



5 MARKETING MUST-HAVES

for every business

TO BRAND AND MARKET YOUR BUSINESS, YOU'LL NEED:

1. A brand identity
2. An elevator pitch
3. Promotional tools
4. A social network
5. An experienced mentor

You're excited to spread the word about your business.

Wondering where to get started?

We've identified five marketing must-haves to help you successfully brand and promote your business. The tips included in this guide are proven to work for large and small businesses alike.

1. A BRAND IDENTITY



The key to great marketing is answering the right questions. What are you offering and who will you offer it to? Will you be a company known for outstanding customer service? Or will you be known for great prices?

Your brand is the story that tells the world – and your customers – who you are. Everything that shapes the public's perception of your business is part of your brand identity. That's why all of your marketing efforts should build and promote the story you want to tell.

Five things to consider as you build your brand identity:

Description: How do you define your business? What is your product or service?

Audience: Who are you specifically trying to connect with? New moms? Young professionals? Small business owners?

Customer needs: What are your customers looking for in a product or service? What is most important to them? And what are they looking for beyond just the product or service you offer? Is it a great price? The best quality? One-on-one support?

Key benefits: How will you fill a need or solve a problem? What is the most important thing you offer your customers?

Key differentiator: What makes you different from the competition? Why would a customer be better off doing business with you rather than your closest competitor?

Once you've answered these questions, you will have defined your position in the marketplace and be able to answer the most important one of all: Why should customers buy from you?

Equipped with an understanding of your brand identity, you can start to develop a personality for your business. It may be helpful to think about this in terms of the types of people you know. Do you envision your business as playful? Down to earth? Sophisticated? Your business's personality identifies the unique traits or characteristics that humanize your brand. After you've discovered what those are, you'll find that marketing your business becomes a lot easier.

Here's an example of brand identity brainstorming for a fictitious business we'll call "Emma's Eco-Friendly Landscaping":

Description: We provide eco-friendly land care services.

Audience: Local homeowners and businesses.

Customer needs: Our customers are seeking eco-friendly landscaping and gardening solutions. They want more than just a beautiful garden – they want to know that it exists in harmony with the environment around it.

Key benefits: When you utilize our services, you get both a beautifully designed property and the peace of mind that comes with knowing all the materials are eco-friendly. You'll have access to an expert team that's capable of educating you regarding the most sustainable land care methods. Plus, organic gardening methods ensure you'll use less water and fertilizer in the long run.

Key differentiator: Unlike most of our competitors, we utilize pesticide-, herbicide- and petrochemical-free fertilizers. We also source our plants and materials locally, and we responsibly recycle all our waste.

2. AN ELEVATOR PITCH



Once you have a clearly established brand identity, it's a good idea to prepare yourself for all the informal occasions when you'll have a chance to talk up your business. These "elevator pitches" – usually kept to about a minute – provide opportunities for you to come across as professional, capable and memorable, ensuring your business is top of mind the next time a potential customer needs your product or service.



During this brief window of time, you'll need to clearly summarize your business with confidence and enthusiasm – and that takes practice. Here are some things you'll want to explain:

Who you are: Consider what you would most want the listener to remember about you. Keep it short and to the point.

What you do: Provide a concise description of your product or service.

Why you are unique: Detail a marketplace problem that impacts your audience and explain why your business is uniquely suited to address it. To organize your thoughts, it may help to think of this as a tagline that allows the listener to understand how utilizing you or your company would benefit them.

Your immediate goal: Include what you are specifically asking your audience to do and include a timeframe for doing this.

Make sure you tailor your pitch to your audience. You wouldn't address a potential customer the same way you would a neighbor at a party asking about your business. Keep in mind the distinct concerns of your listener.

Rehearse your pitch out loud – 50 to 100 times – in front of a mirror or to a mentor, friend or family member. You want to make sure you include every important point and that your pitch is on time. That said, don't try to memorize your pitch verbatim – you want it to sound natural.

When the conversation has ended, make sure your listener has your contact information. An eye-catching business card can serve as an effective reminder of what your business offers long after you've parted ways.

Here is an example of an elevator pitch for Emma's Eco-Friendly Landscaping:

Hi, I'm Emma, owner of Emma's Eco-Friendly Landscaping. Did you know that organic gardening requires less water and fertilization than non-organic methods? It's also healthier for the homeowner.

My landscapers specialize in sustainable gardening solutions for many homes and businesses in this area. Our organic gardens are both beautiful and better for the environment because, unlike other big landscaping companies, we do not use harmful pesticides and petrochemical fertilizers. We're from the local community, and we garden for the local community. We also take the time to educate our clients on sustainable landscaping methods.

If you or any of your friends are interested in revitalizing your garden in an eco-friendly way, I'd love to talk in more detail about our services. Here is my contact information.

3. PROMOTIONAL TOOLS



After you've identified who you are and what you do, you'll need a variety of marketing tools to reinforce your brand identity and give your prospective customers something tangible to remember you by. Here are some tools that can play a vital role in promoting your business:

Business logo

Start with a professional logo – this will serve as the foundation for your brand's style. Creating a logo is essential to branding your business because it will be positioned everywhere throughout your company, including your business cards, envelopes, websites and packaging. For more established businesses, think about if your existing logo represents your business today. If it doesn't, you may need to consider refreshing it.

Business cards

A business card is often the first thing a prospective customer or client sees, so making a strong initial impression is crucial. Make sure to include the following information:

Name	Phone number
Company name	Website
Business logo	Social media profiles
Email address	Physical address (if applicable)

While the front of the card should be all about your business, the prime real estate on the back can be utilized as appointment or loyalty cards. Depending on your industry, eye-catching designs and colors might also go a long way towards leaving an enduring impression.

Professional website

A professional-looking website is a must-have for any business. Think about it – if you're looking to purchase something, the first thing you're likely to do is check online to see where it's available and at what price. If your business isn't online, potential customers will have a much harder time finding you.

Also, having a website with search-engine-optimized (SEO) content – key phrases that match what your customers are typing into search engines – is critical to ensuring your business's online visibility.

Branded marketing materials

You've asked the right questions about your business and understand the needs of your target customers. You've developed a concrete brand identity that really tells your company story. Now is the time to communicate your message and give your business the exposure it needs. Use postcards, magnets, signage, branded apparel and other promotional handouts to get your name out there. As long as you are consistent in your messaging and branding, awareness of your business will steadily expand.

4. A SOCIAL NETWORK



Does your small business have a social media presence? Although it may seem intimidating, social media can provide many benefits, including direct customer interaction, word-of-mouth marketing and customer service. We'll illustrate these benefits using the example of Emma's Eco-Friendly Landscaping.

Connecting with customers

Through interactive online platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter), social media provides the opportunity to engage with both customers and prospects. It's an interactive way to reach and interact with people outside your traditional network.

Example: Many customers aren't exposed to the breadth of Emma's product offerings or her expertise. Uploading a photo gallery of new garden designs on Facebook or creating helpful tips that can be posted on Twitter can kickstart a conversation with her next potential customer...and reinforce her knowledge to a current one.

The new word of mouth

Whether it's Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest, the concept of sharing is one thing every social platform has in common. Depending on the social media outlet, you can share everything from photos and videos to helpful articles with your audience, who can then share it with theirs.

Example: Emma posts a photo on Facebook of a perfectly manicured lawn she worked on. One of her fans sees the photo and shares it with a friend that they know is looking for a new landscaper. This is a new potential contact for Emma.

Customer service

Social media affords customers the ability to connect directly with businesses like never before. Whether it's a negative or positive comment, it is an opportunity to build a relationship with current and potential customers.

Example: Emma's client has ordered tulips for her front yard, but when the client arrives home there are daisies instead. Emma's client voices her displeasure on Twitter and mentions Emma's business. Emma sees the comment and responds right away to fix it. The client ends up being happy not only with the outcome, but also with how quickly Emma responded. The client in turn shares her positive experience with all of her followers.

This is a quick snapshot of the potential benefits of using social media. Before you jump in, be sure to do your research. Make sure you understand each platform and what it is used for. There is nothing wrong with starting with just one platform and growing from there.

5. AN EXPERIENCED MENTOR



Growing a business can be a challenge for even the savviest business owner. No matter how prepared you are, there are always some obstacles your previous experience hasn't taught you to expect. That's where having a trusted advisor to bounce ideas off of can be helpful.

Whether it's through SCORE or your own network, seek out veteran business owners who you can talk to about your day-to-day activities and long-term goals. This person may bring a fresh perspective based on their own experience and help reduce your risk of putting resources (time and money) toward things that may not make sense for your business.



Over 15 million small business owners rely on Vistaprint to deliver everything they need to market their business – from business cards to custom websites. Exceptional prices, 24/7 convenience and more than 5,000 professional designs support Vistaprint's mission to fuel small businesses' success. To browse our products, visit vistaprint.com.



Created by Vistaprint, Owner Nation is the only place on the Internet devoted to those who own and market their own small business. The site helps business owners achieve marketing success by providing real world marketing ideas and practical advice through tutorials, articles, videos, polls, interviews and more. To learn more, visit ownernation.us.