

# *From Zero to Hero*

Marketing For Startups and SMEs





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As a busy entrepreneur or business owner we know you might not have time to read this whole e-book in one go (but please do read it!). So to speed things up we've summarized each section below:

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Having a customer-centric, lightning-fast, mobile optimised website is a must-have to achieve a place at Google's top table and some space at the forefront of your prospects brain. Don't delay, get building!

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Make your company one that people can connect with. Find people, be creative, assess your content, engage them, and tell them what you're up to, because 'word of mouth' starts with you.

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# COMPASS GUIDES

## FROM ZERO TO HERO - MARKETING FOR STARTUPS AND SMEs

**Running a company?** It costs A LOT of money. It costs even more money, it seems, when you're a startup or an SME, braving the real world and facing obstacle after obstacle on a regular basis. And then there are all of those unforeseen costs that sneak up on you. And then, there's that beast called Marketing.

The good news - modern marketing has been made somewhat easier thanks to new technologies and ways to market your business. However it can be hard to know where to start or where to put the most effort. If you're feeling discouraged with what you've tried so far or you haven't quite known where to start, at all - you're in the right place.

In this eBook, we're going to give you some tips on which channels to use, why each channel is important and how your company, with a limited budget and resources, can best use them to get your stellar product in front of the people who need it, when they need it most.

Having been a [start-up ourselves](#) we've spent time, money and energy learning what works and what doesn't for our business (and we're still learning!). So read on for our thoughts on where to put your brain power and a bit of cash to take your marketing from zero to hero.







## WEBSITES & MOBILE

Does any business not have a website these days? Before you print a business card or spend a penny on advertising, you need to start building your online presence. Even if you aren't tech-savvy or creative, you can now use simple web publishing tools to build a website in a couple of hours. And the fees for hosting a website start at less than \$10 USD per month which is probably one of the cheapest marketing costs out there. Yes, much cheaper than placing an ad in a magazine or a newspaper. Tools like [WordPress](#), [Wix](#) or [Shopify](#) make it easier to get a basic website setup and if you're feeling really adventurous, you can even bolt on advanced features like e-commerce or user accounts. Best of all, most of these tools are free to get you started.

**75%**  
of users base your entire company's credibility on your website's design<sup>1</sup>

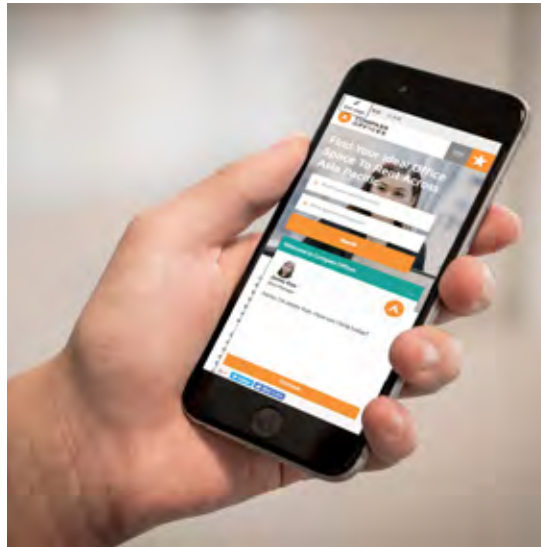
Think of your website as your information hub where all your other marketing resource can point to – a place where you can display all sorts of different content to show your potential customers how great you are and what you can do for them.



**85%**

of adults think that a company's mobile website should be as good or better than their desktop website<sup>2</sup>

That said, it's not enough that you just have a website. You must have a professional-looking site that's optimised for mobile and lightning quick. Break the tradition by following the "mobile first" strategy because most of your users will probably access your website through a mobile device more than once.



## THERE'RE IN FACT, 1.2 BILLION

mobile web users worldwide and the number doesn't seem to be dropping any time soon<sup>3</sup>

Starting a website for your business is a low-cost investment that will help you to both establish credibility and reach a wider customer base than you ever could through traditional marketing techniques. If you keep your website updated with fresh, current content and are quick to address technical issues and customer queries, you'll never have to worry about "not existing" to your current and future clients.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Having a customer-centric, lightning-fast, mobile optimised website is a must-have to achieve a place at Google's top table and some space at the forefront of your prospects brain. Don't delay, get building!



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media, whether Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, Google+ or Pinterest, is the best way to increase your audience reach and alert customers and clients about what's going on with your company. In addition, it helps you build brand awareness, increase your customer base, and connect with current customers.

# 90%

of marketers say social media is important to their business<sup>4</sup>



There are many free ways to market your business on social media, which cuts down on your budget. You can use resources like [Canva](#) or [BeFunky](#) to create your own graphics. Record videos with your computer's webcam or phone and upload to [YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#). Try to build relationships by commenting and chatting with your followers as well.

# 71%

of consumers who have had a good social media service experience with a brand are likely to recommend it to others<sup>6</sup>

**Social media success does not depend on how many followers a business has. Instead, it depends on customer engagement<sup>5</sup>**

Putting your business on the social media map involves using data to pinpoint and engage specific audiences with appropriate content. Aside from using [Google Analytics](#), leverage the use of native social media analytics and insights tools that come with Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.



However, social media can be overwhelming and it's not easy to take care of all your social media accounts while simultaneously managing your business. With social media automation tools like [Hootsuite](#), [Buffer](#), [Kissmetrics](#) and so many others, scheduling, monitoring and analysing social content has never been easier.

Test and evaluate with what your prospects respond to and then fine tune your strategy based on performance metrics. Analyse things like the number of likes, clicks, shares, plays and comments per post, the reach of your social campaigns, and the number of page visits resulting from social media – then adjust and improve based on this data.



# 41%

of people would unfollow a brand on social media if they were receiving irrelevant content<sup>7</sup>



With so many ways to market a business online, it's easy to get overwhelmed. But the internet is often a great place for cash strapped startups to start marketing. Don't fear the acronyms and hashtags, embrace them! Remember, you don't need to be on every social network — just the ones where your customers are hanging out. Start small and build your web presence as you grow your business.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Make your company one that people can connect with. Find people, be creative, assess your content, engage them, and tell them what you're up to, because 'word of mouth' starts with you.

## PERSONAS AND CUSTOMER TYPES

While it may seem like customer personas are just for big businesses, they're just as impactful for small and medium sized businesses as well as startups. Customer personas (also known as buyer personas) are your opportunity to target exactly who your customers are, and what they're looking for. Without them, you're like Iron Man without his AI assistant - flying blind. The best way to get started is to look at your customer data for some demographic generalities, including age, income, education, job characteristics, purchasing frequency, purchasing dollar amounts, etc. If you don't already have demographic information, you might want to conduct a survey to get that information.



# 71%

of companies who exceed revenue and lead goals have documented Personas<sup>8</sup>

# 47%

of companies who exceeded sales and revenue goals consistently maintain their Personas<sup>9</sup>

Use social media – Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook all offer quite a bit of analytic data that can help you dive into who's following your business— helping you drill down on who your existing fans are. You can also use social media listening to find potential customers and learn more about them! Ask your audience directly through surveys and interviews. If the opportunity arises, sitting down with your customer is the best way to get to know them.

Once you've created customer personas, distribute that information to your team. The more your team knows about your customer, the easier it will be for you to develop a product and market it to that persona.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

With customers expecting brands to have a greater understanding of their preferences, wants and needs, personas are a great way to get inside your customer's heads and develop marketing that's relevant to your audience.





## MARKETING DATA

Marketing data is the information that helps you to build a sound knowledge of your customers and competitors. It is a powerful tool for companies of all sizes, but is especially important for entrepreneurs and startups. Simply put, market data helps you get inside your customers' heads.

As a small business owner, you may not have much room for error. When your financial stability is on the line, every decision counts. Fortunately, marketing research can help minimise risk and improve your business strategy from the bottom up.

In order to understand customers, companies conduct marketing research using a variety of methods. The least expensive methods are by conducting interviews, surveys, questionnaires and listening in on what your target audience are saying about your company on social media and the web.

Google Forms, Survey Monkey and Polljoy are some of the go-to tools for conducting surveys and questionnaires, while sites like Reddit, Quora, Small Business Forums plus LinkedIn and Facebook groups are free places to share small business ideas and knowledge, ask questions, find help and are great for tips on email marketing, link building, social media management, finding up-to-date blog topics, and for connecting with industry experts.

# 74%

of businesses using CRM report better customer relationships<sup>10</sup>

You will also need a marketing database to record all the data you collect. A good one like [Salesforce](#), [Zoho](#) or [Hubspot](#) will allow you to record lots of information against a customer record and then use it to personalise your customer experiences. It's worth investing some time and money on your CRM tool in the early days of your business as trying to integrate one when you have hundreds of employees is a major headache!



# 41%

revenue increase is attained with a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform<sup>11</sup>

Market data takes the guesswork out of marketing, helps you to better target customers, develop your product offering and gives you the evidence that you can use to drive your marketing strategy and accomplish your objectives and goals. What's more? Small businesses generally have the advantage of agility, making it perfectly suited to act on data-derived insights with speed and efficiency.

Today, startups and small businesses can know more about their customers than ever before. But in the rapidly changing digital economy, small businesses need to take a page from the enterprise playbook. As technology advances and more information is created on a daily basis, being able to access, learn, and react to big data in real time will be the standard of success.



### KEY TAKEAWAY

If your small business is not prioritising personalised initiatives, you're missing out! Take the time to analyse and understand your marketing data, and your prospects (and revenue) will respond accordingly!



## MARKETING AUTOMATION

One of the most startling takeaways from the [Gartner 360 Summit back in 2011](#) was the statement that “by 2020, 85 percent of customer relationships with businesses will be managed without human interaction”. While this may sound somewhat futuristic to many, from a marketing perspective the future is already here: it’s called ‘marketing automation’.

What does this have to do with you? Especially since you’re already busy wearing so many different hats, making a great product, providing a great service, finding more customers, paying bills, managing employees, dealing with vendors, and doing it all in less than 24 hours a day.

Email is one of the primary tools of marketing automation. Turns out, marketing automation can make your busy life easier and grow your business in the process. Done well, with a focus on the customer journey, you can build better relationships with everyone in your contact base and scale the human touch ingrained into your company DNA.

# 95%

of small businesses use email as a primary channel for communicating with prospects and customers<sup>12</sup>

A good email marketing service enables you to create highly engaging emails. It also allows you to manage your contacts, segment users into groups, and track the performance of your email campaigns. All you need is your list and the right software.



# 75%

believe email is the most cost effective option for personalising communications and measuring effectiveness<sup>13</sup>

The first thing you need to do is segment and organise your list of subscribers. By segmenting them as much as possible, you’ll be able to send better, more personalised emails, and therefore increase your chances of making more conversions (good thing you started collecting all that data!).

The way you segment your list is completely up to you, but here are some of the most common options:

- By demographics: segment via their age, sex, or location
- Customers: recent or old customers, potential leads
- Engagement: active vs. inactive subscribers

### **Sending automated emails helps marketers repurpose 61% more content than marketers who don’t use automation<sup>14</sup>**

The main challenge for SMEs and startups is finding a marketing automation tool that’s affordable. You can put a process in place with cost-effective marketing automation tools like [Mailchimp](#), [Apsis](#), [Hubspot](#) and [GetResponse](#). These automation solutions can streamline a large variety of your marketing functions, so it’s possible to focus on other daily tasks while effectively nurturing leads and driving revenue.



### KEY TAKEAWAY

Marketing is ultimately a pursuit to send the right message to the right people at the right time. Marketing automation helps take away some of the manual effort and scale your marketing no matter if you have 100 or 1,000,000 customers.





## BRAND

Just like that first jolt of caffeine in the morning, every small business needs a strong brand identity to start out on the right foot. Branding is a way of defining your business to yourself, your team and your external audiences. It is not a replacement for sales or specific marketing campaigns but assists and reinforces your sales and marketing efforts in important ways.



# 64%

of consumers cite shared values as the primary reason they have a relationship with a brand<sup>15</sup>



**Brand** - The perceived emotional corporate image as a whole.

**Identity** - The visual aspects that form part of the overall brand.

**Logo** - Identifies a business in its simplest form via the use of a mark or icon.

The identity or 'image' of a company is made up of many visual devices:

- A Logo (The symbol of the entire identity & brand)
- Stationery (Letterhead + business card + envelopes, etc.)
- Marketing Collateral (Flyers, brochures, books, websites, etc.)
- Products & Packaging (Products sold and the packaging in which they come in)
- Apparel Design (Tangible clothing items that are worn by employees)
- Signage (Interior & exterior design)
- Messages & Actions (Messages - conveyed via indirect or direct modes of communication)
- Other Communication (Audio, smell, touch, etc.)
- Anything visual that represents the business.

Simply put, a brand is the bunch of ideas and feelings your customers - and your employees - have about you. The stronger and more positive those ideas are, the more they'll buy from you, and the longer they'll remain loyal to you.



### 1/3 of consumers have a brand in mind when they go shopping<sup>16</sup>

But because brands are made of ideas and feelings, they're tricky things and hard to control and this makes branding difficult especially for big companies. Many big organisations have no obvious soul - particularly those that have grown through mergers, or have expanded beyond their home country or original product, or have hit hard times commercially. A large organisation has to get thousands of employees to conform to the brand, and to be consistent globally in the experiences it gives its customers. That means codifying the brand, writing rules, policing everything.

Small businesses, by contrast, are ideally placed to build the best possible brands. Often they're founder-led, or family-owned, which makes the company a very personal thing. Values tend to be woven into the business. All those things to do with tone, style, beliefs, purpose, perceptions - which get summarised as branding - aren't artificial constructs, they're just part of the climate.

Focus on what you know best and develop a unique branding process for your clients that also plays to your strengths and preferences. In other words, be yourself. It's important to put time and thought into your brand, but you don't have to invest a lot of money in order to be great. That's the value of branding for small businesses.

#### KEY TAKEAWAY

If you've got a business, then you've got a brand and it's never too early - or too late - to make a start. Building a brand is an exciting process and should involve your whole organisation. Enjoy creating your identity and you'll reap the rewards.



### CONCLUSION

Bootstrapping builds character and there's nothing like marketing a startup with a modest budget to encourage innovation. Leveraging connections, special events, skills and the Web can give your business a special twist. Limited funds give you an excuse to flex your creative muscle and truly share your vision with the world. It's not always about the money you have to spend on marketing, it's about the time and effort you put into it and above all, the relevance it has for your customers.

As your business continues to grow, you may branch out into other methods of online and offline marketing - but the tips in this eBook will help you to develop a solid startup marketing strategy that can be the foundation from which you continue to build upon. Marketing should begin and end with your customer. We wish you the best of luck in your marketing endeavours - now go and write that marketing plan!



## SOURCES

1. 75% of users base your entire company's credibility on your website's design ([web credibility research , Stanford](#))
2. 85% of adults think that a company's mobile website should be as good or better than their desktop website ([SEOcial](#))
3. There are in fact, 1.2 billion mobile web users worldwide and the number doesn't seem to be dropping any time soon ([Mobiforge](#))
4. 90% of marketers say social media is important to their business ([Hubspot](#))
5. Social media success does not depend on how many followers a business has. Instead, it depends on customer engagement ([Forbes](#))
6. 71% of consumers who have had a good social media service experience with a brand are likely to recommend it to others ([Marketing Sherpa](#))
7. 41% of people would unfollow a brand on social media if they were receiving irrelevant content ([Hubspot](#))
8. 71% of companies who exceed revenue and lead goals have documented Personas ([Understanding B2B Buyers Benchmark Study, Cintell](#))
9. 47% of companies who exceeded sales and revenue goals consistently maintain their Personas ([Understanding B2B Buyers Benchmark Study, Cintell](#))
10. 74% of businesses using CRM report better customer relationships ([Software Advice](#))
11. 41% revenue increase is attained with Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform ([Software Advice](#))
12. 95% of small businesses use email as a primary channel for communicating with prospects and customers ([Smart Insights](#))
13. 75% believe email is the most cost effective option for personalising communications and measuring effectiveness ([Smart Insights](#))
14. Sending automated emails helps marketers repurpose 61% more content than marketers who don't use automation ([Smart Insights](#))
15. 64% of consumers cite shared values as the primary reason they have a relationship with a brand ([Helpscout](#))
16. 1/3 of consumers have a brand in mind when they go shopping ([Helpscout](#))





## ABOUT COMPASS OFFICES

With a network of more than 10,000 work stations in eight cities across the APAC, Compass Offices' growing portfolio of over 40 business centres provide a wide range of services to startups, SMEs and large corporates. Our clients use different variations on the Compass theme to tailor new work arrangements to their own needs. From fully furnished serviced offices, virtual offices, meeting rooms and prominent business addresses to concept co-working spaces and habitats, we provide workspaces that reshape industry, transform cities and enrich lives.

Visit us at <https://www.compassoffices.com/>