



Strategy to Impact.

The Lowest Hanging Fruit for your Business

Marketing Planning Guide

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Strategy to Impact

- The Lowest Hanging Fruit

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Instructions

- This guide comes with a complimentary Workbook, that lists all the consideration questions asked in this guide. Depending on your style of learning, you can answer the questions as you go through the guide, or once you have completed it. The Workbook will clearly indicate which section the questions refer to, so you can quickly refer to that section again to refresh your memory on the concepts and examples.
- Everyone who purchases this guide will get access to related online classes and learning material.
- The goal of this guide is to provide an overview in the essential marketing principles you need, to help you focus on what matters. The goal is not to overwhelm, but sometimes, especially if these concepts are new to you, it might feel like information overload.

If you find it difficult to progress through the guides, please let us know, it will be valuable feedback and we will utilise it to improve the product, and ensure that you get the support you need to realise the value of your investment with us!

Contact us at anytime - grow@strategytoimpact.com

Introduction

Greetings!

With so much marketing support material out there, we are thrilled that you are here, it means that our marketing strategy worked... one way or another...

I'm excited about the chance to help your business thrive. With 20 years of hard-earned experience, I can share insights that will save you valuable time and money. You'll **avoid costly consultant fees and wasted efforts** on ineffective marketing channels, focusing instead on strategies most relevant for your business and customers, meaning that you can quickly see the results, or if not then understand what the issues are.

The goal here is to share valuable insights and summarise **all that you need to know** to make informed decisions and hit the ground running with your marketing, rather than Googling for hours trying to understand what is relevant for you, or trusting expensive agencies that they are offering you the best solutions.

See the Strategy to Impact guides as the foundation to **choose your own adventure** with your marketing.

To avoid writing a thesis that you are unlikely to read, the purpose of the guides is to provide a high-level overview of channels to help you determine your focus areas, it would not be viable to also explain the action steps for every channel, but at least you can focus your time on learning HOW to do something, as after working through the guides you already **will know WHAT** you should do. To help you with the HOW we will be

constantly updating our digital Tool box and provide learning material by other organisations so you **don't have to figure it out for yourself.**

Many **business owners** tell me how **overwhelmed** they are with all the info, and feel like they **“should be doing all of these things”**, but they are not sure where to start, are confused with the marketing planning templates, and do not have the energy to learn it all, or what resources to use. As a result they do very little in terms of formal planning, and **spread themselves thin trying to do it all....**

Strategy to Impact to the rescue!

Each business is unique, with unique goals and capabilities, even if they are competing in the same industry for the same clients. My value as a business mentor working with clients, for the last 10 years, has been to **unpack all the options and provide clarity** on what business owners should be focusing on, which comes with a big dose of **motivation and inspiration.**

I have thought long and hard about how to share this value with more clients beyond one-on-one meetings- the solution... you are reading it now.

Many new clients come to our meetings needing the foundational marketing knowledge. This means we spend **valuable time on basic insights** rather than personalised strategy and troubleshooting your specific challenges. **By equipping yourself with these insights beforehand, you gain clarity at your own pace.** Then, if you still desire one-on-one support, our meetings become laser-focused on maximizing your success. It's a win-win: you save time and money, and we get straight to tailored solutions that make a difference.

For example, I often see business owners that specifically seek my services to troubleshoot their marketing channels, ie Facebook, and my usual response is “Yes I can help you do that, but do you need Facebook? Is that where your clients are?”, and more often than not, it is clear that they are spending all their energy barking up the wrong tree, getting frustrated and feeling like there is no demand for their product or service.

Simply put: it is essential for you to **consider the opportunity cost** of investing all your energy and resources into one marketing channel over another. This can be **the difference between business success and failure.**

In this guide we will explore essential considerations and available opportunities.

I want to share my marketing mottos:

1. **All marketing is good marketing - but not all marketing should be your number #1 priority because some channels simply will not yield the results you need.**

For example, spending \$10K on an ad in a newspaper is a great idea! However, is that going to yield the same results as spending this budget on another channel? While newspaper ads and Facebook can be effective, they might not be the best use of your time and money. Every hour dedicated to one channel takes away from potentially more profitable tactics.

2. **What is the lowest-hanging fruit?** - I see all marketing channels as fruit in a tree ready for picking, however, metaphorically speaking some fruits are low enough for you to reach out, grab and enjoy immediately. Others would require you to purchase a ladder, risk your life, and spend energy climbing to the top of the tree to pick the

highest one, only to miss all the more accessible opportunities below it. The purpose of this guide is to show all the fruits in the tree, so you can decide for yourself, which is the lowest one for you. We are looking to determine the best result for the least effort.

3. **“Strategy is the easy part, execution is everything”** a famous quote circulating online often attributed to various billionaires but be it Bezos or Jobs who said it first, they are right execution is everything when it comes to marketing. I can help you come up with the best strategy possible, but you are the one that has to go off and execute it, which is often where sh*t goes wrong (excuse the French). Your skills, capabilities, interests and alignment are crucial to your marketing plan's success. You need to be clear on your weaknesses which you need to support with external resources, which costs time and money and since both are scares how do you decide which area to focus on?!

Even identical businesses with the same plan will see vastly different results due to execution. This highlights why larger businesses, who are able to hire experts, often outperform micro-businesses where owners handle everything themselves.

4. **“Marketing is about creating value for people not about selling them stuff that they don’t need”** - I am sure that most people reading this know they have a great product or service that they know customers will value. The purpose of marketing is to figure out how those who could benefit from this product see the information and understand that it is for them. Often marketing can be labelled as the engine of the capitalism-fueled consumerist society, and I am sure at times it can be. However, if we approach marketing with a win-win

mindset, and focus on creating or highlighting the value in our products or services, it makes marketing a lot more enjoyable for all involved.

As a business mentor, I focus on empowering clients, not predicting success. History is filled with 'crazy' ideas that became wildly successful. Likewise, seemingly brilliant ideas can falter without strong execution. My goal is to support founders and marketing executives in refining their vision and equip them with the knowledge and resources necessary for sustained growth.

I also think it is incredibly offensive when someone shoots down your ideas, so I approach it in a way that helps people see how challenging the journey might be, and help them understand the action plan and timelines required to make it all happen. And if after seeing the big picture you are still motivated to pursue it, then it's my job to help guide you on the journey.

Ready?! Let's do this!

How to use the guides

Having worked with thousands of business owners over the years, I know exactly how unique all our preferences are for consuming new knowledge. **A preferred method for one person may be overwhelming for another.** I especially understand this having taught Digital Marketing to university students for 4 years, the same material can be consumed and interpreted and many different ways.

I want to **accommodate as many preferences as possible.** Phase 1 are the written guides + Tool Box + Knowledge Library. Phase 2 will enhance your

learning experience, we will be providing audio and video versions of the guide, live sessions, and a a planning workbook. These resources aim to provide a structured approach to help you consolidate the knowledge gained from this guide and apply it to create functional marketing plans. We hope to create a Bionic Reading version to help the neurodivergent executives consume this valuable information. **The more feedback we can get from you, the better we can be at helping you achieve your business goals.**

This guide is a powerful tool, saving you valuable time and money. Treat your engagement with it as seriously as any scheduled meeting. **Set aside focused time**, just as you would for a one-on-one session, to achieve the best results.

Go ahead, and book in at least 3, one to two hours block of time to work through the guide in the next couple of weeks. This will give you a good indication of how efficient you are in progressing through it, and book in the remainder of your time according.

This guide is intended to be read from start to finish. Initially, I recommend reading through all the marketing guides sequentially, but the guide on Digital Marketing Channels can be read in any order.

We will also be giving you access to the Strategy to Impact Knowledge Library, with additional reading material and links to trusted sources, plus our Tool Box with current and useful tools that will help you save a ton of time researching.

Marketing foundations

Before we dive into identifying relevant tactics, its important that we are all on the same page with marketing planning principles. This section is a bit of Marketing 101, so for those with a marketing background this could be stating the obvious, however, it is essential to reflect on these principles and their implication for your business. It can be hard to fully comprehend the value of this model until you see how all the components come together. It is especially helpful in troubleshooting sales performance. For those of you who are “new” to marketing, this could be very eye-opening.

Even I need to remind myself of these foundational principles whenever I am marketing anything, including my own services.

The Marketing Mix

While the Marketing Mix framework might seem basic, my years of applying it to real-world business challenges have shown me it's often overlooked or misunderstood. My clients find my approach insightful because it's grounded in practical experience, not just textbook theory, though it's important to weave that in.... being a university teacher and all.

In short, the Marketing Mix is the fundamental framework of your product/service and how customers access it. This is often referred to as the 4 or **5 Ps of Marketing - Product, Price, Promotion, Place and People** - there are actually up to 7 Ps, but I find that these 5 are the priority and integrate the remaining Ps i.e. Proof and Processes is important once the rest of the mix is in place. I have had a couple of experiences as a consumer recently where the price and product and people are right, but the

processes really let them down and left me an unhappy customer even though overall the value was great. As the goal is to focus on the lowest hanging fruit for now, lets cover the first 4 Ps.

I find that 100% of the time when business performance is not meeting expectations there is always at least one if not all of the Ps that are not in alignment. There is no point in executing your strategy if one or more of the following needs improvement:

PRODUCT

This of course will always be the first point of consideration. Without clarity on what you will be selling, and minimal viable product (for start-ups) and getting that right, there is no point in marketing. For example I have seen some great marketing campaigns for apps and after downloading the app and going through the onboard process and testing the app its clear that the only thing going for it, is a competent marketing team.

Consider these questions:

- Have you validated your product or service? Do you know that it works and people are using it with the desired results?
- Does it meet a real need or desire?
- Who is the product for? Is there demand for it? Are you getting repeat customers?
- Do the product features align with your expected target audience?
- Is the market size large enough for you to make it worthwhile? Is the market over-saturated?

- Does the product solve a problem? Does it create value? Are you articulating it in the best possible way?
- What outcome or transformation does the customer experience?
- Are there any features we should remove or add to increase value?
- What would improve customer satisfaction or result?

Established businesses with a proven sales track record can tick this one off straight away. You know that you've nailed the product, you are getting repeat business and word-of-mouth referrals, tick tick tick.

Could your product or service variations increase repeat business and attract new customers? It's a question worth exploring for potential growth

New businesses of course need to take the steps to validate their offer before taking it to market, which can be done with market research and Beta trials (refer to the Knowledge Library for links to further information on this).

Early-stage businesses sometimes see initial success but then find growth stalls. A lack of repeat business and traction indicates it's time for a critical review of product-market fit. Even promising concepts can suffer if the potential customer base is too small for long-term viability, or too competitive where without substantial investment in marketing it's impossible to get noticed.

Case studies:

1. I met with a business owner where it was clear that the product was actually the issue, not the marketing effort this far. This client is a software developer who has created a task management app, he managed to attract some users. He was asking me how to market the app and how to price it. My first question was how are the existing

users finding it? He said that most of his 19 subscribers used the app once and never came back. He showed me the app. It looked like technology from 1998, with really basic features and poor user experience. This is the purpose of creating a minimal viable product (MVP) for a group of customers to try before investing more. It was clear that before he spent anymore on marketing, he most importantly had to get the product right. The client then wondered if he had the motivation and resources to put in this idea.

I would never discourage a client from pursuing what they believe in. I can only paint the full picture of the challenges ahead - entering an over-saturated market with major market leaders, with a \$0 budget for development and marketing, other than what he can do himself... Definitely a challenging slog, but when there is a will, there is a way... right?

2. Since Strategy to Impact's mission is to lead by example, I thought it might be interesting for you to use us as a case study too and be transparent with our own marketing strategy to show how various considerations impact the areas of marketing focus.

At concept phase, we spent a lot of time discussing what the product can be... A course? A book? A guide? A workshops and even an app? All of these are a great idea. I know that we can create value for customers in any of these formats. However, with so much free marketing information available, it's easy for businesses to get inundated with 'shoulds' and end up pursuing the wrong strategies. It just made sense to create this guide simplifying the process, supporting business owners in making informed strategic choices.

Like most founders, I like to overcomplicate things, with grand visions and complex offerings. However, starting with this guide helped to focus on my core strengths: clarity on strategy, marketing planning and digital marketing, and share the knowledge my clients value most. Eventually, I would like to drill down further and create niche guides, but starting with this version, the one that can help the most people right now. I'll also add audio/visual elements for different learning styles. Unlike many courses or books, I wanted to combine valuable content with ongoing support, ensuring clients get the most from this guide.

All things considered, this felt like our “lowest hanging fruit”, and what is most likely to make the biggest impact to the greatest number of people as the content will be relevant for most business owners and/or their marketing teams.

PRICE

If the Product and Price mix is not optimum, you are unlikely to get any traction from your marketing effort. In my strategy meetings with clients, we always do an audit of their pricing and how they articulate it.

Questions to consider:

- Have you validated your price? Is it what the customer wants to pay? Or is it what you want/must charge?
- If it's too high, are you going to alienate customers?
- Is it too low that it cheapens the perceived value?
- If it is a high price point are you articulating the value correctly to make it a *no-brainer* purchase?

- Are you attracting customer interest, but they are not agreeing to close the deal?
- If the price is too low, is your marketing return on investment (ROI) going to be worth it? In this case, you might consider offering packages to increase order value.
- Do you need to offer discounts? Pricing tiers? Packages? Payment plans?
- What's our breakeven point, and how many sales do we need to make this profitable?
- Can you take a hit on the margin to facilitate volume growth?
- Does the price include a wholesale margin so you can utilise re-sellers to distribute your product?

Premium Pricing

Many clients I meet struggle to find the right pricing balance. It must cover costs and ensure a profit margin for growth, but will it still be affordable for customers? If your product truly offers superior value, do you have the budget to market it effectively and reach the right audience, who are willing to pay that premium price? Premium branding is expensive! For example - Let's say your state-of-the-art handbag costs \$1000 to manufacture. With the typical retail margin, you need to sell it directly to customer for at least \$2000. Now you're competing with Chanel and Gucci for a clientele that can afford luxury. This is where brand value becomes critical. A DIY logo, basic website, and Instagram presence won't cut it. To attract these buyers (unless your bag's features are truly exceptional), you'll need strategic investments in marketing: Vogue ads, celebrity endorsements, high-end marketing material with top models and photographers – all to build a brand that commands a premium price. This all costs A LOT of money

before you see any results. So do you price it lower, or invest in the branding? Or do you reconsider the product?

Value pricing

Then we have to consider perceived value of pricing. There are business advisors charging \$10K for their programs, and others who are charging \$400. Clients willing and able to pay \$10K for a business program are unlikely to consider the \$400 program because it just seems too cheap to bother. Conversely, some will never pay \$10K for coaching, and there are plenty of business opportunities offering clients solutions at lower price. When a customer can have the \$400 version, but chooses to extend themselves and pay \$10K it means that the premium offer offers greater perceived value and expected outcomes, even though the information shared could fundamentally be the same and have similar outcomes for the business (remember... the 'execution' bit)

Articulating your price

Sometimes your price might be right, but the way you package it up and articulate it may be off-putting.

Here is an example I use with all my clients, lets say if you loved this guide and wanted me on your team, and I said to you "ok great, it will cost you \$5200 to work with me for the year".....

vs.

"it will cost you only \$100 per week to work with me for the year."

The total cost for the year is the same, but which one is more palatable?

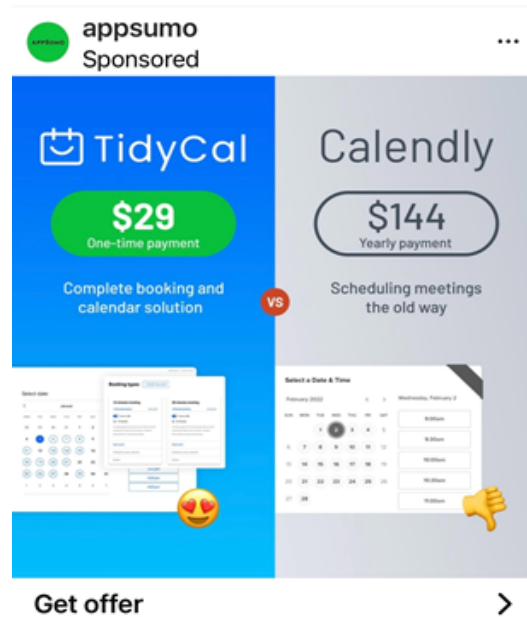
Depends on the customer, but I bet I would convert a lot more \$100 per week clients, than \$5200 upfront clients.

It is also ok to know your value and set the price that you believe reflects it, even if it does put off the majority of your potential customers at first. Having a clear strategy to continuously enhance your perceived value and attract niche customers is crucial, as is realising that it may take you sometime to organically guild your brand without a capital investment.

Missing the price point

It is one of my personal peeves when a brand gets their pricing strategy wrong. I find that a lot of Apps and Software as a Service (SaaS) companies get it really wrong and alienate large numbers of potential customers. For example, offering a 2 week free trial for something that would take a month or more to fully appreciate the value of the product. Or having a free service offer, but then charging an arm and a leg for the next bracket, sending their customers straight into the arms of competitors with a more **comfortable** pricing model.

Here is an Instagram ad I saw recently, and found it very effective. The strategy for the newcomer Tidycal is to purely compete on price for a similar product to get market share.



I was a happy Calendly customer until I saw this ad (I did see it a few times over a few months before I took action), and after reviewing my budgets recently and seeing the ad soon after, I thought what have I got to lose?! I checked out the product, found it to be a good alternative, and now I am a TidyCal customer. As happy as I am with the deal, as a strategy advisor, I am inclined to say that the offer is almost too good, however their objective is clearly customer acquisition and to capture Calendly's market. I am sure eventually TidyCal will start enticing me to pay again with additional features that are not included on this forever plan, while they no longer offer this plan to new customers, once they have sufficient market share and are a known brand.

A bad pricing decision example would be recently Mailchimp, a market leader for email marketing, changed their free price bracket from 2000 contacts down to 500, which is fine, however their entry level price bracket for over 500 contacts was quite expensive, and meant that the user who were now forced to pay were inspired to review alternative options and

found that some other market leaders who do not have a free option and thus were not not considered previously, actually offer a much cheaper paid version than Mailchimp with the same level of perceived value. So Mailchimp by getting greedy on their entry level paid version forced a whole lot of their loyal and growing businesses into the arms of the competitors.

Case studies:

- 1) I had a client that was selling cosy sheep's wool dog beds. However, she was not selling enough to make a living. The dog beds were \$900, and they were made in China (initially they were made in Australia but there was not margin in it so it was moved to China, which of course reduced the perceived value of the product). There was not enough margin in the product to allow wholesale, so the only option was to sell directly to consumers via online and dog shows. This would have required a substantial investment in marketing to reach the customer, and how many of them had \$900 to spend on a dog bed?!?! The marketing material came across as very DIY and did not reflect the premium price point of this product. Yes, there were a few customers who saw the value, but the Price component of the Mix was a major obstacle that the business was not able to overcome.

While some customers recognised the product's worth, the high price point proved to be an insurmountable barrier, preventing the business from achieving its sales goals.

- 2) In the case of Strategy to Impact, pricing was relatively simple once we narrowed in on the 'Product'. Because of my experience a small business owner with limited resources, affordability in everything I do is important to me. It is important for me to support those who need the help but generally cannot afford advisors. However, pricing it as

your average book, ie \$29.95, seemed too low for all this effort and value that I know I am creating. I decided pricing it similar to one consultation seemed most appropriate, since we would discuss all this in the initial consultations anyway. Except I know that this guide actually offers so much more than just one 1-on-1 consultation, and knowing this, makes me so much more confident to sell it at this price without reservations. Of course, as this is the first release we plan to offer a discount to encourage the purchase, but at the same time highlighting the value by featuring the original price, and a moneyback guarantee for those who do not find it valuable, to help overcome reservations about spending money on this product vs another. We can always make price adjustment either by short term discounts, or finding ways to offer additional value if we find our original pricing model to be unfavourable.

In certain business scenarios, particularly those involving product-based operations with goods that have a cost, flexibility in pricing is often constrained. This limitation can be attributed to factors such as the cost of inputs required for production or prevailing market prices for comparable goods.

PROMOTION

This is the big one, and the main focus of this guide. Once all the other Marketing Mix components are aligned this is where all the focus is. There's always room for improvement, whether it's enhancing existing tasks or pursuing new opportunities.

Questions to consider:

- Where does your audience find information about similar products?
- Are you targeting the right audience? Are you segmenting and targeting the various audiences with niche content relevant for them, or are you going out with the same message across the board and just seeing what you catch. (The Digital Marketing Channels guide goes into more detail about this)
- Briefly outline all the different types of customers relevant to your product. Ideally, you pick the top 3 and complete a detailed client profile overview to ensure that you are focusing on the audience that is most likely to resonate with your offer. Remember, you can not try and reach everyone (unless you have an unlimited budget and a large team that can test and measure campaigns for different audiences)
- Have you determined the best channels for your audience?
- What kind of content resonates with them-story, stats, visuals, demos?
- Are you clear on what your audience responds to and values?
- Is your visual communication where it should be?
- Which channels are performing best-and which are we wasting effort on?
- What is your budget and skill set?
- Is it easier to attract repeat business from existing customers or find new ones?

What are the marketing objectives?

There is always an element of testing and measuring, but if your marketing message and branding is not fine-tuned then you are unlikely to achieve the desired outcome. Be sure to be clear on what the desired outcome should be. Too often I see businesses doing “marketing”, without clear measurable objectives, just posting because they know they “should” be posting, but no clear understanding of what these posts should be achieving. I discuss this in more detail in the Strategic Objectives section of the Digital Marketing Guide.

Have you got what it takes?

Remember as much as “all marketing is a good idea”, when you don’t have the resources to do it all effectively, you really need to focus on the lowest hanging fruit, and know what you are trying to achieve with it. For example an ad in Vogue - good idea! Spending thousands on public relations - good idea! But is that the best use of your budget right now that is most likely going to get you immediate sales?...probably not. As fun as it is to see your brand on a shiny billboard on the freeway on the way to the office, if your target audience is not seeing it, or even if they are, but you got the marketing message all wrong, you have just wasted valuable resources.

The Digital Marketing Guide aims to assist you in evaluating the relevance various digital channels available, and help you make informed decisions about which ones to prioritise.

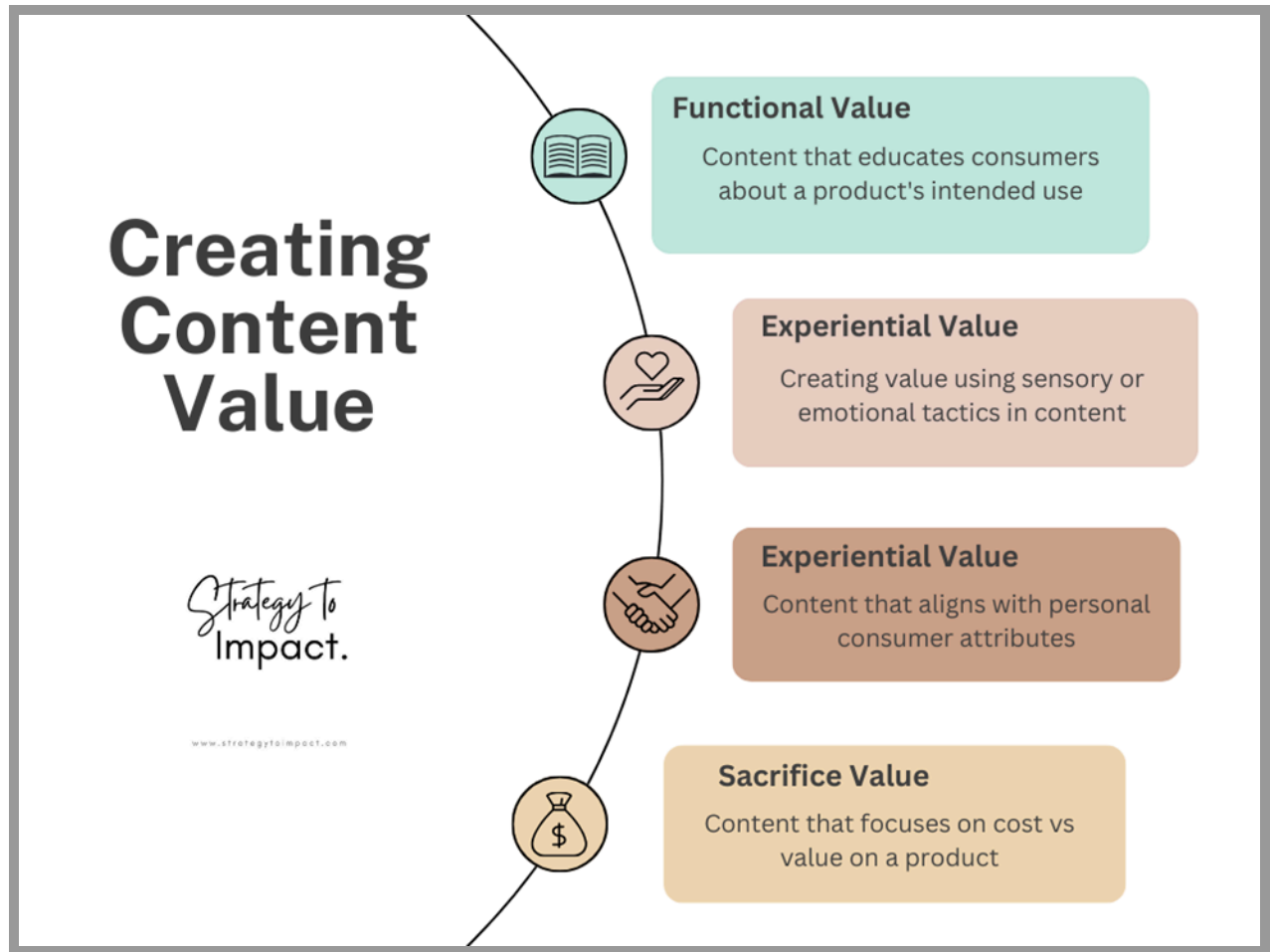
Important Consideration for Promotions Planning

When planning your promotions it is important to keep these 4 things at the forefront:

1. Value

It's crucial to have a clear understanding of your value proposition, but it's also essential to recognise the value that your promotions generate for your target customers. While I assume most readers are familiar with the concept of value proposition, if not check out the Strategy to Impact Knowledge Library), we will included some helpful articles on what you need to know. However, my focus in this discussion is solely on the value of your promotions.

Value creation in your marketing material is something we focus a lot on in the class that I teach at the university. In order for your clients to engage with your content, you need to be creating some kind of value. I am going to sprinkle in some marketing theory in here, and my favourite model to explain this concept is the Smith and Colgate practical Model for Customer Value Creation (more on this in the Knowledge Library if interested). Everytime I mention this in my conversations with clients it feels like they have been enlightened, this framework does help simplify your campaign and content planning.



(inspired by Smith and Colgate)

Functional Value - This is content that shows customers how to use something, it's features, educating customers about the product/industry, showing outcomes. Think a paint brand showing customers how to use their product to achieve professional results, or educating the customer on ergonomics before showing furniture that aligns with the best practice. Skin care - before and after etc.

Functional can also refer to how easily the customer can find information on the product. Websites with a FAQ section are an example of Functional value.

In short, to create functional value you need to focus on education and outcomes of using the product.

Experiential Value - This is content that creates some kind of sensory experience, either visually pleasing, or enticing, like someone making a delicious recipe using specific products, or a beautiful holiday destination. As well as emotional content like what airlines often use with the old “coming home for holidays” ad with sentimental music and warm hugs.

Well-designed, visually appealing curated content can also be deemed ‘Experiential’ value.

In short, sharing or inspiring an experience, making customers feel like they are there or want to be there, creates experiential value.

Symbolic Value - This is where content tries to align with personal attributes of the customers; for example, having a plus size model next to a standard size one showing off the same outfits (which could also be functional value from a practical use of the product in difference scenarios perspective). Or align the product and service to a particular stereotype of a person; for example, a productivity app can do a campaign on how they helped people with ADHD get organised, which of course would have personal meaning for people who resonate with ADHD content. Even content showing the business owner doing something good for a cause would attract those passionate about that topic too. Humour or showing your customers you understand them and their experience is especially relevant here.

In short, to create symbolic value the marketing material has to align with the target audience personal values and characteristics.

Cost / Sacrifice Value - This is basically focusing on price vs value. Content may simply include discounts (as that in itself is creating value for the target audience). Or if your product is at the higher end of the price scale, the focus would be to promote the features and value, with the price being almost insignificant until the transaction. Also content around answering some concerns and minimising perceived risk of purchasing this product, including customer reviews.

In short, you create cost / sacrifice value by highlighting price and features and removing customer reservations that they may have about this product over another one.

In a world bombarded with countless marketing messages daily, customers often tune them out. To stand out and capture their attention, businesses must focus on delivering value at every touch point, creating a meaningful connection and encouraging engagement.

Practical exercise:

Next time you are online notice what marketing stands out to you, or you engaging with, and then think about why you find it appealing, and what value is it creating for you?

2. Authenticity

There is a lot of talk about authenticity in marketing lately, with the rise of A.I. that can create content for you. The main issue with AI is the lack of authenticity. Customers see right through it and will not connect. I also see a lot of clients follow “best practice” recommendations set out by the industry leaders, ie beautifully curated Instagram grids with stories and reels coming out like clockwork, and yet they get no traction, fundamentally it is usually because it lacks the authenticity and comes across a bit “me too”. So the key is to apply these best practice principles but utilise it to create your own authentic content, or cleverly utilise trends to capture attention while they are hot. The challenge is really to be authentic but polished, poor quality DIY production unfortunately rarely resonates with anyone other than your mother.

Example - recently I had a student propose to set-up a Tiktok account for a holiday rental property. From my vantage point the logistics of continuously creating content that will attract followers, without constantly nagging your guests for content, seems like more effort than its worth. However I also said “If you have a clever idea to make it work, then why not try it!” So many profiles made a name for themselves creating content that you would just never expect to get any traction, but people find value in it. So if you can think outside the box, while conforming to characteristics that seem to be effective, results may exceed expectations. (The student did a great job and got some traction on Tiktok, however the business owners were unable to continue to leverage this opportunity because of lack of digital skills that required them to employ someone to maintain the account, which is not something they were prepared to allocate funds to).

3. Brand

The visual quality of your content must align with your brand identity. It doesn't always have to be high-end quality, if your audience does not expect it. I have seen a number of successful businesses that take a very organic DIY approach to their marketing, with just the owner taking mediocre photos and talking to the camera, but it is in alignment and resonated with the customers. Simple + done cleverly is the best approach if you can musta it.

In the instances of brands with premium products where they cannot afford to invest in content that creates perceived value to warrant the price tag, DIY content just does not work (unless you are a naturally skilled content creator). At the top end of market, poor quality marketing material naturally brings down the perceived value of the product, making it seem unjustifiably expensive. Like the case of the premium dog beds mentioned earlier. At \$900 per bed, you'd expect "Vogue" like visual content, with images of Kylie Jenner's pooches sleeping peacefully in the damn thing. It is doable but it costs more than anyone in their right mind should be spending on this tactic with that type of product.

Here is an example of a post by a business that sells sports merchandise, and gets no traction with their Instagram because of posts like this. The customers are unlikely to rush in to pay \$60 for this ball based on these images with products still in plastic, on a worn-out carpet, despite them being genuine leather and authentic merchandise. Maybe if these balls were \$5, this would make more sense.



2 likes

_____ Genuine Leather
Sherrin Toyota Size 5 \$60

But this post creates no value at all for the audience.

Ideally, businesses invest in a professional to help with branding and brand guidelines, which in turn helps with consistency, but it can be an expense that is hard to justify so in that case keep it simple avoid crazy bold colours in your logos and backgrounds, and avoid DIY visuals unless you are certain you know what you are doing.

And if it doesn't work out initially, re-branding is always an option, but if you can afford to get it right in the first place, it's worth a shot.

Case study:

1. I had a fashion designer client once who made garments to order, which of course commanded a higher price point. The client could not understand why she was not getting many orders despite paying for ads and attracting traffic to her website. I had a closer look at her

website and instantly saw that her product images were the issue. She simply used her friends, who (with all due respect) were not models, and their awkwardness took all the attention away from the garment. The client was very resistant to my recommendation to invest in the images, because she could not see what was wrong with these images and wanted her brand to be “more down to earth”. This is when I say “there is ideology and then there is commercial reality”. The sweet spot is when you balance authenticity with the visual communication that customers would expect from your brand. The products may still sell in the DIY version but your customer base most likely will be limited to friends and family.

Finally, she took the advice and invested in professional photography, and it instantly made the clothing go from looking too expensive, to really great value. Until she fixed that it was impossible to get any traction with her marketing.

Which image is more likely to entice you to buy this \$180 top?



You may say neigh or both, depending on how much you like that top, and if you can afford it. However I think you can clearly see how one image creates more perceived value and quality than the other.

As much as you can get your cousin with a hobby camera and a friend to model for you, you can expect results equivalent to your investment, there is a reason why professional models and photographers are expensive, because they sell! This has been proven time and time again. And yes in some instances DIY is cute and works for a brand, because of “authenticity” but for all who get it right, many more get it very wrong. (Unless you are already a branding and content professional starting a new brand, in that case lucky you.)

2. With Strategy to Impact, we initially need to focused our marketing funds on other priorities, foregoing professional branding services. However, we could leverage our understanding of marketing and branding in general to develop what we needed to gets started, and if it does not resonate with out target audience we can adjust.

Another option is to find someone who has an interest and some “know-how” to help, especially if they are interested in growing their portfolio in this area to attract new customers. This could be professionals starting their own services, or students looking for professional experience. The challenge with this version is that they usually do not stick around for long, and the high turn-over of helpers can impact brand consistency, even if you got brand guidelines. Good to keep in mind is that if you do not have any skills in the area yourself, the next best thing is to find someone who is interested in developing their skills in an area.

4. Segmentation

Usually is much easier to get traction with marketing content that appeals to a particular segment/niche than to figure out one marketing message that resonates with everyone.

A simple example would be - men and women. What resonates with men is very different to what resonates with women. We don't have to do any extensive market research to say with a degree of certainty that using a girl in a bikini sitting on a car would be a more effective way to sell the car to men, but not so great if the goal is to sell the car to women. If you have a whole database of heterosexual men, sending that girl-in-bikini-car-photo to them is likely to attract minimal complaints. But if you have a mixed database and you send the same photo to them all, your unsubscribe rate may not be pretty. 😊

The earlier you can start to segment your customer base the better, it gives you options for really targeted marketing later down the track. The more you can drill down the better it is, ie age, postcode, preferences, how they connected with you- all these details can be worth their weight in gold.

If you have a very broad audience and segmentation is difficult, it is still important to know your segments, as you then must ensure that all your messaging resonates with all of them, otherwise you will alienate customers.

I discuss this topic more in the Digital Marketing Guide, where we look at digital marketing strategies and target audience profiling.

Case study:

1. I don't know if its just me, and you probably have your own version, but I get a bit frustrated with international brands that send me "Fall" emails when in Australia we are going into Spring. If you are going to have a global audience then speak with a global tone. It doesn't mean that you cannot acknowledge Fall, but at least acknowledging that its Spring on the other side of the world, would make it more relevant to all recipients.
2. For Strategy to Impact we are segmenting as we go along, and discovering that we often need to go back and add additional segments as they become apparent. Doing it retrospectively to large databases is daunting, so if its not a realistic options for you, start doing it going forward.

PLACE

This refers to your sales and distribution channels. Your 'place' of business and how the customers can access your product. This good be a brick and mortar store, office, website, eCommerce, online market places, wholesale via other retailers, affiliates, market stalls, door-to-door sales (maybe avoid this last one, I am not sure why people still bother with this approach)....

Questions to consider:

- What are your current distribution channels? Where can customers find your product of service.
- Are there any other channels you can use to help customers buy your product?
- Is it location-based or can it be global?

- Do you focus on local area marketing or global marketing?
- Can you create different campaigns to market each of your locations? Are you reaching the right people at each location?
- Is the delivery smooth, professional and reflective of our brand?

As with all the Ps in the Marketing Mix, the accessibility of your product can make or break the business. 'Place' is not all that relevant for some businesses but is everything to others.

Online

I see a lot of product start-ups who are planning to use eCommerce as their only distribution channel. If it is a product that needs to be tried on, or physically tested in some way to convince a prospect to buy it, online-only can be very limiting. In that case the recommendation would be to explore other distribution channels to capture the audience in other ways. Several avenues exist to reach new customers, including wholesale or consignment distribution via multi-brand stores, pop-up shops, showrooms, and warehouse sales. Participating in markets can also be effective. The key is to select options that attract passersby and provide a physical location for online customers to visit.

Physical location

Conversely, location based businesses may be limited only to the business that the local community can provide, and offering your product online or wholesale through other stores etc, could exponentially increase your market opportunity. Some businesses are niche enough

that they become destination stores, I am always surprised how successful gaming and collector merchandise type stores can be, even when they are in the most random of locations. Distance is no barrier for an enthusiast! Celebrity brands in recent times avoid having permanent locations and opt to have short-term pop-up locations with cues around the corner to create hype and scarcity.

Covid was great at forcing business owners to look at alternative distribution channels that strengthened their business as a whole. However, those who were stuck in a location and were unable to deploy alternative channels for whatever reason, were in dire straights.

Case studies:

1. During Covid I was run of my feet supporting business with resilience and digital adaptation via government funded programs. One of my clients was a cute little nursery store selling pot-plants located at Queen Victoria Market. Prior to Covid, they were enjoying a successful retail business selling indoor plants that have been trending. The success of their brick and mortar store meant that they were not interested in eCommerce as a sales channel, because it was... “too hard”: website cost too much, too hard to maintain, too hard to ship, too much competition etc.

Covid forced them to overcome these “too hards”, and they figured out how to ship the potted plants so they did not get damaged; launched a website; and leveraged their already substantial social media audience using paid ads. Their sales skyrocketed, soon their online sales were much higher than their physical store had ever been, they literally could keep up with the demand. Their database grew with their online sales, and soon they had a significant email list to promote

to. This enabled them to launch another distribution channel, and have bi-annual warehouse sales where they cleared out large volumes of stock, that they were prepared for. These warehouse sales proved to be super popular, especially with an eager email database of existing customers.



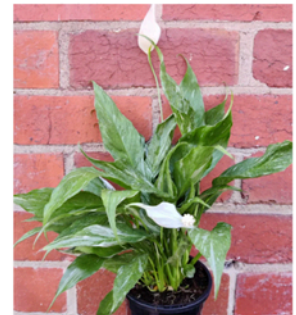
Syngonium Neon - 13cm Pot



Begonia Speckles- 13cm pot



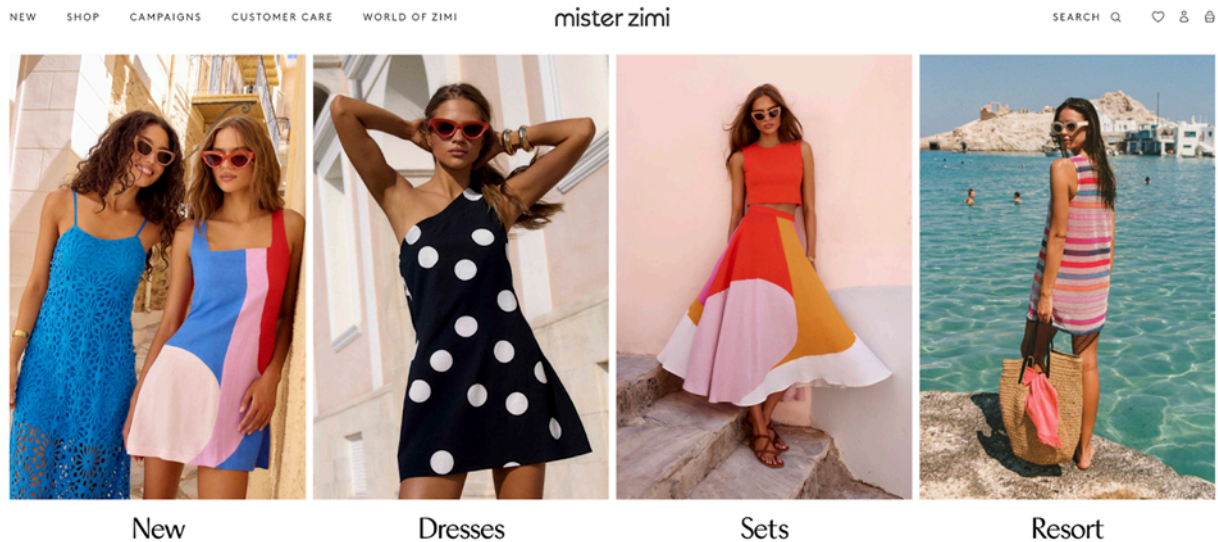
Zanzibar Gem (Zamioculcas zamiifolia) -



Domino Peace lily (Spathiphyllum) -

2. A non-Covid example - Mister Zimi is a successful Australia fashion label. Initially, the distribution channels were online and hire-a-rack type stores only. The designs proved popular and the audience grew quickly. The brand then started running pre-order warehouse sales, where people could come and try on samples and place an order (which is a great cash-flow positive model, that minimises stock risk). This strategy proved so popular that they started doing new-season warehouse sales with stock, which walked out due to the scarcity of limited stock availability. This then gave the brand confidence that they could have their own stores, and they now have 5 flagship stores around Australia. Wholesale to multibrand boutiques is something they categorically refused to do this far, you can only buy Mister Zimi from Mister Zimi - instore and online. Even their expansion to the US has been a direct to consumer model, facilitated by local warehouse distribution. As a side note, direct to

consumer models generally requires building a strong social media presence.



3. For Strategy to Impact, initially our focus is digital products, through our own website. We did consider Amazon, but with the chosen format of a guide, not just a typical book that can be printed and sold physically, we felt that Amazon as a channel is not a priority for us. Also initially we are focusing on Australia, with the goal to expand the marketing to the US as soon as we see traction in Australia. There are extra costs like brand protection in the US that we did not want to incur until we were sure we are onto a winner. UK, New Zealand and other English speaking countries will be looked at after sufficient momentum in the markets that we considered our Lowest Hanging Fruit.

It was a consideration if our Australian origins would be a barrier to customers in other countries seeing this guide as relevant to them. For now we are staying close to our roots, as there is no point in

complicating matters because of an assumption that this product may need to be customised for international audiences. Time will tell.

I also really want to do in-person seminars and Mastermind Groups. Obviously that will start with targeting my home city first, and then based on the success of that look at other opportunities.

PEOPLE

This P is very relevant for businesses that need to employ staff, especially customer-facing staff. There is no point in investing in a great marketing campaign, if you do not have the people available to help you manage the increase in demand in a way that truly reflects your brand.

For solo operators, the consideration here is have you got the capacity to manage everything you have set out to do, and if not who are you going to get to help you?

Questions to consider:

- Are your systems and people set up to manage an increase in demand resulting from your promotions?
- Who interacts with your customers - directly or indirectly?
- Are your staff trained and ready? Do you have processes in place to onboard and train staff quickly to meet demand?
- Do your customer-facing staff embody the values of the brand? Are you delivering not just competence, but care and connection?
- Are our clients or customers becoming advocates?
- Are we showcasing the *people stories* behind our business (testimonials, team intros, founder's story)?

Nothing will annoy customers more than having to wait an excessive amount of time for their order, or have to line up in a queue, or be faced with staff members who do not know the product, or if your calendar is booked up for weeks or you are out of stock on what they just saw advertised? In fashion retail, for example, its really clear when the marketing team does not communicate with the product teams and continue to run ads on items that are sold out.

Case studies:

1. I recently caught up with a client who owns a labour hire business for a marketing planning workshop. We went over the Marketing Mix, and when discussing the product we addressed if his labourers, who are the 'Product' are actually good, or if they are costing the business with the incompletance. There were a few examples of situations where the client was not happy with the staff he was assigned. We discussed tactics to mitigate this, which included organised "values" training for all labourers when on-boarding, and tips for clients on how to make the most of their labourers. This was a unique case where the people were the Product, but it's clear how these considerations are relevant for the People part of the Marketing Mix.
2. For Strategy to Impact, for launch do to personal circumstances, we had to launch on the smell of an oily rag for a budget. Fortunately because I have been teaching and mentoring students and graduates for 15 years I know how to create win-win partnerships with them, so that is always my go to solution when extra hands and brains are needed. However, when working with interns it is really important to firstly identify those who have a great attitude, and then offer them A LOT of value in sharing your knowledge and providing guidance. I

have seen many painful internship situations where no one is happy because there was not sufficient leadership, and the expectation was that the students will work out what to do and how to create value on their own - this never ever works.

Planning for Capability

When I work with clients on strategy, I make sure that all that we plan is within their capability and available resources. Some clients know they cannot do something on their own and need to hire support. But sometimes even finding the right person for the job can be overwhelming. If I had a dollar for everytime a business owner's main concern about growth strategies is to find and retain staff to enable it, which is especially in service industries like hospitality.

Other clients have no budget to pay for any support, and in that case we really need to focus on identifying how they can learn to do something themselves, and what they should focus on to see results quickly which of course will enable a budget to eventually hire staff to support growth.

And some clients hire me to mentor their staff to guide them towards having the acumen to achieve the objectives of the organisation. Education and empowerment are proven ways to attract and retain staff.

Marketing Budget

There is no be-all end-all rule for setting a marketing budget. This is because each business differs on how much they are prepared to spend on marketing.

However each business should have clarity on what they can spend, and what the expected results should be.

If I said to you - your marketing is going to cost \$3 for every \$10 you make, that might seem reasonable to you, but some businesses might happily spend \$7 to get \$10 in sales.

The 10% rule

Many of the multi-million dollar businesses that I have worked with set their marketing budget as 10% of their target revenue, or Gross Profit Margin (GPM). Either is fine, depending on your business model i.e. total revenue is easier to calculator but commission business would be working with GPMs, as their margin may only be 10% of the total sales revenue for the business.

The 10% budget means for every \$1 you spend on marketing you are looking to get 10x the return -> \$10. What this enables you to do is plan your budget, and look at channels where you believe you can get 10x return on your marketing investment. This is especially important if you are a start-up growing off sweat-equity alone, and in this case it is even more important that every dollar you spend has a measurable Return on Investment (ROI).

Yes, some marketing activities are hard to measure. For example, magazine articles may not have a means to measure how many purchases are made as a result of this article. And the famous quote of all marketers is that “50% of marketing budget don’t work, you just don’t know which 50% isn’t working”. In this case you would look at the picture wholeistically and ask yourself “how much did you spend on marketing to achieve this revenue?”.

Then think about each channel to evaluate which you think worked, and which didn't, so it can be repeated or not.

Valuing your time

We know that time is money, but for the purpose of budgeting, I am talking about money you will actually spend. However, you would be wise to be conscious on the ROI of your time as well, and at the very least think about the opportunity cost of your spending time on one channel vs another.

i.e. Spending 30 hours a week creating Instagram reels for your 200 followers, vs spending the 30 hours looking for the contact details of your prospects and emailing them an intro. You cannot do both, so which one is most likely to result in income for your 30 hours?

Recently I was baffled by a case where a company had cashflow issues, but money in the bank that was saved for a “rainy” day, let go of their digital marketing assistant who was costing them ‘not-much’ per week, in favour of getting interns to do it. This sounds great in theory, but the hourly rate of their manager was not factored in the cost of training, supervising, and reviewing the work of the novice intern, that usually finishes up every 6-12 weeks. Not to mention the impact on the consistency of the output, and how hard it is to maintain with high turnover of people. If you just don't have the money, fine, but always think about the opportunity cost of such decisions. The businesses that I have seen survive downturns effectively, ALWAYS invested more in their marketing at that time, which can be counter-intuitive but proven to be effective. Again, investing in marketing when you cannot pay your electricity is one thing, but cutting spending “just in case” at the cost of your time and sanity is another.

Investing in People

One of my biggest regrets in my business career so far is not investing in sales people. I am not ashamed to admit that sales has been my weakness, I just don't feel comfortable speaking with people when my goal is to convert them, but I insisted on being THE sales person in my business, believing that because it's my idea, I am the best person for the sales job. Because I didn't feel comfortable doing it, I procrastinated on it, only working on new leads when the situation was desperate, which is totally the wrong energy to be going into sales conversation with. While I did the sales, I hired people to help with operations, admin and marketing. In hindsight, had I put those funds into a sales person, and focused on these other tasks myself, which I was happy to do, I know now that it would have made a huge difference, and brought in the funds to enable hiring more help.

Another example worth mentioning, I knew a CEO who was on a salary of \$300,000 per year, and insisted on doing the graphic design himself for posters and flyers...and he was not a graphic designer. Now the cost of these designs when factoring in his cost per hour, is obscene when someone on \$50ph could have done it, instead of the CEO's rate of \$145ph, saving the time to focus on more value add tasks. It would be funny if it wasn't true. But sadly it is not too far from the thinking of many small business owners.

Case studies:

1. Due to COVID, a clothing boutique with a single physical store had to close. Fortunately, they already had an established online presence and a substantial email list. Instead of reducing their expenditure during the lockdowns, the owner made the bold decision to invest an

impressive A\$60,000 in digital advertising within a single month – a significant sum for a business of its size. It paid off more than anyone could have imagined! Their taking for that month was \$1-million dollars! Which was exponentially more than their average takings with an open store. And the return was way more than 10x. Covid was the best thing that happened to that business. Important to note their Marketing Mix already had an established Product, at the correct Price, with People in place to adapt to the demand, and when changing their focus to the alternative Place, their Promotion was a winner!

2. A less fortunate example was a fashion label that I worked with when I had my retail store. The owner borrowed \$100,000 for marketing, and because it seemed like so much money, she spent it on any marketing that seemed like a 'good idea', without consideration for the lowest-hanging fruit, and ROI. Fashion week events, PR, pop-up shops, excessive amount stock - all valid, but was it how the money should have been spent at this early stage? Well, the label is no longer in business, so the answer is no.
3. For Strategy to Impact, as we are essentially a start-up brand, our goal is to build our revenue as organically as possible, and use the available funds to get to that 10% of our target revenue to spend on marketing. The first \$10K we make will be invested in making 100K, and continue to re-invest while keeping expenses low. We are clear on what we will spend our time on as we launch, and how we will not. Email marketing is (almost) free so that will be the priority that will help validate the product/market fit and hopefully generate revenue that can be reinvested in paid digital ads.

Illustration:

Let's say our target revenue is \$500,000, so 10% of that is our marketing budget, \$50,000. We now need to decide how to spend it in the best possible way to ensure we can achieve our \$500,000 target.

The \$50K is to include the cost of human resources to make it happen. If you can do it all yourself, great, you have \$50,000 to spend in other ways. If you need to hire someone, you need to make sure they are at least paying for themselves with the revenue they are bringing in, but the end goal is to bring in more than they cost.

The \$50K is to include the cost of human resources to make it happen. If you can do it all yourself, great, you have \$50,000 to spend in other ways. If you need to hire someone, you need to make sure they are at least paying for themselves with the revenue they are bringing in, but the end goal is to bring in more than they cost... With that as a consideration you can set the KPI for the new hire for the trial period, so you can see if you achieving results you are expecting, and quickly reduce that expense after a period of time if it is not working for you.

Questions to consider:

- What is your target revenue for the year?
- Can you allocate 10% marketing budget? If not, how much can you allocate?
- What is your dedicated monthly/quarterly budget for marketing activities (e.g., paid ads, professional photography, external content creation)?

- How much dedicated time per week can you or your internal team commit to learning and executing new marketing channels?
- What is the opportunity cost of you spending time on a marketing task (i.e., what higher-value business activity are you giving up)?
- List all the marketing tasks that come to mind (without detail for now) Have you got the internal marketing capabilities to achieve these tasks? What do you want to be doing in-house? What should you outsource? List all the tasks you you can think of that you can do internally, and what do you need to do externally.
- Are the skills required worth acquiring internally (via courses etc) or are you better to pay an expert?
- For tasks where your internal skill or time is limited, how much budget are you willing to allocate to a professional vs. an intern/beginner, and what are the trade-offs you are willing to accept (e.g., brand consistency, quality)?
- What are the long-term implications and costs of this decision?
- How do you determine what human resource options are right for you? Can it be automated?

NEXT STEPS

1. Work through the questions and considerations in this guide in your Workbook. This will help get clarity on your market readiness, and if you can start investing in promotions.
2. Once you determine your available budget, you need to decide on the best ways to deploy these funds. Digital Marketing Channels are usually more accessible and affordable than traditional marketing formats, and our Digital Marketing Guide gives a valuable overview of

all the relevant options, so you can pick which channels are your *Lowest Hanging Fruit*.

Remember, if you have any questions, feel overwhelmed, or need to troubleshoot a unique problem, one-on-one support is available. Contact grow@strategytoimpact.com for more information.