For small businesses that want to grow big.

MARKETING PLAN WORKBOOK

This easy-to-use workbook asks all the right questions for business owners to create a marketing plan that grows their business.

Easy to use workbook gets you started today

18 Creative strategies that work

Planning short and long term objectives

Proven tactics to build your bottom line

Marketing budget template



Next Steps

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Introduction

Successfully marketing a small business is hard work and not for the faint of heart – you must learn to be an expert in practically every discipline until you can afford the virtuoso strategists, creatives and financier-types to breathe new life into your marketing plan and scale your business.

Nothing is more important to the short and long term success of your business than marketing. Consider what's already on your plate. The bare minimum of your responsibilities:

- Supply and stock your business
- Hire, develop, and manage an effective and loyal staff
- Maintain quality control
- Develop a customer base
- Earn their loyalty so they review your business online and promote you to their friends and buy from you again
- Keep your accounts current
- Anticipate potential crises to avoid them
- Be prepared to sustain your business, scale up or franchise

Yours is no small challenge! However, if you honestly answer the questions here, you'll have the elements you need to develop a marketing plan you can use to steer your company toward higher sales and marketing distinction.

If you find yourself overwhelmed, no worries! I'm here to see you through the process. For that matter, so are hundreds of other qualified professionals you can find online. First, take a crack at answering the workbook questions. Then, if you find yourself in need of some professional assistance, contact me at drew@drewbufalini.com.

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Getting the Most From This Workbook

While you answer the questions to come, remember that no one knows your business as well as you do – from your start-up story to your products, from your public image to your plans for the future - you already know the answer to many of these questions! Start with the questions you can answer first.

Two words of advice: be honest. Excruciatingly honest. Great marketing plans are rooted in reality. If you have exact figures, use them. When it's time to set your objectives, there's nothing wrong with thinking big and, if you can afford it, and it makes sense - shooting for the moon.

When it comes to your competitors, you'll have to do some sleuthing. The more you know, the easier time you'll have differentiating your business. Start with an internet search, then take a "virtual shopping trip" to their store.

Finally, this workbook is designed to pick your brain of the key information needed to formulate a proper, functioning marketing plan. You can absolutely leverage this workbook to write the plan yourself. However, most ventures benefit from a pair of objective eyeballs and a team of crack creatives. That's where I come in.

I work with teams of accomplished creatives who are dedicated to creating and executing on brilliant marketing plans. When you reach the realization point – when you know your time and money could be best spent delivering tangible results – reach out! We'll help pull it all together for you.

Executive Summary

Usually, this is where you sum up your final analysis, including your recommended strategic plan of action and marketing budget. Write this section last because the data you collect and decisions you make during the process of completing this workbook will inform your final decisions.



Market & Situation Analysis

How well do you know the competition in your market? Chances are good that you're not a billion dollar start-up unicorn and that your competitors already exist. There's nothing wrong with competition - it's the backbone of capitalism! The more you understand yours, the easier it becomes for you to learn from their mistakes and stand out in the marketplace.

Answer the following questions utilizing your own knowledge as well as any intelligence you can gather from your competitors' websites, trade publications, and the news media. Even their customers. (Maybe even yours!)

Are you subject matter expert? If so, how does it relate to your business? How can your customers utilize your knowledge?



What does the innovation landscape look for your business segment in the coming year? How is your company contributing? Can you build/capitalize on a competitor's innovation? If so, how exactly?



Are there polls predicting customer behavior that apply to your business? This is the place to include facts and figures to back up the decisions you will make for the Executive Summary.

How long have you been in business? To what do you attribute that success?

Do you have any strategic partnerships? How do they accentuate your product or service?

How are you driving traffic to your business? Did the previous year's marketing plan yield any insights you can use now?

Is your company launching any new products or services? If so, do tell...

What is the economic outlook for your business segment in your area?



When was the last time you updated your website? If it's been a while, what would you change/add?

Do your marketing materials (brochures, presentations, even business cards, etc) represent who you are as an organization? If not, how would you change them?



Do you have a design system that includes everything from your corporate font(s), color palette, iconography to the tone of your copy?

If you answered "no" or "I don't know" to that question, here are the questions you'll want to answer early in the design process:

Heading Font:

Subhead Font:

Body Copy Font:

Color Palette:

Iconography:

Button Style:

Competitive Landscape

Who are your primary competitors? How long have they been in business? What do you think makes them successful? What can you do differently to better compete?



Why should your competitors' customers come to you instead?

How do your prices compare to your competitors'?

What do your employees think of your competition?

Competitive Landscape

Do you have a brand yet? What does your brand say about your company? Are you proud of it?



If you had the money to do your dream expansion today, what would you do? How much would that cost? Could you afford that today? Why or why not?

Competitive Landscape (cntd)

How do your customers perceive your employees? Is there a sense of who is a "favorite?" Are you doing anything to recognize employee(s) for their hard work?

How can you encourage employee loyalty that inspires teamwork and innovation?



Competitive Landscape (cntd)

How are you capturing customer data and reviews? Are you sharing them with the public? Can this process be integrated as part of your customer experience?

Does your local community care about your company? If not, why not? If so, how are you engaging with them? What has your company done for the community lately is always an important question.





What can you learn from a S.W.O.T. Analysis?

Remember earlier when I said you would have to be painfully honest to write an effective marketing plan? Well, this is the place to be extra candid. Only an evaluation of your business with a high-powered lens can put you on a strategic path to success.

When you complete the S.W.O.T. analysis, remember not to think of this as a critique of your business acumen or your previous decisions. Remove all judgement and be straight forward. S.W.O.T. stands for:

Strengths (of your business compared to your competitors) Weaknesses (of your business) Opportunities (for your business)

Threats (potentially against your business)

S.W.O.T Analysis

Weaknesses

 What makes your business the best amongst its competitors? Do people know about your strengths? How do your customers talk about you? Does your brand stand out in the marketplace? Do customers know your logo? Your URL? 	 What/who is the weakest link in your business? What keeps you up at night? Is your supply chain solid? Where/when do you find yourself strapped for cash? Do you have access to funds for growth? What else haven't you thought of yet?
Opportunities	Threats
 Are your shelves optimized? online and off What data do you capture with each sale? What could you do to improve customer loyalty, 	 Competition that is more established? Inflation? Cash flow or credit disruptions? Negative news about

S.W.O.T Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats

Who Are Your Customers?

Time for you to take a hard, quantified look at your pool of customers and potential customers. Include face-to-face, business-to-business, people, and businesses who buy from you online. Once you have the breakdown, prioritize them in terms of who spends the most money with you today to how you *want* your customer demo to spend and look like next year. You need to know everything about your customers that they're willing to share with you - it's all information you can use.

Who are your customers?

Who are your priority customers?

Are men, women or a team of people responsible for buying from you?

What is the average amount of gross income you receive from your most profitable customers?

What is the average age of your customers?

Who Are Your Customers? (cntd)

What is the racial breakdown of your customers?

Black

White

Latinx

Asian

South Asian

Unknown

What is the average education level of your customers:

High School Diploma

Associates Degree

Bachelor's of Arts/Science

Master of Arts/Science

PhD.



Who Are Your Customers? (cntd)

Where do your customers live? Are they walking, driving, or taking public transit to your business? What's the average time a customer is willing to travel to visit you? Do you offer delivery or free shipping? Internet ordering? Is there a nearby anchor-type store that shares your traffic?

Could you have more customers if you delivered or utilized a service such as Instacart? How much would you have to raise your prices to be consistently profitable using a delivery service?



Your Competitive Advantages

Think hard about the *soul* of the company. What do you want your company to become? What problems are you solving from your customers? When you answer the following questions, consider your company, employees, and its culture.

Who Is Your Company in 30 seconds?

What does your company offer in 30 seconds? Some call this the "elevator" speech, i.e., the quick answer to what your company does when someone asks.

Once you settle on a 30-second answer, get your employees on board. To positively support your brand, everyone should be on the same page.



Where is your company located? Is that location important to your brand and/or sales? How can you use that to your advantage?



What is your primary product or service?

Do you sell anything that complements your primary or secondary product or service?

Who is your closest competitor? Think beyond geography, why do you consider them competition? What do you have in common? What can you do better? (And what are they ALREADY doing better than you?)



If you had the money to do your dream expansion today, what would you do? How much would that cost? Could you afford that today? Why or why not?



Is there any ongoing education that keeps your employees competitive? Are there skills they could gain from school that would benefit your company?

How do your customers perceive your employees? Who is the "favorite" employee? Are you doing anything to recognize that employee(s) while encouraging your other employees to strive to perform better?

How can you encourage employee loyalty in a way that inspires teamwork and innovation?



How are you capturing your customer reviews and comments? Are you sharing them with the public? Can this process be integrated as part of the customer experience?



Does your local community care about your company? If not, why not? If so, how are you communicating with them? What has your company done for the community lately - is always an important question. It's never too late to sponsor a little league team!



1-Year Objectives

Primary Location and/or Website:

Gross Income:

Customer Retention Rate:

Referral Rate:

Website Visitors/Day:

Website Purchases/Day:

Marketing Budget:

Number of Employees:

Gross Profit:



What is your potential for growth? What can you do now to pave the way for future growth?

1-Year Objectives (cntd)

Are you giving your customers the best experience for their money? What is that experience?

Are you giving your employees the tools they need to succeed? Have you asked them this question?

When was the last time you did customer research? If you could ask all your customers three questions, what would they be?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



5-Year Objectives

Imagine your company in five years. Are you on solid fiscal ground? Are you selling the same product and/or services? How's your credit?

Do you have the same customers? New customers? How does word about your business spread?

How many locations are up and running? Are they all profitable? If not, which stores aren't profitable? Why?



5-Year Objectives (cntd)

What does your management team look like? How are they tasked? Do they share your vision?

How many employees do you have? Do they have opportunities for growth? How are you incentivizing them?

How are YOU handling the stress of balancing your life and your business? What are you doing for yourself to keep your mind and body healthy?



5-Year Objectives (cntd)

Primary Location and/or Website:

Gross Income:

Customer Retention Rate:

Referral Rate:

Website Visitors/Day:

Website Purchases/Day:

Marketing Budget:

Number of Employees:

Gross Profit:

Have you achieved your growth potential? If not, why?

Website and Social Media Metrics/Goals

Your website should be one of your best sales tools. Done right, it can speak in the voice of your company; it can deliver accurate and secure information to customers; it can connect your social media sites, send timely push notifications and deliver dollars directly into your bank account. And that's just scratching the surface.

Your website can also be one of your best employees - as long as you have a good strategic marketing plan. For that, you need to collect all of the analytics available.

The same goes double for your social media sites. Use this as a guide for tracking your BASIC web analytics. In the future, you may want to know more...and we're here to help when that day comes.

<u>Compa</u>	any Web Site	2		
	Visitors/Month	Avg. Page Views	Top Pages	
Last Year				
Current				
Next				

Website and Social Media Metrics/Goals

Twitter	Followers	Impressions
Last Year This Year Next Year		
Facebook	Likes	Reach
Engagement Last Year This Year Next Year		
LinkedIn	Followers	
Last Year This Year Next Year		
Tik Tok	Subscribers	
Last Year This Year Next Year		

Strategic Concepts

Build on any of these concepts or use them as is - these are just the beginning of the great ideas to come.

- Buy season tickets to a local concert/event venue to entertain/build client relationships
- Create a digital content calendar for posting blogs, articles, videos, paid advertising, customer content and social media advertising. And stick to it!
- Promote your products and services on a local platform such as NextDoor or Patch.com.
- Find a complementary strategic partner. Your combined vision should offer customers a revelation

 and blindside your competition.
- Leverage nonprofit relationships, charity drives, civic awards to promote your business as a good corporate citizen.

Strategic Concepts (cntd)

- Create, post, and update listings and links on multiple platforms including Facebook and Instagram or LinkedIn.
- Can your business help people in your community directly? If so, start doing some good and make sure your local media is there to cover the event and shoot some videos.
- Launch a YouTube channel and post regularly. Show off your expertise!
- Create educational opportunities to sell products/services and create/educate influencers to promote your brand.
- Throw a social event for influencers/customers and broadcast on Facebook Live and YouTube.
- Highlight client success stories through quantified, scientific outcomes and narratives in your blog.
- Check online publishers to see if they can use your content.

Strategic Concepts (cntd)

- Shoot a mini-iPhone documentary, and post stories on social media.
- Create and distribute original content via educational materials where customers congregate online (Not your website. Find social groups that care about what you have to offer and meet them on the websites where they live, work and play.) Be helpful!
- Promote programs, contests, meet 'n greets for locals (or online groups, maybe your own Zoom room).
- Widen your area of immediate influence.
- Lunch/In-Services with influencers and referral sources to build relationships



Proven Tactics:

<u>Blogging</u>

- Post regular educational, informational, and entertaining blogs about your company
- Give your customers a voice and a place to be seen on your website with a place to review their experience. Then YOU share it on your social sites.
- Including guest blogs from affiliated businesses or strategic partners are a great way to share content and add to the number of incoming links.
- Get people engaged with your company by answering questions that address customer pain points.

Branding

- Do you have a professionally designed logo? (Designs by relatives DO NOT count!)
- Do you have a tag or theme line that differentiates your company from the competition? Is it seven words or less? (Cuz if not, it should be!)



Branding (cntd)

- Do you use a specific color palate, font, and hierarchical text point size in all of your communications? If so, is it accessible? (And where can your creatives find them?)
- Does your business support any local teams or causes? List them here:

- Is your company REALLY a great place to work? Do you get dozens of unsolicited resumes a week? Are your employees champions of your brand? If you answered no to ANY of these questions: what can you do TOMORROW to start turning things around?
- What is your purpose as a company beyond turning a buck? How do you share that with your employees and customers?



Charities & Awards

- How are you involved in your community? Do you have a pet or personal cause for your company to champion? How do you share your charity with the press?
- Can you enlist your business customers in a charity drive? What causes do they care about? Are there any charities or causes you want to connect to your company?
- What existing charity events could benefit your business? Think of all the "business" that happens over golf. Make a list and add it to your calendar.
- Does your industry have events/awards? If so, how can you win one, and what's the best way to share the big news with the world?



Content Management

- Do you have a content management system in place and an employee who knows how to use it? What's the return on your investment?
- Create a list of problems your customers look to you to answer, then use your website and social media to explain your solution to the world. The resulting content doesn't need to be an article: it could be an:
 - infographic
 - Testimonials
 - Facebook or Instagram post
 - FAQs
- What keywords do you use on your website so search engines can find you?
- How can you increase client engagement? Give users a reason to visit and interact with your store/website.



Education

- Continuing education is imperative in every field. Can you offer your customers a certification? Can you teach your expertise online or in person?
- Are you recording your educational presentations? If so, are you offering them on your website and social media?
- Ask your best "students" or clients to dinner individually to find out what your business is doing right AND wrong. (This is educational for you.)
- Can you package your intellectual content in a way that helps your customers? Perhaps as a podcast they can listen to on their way to work?





Database Management

- Do you have the name, phone numbers, and email addresses of all of your customers? If not, do you know how to get it?
- If you don't have a customer list of emails, have you considered purchasing an extension that gathers the data you need?
- Have you personalized and automated your lead nurturing process with emails timed around your sales cycle and customer behavior data?
- Is your database segmented into specific demographics and regions? If so, you can develop creative unique to each demo, which improves the odds of a sale.
- Do you have an email calendar that includes all of the critical customer touchpoints and event, holiday, and birthday notices?



Digital Marketing

- Does your website accurately reflect your business? Not simply the products you sell, but the ethos of your company?
- Same question for your social media pages.
- What are you doing to ensure search engines find you? Are you using SEO (search engine optimization) best practices?
- Are you boosting/promoting original content on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tik Tok, and other relevant social media platforms?
- Are you leveraging local social media sites like Patch.com, NextDoor.com, DirJournal.com, Reddit? If so, what are you doing to engage your customers digitally on a local level?
- Do customers review your business on Yelp? If not, make it easy for them with links and suggestions.



<u>Digital Marketing (cntd)</u>

- Do your employees follow your company on all social media platforms? If so, are they active contributors to the conversation? If not, why not?
- Launch a YouTube channel for your customers and followers. This can be a place they can learn about your company and also contribute their own content via your blog and customer reviews.
- Do you have affordable content creators like writers, strategists, and designers to bring your vision to life?
- Are you polling your customer to discover more about them while adding them to your database?
- Do you know where your web and social traffic originates? Where do people spend time on your site? Do users tend to leave your site from one particular page? Answers to these questions and many more can be found for free by linking your site to Google Analytics.

Email Marketing

- Have you defined your key metrics and set objective goals for the percentage of emails opened, clicked and engaged?
- Do you have an annual schedule for your email marketing?
- Have you defined customer journeys/experiences from your emails?
- Have you created a segmented list of timely and targeted content to interest each demo?
- How are you keeping your customers interested in your business? How are you telling the world about your success stories, upcoming events, and appearances in the news?
- Do you have a working content calendar including scheduled blogs, articles, videos, and infographics for your social media sites?
- Are you directing your existing customers and prospects to your fresh content?
- Are you emailing surveys to your customers to find out what you can do better?



<u>Events</u>

Calendar

Are there regular conferences or sales events in your industry? Put them on your calendar now for the year and plan ahead to make a good first impression.

Trade Show Display

Create a theme for your industry event and make a splash with every customer approaching your booth. Make it an unforgettable experience.

Specialty Items/Give-a-Ways

Do you have advertising specialty items that have your logo, phone number, and URL? If so, give it away to the world of your potential customers at events. Before deciding on the specialty item, think about what your customers would use on a regular basis...what will they find helpful...that they won't toss?

Here are some easy answers, all of which should be manufactured with your logo before distributing:

- Pens
- T-Shirts
- Key chains
- Flashlights
- USB drives

Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday Friday Saturday 3 4 1 5 2 6 10 7 11 8 12 9 13 17 14 18 15 19 16 20 24 21 25 22 26 23 27 31 28 29 30

Sales Materials

- What do you do when a potential customer asks you to "send me something?"
- Do you have a pre-designed email that details your main services and links back to your website and social pages?
- Do you have a brochure that you can drop in snail mail along with a personal note to a potential customer?
- Do you have a general marketing piece that you can give out at conferences and on sales calls?
- Are your employees well-versed in your product or service? Do all of them say the same things about your company? Note: see elevator speech on p. 19.



Presentations

Now that you have their attention, how are you going to dazzle your prospective customer? Usually, one-on-one gives you the best opportunities. Use active listening and note-taking to show your prospect that they have your complete attention.

Other prospects prefer a professional pitch to impress a group of prospects simultaneously. Satisfy either situation with a creative PowerPoint you can present from your laptop,via projector in a conference room, a Zoom room, or print for use as a sales leave-behind.

- If you're presenting in person, do you have a stand-out leave-behind to remind participants of your company and presentation?
- If you're presenting via Zoom, Teams, Skype (etc), do you have slides and graphics ready to share? Logo background?



Lead Nurturing

- Are you promoting downloadable content, i.e. your blogs, articles, e-book, etc? Do you have a list of topics? Write down your ideas!
- Are you capturing customer contact info and adding it to your database?
- Are you maintaining customers and prospects on a ranked list that targets your easiest potential sale down to your most difficult-toengage prospects?
- What can you do to convert your prospects from being "on the fence" to buying and staying "in your court" and loyal to your business?

<u>Photography</u>

- Do you have PROFESSIONAL photography of your product or service? Of you and your employees in action? Of your product being manufactured? In use? Of your service being rendered?
- Do you have individual headshots of your employees you can potentially use in an Employee Profiles section on your website or in presentations?
- If you use customer testimonials, do you have any pictures or video of the customer?
- Does the photography on your website include alt tags?
- Also, if you use any photos that you found online do you have permission to use it?

Public Relations

- Do you have contacts in the media who are willing to tell the story of your business? If so, they're a great resource to start.
- Why should people know that your business exists? What can you do for THEM? If you have done something newsworthy, do you know how to get it to the right publishers?
- Are you, your employees, or clients well-known in the community? Could you leverage this to draw more customers into your fold?
- Will there be any special community events held at your business that are advertised in the local press?
- Do you have a person who is media trained and can confidently speak with reporters on the air?
- Do you have a crisis plan for when your worst-case business scenario occurs?

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Social Media

- Please provide all of your social media URLs here:
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - LinkedIn
 - Twitter
 - Tik Tok
 - Others
- How often are you posting fresh content?
- Do you have a dedicated person or agency regularly creating fresh content? Who is responding in the name of your company?
- Do you have a budget set aside to promote your posts?
- Are you leveraging LinkedIn contacts for networking and new business?
- Do you employ a social media moderator?



<u>Social Media (cntd)</u>

- Have you tried starting a Facebook group or joining a Facebook group?
- Are you optimizing each post with hashtags? How are you choosing them? What hashtags are reaching the most people? Which are reaching the RIGHT people?
- Are you promoting your company milestones and events? Which ones?
- Are you capturing data from your social sites and your website to find out what content best drives people to your website? What are your key performance indicators?
- Have you considered polling your customers and prospects (even the public) on business-related issues? Results?



<u>Website</u>

- Do you have a website? If so, what is the URL? Is it optimized for laptops and mobile formats?
- Is your website linked to your social media pages?
- Does your website represent your brand in its most authentic online form?
- Are you selling any products on your website? Do you have product photography including text descriptions?
- Does your site account for user experience? Have you done any research?
- Have you addressed accessibility? Is your site WCAG compliant?
- Do users have a way to contact you via the site?



Your Marketing Budget

According to Deloitte's 2021, marketing accounts for an average of 11.7% of most corporate budgets.

The average small business, however, only spends an average of 7.5% of its annual budget on marketing.

How you decide to allocate that money depends on your industry standards as well as the other needs you have already identified in this plan.

Use the list on the next page when considering what you want to accomplish and how to allocate your marketing dollars. This budget should reflect your Year 1 Objectives.

For example, if you set one of your goals as increasing web sales, you'll want to focus your dollars on digital marketing and social marketing, content creation, and search engine optimization.

Or, if you decide your business would benefit from building more personal relationships with present and future clients, concentrate your money on events, lead nurturing, and building a brand with which prospects will want to be associated.



Advertising Specialties

Analytics

App Development

Automation Software

Art Direction (if producing TV or video)

Collateral Materials

Copywriting

Charity Sponsorship(s)

Corporate ID (logo, cards, etc)

Creative Consultants/Freelancers

Content Creation

Content Management System

Customer Relationship Fund (wine & dine)

Design

Employee/Client Education

Event Display for Conferences (if required)

Market Research

Budget (cntd)

Media Placement

Print

Broadcast

Digital

Mobile Marketing

Photography

Printing

Production

Photography

Post Production

PPC/Promoted Branded Content

Search Engine Optimization

Video Production

Web Content Creation Tools

Website Development/Management

Total:



Now that you know all of the important questions, you'll see that some of the answers become instantly clear...but not all of them. That's because there's no universal recipe for marketing success. Except for what works.

And the only way to know THAT is good, old-fashioned experience.

Right now, you have three options:

- 1. **Do nothing**. Keep your eye on the competition and if they make a move, you follow. You don't mind being second best.
- 2. **Roll the dice.** You think you have a workable strategy and the know-how to make it happen...but you'd rather not spend any money. You have a niece in graphic design school, right?
- 3. **Connect with me!** I can help you translate your data into a winning marketing plan that you can afford to put into action:

drew@drewbufalini.com

My team of contract freelancers includes every specialty you'll ever need to bring your new marketing plan to life.