

A Simple Marketing Plan

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Marketing is often the difference between an idea and a dream that no one knows about and a real product or service that is used and loved by many.

If you just cringed at the word “marketing”, you are not alone. I resisted the word myself. The word can conjure images of high-pressure, unethical sales practices, very expensive use of media, and a lot of work with results that are rarely guaranteed. Marketing can be all of these, but it does not have to be so.

Perhaps you see yourself as a non-profit or offering a more altruistic product or service? Then the term “public relations” may sound more appealing to you. The terms are not quite the same and you could spend some time researching the nuances of the differences. However, can we agree to consider public relations and marketing as nearly synonymous terms for the rest of our discussion?

The goal of marketing and public relations is essentially the same. You want your target audience to know about you, your product, your service, and your organization and what you have to offer that will make lives better and/or solve problems.

This article is intended to provide something a roadmap to marketing, starting with simple steps that you can begin today with little or no financial investment.

From there we will look at progressive ways of expanding your marketing efforts as appropriate for your goals, time, and resources. For now, we will start with the basics.

First Things First

The first step is some homework for you. Why do you want to do what you are doing?

Marisa Murgatroyd of Live Your Message said that her life and business did not start to take flight until she figured out two big **Whys**:

- **Why** do you want to provide your product or service? What is in it for you? Money? Service? Community? Challenge? If you are a non-profit, why would you, volunteers, and supporters want to be involved?
- **Why** do others want your product or service? Who is your market or audience? What is in it for them? Make their lives better? Money? Solve a problem?

Marisa was just saying something Stephen Covey and others have been saying for years, though most people talk about the two whys in isolation. She struck the right chord with me because being clear on the two whys are essential.

If you are only pursuing a project for yourself, it may have some personal satisfaction for you, but may not go anywhere with others.

If you only focus on what others want and need you may not have the passion or commitment to carry it off. You may be able to launch a product or service, but it will

not reach its full potential if the venture has no passion.

Please take some time to contemplate and write down your two whys. If you can come up with two compelling whys for your self and the market you hope serve, the rest of the marketing plan will be evolve from these two whys.

If you cannot come up with two compelling whys for your venture, then maybe you are not ready the next steps.

Unique Selling Proposition

Have your two whys clearly defined? Good!

Dan Kennedy, founder of Glazer Kennedy Inside Circle, author of the No B.S series of business books as well as and many marketing courses and conferences., would have you develop your Unique Selling Proposition or USP.

What is it about your product, service, publication, or non-profit organization that distinguishes you from perhaps thousands of other people and organizations that are in your market?

This much easier said than done. But if you can clearly state your Unique Selling Proposition, your marketing efforts will be much more focused and effective. There are many books on the subject available in Kindle format at Amazon. See unique selling proposition {provide link on site}

The Bare Essentials

No matter what size your organization is, there are two essentials:

1. Business cards (unless you never plan to talk to people about your product and service in person). You can get tasteful cards through companies like VistaPrint for low cost. Sometimes it is worth having custom designed cards, which could cost hundreds of dollars.
2. A website.

Here is what happens. You are at a party, conference, or networking event and you give your 30-second elevator pitch about your product, service, or non-profit organization. You give out your business card and the people interested in what you have to offer go to your website to find out more.

Even a simple site with a few pages describing what it is you offer and a way to contact you is better than nothing by a long shot. And there is a chance that people will come across your site and contact you out of the blue.

Website

So you need a site! What does a site cost? The short answer is somewhere between zero and million dollars, depending on your goals. There are times when your business can benefit from a site designed to serve a large market with a costs in the tens of thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands. If you are reading this article, chances are that is

not you. Yet.

I created a dynamic site engine that runs sharedvisions.com and a few other sites before WordPress and other self-service platforms like Weebly, Wix, and Squarespace matured online. I also handcrafted a few custom sites. However, my site engine was optimized to provide quick access a lot of different content with a fairly complex menu, site map, and multiple sections. Also the sites do not cater to mobile browsing, which is significant portion of traffic today.

I am now getting people who come asking for help with WordPress, Weebly, Wix, or Squarespace sites that they have started.

I am also more inclined to suggest getting started on one of these platforms, especially if they want to blog or update the content themselves.

The modern features to look for include:

- Professional looking templates. Most offer decent templates even at the free level and support purchasing templates or have a designer tweak a template to work for you.
- Support for integration with social media like Facebook, Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, et cetera.
- Mobile view support.
- Support for widgets such as slide shows, galleries, e-commerce, mailing lists.
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
- Easy content editing.

My first impressions are that [Squarespace](http://Squarespace.com) is the place to go if stunning visual design is your main concern.

Overall I like [Weebly](http://Weebly.com) for the following reasons:

1. There is a decent range of professional looking templates available.
2. It is difficult to imagine an easier site editing interface.
3. All of the key components of a modern site are supported, including image galleries, slide shows, forms, memberships, mailing lists, social media link, and more.
4. Automatic support for mobile browsing and search engine optimization.
5. HTML embedding is supported to allow embedding videos, special scripting, and widgets from companies like MailChimp and InfusionSoft. You will not get stuck waiting for the company to add a widget.
6. You can change the template theme at any time. Tired of your theme? Then you can switch and try something new without rebuilding the site.
7. You can edit the HTML and CSS at a low level. Either you or a designer fluent in Cascading Style Sheets can tweak the styles to get just the look you are looking for across all of the pages on your site with a few edits. Again, you will not get stuck.
8. It is easy and inexpensive to create a number of different sites to focus on specific

product and service offerings or to cater to specialized markets. You may want to appeal to one market with an approach that is in a language that they understand, while you could target a different segment with a different presentation – even if it is the same product or service.

9. You can do A/B testing without a lot of fuss and expense. Create two versions of the site and see which gets the best response.

If I came to me and wanted a site with a limited budget, I would probably recommend getting started on Weebly. We would design and build the site together and I would train you to maintain the site. Or you could simply have me update the content on a regular basis.

Social Media

Although essential, websites have never been particularly good marketing vehicles on their own. You generally need to drive traffic to your site in one way or another. Social media can help do that with a little planning and time. Courteous and regular postings can help generate interest and spread the word about your product or service. Facebook is often used to encourage live discussion of current topics.

You will need to have a good idea of main strengths of each social media platform and take care in your campaigns. If you are not willing to engage social media regularly, it is best to test with only one or two platforms and consider hiring someone to manage the social media accounts for you.

Beyond Simple

Okay, perhaps we have reached the limits of a marketing plan that could be called simple! Everything up to this point could be done a little planning, research, and some simple tools that are available for free or nearly free.

Here is a recap:

1. **You have determined your two essential *whys*.**
2. **You have identified your *Unique Selling Proposition*.**
3. **You have established or will establish website appropriate to your goals. This could be simple and free, highly planned and designed, or something in between.**
4. **You have considered how to incorporate social media.**

If you want help working through some or all of these four areas, please contact me at 604 762-6410 or gregdixon@sharedvisions.com and we can start working out a plan that will work for your goals or budget.

The next items require more planning, sophisticated tools, and effort to implement. Maybe you are ready now? Or perhaps we need to work through the basics first. At least read through the following sections to get an idea of incremental steps that can be taken over time. Rome was not built in a day!

Mailing Lists

Much of Internet marketing is built around building mailing lists. That is why you do not have to browse too far before coming across a site or post that offers a free report, training, or gift in return for your email address. That is likely to lead to successive emails offering more free training and information of interest to you. Eventually that will lead to offering to sell a product or service to you.

For most Internet marketers, the mailing list is pure gold and they are playing a long-term game to get sales.

It is the same for direct mail marketers as well. In some markets, fax machines still rule. Yes, hard to believe, but true!

One of the best places to start with list building is MailChimp.com. Sign-up and use is free for small organizations and the tools and training resources are top notch.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

Two top pay-per-click (PPC) advertising platforms are Google AdWords and Facebook Advertising. In my experience with Google AdWords, there are three main things that can happen with your ads:

1. Not enough people are searching for the keywords relative to your product of service to display the ads frequently, let alone click on the ads. If you cannot come up with keyword phrases that generate traffic, then maybe you need to put more attention into the second why of the two essential whys and restructure or reposition your product or service.
2. Your ads will generate traffic and you can tune the costs versus return on investment (ROI) to make it worthwhile.
3. The cost of reaching your market is very high. Some keyword phrases may cost \$5 or \$10 a click to up anywhere near the top. This indicates both interest and strong competition.

How much should you spend? The general advice is to start small to test the market. If you can find an ad with keywords that generate more in sales than they cost, then keeping ramping as long as you have a positive return on investment. If \$100 works, reinvest the profit to ramp to \$1,000, then \$10,000 ... If it stops providing a positive return, stop or scale back.

Free Market Research

You can sign up for Google AdWords for free and use its traffic estimator tool to test ads and keywords even if your product or service is just an idea sketched on a napkin. If the estimator is forecasting low traffic and PPC costs, perhaps the interested in your product will be low.

If the traffic estimator results are at the other end, then you know that you need to have a very strong unique selling proposition, strategy, and delivery to compete.

You will also do other market research, but the traffic estimator can give clues on general interest and how to position in your market.

Classified Ads

If you look in the classified section of your newspaper or favourite magazine and see the same ad run every month, chances are that the ad is generating a positive Return On Investment. For example, if an ad costs \$10 a day to run in a single newspaper and generates \$10 in profit, then run it in every newspaper where it works until it stops working! Many newspapers will run ads for free for low-cost products, including both paper and online exposure. Worth a try.

Copywriting

Dan Kennedy will tell you that the most important skill you can learn or access is copywriting. All effective communications start with good copy. I have not always believed this myself, but I have come to the same conclusion.

Close your eyes while watching even the flashiest television ad and you will still hear the marketing message. Flashy visuals drag you in, keep your attention, and underscore the points with visuals, but the best ads work on radio too. Copywriting.

Strong copy is the basis for effective video sales letters, whiteboard videos, and many presentation videos. Again, copywriting.

Copywriting includes writing classified ads, email messages, whitepapers, video and radio ads, paid print advertising, social media posts, blog entries, promotional articles, and more.

Direct Response Advertising

Dan Kennedy and the folks at GKIC still walk the walk true to their direct response roots. Since signing up for the Insiders Circle Newsletter, I have received at least one item in the mail a week. Sometimes I receive many more pieces than that. I have received plastic handcuffs and mouse pad that I am looking at right now. I also receive email articles and invitations almost daily, along with links to training/marketing video clips.

They leave no stone unturned in their marketing approach. And some of it is pure gold as well as entertaining. The best reminder from this week is to never go into a meeting with a potential client without researching as much as you can about the client and what their needs might be. It is easy to spend too much time on our why without understating their why!

Press Releases

A feature in a newspaper, blog, radio show, or television show can be worth thousands of dollars worth of exposure for your product, service, band, or event. If you can find a newsworthy angle to your release, it is worth sending out press releases to appropriate media.

You will need to keep the Why of the publication in mind. Generally why they would pursue an interview or feature with you is because it serves their audience to know about your event or innovative new product or service. Some community newspapers want to support local businesses.

Most print publications also have an online version, providing an opportunity to provide links from your website, email messages, and social media to help spread the word.

Video

Most marketing campaigns use some form of video these days, including:

- Video sales letters, with a narration and text and images.
- Direct talking head presentations.
- Doodle or Whiteboard ads. One my favourite is Shocking French, which starts with a click ad of an ambiguously sexy photo of a woman, which leads to one of most persuasive doodle videos ever for a foreign language training system. If you are interested in learning a new language you will have a hard time not hitting the add to cart button at the end!
- Training sessions. A current strategy used by Jeff Walker, Ryan Deiss, Brendan Buchard, Brian Tracey, Andy Jenkins, Mike Filsaim, and others is to present a lot of value content for free. You get a very good idea of who they are and what they have to offer long before you get to add to cart.
- Project profiles. I do quite a lot of video work with worthwhile non-profit projects.
- Music, art, and other special events.
- Weddings and family events.
- Keynote speakers.
- Client testimonials.
- Short 'television' ads.

Short video clips can work with websites, email lists, social media, and search engines to extend your online presence. Long clips can establish trust and authority. Length is not a factor if the content is intriguing and interesting to the viewer. Good storytelling skills help.

Marketing Funnels

You have probably seen many of the above tools and strategies linked together in what is called a sales funnel. You are invited to read or download something, which leads to more information and possibly a free trial, then a compelling reason to purchase or subscribe to something, followed up with offers to buy or subscribe to a complementary add-on. There are many variations of the marketing funnels.

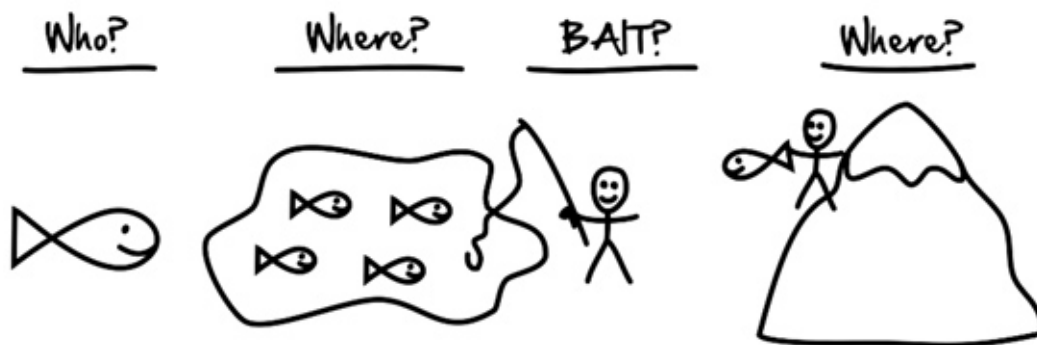
I am quite impressed with [ClickFunnels](#), which can easily host automated webinars as well as make various kinds of funnels in an amazingly easy user interface. The tutorial

videos are excellent and Russell Brunson seems like a young genius appreciated by the Dan Kennedy and GKIC gang. [Please check out Russell Brunson's demonstration of building different kinds of sales funnels.](#) It will open up a new world for you.

I have ClickFunnels if you would like to try creating a funnel for your business. Please contact me at 604 762-6410 or gregdixon@sharedvisions.com. I would ask a nominal fee to set up a funnel and a percentage of the returns if it works.

Fishing Analogy

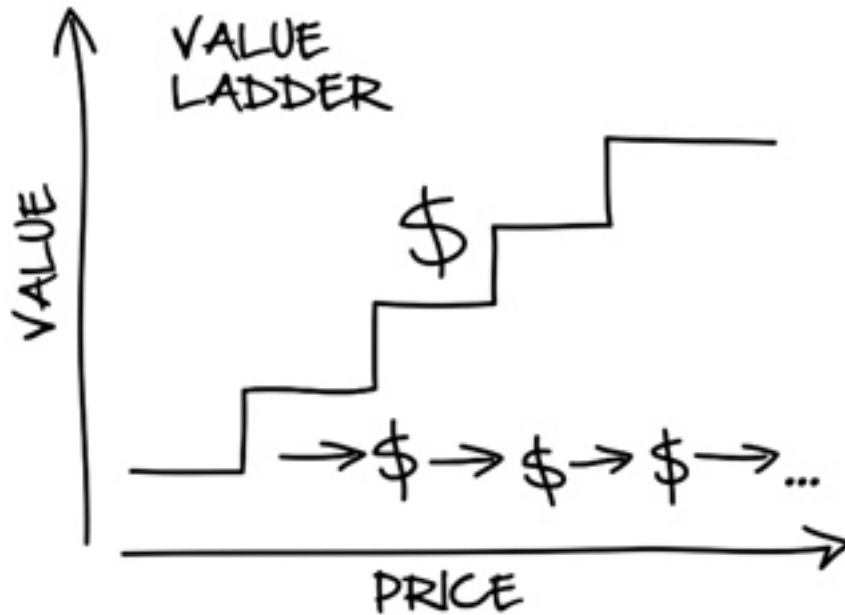
I ordered a four-hour training video with ClickFunnels that is pure Gold. At one point he scrawled a crude drawing that shows a fish on the left (who your market is), with a pond of fish (where they hang out), a man with a fishing rod (using the right bait), followed a mountain o (where you want to take the prospect).



Value Ladder

He next used a value ladder to explain how move a client through your sales funnel to provide progressively higher value offerings.

Russell said that most businesses and marketing falls short by focusing on the middle step and not paying enough attention to steps lower and higher on the value ladder.



For example, say you have a product that you want to sell for \$50. The tendency is to offer the product at \$50 and hope someone buys it. People generally ignore the lower and upper levels of the value ladder.

The lowest rung is a free offer of a report or something else to interest a potential customer. The next rung is to offer something low-cost that is very tempting. Often the item sold here will just break even to cover costs. The middle rung is your usual product or service offering. The next rungs represent progressively more expensive products or premium services. The main idea is that once a client spends a little with you, they will often spend more if you are offering products and services of value to them.

The folks at Webinar Jam are very good at this! Just saying!

Webinars

Webinars have become an important tool for both promoting and supporting products online. You will come across or sent an invitation to sign-up for a webinar that introduces a product, teaches some skill or knowledge area, or provides specialized tips. The best sequences will send reminders, sometimes to your cell phone, to join the webinar. The webinar itself could contain people talking to the camera, demonstrating software, presentation slides, interaction with other attendees, or more.

Some will be pure information, though a sales webinar will make one or more offers. Some of those will be presented as one-time offers to provide some urgency. Some go far, but the best ones look like they are offering something of great value to you.

After the webinar the best ones provide follow-up emails and links to watch replays. The webinar is likely to be presented over and over again as what is called an Evergreen webinar.

If you can create an entertaining and compelling webinar, the same webinar can continue to provide training or generate money on autopilot.

Webinar Jam! Seems to be one of the best platforms out there. I have Webinar Jam if you would like to try presenting a webinar yourself. Good webinars require:

- Good content
- Planning
- Practice

I can help you explore webinars as a vehicle for your message. 604 762-6410 or gregdixon@sharedvisions.com.

Marketing Automation

ClickFunnels and Webinar Jam! Provide marketing automation tools such as auto-responders, list building, automated follow ups. The software tracks when you sign up, what you do, when you bail out. The best planned flow will automatically send out reminders, offers, links to replay, follow up offers. In short, the automated systems can reproduce what a well-trained sales force can do.

Based on the use big some of the biggest players such Dan Kennedy, Dave Dee, Rich Shefren, Ryan Deiss, Maria Andros, and others, the premium marketing automation company is likely infusionsoft at infusionsoft.com. Infusionsoft provides a mature sales automation and Customer Relationship Management system for companies with matures sale processes in place. And perhaps the people at Infusionsoft can help you get the sales processes in place to seriously grow your business.

If you are just dipping your toes in this arena and want to learn more about what goes on behind the scenes, Agile CRM at agilecrm.com allows you to play with a free trial. I like where this product is headed, though I think you need to be fairly technical to use it. It seems to be growing up fast, though.

A Simple Marketing Plan – Revisited

Okay. The marketing plan is perhaps more complete and comprehensive than simple!

However, you do not need to do it all or do it alone. We can start with the basics and progress through the more complex items according to your goals, time , and budget. The process could extend over many months.

I have access to all of the tools listed above except Infusionsoft.

Please let me know if you would like help with any or all of the following:

1. Identifying why you are offering your services for yourself and why you are offering your services for others.
2. Your Unique Selling Proposition
3. Establishing a website
4. Social media

5. Print assets such as business cards and brochures
6. Video
7. Copywriting
8. Mail lists
9. Sales funnels
10. Webinars
11. Sales Automation

Results Based Pricing

One of the ways we can structure payment to to pay a nominal fee up front, then determine a payment based on measurable results. For example, perhaps \$10 per person who joins a mailing list or \$100 for each new customer. The rates will depend on your goals.

Please call me to discuss your vision for the future.

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