my favorite partnership workshop strategies is to approach two businesses that market to the same target as you and offer to provide them with a seminar that will benefit their clients. What makes this unique is that by including two other businesses (say, a bank and an accounting firm) you greatly enhance the value of the proposal. The accounting firm and the bank both get to offer something valuable to their clients, but they also get to meet some potential clients in the process.

The two partners may actually compete to fill the seats for you, and everyone in attendance is a new referral.

### **Workshops as Marketing Tool Tips**

Since most, if not all, of your speaking engagements will be unpaid events, it is important to remain focused on the primary goals of each event—to be seen as an expert, to present useful information, and to generate highly qualified prospects. It is absolutely essential that you leave each event with the name and contact information from as many attendees as possible. (This is like capturing leads that visit your Web site.) Most groups will understand that some amount of marketing from you is the price they are paying for a “free” speaker. The best way to turn your speaking events into marketing events is to develop a lead capturing system based on the two-step strategy.

At the end of your talk, offer a valuable information product for attendees who drop their business cards in a bowl you have placed in the back of the room. There are many ways to create a compelling

## Duct Tape Marketing

offer, as long as you are mindful that most groups are uncomfortable with speakers who make a hard-sell pitch from the podium.

If you have created a PowerPoint presentation for the talk, offer to send the attendees a copy if they provide you with their contact information.

Alan Amezdroz of the Inner Southern BEC (Business Enterprise Centers) located in Morphettville, South Australia, finds it far more effective when he makes a presentation *not* using a PowerPoint slide show. Instead, he uses a magnetic whiteboard.

Using various colors, he has made some large names of what his company offers, laminated them, and attached a magnetic strip on the back of each. He speaks about each item as he throws it onto the magnetic white board. He finds that is much more effective, visual, and dynamic ([www.isbec.com.au](http://www.isbec.com.au)).

Most groups will have no problem with your introducing your products and services as a wrap-up to your valuable content. If you have actual information products to sell, you may also be allowed to offer them to interested participants. In fact, some groups find that their participants like to come away from a presentation with a book or CD related to the presentation.

The key to creating a marketing event is to get agreement with your host on exactly what you intend to do. Once your reputation as a speaker with a valuable message spreads, you can begin to negotiate with marketing and publicity tactics in exchange for a fee. Some groups will actually give you a list of registered attendees if you ask.

Lastly, I like to create a one-page testimonial creator document. At the end of your presentation, ask participants to complete a very brief survey to help you make your presentations better. You can offer some free information product in exchange for the completed survey. If you word your survey correctly and are presenting good information, you will receive comments that can be used as testimonials in the promotion of future speaking events.

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

### Some Speaking-as-Marketing Considerations

- Find out as much as you can about the potential attendees.
- Tailor your presentation to the audience.
- Prepare a simple one-page, note-taking handout with your contact information.
- Create an information product to offer in exchange for contact information.
- Create a testimonial feedback page.
- Follow up with the participants within one week of the event.

### How to Become a Better Speaker

Speaking, or, at the very least, effectively presenting an idea, whether to two or two thousand, is an essential business skill. I would argue that businesses should have one or two core presentations that they make routinely as a way to share their company's unique point of view or story. Small business owners should think of presenting information in online and offline seminar formats as an important lead generation and conversion tactic.

Many people struggle with speaking in front of an audience, and the only real cure for this is to get up and do it. Realize that no one will suffer permanently from it, and then get up and do it again. There are, however, three bits of advice that I would give to anyone who desires to become a more effective speaker. For me, "effective" only means getting your point across in a way that inspires listeners to do what you want them to do.

Share the love. One of the most important elements an effective speaker brings to an audience is passion. This can be passion for helping people get something valuable from hearing the lesson or passion for the subject itself. You can't fake passion, but when you have it, your message often comes through more clearly, regardless of the polish of your speaking presence.

If you're naturally passionate about your subject or the purpose of

## Duct Tape Marketing

your information, then don't hold back; let people be attracted to that passion. If, however, your position requires you to present information that may be useful, but doesn't exactly capture your imagination, then your job is to inject something you are passionate about into your presentation. Let's say you are talking about network security, but what you really love is *World of Warcraft*, music, or baseball. I believe you will be a much more compelling speaker when you find a way to weave topics you are passionate about into your presentations.

Become a TEDhead. If you're not familiar with TED ([www.ted.com/](http://www.ted.com/)), then I am thrilled to be the one to introduce it to you. TED is a small nonprofit devoted to "ideas worth spreading." It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: technology, entertainment, and design. It has grown to be a worldwide phenomenon and one of the best places for you to learn how to be a better speaker.

TED speakers are chosen because they are fascinating and have passion for a big idea. The format challenges them to present that idea within 18 minutes, and most use very little in the way of slides or media. Every TED talk is recorded and housed on the site. Make this your classroom and you will have access to a tremendous collection of speakers that will inspire you and teach you how to be a better speaker. Watch everything they do. (Start with Dan Pink on the surprising science of motivation at [www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/dan\\_pink\\_on\\_motivation.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/dan_pink_on_motivation.html).)

Shoot your free throws. Legend has it that Larry Bird, the great NBA star, shot a hundred free throws every day, even after he became a superstar. He also led the league in successful free throw shooting year after year. In order to be a better speaker, you've got to practice. You may choose to spend a lot of time in front of the mirror, going over your presentation, but I suggest you get in some pickup games pretty quickly too.

Hunt down a Toastmasters chapter in your area, and start forcing

## Ramp Up a Systematic Referral Machine

yourself to present and receive critical reviews from a peer group. Seek out opportunities to present your ideas wherever you can. Speaking to the knitting club monthly lunch may not get you in front of the audience you ultimately desire, but it will get you live feedback and help you get better. Another thing about practicing in front of an audience is that it almost always leads to other speaking opportunities. Don't let weeks slip by without rehearsing and presenting live. Keep refining your ideas and approach by listening to your audience.

## Duct Tape Marketing Chapter Resources

### **BNI—Referral networking organization**

[www.ductapemarketing.com/bni.php](http://www.ductapemarketing.com/bni.php)

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## Action Steps

1. Create a referral target market(s). You must create a target list of companies and individuals who can be motivated to refer. This can be clients or a network of related businesses.
  2. Design a referral education system.
  3. Outline your referral lead offer and system.
  4. Create a referral conversion strategy.
  5. Identify a referral follow-up strategy.
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## Chapter 14

# Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

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In this chapter, I'm moving the Duct Tape Marketing system away from lead generation, the basic work of generating contacts and referrals, and toward the ultimate goal—lead conversion or sales.

Be forewarned, however, that my approach to sales is much different from anything you might read about in one of the dozens of books that focus on teaching you the tricks of the sales trade. If you've jumped to this chapter in hopes of finding some killer closing techniques, you're bound to be disappointed. I refer to this portion of the system as lead conversion for a reason. If you've done everything I've outlined to this point to generate your leads, then selling them is unnecessary—they're already sold. The only job left is completing their education and getting agreement on the terms of their purchase or working expectations.

### **Effective Marketing Eliminates the Need for Selling**

Confusion on this issue will always exist. That's why so many companies have marketing departments and sales departments. The only reason you need both is because the marketing department is doing such a lousy job differentiating the business and products, and the

## **Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System**

sales department has to hit the streets and do the educating for them. That's why selling can be such a tough job.

With the Duct Tape Marketing system in place, the focus moves away from selling and toward educating prospects that have already expressed an interest in your business and, more important, your unique approach.

But, just as I have presented a set of systematic steps to apply to every aspect of your marketing to this point, I want to start the explanation of the lead conversion process with that same key point. This is a system; it's not a technique.

## **What Happens When the Phone Actually Rings?**

### **A System That Works**

So you've managed to make the phone ring. It's a hot prospect on the other end—now what? It's amazing how few small business owners consider this question.

There's no question that certain people are more naturally suited to the role of lead conversion than others. But we're not talking about certain people; we're talking about you and your business. What I want to introduce in this chapter is a system that will allow almost anyone to succeed, even with average lead-conversion skills.

Maybe you're a gifted presenter, but does that mean that everyone in your organization is? What if you could take the most successful salesperson in your organization and successfully duplicate her?

The Duct Tape Marketing lead conversion system relies on three distinct components:

#### *1. Discovery*

In discovery, the central goal is to discover if a prospect actually fits your ideal target market. If you've done a good job in your

## Duct Tape Marketing

marketing up to this point, you will usually attract qualified prospects. Your lead conversion system should help you quickly make this assessment on an individual basis and continue to deliver the expectations you have set with initial lead generation activity.

### *2. Presentation*

Whether across the desk or over the phone, most businesses do indeed need to present an offer of a product or service to the eventual buyer. The Duct Tape Marketing tool of choice for this step is something I call an internal seminar. The internal seminar is a quasi-scripted presentation made as part of your initial client meetings.

### *3. Transaction*

The final leg of the lead conversion system is a planned “first purchase” transaction process. In other words, a thought-out and consistently executed way to take the order, deliver the goods, or execute an agreement. Put a little flair into this sometimes-awkward step in the client relationship building process, and you are well on your way to orders number two and three.

## A Selling Pattern Interrupt

When prospective clients call Schloegel Design Remodel, a remodeling company in Kansas City, they experience a process that’s a little different from the norm. Most homeowners call a remodeling contractor and ask them to come by the house and discuss their project. Prospects at Schloegel are instead invited to come to Schloegel’s offices for the first meeting.

During this meeting they are introduced to the practices that make this firm different, shown an array of stunning projects

## **Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System**

completed by the firm, and introduced to some past clients by way of video testimonials.

They meet the staff and are introduced to the design remodel process step-by-step. The staff covers the good and the bad and sets the expectations for a successful project.

All of this systematic presenting is done in advance of finding out the specific details of the homeowner's project. This unique approach helps this firm stand out from its competition and creates far better working relationships with people who eventually become clients.

## **On to the Core Steps: Discovery, Presentation, Transaction**

### **Discovery—Have a Plan**

The discovery phase is initiated when prospects call or e-mail you, requesting an appointment or asking if you could help them in some manner. It is important that you have a systematic way to handle these requests.

If you call prospects back and engage in an unstructured question-and-answer session, you are likely to lose them to some specific point before they fully grasp what it is that you have to offer. I suggest that you pose a few simple questions in your first contact that will allow you to get a feel for how ready they are to understand the need for your products or services. I like to ask prospects what led them to call me or what's going on in their business that needs fixing. (I always ask for their Web site address too.)

It's important to cut this first contact off at this point. Resist the urge to tell them all of the great things you can do for them. Often a call like this will come in out of the blue, and you don't want to wing it. This is a system we are working here.

Another value of this practice is that it projects a professional, selective, and thoughtful approach to your client selection process. I

## Duct Tape Marketing

don't mean that you are to play games. But you should be thoughtful and selective about whom you work with. Life's too short to do otherwise. Your measured process will make your business more attractive in the eyes of your prospect.

Next, I immediately reveal my marketing process to help both of us determine if we should build a working relationship. The mere fact that you have a structured approach sends a very good marketing message. Again, in my instance I can usually suggest either a meeting or the need to exchange additional materials based on the answers they give to my first few questions.

### **Presentation: The Internal Seminar**

The internal seminar is what some people might define as a *sales call*; the difference is one of control. There are lots of sales books, courses, and trainers that will tell you to probe for pain, ask leading questions, and listen for opportunities to propose solutions. My belief is that if you have properly presented your solution and value through your marketing, you are there to reaffirm that your prospect fully understands what you have to offer. I think that is best done through an almost scripted presentation or seminar presented internally to one prospect at a time. The reason this approach works so well is that it allows you to keep control of the information that is presented.

I'm not suggesting that you simply show up and ram your message down the prospect's throat, but I am saying that you should have a systematic process to make your primary points. What I have found is that when you do this, you more accurately communicate the key messages you need to put together to attract the kind of client you know you can best serve.

Many salespeople fall into the trap of simply responding to questions from prospects and attempting to "sell" them by figuring out what their hot buttons are and pushing them. The problem with this approach is that it often leads to clients who don't really fit what you have to offer.

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

When you take control of the meeting and present your core points in a structured way, you will either connect or you won't, but when you do, it will be the right connection. The structure of your internal seminar can allow for plenty of interaction, but like a well-crafted seminar, you are the presenter.

You are already familiar with a great deal of the content needed for your internal seminar presentation from the marketing kit chapter. The creation of your internal seminar consists of weaving the key elements into a concise message that includes:

- The problem
- Your solution
- Your core difference
- Your story
- A real client example
- How you work
- The expected results

I have a presentation that I first used in free workshops called “The Seven Deadly Sins of Small Business Marketing.” When I altered this presentation only slightly and began to use it as the basis of my lead conversion system, my sales calls became contract-signing (order-taking) events. Another benefit of this approach was that because I presented a very structured amount of information, my appointments were cut in half. When you take this approach, you can get very good at making the exact points you need to make.

It may take some time to get good at your internal seminar, and yes, you can't deliver it in exactly the same fashion as you might to a roomful of workshop attendees, but it's pretty close.

The last step is to get some form of agreement on the next steps. This will certainly mean different things to different types of businesses, but you can't leave your meeting with a simple, “I'll get back

## Duct Tape Marketing

to you.” You must leave with either a sale or a commitment on what needs to come next to move closer to a sale. Then you either move to the transaction phase or continue the education phase.

### Transaction

It’s funny how often small business owners will spend months chasing new customers, and then once they land them, they have no process in place to make sure they serve their needs and communicate key information.

Once your prospects determine that they want to become clients, you should shift your lead conversion into the final transaction phase. I use the term *transaction* rather loosely, as I know some businesses may have an actual cash register–type transaction, while others may simply exchange terms of an agreement. Either way, the actual “how” you do that should be simple, clear, and marketing-based. One of the best ways to move smoothly to the transaction phase of lead conversion with a prospect is to be prepared to do so. When you make a lead conversion call, expect to convert the prospect to a client and simply move the meeting to the next phase when the prospect says yes.

## Get the New Customer Off to a Great Start

When new clients say yes, you should be prepared to teach them how to get the most from this new relationship or product by putting a new customer kit in their hands. Your new customer kit, much like your marketing kit, allows new clients to fully understand what to expect now that they are clients. That’s right; your educational marketing approach doesn’t end once you make a sale. Almost every type of business, service- or product-based, should develop “training” documents that communicate key bits of information. Your new customer kit can contain pages that explain:

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

- What to expect from us next
- How to contact us if you have a question
- How to get the most from your new product/service
- What we need from you to get started
- What we agreed upon today
- How we invoice for our work
- A copy of our invoice

I believe that creating a series of documents like the ones suggested above and having a systematic step that allows you to communicate this information demonstrates a level of professionalism not always displayed by small businesses. Nothing derails a client relationship faster than failing to set and meet initial expectations.

Another very practical aspect of this approach is that it allows you to gather up front the client details that you need to conduct business. Many salespeople (business owners) are so thrilled that a prospect has said yes, they want to run out the door before anyone can change their minds—this is a mistake. Whether it is in your initial meeting or in a “getting started” meeting, you need to be crystal clear about how you will work, what you need to provide, what you have promised, and what you expect from them as well.

Finally, you must get the money issue addressed very early. I know that you probably agreed on a price for your product or service, but that’s where many small business owners leave the discussion. I think this is generally because most people are a little uncomfortable discussing money. Don’t make this mistake. At a minimum you should have a discussion as part of your transaction phase that includes:

- How you charge and invoice
- How you expect to be paid
- What you need to do to make sure your bills get paid (Do you need a purchase order number?)



## Duct Tape Marketing

Who to contact regarding billing issues  
Affirmation about what you will bill

You should confidently include this information as part of your new customer transaction phase. (You can develop a simple worksheet that allows you to gather the information that you or your accounting staff needs and complete this form in your initial kick-off meeting.) Two things will happen when you do. You will have far fewer payment issues, and you will again present a more professional appearance for your business. You will be doing your clients a favor when you have this discussion up front.

## The Lead Conversion System Technology Tool kit

Smart businesses and salespeople are using technology to help provide additional points of contact, training, and research in ways that enhance, rather than replace, the overall process of moving people to making a purchasing decision.

With that in mind, here are my tech toolbox suggestions for amplifying the selling system. This is not meant to be the complete list of every option, but more of a starter list of tools I like to help get you thinking about fusion.

### Discovery—moving a lead to the next planned step

- Wufoo ([www.wufoo.com/](http://www.wufoo.com/))—a brilliant form-building tool that can be used to present a series of qualifying questions that feed your CRM pipeline.
- LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com))—connect with your prospects at this point and you may find you can build a relationship much faster.

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

### **Presentation—the planned act of presenting your unique approach, case statement, and story**

- iPad—the small, yet brilliant display of the iPad running Keynote or even a PDF viewer makes the perfect intimate presentation tool. Don't create the 50-slide info dump. Use a handful of slides to create impact and reinforce your primary point of view and story.
- SlideRocket ([www.sliderocket.com/](http://www.sliderocket.com/))—an online slide presentation tool that can be used live or as an on-demand show. The power of this tool is the ability to create presentations that contain multimedia and forms tied to your CRM system.

### **Nurturing—keeping a prospect interested and engaged as they move through their buying cycle**

- Office AutoPilot ([www.officeautopilot.com](http://www.officeautopilot.com))—a little-known tool that has the power to run your entire marketing automation process. The full suite includes form-based e-mail marketing, direct mail integration, lead scoring and tracking, and pURL technology. Best of all, it's built with the small business in mind.
- InfusionSoft ([www.infusionsoft.com/](http://www.infusionsoft.com/))—another small business-oriented tool that includes CRM features, autoresponders, branching, and personalized follow-up based on click tracking.
- Constant Contact ([www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com)), Vertical Response ([www.verticalresponse.com](http://www.verticalresponse.com)), MailChimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)), AWeber ([www.aWeber.com](http://www.aWeber.com))—all great, reputable e-mail marketing services that allow you to create multifaceted e-mail follow-up campaigns.

## Duct Tape Marketing

**Transaction**—a process that focuses on delivering a remarkable experience once a prospect decides to buy

- MavenLink ([www.mavenlink.com/](http://www.mavenlink.com/))—one of the many online project management suites, but focused on simplicity for the service provider. Using a tool like this allows you to create an online portal for every client and give them access to orientation materials as well as an online collaboration space for project work.
- Central Desktop ([www.centraldesktop.com](http://www.centraldesktop.com/))—another project management tool, but with a nice wiki feature for building lots of easily searchable content for your customers.
- Jott ([www.jott.com](http://www.jott.com))—this tool does a lot of things, but primarily it's a way to speak a message and have it sent via e-mail. Try this right after you meet with a new client and send the action steps from your just-completed meeting via e-mail.

**Review**—measuring results, both yours and the clients (one of the most overlooked points of selling)

- MyNextCustomer ([www.mynextcustomer.com](http://www.mynextcustomer.com))—a simple way to measure phone calls, Web leads and sales from social media, SEO, paid search, and offline marketing campaigns to determine where your highest conversion payoff is.
- GetSatisfaction ([www.getsatisfaction.com](http://www.getsatisfaction.com))—a very nice tool that facilitates the act of bringing customers and companies together to create a better shared experience.
- SurveyGizmo ([www.surveygizmo.com](http://www.surveygizmo.com))—my favorite online survey, poll, and questionnaire tool.

## How to Create a Social Media Conversion System

People often complain that social media is a giant time drain, but one that they know they must dive into because everyone says they must. Of course, this is exactly the kind of thinking that makes social media, or any business or marketing activity, a giant time drain. Social media participation and integration is an important aspect of marketing, and while the names, technologies, and tools may feel foreign, the fundamentals involved in making them pay are the same.

Marketing is about building trust. These days, any effective conversion approach is steeped in building trust through engagement. This is true of selling, advertising, lead generation, and customer service—and it's certainly true when it comes to building trust using social media platforms. The trick, like all good inbound marketing, is to create value and a reason for someone who encounters your business to want to know more.

Following are seven steps that can help you create your own social media conversion system. (Warning: these are pretty much the same steps I would recommend for engaging any prospect, online or off.)

### **1. Put content out strategically.**

The first step is to create and optimize content that can live in social media outposts such as Facebook, YouTube, SlideShare, Flickr, or other social media communities. You can also use ads placed on Facebook or LinkedIn as ways to drive attention to your content, offer, or other call to action.

### **2. Use landing pages for every choice.**

The next step is to build a series of unique landing pages for each community. In other words, create a page for your Twitter call to action, your Facebook call to action, your LinkedIn call to action, and so on. The difference in these pages may be subtle, but this is an important part of the personalized engagement. You can build these

## Duct Tape Marketing

pages yourself, but using a landing page service, such as SiteTuners ([www.sitetuners.com/](http://www.sitetuners.com/)) or Unbounce ([www.unbounce.com](http://www.unbounce.com)), is a great way to keep track of and measure results from lots of pages.

### 3. Make the message match.

It's important in social media that the message on each page matches your content and call to action. You can start by identifying that the visitor followed a link on Twitter and that he or she is indeed in the right place. Think about using widgets that place a live Twitter stream or Facebook Fan Box on the page for visitors from these sources. There are many other elements to good landing page design, but my main point here is to create a personalized page that matches some element of how the visitor got there. Here's a good article on improving your landing page results: [www.blog.performable.com/ten-easy-ways-to-improve-your-landing-page-conversions/](http://www.blog.performable.com/ten-easy-ways-to-improve-your-landing-page-conversions/).

### 4. Create a "get to know more" call to action.

The real point of your engagement on your landing pages is to capture permission to share even more. The simplest way to do this is to offer valuable information in exchange for an e-mail address. (You can also offer *following you* in other social media platforms as an alternative to those who don't want to give up an e-mail address.) Your PPC and Facebook ads can point directly to their own landing page, promoting your free information or offer. In some cases, this may be a direct product link, but this will be far less effective.

### 5. Test every element.

Landing page design and conversion is a bit of a science, so you need to test every element—headline, call to action button, social media connection, message, offer, and even video and audio appeals. The good news is that you can create what are called A/B tests using a tool like Optimizely ([www.optimizely.com](http://www.optimizely.com)) or Google Website Optimizer or any of the landing page services mentioned previously.

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

### 6. Enable sharing.

Since you're playing in the social space here, make sure that people can tweet that they just got your awesome information or that they "Like" your landing page. You can use social media plug-ins to make this easier on WordPress or static pages. Most of the landing page services make this available as well.

### 7. Personalize follow-up.

Once you're captured permission, you can really ramp up the personalization by using a service like Flowtown to add in lots of social media data about your landing page visitors. Flowtown can integrate with e-mail and landing page services to create customized follow-up based on the e-mail address and social media graph of each person who signs up for your free information. Flowtown uses Klout (<http://klout.com>) scoring data to rank the social influence of each person.

You can create campaigns for people who are most active on Twitter or Facebook, or you can also create a scoring system that notifies you when a particularly active or influential social media user enrolls. This type of approach might kick out a list of prospects for a live salesperson to follow up with.

While setup of this system may take a bit of work in the beginning, once you have all the moving parts automated, you can focus on content creation while using social media sites as both an inbound and outbound lead generation and conversion platform.

## A Word about the Invoice

Not all companies send invoices to their clients, but most do. Remember what we learned back in the foundational first section of this book? Anything coming out of your business that touches your customer is performing a marketing function. Treat your invoices as though they

## Duct Tape Marketing

are performing promotion, because they are. Design stunning invoices that reflect your other marketing identity materials. Use them to upsell, resell, and communicate important sales messages. Treat them as a big deal, no matter how small you think they may be. Don't settle for the generic, software template-style invoices just to save time and a few pennies.

Here's my rationale. Earlier I mentioned that the whole money issue trips up a lot of small business owners. There are a lot of deeply seated, psychological things swirling around in most people's heads when it comes to money. I think that when you make a big deal out of your invoices, you send the message that you care about your client's money, that you are proud to present this invoice, and that you think it's an honor to exchange their money for your goods and services.

I know that may seem like a lot to ask from a piece of paper, but sometimes that's the only tool you have to send the right message. Try it sometime. Print an invoice on a cheap piece of paper with no color and then print one on a very nice-quality sheet of paper with your logo and company colors. Which one do you want your client to receive? You've set an expectation in all of your other communications, so keep it up.

## Surprise and Delight

In addition to your kick-off meeting, I suggest that you add a bonus feature into your initial transaction process. As part of the process, design a step that allows you to give your new clients more than they anticipated. In other words, immediately surprise them with something more than they expected. This surprise can be a bonus gift with a product, another valuable information product, or even a gift certificate of welcome. (This can come at no cost from an eager strategic partner.)

The point of this step is that it gets the relationship off to a great start and helps new clients reaffirm their decision to do business with

## **Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System**

you. Even though you have convinced your new clients to trust you enough to give you their business, you are essentially still on a trial basis. They know what you have promised, and that's what they bought. Now start overdelivering to make up the gap between promise and result. It's also a nice way to show that you appreciate your new customer. Anytime someone gets something she didn't expect, it is memorable. The surprise or bonus you offer doesn't need to be expensive, just thoughtful and useful.

### **The System Recap, Step-by-Step**

The steps involved in the Duct Tape Marketing lead conversion process for my business look like this:

#### **Discovery**

1. Take a call from a prospect and find out a little background.
2. Suggest a meeting either by phone or in person.
3. Send premeeting materials, including a basic questionnaire.

#### **Presentation**

1. Present an internal seminar.
2. Determine the next step.
3. Send follow-up education materials and the agreement.

#### **Transaction**

1. Conduct a new customer meeting.
2. Add surprise to the equation.
3. Initiate follow-up education.

There are situations where I might add a step for a prospect who needs more information or time to do research. You will ultimately



## **Duct Tape Marketing**

need to discover through testing the steps in the process what meets the needs of your individual business. In some instances, your process will require fewer steps, in others more.

### **Further Thoughts on Lead Conversion**

#### **Consistency Builds Trust**

Once you build a system that works for you, it is essential that everyone in the organization use the basic steps in the system. Each person can personalize some of the words, but the core message and core steps must be used by all. Few things build trust like consistency of action and message.

#### **The Stated Purpose of Any Contact**

Anytime you arrange a meeting, either on the phone or in person, you should have a set, intended purpose and outcome for the meeting that all agree upon. Not only is this a good practice in terms of efficiency; it is another way to make certain that everyone knows the rules and expectations.

#### **Using Presentations**

If you use a PowerPoint or other presentation in your internal seminar, make sure that the presentation format doesn't become a distraction. If you are meeting with a ten-person executive committee, then a projected presentation might have a place. If you are simply meeting with one person, a laptop presentation may be a bit intimidating.

I suggest that you create a one-page outline or checklist document that you can use with your internal seminar presentation. That way your prospects have a sense of where you are headed at all times. If you stay on track, they will generally allow you to make your core points without interruption.

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

### What Objections Usually Mean

There are libraries filled with books about overcoming sales objections, but I can boil almost every sales objection down to two simple things—the prospects aren't really qualified enough or they don't have enough information. Even a price objection means that they either can't afford what you have to offer in the first place (not qualified) or they don't yet understand how valuable what you have to offer is (not enough information). Your job then is to simply attempt to solve either objection by way of education.

An offshoot of many Duct Tape Marketing lead conversion systems is something called a *drip system*. A drip system is a method that allows you to automatically refilter your prospects into a communication system that continues to drip more information to them over a long period of time—a year or more. You can put your prospects who aren't ready to become clients (or who can't seem to make a decision) into this education system and stay in touch easily until they are ready to react. Use your CRM software and the constant contact method described in chapter 11 to put this on autopilot.

### Make Yourself Smarter

The Internet, as we've already discovered, is a great place to get the word out about your business and automate many of your marketing activities, but it's also a great way to become a much smarter lead conversion player.

The essential building blocks of trust are value, knowledge, and common ground. Your prospects want to know that you offer something of value, understand their business, and can relate to their world before they will relax their anti-salesperson guard a bit. In order to break through quickly with a prospect, not in an effort to trick them but in an effort to get your message heard in the right vein, you need to do some homework. Use the vast array of Internet-based research tools to discover everything you can about your prospects,

## Duct Tape Marketing

their business, their industry, and their competitors. Your ability to help them understand how you can provide a solution may actually depend on your having a simple understanding of the jargon they are familiar with using. Your ability to connect personally may reside in your knowledge that they are passionate about supporting the arts. It's all there for you; use it for good.

I once proposed a joint venture with a software firm located in France. I did a bit of research on the firm's founders and discovered that one of them had grown up in the United States, in my hometown, and attended the same university I had. Needless to say, that changed our conversation from the outset. It didn't mean I was any smarter, but it enabled both parties to feel more comfortable.

## Beyond Satisfied—Your Customer Service Plan

If you want your customers to come back for more and tell the world all about how wonderful you are, you've got to make certain that your actual product, process, service, or result matches what your marketing promised. Again, it's all about meeting and exceeding expectations—and moving your customers way beyond satisfied.

I've already mentioned how important I think it is to create an invoice that has marketing impact. Now let's talk a little about all of the things that happen between agreeing and invoicing.

Analyzing and improving your processes in areas such as status notification, ordering, estimating, scheduling, proposals, delivery, returns, claims, changes, and billing can pay handsome rewards in marketing terms and may allow you to create competitive advantages you didn't know existed.

## Where Customer Service Is Bred

Simply put, the key to growing loyal clients is growing loyal employees.

## Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System

This is not meant to be a book on hiring and management, but rest assured every member of your staff can and does perform a marketing function. When you hire staff members, I think that it's critical that you understand and communicate this marketing mind-set. In most businesses, people who come to work with a knack for serving and a willingness to learn possess the makings of a great marketing-based employee.

Beyond that, though, it is absolutely essential that you give them the tools they need to be successful. These tools, I believe, fall into two categories: effective marketing and customer systems and the training to operate them; and the technology that makes doing their job easier.

A great deal of this book has dealt with and stressed the need for marketing systems, but suffice it to say that every aspect of your business will run better if you set up systems that allow your staff to effectively complete necessary tasks. (Plus, then they can spend more time on creating innovative marketing strategies.)

Advice on technology solutions for your business could consume the entire contents of another book altogether, but I believe that your business must invest in technologies that support your people and allow them to effortlessly serve clients. I would put a great deal of emphasis on employing technologies that make it easier for your clients to get the information they want and easier for your staff to access and provide information regarding your work with your clients.

I've already mentioned the use of CRM software for lead generation purposes, but the *C* in CRM stands for customer (Customer Relationship Management). You should use your CRM software to track and file every contact and request with regard to a client or project. This simple step can allow everyone in your organization to answer a client's question about a project on the spot. Powerful yet inexpensive Web-based project and client management systems are being developed every day. These systems allow your clients to have access to and comment on work in progress in real time, from any Internet connection in the world.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Tools aren't always about computers, though. Another example of an employee-empowering tool might be the ability to say yes to certain types of customer requests or offer a certain type of free trial service up to a certain value. This type of investment lets your employees know that you trust them and allows them to make snap marketing decisions when they matter to the customer most. Become a student of new technologies and you will discover a host of ways to give your small business big-business service. But never forget: if you've got happy employees, you will provide good service and your business will grow.

### Create Community

Another very powerful way to build client relationships and generate referrals is to bring your prospects and clients together. What I mean is to actually create opportunities for your clients and prospects to meet each other. This suggestion can take many forms, but the key ingredient is that when your clients meet one another, they can form a potentially stronger relationship with you.

I think a couple of things are at work here. When you bring a group of your customers together, they can indeed see firsthand that others, very much like them, put their trust in you. In many small businesses, clients can bear many common characteristics, so providing the opportunity to connect with other small business owners, for example, is a powerful way to increase their connection with you.

Here are several ways I have found to use customer community building as a marketing tool.

### Peer-to-Peer Lead Conversion

The focus group format presents an interesting marketing opportunity. Most people think *marketing research* when they think *focus group*, but with a nifty little twist on this concept, you can turn it into a sales conversion machine.

This works particularly well if you can focus on one specific

## **Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System**

industry group. The idea is to find a group that shares the same frustrations and uses the same language to express them.

Put together a teleconference panel aimed at discussing a common industry issue or growing trend. Invite ten participants, but make sure that at least two of the participants are happy clients that turned to you to solve this frustration. Then, once the group is assembled, you sit back and gently moderate only. If any selling goes on during the call, it must come from your clients only. Let the group talk about the good, the bad, and the ugly. Three things will generally occur from such a session:

1. Your current clients usually feel pretty good about the decision they made (that will lead to more referrals).
2. Other callers come away with a very favorable impression of your place in the market—who else is making this kind of educational effort?
3. Several members of the group will call you the next day and invite you to show them how you can help.

There are any number of ways to add a creative twist or two to this approach, but nothing sells like a current user telling a skeptic, in his own words, how great your product or service is.

### **The Client-Only Event**

Let your clients know that you are holding an event exclusively for them. Instead of making it a simple meet-and-greet, sell the event as a roundtable focused on a specific issue of interest. You may even want to line up a speaker to present new information and facilitate the discussion aspect of the meeting.

### **Customer Loyalty Tools**

There are plenty of companies out there that practice things such as special membership pricing, frequent purchase programs,

## Duct Tape Marketing

and even cash incentives as ways to keep customers coming back for more. There are cases where these types of tools may indeed bring people back, but they are often price-motivated and will build loyalty in ways that may not be best for your business. After all, price shoppers are only loyal until they find a better deal. I have found that the strongest loyalty-building tool you can apply when working with your existing clients is communication—frequent, results-based communication.

When you set up systematic contact points with your clients as part of your customer relationship management, you get the feedback you need to address new issues and confront any problems that arise.

### Again, with the Handwritten Note

Jeanna Pool of Catalyst Creative, Inc., of Denver, Colorado, wants to know if you've ever had a client thank you for thanking them.

Every single time—and she means *every* time—she sends out a thank-you to her current and past clients, she gets a handful of phone calls from clients thanking her for thanking them. Plus, she has found that about seven times out of ten, they are ready to hire her for another project or two . . . not to mention she finds that she is one of the only small business owners they work with who actually takes the time and effort to show that kind of appreciation ([www.catalystcreativeinc.com](http://www.catalystcreativeinc.com)).

### Client Survey

I think that it is a good idea to conduct systematic surveys with your clients. This can come in the form of a phone call after a service is provided, a survey form accompanying a new product, or an annual or semiannual review. Surveys can help you discover when you let a customer down or how you can make your product instructions better. Large organizations frequently employ surveys, but even if your business only has three clients, you should systematically

## **Turn Prospects into Clients and Clients into Partners with an Advanced Education System**

communicate with them at critical junctures in your working relationship to access how they feel the work is going. Woofu, Survey Monkey, and SurveyGizmo are all good online tools for this.

### **Results**

Another valuable customer loyalty tool is something I call a *results review*. If you are in a business that provides services over time to your clients, it is crucial that you measure whether your client is actually receiving the results they expected. Once you do this, it is equally important that you devise a way to communicate how the expected results compare to the actual results.

Far too often your clients will take for granted the work and the results that your firm is providing and can be tempted to listen to competitors offering the latest new thing. It's very important that you keep your clients informed by creating a system that allows you to track and communicate results achieved.

### **Subscription and Membership Clients**

For many businesses subscription, membership, and retainer fee arrangements are a great way to get and keep customers. Dan Janal of PR LEADS in Excelsior, Minnesota, heard the saying, "It is easier to sell to an existing customer than to get a new customer." So he decided to see what parts of his business could be put on a subscription basis, or automatic renewal basis. He knew that every day his clients were making a decision to use his service or stop. When he went to a model that allowed his clients to use his service on a month-by-month basis with no annual fee and no contracts, he found that clients tended to use his service longer and the billing process was much easier, allowing him to focus on selling more subscriptions ([www.prleads.com](http://www.prleads.com)).



### Action Steps

1. Create your new customer kit.
  2. Script what you will say to the next prospect when the phone rings.
  3. Draft your internal seminar presentation.
  4. Determine how you will surprise your next client.
  5. Get clear on having the money talk with your prospects.
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## Part III

# Getting on a Roll!

(Find Out What Works and Do More of It)

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### The Power of Positive Expectancy

Before we dive into the last, somewhat tactical, advice of the Duct Tape Marketing system, I want to interject a marketing suggestion that isn't as tangible or as easily explained as many we have covered up to this point—though I know it works. It's something I've heard called the power of positive expectancy.

How often have you expected that something would work and it did? Now flip that around. How often did you just absolutely know that something was going to fail, and—guess what?—it did?

I wish I could go beyond this notion of positive thinking and explain in the precise terminology of quantum physics its actual workings, but I'm a results person. If it gets results, I don't always need to know why. Here's how to apply the power of positive expectancy:

- If you expect your clients to be thrilled with your services—they will.
- If you flat-out expect your clients to refer business your way—they will.
- If you know a direct marketing piece will make the phone ring—it will.

## Duct Tape Marketing

Okay, I'm not saying that you don't need a good list, killer copy, and effective design, but you've got to believe your marketing will pay off or you won't bring to it the proper energy and enthusiasm required to work through the trial-and-error phase.

Have you ever desperately tried to sell something that you didn't really believe in? Hard work, isn't it? On the other hand, have you ever found yourself so excited about a product or service that you found people would almost track you down to buy from you?

This notion of expecting and receiving success is widely accepted in self-help, philosophical, and spiritual circles. Business owners sometimes feel the need for cold, hard facts and statistics—logical explanations. But think about this for a minute. When was the last time you made a purchase for purely logical reasons? Almost every buying decision ever made was based on emotion and rationalized with logic.

So, what better way to bring emotion into your marketing than to expect marketing miracles every day? As we move into the final section of the Duct Tape Marketing System, you have to believe you are going to be on a roll! With this belief, the remaining content of this book is designed to help you do two things: (1) commit your newfound marketing knowledge to an action plan that delivers results, and (2) act as a guide for your continuing marketing education. When you do this effectively, you'll be entirely focused on finding out what is working and doing more of it.

To really get on a roll, there are also some basics of planning, budgeting, and calendaring that we'll address in the next chapter.

# Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

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**S**o much of what you have read prior to this chapter sought to teach you successful marketing strategies to use in building your Duct Tape Marketing system. It is my hope that you have already begun to explore ways to implement what you have read, but before you can move toward the completion of an integrated plan, it is important to set a series of goals that are tied to your marketing plan, activities, and, eventually, budget.

## Set Marketing Goals and Communicate Them

Great volumes have been written about the power of goal setting, but little has been written about the notion of goal setting when it comes to marketing.

For some businesses the very act of setting marketing goals will be a giant step in the direction of achieving them. For others, the process will simply validate the need to focus on a vision for the business.

I have found that the ability to achieve any goal is greatly impacted by the goal's power to motivate you to action, so the more powerful the goal, the likelier it is that you will achieve it. Here are ten elements that can make any goal more achievable:

## Duct Tape Marketing

1. You must *really want* to accomplish the goal. If not, then you must find a way to make it so.
2. You must believe that it is possible to accomplish the goal.
3. You must put the goal in writing.
4. You must list in detail all of the benefits of achieving the goal.
5. You must set a deadline for achieving the goal.
6. You must list what stands in your way of achieving the goal.
7. You must list what skill, knowledge, and people you will need to assist you.
8. You must have a plan to accomplish the goal.
9. You must constantly revise your plan.
10. You must make a commitment.

### Goals That Support the Duct Tape Marketing System:

#### Vision Goals and Tactical Goals

Vision goals encompass your greater vision for the business and for your life. Questions like, “Where do you see your business in five years?” are the genesis of vision-oriented goals.

Tactical goals are much more tangible. Factors such as number of new clients, revenue increase, or profit increase all fall into this category of goal setting. Once you come up with your short-term vision and tactical goals, you should find a way to communicate these goals to everyone in your organization.

#### Goals for Your Vision

I want to warn you that this next section may be some of the most difficult material presented in this book, but take it to heart and it may be the most fruitful. I know, I know, this is a marketing book, and here I am getting ready to ask you what you want to be when you grow up.

If you picked this book up because your business is stuck in a rut, the answers to the questions I’m about to ask may actually be the key

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

to getting you unstuck. So turn off the phone, unhook from e-mail, and write the answers to the statements below on a sheet of paper.

What will your business need to look like, act like, and be in order for you to achieve your most important goals in life? In one year? Three years? Five years?

Describe the ideal experience/relationship you want your clients to have with your business.

Describe a perfect day at work for you.

Okay, now what needs to change for you to realize any of the pictures above? Your vision marketing goals should flow fairly easily from the answers to that question.

### Tactical Goals

Unless you are an accountant, the thought of math may not be that appealing to you. This book does not attempt any foray into the inner workings of accounting, but I have found that, like it or not, your marketing success at many levels is tied to basic accounting principles. At the very least your tactical marketing goals should include projections for *revenue* and *profit*:

**Revenue.** For the most part, revenue is sales. Sales are good, and they keep the machine running, but they are not the entire picture. Your revenue plans must address your capacity to actually service the amount of business your marketing plan generates. Some people simply pick a number that is X percent above last year. If you have not done any type of goal setting or marketing to support that goal in the past, that may be your best approach. The primary point is to have a number that you are shooting for.

**Profit.** A sale without profits is a recipe for disaster. Many businesses fail to understand how to account for the expenses involved in their business and either price their products and services incorrectly or simply fail to make any profit. This is one of those places where employing the services of an accounting professional can be a very

## Duct Tape Marketing

helpful thing! Work with your accountant to help you integrate the money aspects of your business into your marketing.

If your accountant doesn't understand how to help you do this with reports that can give you snapshots of the marketing goals related to the accounting aspects of your business, then it's time to find a new accountant.

**Your income.** If you are the owner of the business or this business is the source of your income, then it stands to reason that you should set marketing goals tied to your income.

A surprising number of business owners never set any goals for the amount of money they intend to make. Without an income target, you are left to take whatever comes along. So, how much money do you want your business to produce in the next year? Three years? Five years? Further, you should set goals that are tied to your actual marketing tactics:

- Number of active suspects
- Free reports distributed
- Prospects generated
- Appointments made
- Prospects converted to clients
- First-time clients
- Web site visitors
- PR mentions
- Referrals
- Business cards handed out
- Workshops presented
- Testimonials received

### The Logistics of Time

Time is a funny thing—it's the scarcest resource we are allowed to use. There are countless books, software programs, and systems that

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

aim to help us manage and control it, but for the small business, there is a complex set of variables that come into play.

I've begun to apply the term *logistics* more broadly when it comes to running a business. The term is commonly used when referring to the idea of delivering a product or set of goods from one location to another, but what if you began to think about the logistical consumption of time to deliver a result from one state to another. I think that's what small businesses must do at the highest level. The manager or owner of that business brings the highest value when he or she can orchestrate, not manage, time—the organization's greatest resource.

Stay with me on this, because now I need to add another layer. It's not enough to show up to work each day, create a to-do list, and call it a symphony of time. Today, every business has three clocks running at all times—and the management of the flow of goods, information and other resources, energy, and people depend on observing each of these clocks—although they run at different paces.

Today's business needs to live simultaneously in real time, deal time, and meal time.

**Real time.** Information and opportunities come at us today at an astounding speed. Businesses must create systems and processes that enable them to take advantage of marketing, PR, and product development opportunities instantaneously. Failure to monitor, and thus seize, real-time competitive advantages is a threat to even the most entrenched players. Of course, it's never been easier to chase the new shiny thing too. The creative view of world events through the lens of a marketing strategy is an arena that you must hire and manage for.

**Deal time.** This is where the technician lives—"Hey, all that namby-pamby 'Kumbaya' stuff is great, but we gotta get some business in the door." Yep, it's the cold, hard reality of running a business. Deal time is always on the mind of any business facing a payroll or college tuition payment, and it must be dealt with realistically. It may mean getting out from behind the computer and knocking on some doors,



## Duct Tape Marketing

but it may also mean time spent refining what an ideal customer looks like and how to increase what you charge for your services. Keeping your sights on a better experience and higher rate of conversion may just be the best use of deal time.

**Meal time.** Ultimately, any business is fed through attention given to the long-term vision. This comes from allocating resources and consistent chunks of time to things that may not pay off today—or even next quarter, for that matter. This is the hardest area to allocate resources for, but, like planting seeds in the spring, it's the area where the entrepreneur must ultimately come to live almost full-time. Have you crafted and communicated your vision, values, and mission?

The proper attention to each is where the harmony lies, and it's something that you can simply feel in healthy businesses. What if you planned your day with each of these clocks in full view? Would that change your to-do list? Would that make your time pass like orchestrated logistics?

### A Further Word about Your Time

After you set goals for revenue, profit, and income, you must begin the process of planning to reach those goals. One important step is to decide the best use of your time in the achievement of your marketing goals.

There is a simple formula that can shock you if you have never given it any thought. The formula has to do with the concept of hourly wages. Many employees think of their pay in terms of so much per hour, but business owners and those on salary don't use this thinking. Therefore, they often lose sight of the fact that time is indeed money. Once you set your revenue, profit, and income goals, you should break them down into the smallest possible measurement: the hour. Let's use the accepted 40 hours per week and 52 weeks in a year as our basis for computing your hourly numbers:  $40 \times 52 = 2,080$ . So the typical worker has 2,080 hours a year to generate revenue, profit, and income.

## **Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar**

The idea behind this calculation is to demonstrate that if you wish to achieve a revenue goal of \$250,000 per year, and you are the sole revenue generator for the firm, then you must be responsible for generating approximately \$120/hour in revenue every single day, eight hours a day.

Let's say you set your salary goal at \$100,000. Then you must generate around \$50/hour over and above all expenses related to your product, service, or running the business. The point of this exercise is to give you a sobering frame of reference to draw from when prioritizing how you use your time each day. (Did you do any \$5/hour work today?) I would suggest that you take one day and track how you spend every minute. Then go back and assign a dollar amount to the value of how you spent your time. You might be very surprised at how much time you spend doing things that detract from your goals.

What's the most profitable way for you to spend your time? How much time did you spend on marketing today? The biggest benefit of establishing marketing goals that are tied to specific marketing tactics is that it forces you to develop systems and strategies that help you meet the little pieces of the puzzle. If you meet the little pieces (the parts that most businesses don't even think about—like number of referrals), then the big pieces will fall into place almost magically.

### **Make It a Game—Have Rules and a Way to Win**

In an earlier chapter, I introduced the idea of getting your entire team involved in the marketing. This is particularly needful with respect to your marketing goals. One of the best ways to get your team involved in marketing is to set and communicate marketing goals that allow everyone to play. A sale or a referral usually comes about because several people worked together to make it happen.

Once you create your goals, you will find that they take on even more power if you can enlist some of the proven principles of open-book management. Open-book management is an entire management and accounting philosophy, but one of the principles is to identify a series

## Duct Tape Marketing

of critical activities that contributes to a goal and link some amount of compensation to the achievement of these activities.

What marketing activities, if done consistently, would build momentum around your marketing goals? Can you create a bonus pool of money and give points to employees who complete identified activities? You can make the identified activities as big or as small as you like. Not everyone in your organization can actually make a sale, but they likely contribute to a happy customer in some manner. So give them a way to play along. Challenge them to contribute more fully.

Visionpace, a software development company, follows open-book management practices and often ties bonus pool points to marketing activities. For example, programmers achieve bonus points for each post they make to the company's blog. A chance at winning in itself is a motivator for most human beings. The trick is to make winning and contributing to profitable marketing activities one and the same.

### **Tell the World Where You Are Headed**

Small business owners are so busy shoveling coal and doing the work of the business that this glimmer of a long-term vision they have for the business hardly gets any light. If you have some idea of where you want your business to be in a year—in five years, someday—I say, put it out there for the world to see. Let your clients and prospects know your ultimate goal—even if you have no idea how you will achieve it. I have found that quite often the world will conspire to help you reach your goal, but only if you make it known. One of the most compelling things about being a small business is this notion of clients and networks coming together to help each other be something greater. It's what makes your story so worth hearing.

I'm often guilty of the “ready, shoot, aim” school of business, but when I share where I want to go with Duct Tape Marketing, people start showing up with shovel in hand. So put it out there. Tell them where you want to go.

### Create Your Marketing Tracking Gauge

In order to meet your marketing goals, you must aggressively track your marketing progress. I'm not suggesting you become a slave to the numbers—no one really has the time or the need for that—but I do think you should create a wall-sized poster that keeps your critical marketing goals out front for all to see. Your marketing chart, the process that allows you a daily visual of what's important, what's on track, and what's off track, wields a powerful force of focus on your marketing goals.

#### The Ultimate Measure of Sticky Marketing

In the end, the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of your marketing comes down to creating and keeping clients. I like to create measurements that keep an eye on this ultimate measure.

While tracking your success keeps you focused and validates your progress, it is also a tool that can help you identify problem areas in your system. If, for instance, you are generating lots of leads, but too few of those leads choose to become clients, you may have a problem with your lead conversion process. On the other hand, if you close most of your appointments but can't get in front of enough prospects, you may need to adjust your advertising or lead generation strategies.

There are three simple reports that most businesses can create as simple spreadsheets and use to track marketing success or, as I call it, stickiness: prospect-to-customer ratio, lead generation reports, and lead conversion reports.

**Prospect-to-customer ratio.** The number of new customers you acquire for your business divided by the number of prospects generated by your lead generation system is your prospect-to-customer ratio. For example, if you generate 5 new customers in a month and 47 people entered your lead generation system by downloading your

## Duct Tape Marketing

free report or responding to a direct mail letter, your ratio for the month would be 5 divided by 47, or 10.6 percent. I know this is a fairly simplistic calculation, but the thing I like about a number like this is that it gives you a very simple way to look at the effectiveness of your marketing.

Almost everything you do with regard to marketing your small business will impact this number. Now that you have this number, make it your rallying cry. Make it a goal to improve this number every single month. What this number should be is impossible for me to suggest, as it will vary wildly depending upon your business and your industry. The important thing is that you establish a benchmark number and go to work on improving it.

**Lead generation reports.** Since the number of leads generated in any given month is a very critical part of your marketing measurement, I suggest that you create a way to view the number of leads you are generating from every source possible. To do this most effectively, of course, you will need to assign some form of tracking code to each mailing, advertisement, or URL you are promoting.

Simply create a chart or spreadsheet with each possible lead source, and tally the leads generated by each. Don't forget to ask every caller how he or she heard of you, as well. A major reason for doing this level of tracking is to gather data on your most effective promotions and mediums so that you can understand where to best allocate your marketing dollars at all times.

You can't improve what you don't measure!

**Lead conversion reports.** As you begin to establish your new marketing system, another very valuable tool is some form of tracking smack in the middle of your lead conversion process. Some businesses may relate this to a commonly used sales tool called a *call report*.

Use your lead conversion reports to track your sales calls, but make certain that you link it back to your lead generation report. It's funny how often one ad or medium can generate a lot of leads, but

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

very few of those leads turn into clients. Another promotion may not generate very many leads, but they are the right leads, and they turn into new customers.

For certain businesses, a call report might just be an overview of what occurred during the lead conversion meeting. This may seem like busywork, but it may also be very helpful in understanding how to improve upon or duplicate a successful lead conversion system.

## B-U-D-G-E-T

Wow! We've come this far, and I'm going to mention the big "B" word for the first time. It's not that I don't think a marketing budget is critical—it's essential. It's that I needed you to understand a great deal about the Duct Tape Marketing system before a discussion on marketing budgets would be appropriate.

Most small business owners I have worked with fall into two budget camps: the "Budget? What budget?" camp, and the "percent of sales" camp. Both of these camps are a deadly place to be, in my opinion. With no budget designated for marketing, you will do one of two things. Either you will not invest in marketing at all or you will waste marketing dollars that are thrown at the idea of the week. The "percent of sales" calculation may be a step in the right direction, but it misses the point of marketing too.

Here's the Duct Tape Marketing system philosophy of marketing budgets: when it comes to a small business marketing budget, *you should spend as little as you possibly can in order to achieve your marketing goals.* (See why those goals are so important?) I don't think that's really even a very radical statement; it's just that nobody told you to think about a marketing budget this way. Now, here's the rub. You can't take this approach unless you create a marketing plan, measure your results, and follow through on your plan.

## Duct Tape Marketing

### Determine the Client Contribution Factor

To determine how to create a “spend as little as you need to” Duct Tape Marketing budget, you’ve got to do some more simple math. Note that I’ve said you should spend as little as you need to, but that is not the same as saying, “Don’t spend money on your marketing.” I have tied the entire budget process to your goals so they will either influence or constrain your budget, depending upon how aggressive they are and how much money you are willing and able to invest in achieving them.

Before any of that can be determined, though, you need to take a look at something I call your *client contribution factor*. This is sort of a fancy way of saying, how much is a new client worth to your business? When you get a new client, you should be able to predict how much revenue that new client will produce over the course of two or three years. What this number will do for you is allow you to understand how much money you can afford to invest to acquire a new client. This should be one of the factors you consider when creating a marketing budget.

It’s not perfect, but it certainly warrants your attention. If you are a consultant, for example, and you know that each new client is likely to produce \$50,000 worth of revenue for your firm, then you can begin to think in terms of how much you can spend to land each new client.

If you sell a \$79 product that never needs replacement parts, the amount you can budget to acquire each new client will be significantly lower than the above consultant and certainly less than \$79.

The first step is to attempt to determine what the client contribution factor for your business is. This may not be a very difficult equation for most small businesses. Look at a list of your ideal clients and determine what your average revenue per client over a three-year period is or could be. (Three years is pretty arbitrary, but a good place to start.)

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

So at this point we jump back to your new revenue and new client goals to start our thinking on a budget number. If you generated new clients in the past year and can track what you spent on marketing as well, you can theoretically determine what your acquisition cost for each new client was.

Let's recap: I've introduced you to a way to set revenue and new client goals, a method to determine what a new client is worth to your business, and a way to calculate your client acquisition cost. In a perfect world, you would simply take your new client goal and multiply it by your acquisition cost and, voilà! A marketing budget. This is fraught with problems because it assumes that you have been working your Duct Tape Marketing system all along, which we know can't be true, or why would you be holding this book? So we've got to take what we've learned in this chapter and start applying some Duct Tape magic to it.

### Create a Budget and Stick to It

The number we are trying to get to with all of this Duct Tape math is a total marketing budget amount. I'm not really trying to give you a proven method for predicting exactly what you should budget for your marketing as much as I am attempting to teach you what to focus on in order to correctly predict a return on your future marketing expenditures. If you've never done any amount of marketing budgeting, you've got to start somewhere. At best, we can come up with a calculated guess—and then we'll test our guess. Here are the factors we have so far:

1. Your marketing goals (based on your projected goal for new clients)
2. Your cost to acquire a new client (based on your past marketing expenditures)
3. Your marketing budget



## Duct Tape Marketing

If you would like to add one hundred new clients next year, and your past marketing expenditure of \$5,000 yielded twelve clients, your marketing budget for this next year is \$41,000 (or roughly the same \$416 per new client you spent last year).

Don't panic and don't oversimplify what we are doing here. Your cost to acquire a new client will come way down when you use the strategies and tactics outlined in this book, but I'm attempting to teach you a small business budget system that makes sense.

Here's the main concept to grasp: track and aggressively manage your client acquisition cost as a budgeting tool. Again, there is no "should be" cost to acquire a new client because there are too many variables, but when you shine a light on your budget in this manner, your marketing expenditures are held accountable for producing real, measurable results.

### Test, Track, and Adjust Your Budget

So let's say that you have determined that your budget for marketing, based on your goals and the formula above, is \$40,000. Take this number and spread it out over an entire year of marketing activity. It doesn't mean that you will actually spend \$40,000. You are going to make a plan based on it, and then you will simply roll out certain aspects of your marketing plan in small, measured tests and adjust your budget according to results. What you will find very quickly in this method is that you can cut your original budget dramatically once your Duct Tape Marketing system starts producing your goals for leads, clients, and revenue, and your client acquisition cost falls.

As you prepare your original budget, make sure to consider the following key components presented throughout this book:

- Fixed annual expenses
- Consulting fees
- Graphic design costs

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

- Printing costs
- Web design costs
- Web site related costs

In addition to the fixed foundation–type costs associated with these items, you need to determine the actual promotional expenditures you plan to test primarily as part of your lead generation system. You will need to acquire direct mail and advertising costs for the following expenditures as part of your overall marketing plan:

- Promotion-based expenses
- Direct mail costs
- Advertising costs
- Lead conversion costs
- Customer relationship costs

## The Calendar

The next and final step in the Duct Tape Marketing system is to take the planned marketing tactics combined with your marketing budget and create a calendar to track your marketing activities and act as a visual marketing project management system.

In many cases you may simply pick out a marketing budget that you feel your current level of business or cash reserves can support, choose a number of marketing activities that you believe will generate an increased level of business, and plan accordingly. That very system has served many a start-up business adequately enough, but your long-term plan should involve a plan based on predictable results.

### Map the Marketing Year by Activity

One of the best ways to lead your business down the path of predictable results is to map out an entire year's worth of marketing activity

## Duct Tape Marketing

on a wall-sized calendar. This calendar should include all of your foundational marketing work, such as creating or revising your Web site, as well as any planned lead generation tests and promotions.

At first you may feel overwhelmed by the amount of start-up-type work involved in creating many of the tools described in this book, but nothing will change until your marketing changes.

One of my favorite books is by Anne Lamott, titled *Bird by Bird*. In the book, Lamott explains that the title came from something her father told her. Facing a deadline for a school report on birds, she felt overwhelmed and asked her father what to do. She explains that his advice was to take it bird by bird. The same holds true for your marketing. You've got to map out a plan and then complete it a step at a time.

### Create a Monthly Marketing Theme

Another planning tool I like to employ is to give each month of the year a marketing theme. This allows you to focus on building the tools and systems that you need for that theme. So March becomes the month to build your referral systems, and April is the month to build the tools you need to kick your PR program into gear. You don't need to do everything in a week or two. But do something well each month, and the progress you can make in six months may carry you for years.

### Make a Daily Appointment Habit

You are in the marketing business. You are the chief marketing officer. You can't do that job by squeezing in some spare time on Friday. Make an appointment and block out the time every day to do some marketing activity. Write an insert for your marketing kit, call three reporters, schedule a meeting with strategic partners, research a mailing list, and pen five thank-you notes. Now, that's what I call a good week in the marketing department. It won't happen until you make it a habit. Figure out how to get that time on your schedule, and don't cancel the appointment.

## Commit to Your Marketing with a Plan, Budget, and Calendar

### The Powerful Marketing Habit of 5s

I started doing this marketing activity years ago, and it never ceases to amaze me how effective this simple strategy is. Each Monday morning, identify five marketing actions, and book them like appointments. Then don't go home on Friday until they are done.

Now, these can be foundational-type actions, like writing some Web copy or working on a product, but the real power is in lead generation, selling, and generating referrals:

- Write five handwritten notes thanking clients for their past support and business. This act alone will, over time, generate referrals.
- Call five clients who no longer do business with you and make them an offer they can't refuse today! Some clients leave for good reasons. Let them tell you what those reasons were, and you can win them back.
- Call five existing clients and interview them briefly about ways you could serve them better or new services or products they need. Pay attention to what they say. They understand what makes you unique better than you do. They can help you find your core message.
- Call five prospects (I don't usually recommend cold-calling, but if you must, this is the way to do it!) and simply offer them a free tip sheet, series of checklists, or how-to report that is housed on your Web site. Don't try to sell them anything; don't try to make an appointment; don't try to probe for more information—offer them the free info you know they need, and shut up. Let your report sell them, and follow up with those who get the information.

What if you did one of these habits every day? What would that mean to your business?

### Action Steps

1. Craft your marketing goals.
  2. Determine how you will measure your marketing success.
  3. Create a marketing budget.
  4. Create a marketing calendar, and hang it in clear view of all.
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Appendix A:

# Duct Tape Marketing

## Small Business Marketing Resources

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### **Duct Tape Marketing Newsletter**

Sign up to receive free, weekly, small business marketing tips, tactics, and resources via e-mail by subscribing to the Duct Tape Marketing online newsletter: <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/newsletter>.

### **Duct Tape Marketing Blog**

Visit the frequently updated Duct Tape Marketing blog and subscribe via RSS or e-mail so that you don't miss a single post: <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog>

### **Duct Tape Marketing Book Tools Web Site**

Download and utilize a growing collection of marketing tools, worksheets, and forms designed to help you implement the strategies outlined in each chapter of this book: <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/book>.

### **Duct Tape Marketing Products**

Visit our library of small business marketing products, including detailed workbooks and audio programs covering specific areas of small business marketing. Duct Tape Marketing brand merchandise is also available in the product center: <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/products>.

## **Duct Tape Marketing**

### **Duct Tape Marketing Small Business Consulting**

Retain the services of a Duct Tape Marketing authorized consultant to help you implement the strategies and tactics covered in this book. Engagements are available by phone or onsite. Find a consultant near you: <http://www.ducttapemarketingconsultant.com>.

### **Duct Tape Marketing Licensing Opportunity**

Become a Duct Tape Marketing authorized consultant. Are you a marketing or business consultant looking for a packaged system and set of tools to help you work with clients and grow your practice? Opportunities to license the Duct Tape Marketing system and brand are available to select marketing professionals. Visit: <http://www.ducttapemarketingconsultant.com>.

Appendix B:

## Special Offers

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### Free 30-Minute Signature Brand Audit

After reading *Duct Tape Marketing*, you may decide that you want to take action and create your very own marketing system.

You don't have to go it alone. You can engage an authorized Duct Tape Marketing coach to work with you to create and implement the systems and strategies contained in this book.

*Duct Tape Marketing* readers can request a free 30-minute coaching session, including an audit of your brand and Web site, from any Duct Tape Marketing authorized consultant. In this valuable session you will also receive a host of quick tips aimed at getting you on the road to marketing success.

Visit [www.ducttapemarketingconsultant.com](http://www.ducttapemarketingconsultant.com)  
to find a consultant near you.



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Wi-Fi

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not *at* me

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# About the Author

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John Jantsch is the owner of Duct Tape Marketing and creator of the Duct Tape Marketing system. He is a recognized expert in the area of small business marketing. For more than twenty years he has coached and consulted small business owners and independent professionals in simple and low-cost methods for growing and promoting their businesses.

Jantsch is an award-winning small business marketing blogger who has developed a special knack for showing small business owners how to harness the Internet as a marketing tool. His blog, “Duct Tape Marketing,” was recognized by *Forbes* magazine as the best blog on small business and marketing. His podcast is a top 10 rated show on iTunes and was called a “must listen” by *Fast Company* magazine.

He is a sought after speaker known for his practical small business marketing keynotes and workshops, and his expertise is tapped by organizations such as Hewlett-Packard, SCORE, SBA, Microsoft, Verizon, and American Express as a small business marketing spokesperson.

He is the author of four complete small business marketing courses: The Ultimate Small Business Marketing System, which is a companion to this book and includes 12 workbooks and 4 audio CDs; Social Media Pro; Local Search Pro; and Referral Engine Pro.