

# How to make an effective marketing plan on a small budget

 By [Dylan Kohlstädt](#)

13 Jun 2016

With the challenging economic climate that's settled on South Africa like a dark winter cloud you might find that your business has hit a bit of a lull; phones aren't ringing off the hook like they used to and you find yourself thinking of ways to cut back on costs.



[123RF](#)

You haul out your budget and sharpen your pencil as your eyes rake over every number on that spreadsheet, trying to spot anything you can cull.

But before you get any ideas about cutting your marketing budget, we'd like to give you a few strategies to add to your marketing plan to bring back those phone calls and emails.

This is the time to work smart and lean. These five powerful tools will stretch your budget and make your marketing plan work for you.

## 1. Unwrap social media marketing

You no longer need to hope and pray that clients happen upon your website. Social media is here to help you find new clients and remind your past customers about your awesome services, and you have the choice of redirecting them to your social media pages or your website, depending on what your marketing plan aims to achieve.

Social media is good for the following:

- Increasing likes or followers on your page – exposing your business and content to new people, and adding credibility to your brand
- Increasing conversations and engagement with your content
- Encouraging customers to create their own content – by posting photos or posts of them using your product or merchandise – effectively becoming your brand ambassadors
- Encouraging people to share your content – exposing it to more audiences
- Setting up lead generation campaigns that get people to fill out their email addresses – this is brilliant for customers who want a constant flow of leads

The top social media platforms used by South Africans, in order of popularity:

- Facebook hands down, then, to a lesser extent, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, to name a few.

All you need to do is pick one or two of these that your customers use (not the ones you're most comfortable with) and figure out how to work them effectively.

Look at what your competitors are doing and which posts get the most engagement. Then spend a few hours on these channels every day until you 'get it'.

Publishing [regular content](#) on these platforms that is interesting and informative, not hard sell, can be a highly effective way of growing your business's reach. And it won't hurt your marketing budget.

Social media can be cheap to execute, but time consuming. Make sure you have a marketing plan. Know which markets you want to reach and what's important to them before you start.

## 2. Host an event

Hosting an event is a great way to get your brand out there, especially during quieter months. You might not feel comfortable giving away tips on how you do what you do. But don't think others won't need you anymore after you've shared your expertise. Read what we wrote on the [paradox of generosity](#), and you'll see what we mean.

Events are a great way to expose your business to potential new clients and should definitely form part of your marketing plan. You could also host a [MeetUp](#) as another way to get more involved in the community. MeetUps are free gatherings that you can use to build positive relationships with clients. They also improve your visibility in the community.

Lastly, teaming up with other businesses in your field is a great way to make connections. Host an event with them that reaches your mutual clients, and make sure you have a dynamic speaker with interesting topics to get people excited about what you do and the thought of working with you.

## 3. Get your clients marketing for you

Word of mouth is still one of the most powerful 'tight marketing budget' tools. But how do you get those mouths talking? Referrals are a great starting point and are great on a small marketing budget. If you offer fantastic service, you should find that your clients just keep on introducing you to other possible clients. If things are quiet on this front, you might need to address your customer experience and customer service:

- Check your [customer experience](#) – what is it like to be your customer? More importantly, [do you know who your](#)

[customers are?](#) If you say ‘everyone who doesn’t have my product is a potential customer’ then just give yourself a smack on the back of your head. You need a marketing strategy session to identify your target markets or you’re going to waste a lot of money targeting the wrong people or mass markets

- *Check your [website’s usability](#)* – are people frustrated or delighted with your website? Are you losing money through your website? People want to buy from your website, but can they? These questions are foundational to your marketing strategy. You need to ask real human beings what they feel on your website and that’s where usability testing is most powerful.
- *Check your [brand experience](#)* – is your brand consistent from the wonderful lady who makes your coffee through to your best sales rep? It’s the golden thread that moves through your business and dictates how you look, how you speak and how you behave. It’s pretty important and needs to be included in your marketing plan. Having a clear brand strategy might not seem important to you, but what if I told you that customers decide on you or your competitor based on brand and brand alone? If you don’t have a clear brand, how will they pick you? They will then look for the lowest price, and you don’t want that to be your business.
- *Is it easy to do business with you?* I have a few thoughts on that... we need to [make it really easy to do business with us](#) as South African small businesses.

## 4. Don’t underestimate the power of email

[Email marketing](#) is one of the most powerful marketing strategy tools around as it is nearly free and nearly everyone has an email address. If you do it right, you won’t be a spammer.

- Don’t only talk about yourself and your services
- Create lots of interesting content that you send out monthly
- Only send emails that address your customers’ needs

Everything you do should be geared towards gathering email addresses from prospects:

- Create an ebook or white paper for them to download from your website, how-to guides are great for this – and ask for their email address in exchange
- Create lead generation campaigns encouraging people from across various platforms (email, web, paid ads, banner ads, social media, etc) to fill out these forms

Send out monthly newsletters to remind your clients about events, specials and other valuable information they can benefit from. [MailChimp](#) is great for this. Test your emails on a small focus group first before bringing it up to a larger scale. Keep your emails interesting so that your clients aren’t tempted to unsubscribe. Your contacts are gold. You want to create trust and establish yourself as a field specialist. So never, ever spam.

## 5. Get on page one of Google

Search Engine Optimisation ([SEO](#)) is unbelievably powerful. You want to be on page one of Google. Everything you do should be geared towards this goal and your marketing plan should reflect this.

The first place to start is to sort out your website through an SEO audit and fix-up. This will give your website the best chance of turning up on Google. Being on page one of Google will drive more traffic to your website by making you easier to find and ultimately bringing in more clients, clients who are searching for what you sell.

There are simple ways to do great things for your marketing plan without breaking the bank. So put down that pencil or red pen, grab a cup of coffee and get to work!

Dylan is the founder and CEO of Shift ONE, a creative integrated digital marketing agency with 12 full time staff members. Shift ONE was incubated by GTI and Google for Entrepreneurs and she now gives back by offering digital marketing training and workshops and talks to entrepreneurs. She has also facilitated the GTI Women in Business programme and mentors entrepreneurs, marketing managers and women in business on a regular basis.

- Why your social media sucks: The 5 levels of social media marketing (Part 2) - 9 Jul 2018
- Why your social media sucks: The five levels of social media marketing (Part 1) - 2 Jul 2018
- How to make an effective marketing plan on a small budget - 13 Jun 2016
- Three ways innovation could be killing your business - 14 Jan 2015
- 5 people who should never design your website, and how to manage them - 23 Sep 2011

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>