



HOW TO craft your MARKETING PLAN

The A to Z Guide To Promoting Your Business

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WHAT IS A MARKETING PLAN?

Your marketing plan will be your map for how you're going to promote your business.

It will allow you to focus your time and energy on executing that marketing strategy, rather than wasting time wondering how else you can promote and grow your business.

The marketing plan consists of several parts, which we'll explain in more detail and map out for you momentarily.

First, you will outline your marketing and business goals. You need to understand clearly from the outset what you hope to accomplish, so you can align the rest of your activities accordingly.

Second, you will outline your marketing assets. They will likely include things like your website, a blog, social media channels, one or more individuals, and so on.

Third, you will determine the exact methods and techniques you plan to employ, and when. While you will not have to be so detailed as to create specific tweets or campaign topics, you *should* have some plan and idea for how often you will do such activities.

Finally, you will need to begin noting how you will measure the success of your marketing. Marketing is about far more than just driving sales. Marketing establishes your brand and authority, and makes it possible for you to develop relationships with other business and potential partners. Marketing educates potential prospects about the problems that you can solve and, in some cases, acts as your Customer Service department.

The overall goal of your marketing should be to drive traffic to your website, generate leads from that traffic, and convert those leads into sales. But there will be many elements to your marketing plan, and not all will have a clear impact on sales. Some initiatives may help drive traffic, while others may pave the way for leads to more easily decide to buy from you.

“Good marketers see consumers as complete human beings with all the dimensions real people have.” – Jonah Sachs

WHY IS A MARKETING PLAN IMPORTANT?

Before we get into the details of your marketing plan, I want to stress the importance of *having* a plan and what it's going to mean to your business.

You see, there's tremendous risk in *not* having a plan.

First, if you try to launch your business without a marketing plan in place, you might spend a lot of time exploring different marketing options and techniques, and end up investing in strategies that don't necessarily work together.

Second, without a marketing plan, it's far easier to neglect marketing entirely. When launching a new business, there are nonstop demands on your time and attention. If you don't have a plan and schedule of activities in place, your marketing could get lost.

And without a plan, you'll likely have no way of measuring the effectiveness of anything you do manage to do. Which means you will not be learning.

One of the most important principles that business strategy expert, Eric Ries, teaches in *The Lean Startup* is the importance of learning. He says, "Startups exist not just to make stuff, make money, or even serve customers. They exist to *learn* how to build a sustainable business."

Through this Marketing Plan book, you will learn two things:

1. How to put a preliminary marketing plan in place.
2. How to measure the results so that you can learn what works and what doesn't, and adapt your marketing plan to better fit your business and audience.

Let's get started.

"Don't bunt. Aim out of the park. Aim for the company of immortals." – David Ogilvy

PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

There are a couple of assumptions I need to make at this point, and so forgive me if either of these are untrue for you.

First, I have to assume that you're starting an online business, and are therefore interested in *Digital Marketing*. Digital Marketing is just a fancy way of saying "online" or "Internet" marketing, as opposed to more traditional marketing methods like television or newspaper advertising. All of the marketing methods we talk about are going to be digital in nature, but that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of other forms of marketing and advertising. If you will be serving a local audience, for instance, do explore some of the many other options that are available to you.

And second, for the purposes of this book, I make the assumption that you know little or nothing about digital marketing. While I expect you've heard of Facebook and Twitter, I assume you don't know how to use them to promote your business.

So, before we start to craft a plan, I think it's important to get a clear picture of what the **Digital Marketing Landscape** looks like, and the key elements that we'll be discussing. The idea here will be to brief you on virtually *all* of the available digital marketing options, so that when it comes time to decide what you're going to do, you'll be familiar enough with each of them to make some initial decisions.

Do remember though that your marketing plan will be a dynamic and living document, designed to change and adapt and grow right alongside your business. If you decide to focus on, say, Facebook initially, that doesn't mean you can't shift and focus on Google+ instead after six months.

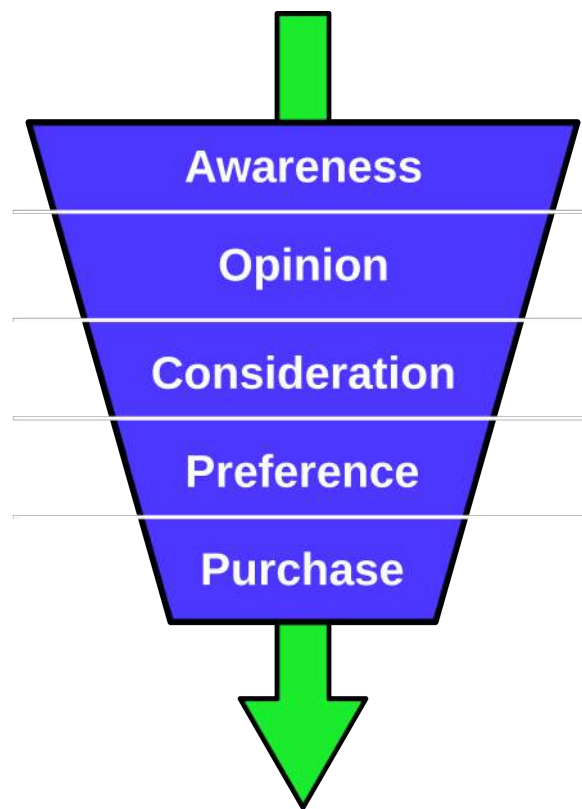
This is where the measurement and learning comes in. If we treat every marketing strategy and technique as an experiment, and open ourselves to listening to the data, we will be able to make sound business decisions and smart changes in direction.

"Don't be afraid to get creative and experiment with your marketing." – Mike Volpe

PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

How Does Digital Marketing Work?

You may have heard of Sales Funnels in the past. Digital Marketing works along the same lines.



Imagine the bottom of a funnel, the narrowest part or mouth - this is the point where your prospects decide to become customers. It might be an online purchase from your website, or clickthrough to an affiliate site, or a phone call to you. The details, of course, will vary depending on your business. This is the **Conversion** point of the process.

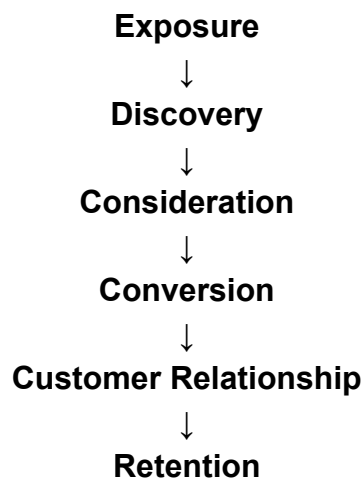
As we move up the funnel, it widens to include pages within your site that educated the prospect on who you are, how you can solve their problems, and the specific products or services you offer. These are commonly referred to as landing pages, which are the **Consideration** point of the process - when prospects are comparing you and your services to available alternatives.

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Above that, the digital marketing funnel typically includes blog posts and other content within your site that visitors may read, leave, and come back to later on. In this **Discovery** point, prospects may be educating themselves, not only on you, but about their problems as well.

And at the top of the digital marketing funnel, we have what I call outposts. These are social media profiles and channels, guest blog posts, search engine listings, email, referrals, and so on. Through these mediums, prospects are at the **Exposure** point where they may be hearing about you and your services for the first time, or perhaps they're looking for information on a topic which you've addressed.

It's also important to note that, unlike the traditional sales funnel, the digital marketing funnel continues beyond conversion. Since prospects who have become customers will continue to visit our websites, read our blog posts, and subscribe to our emails, our marketing efforts contribute to the ongoing **Customer Relationship** and **Retention**, both of which are critical components of a sustainable business and not to be overlooked.



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What Are The Elements Of Digital Marketing Today?

We've touched on a few of the elements already, like "Blog" and "Social Media." What we're going to do now is review all of the key elements in a logical order so, as mentioned earlier, you'll be familiar with each and the role they play in your overall marketing plan.

Content

Content refers to information that you create and present for visitors and prospects to consume. It can be text, images, audio or video, and in a variety of formats.

Recall that at the bottom of the digital marketing sales funnel, at the **Conversion** point, you have a page or pages that allow that visitor and prospect to take a converting action. Typically this is an order or contact page within your website.

That means that virtually all of your content needs to ultimately lead people to this single point and page. You can certainly chain content together - have a blog post that links to a page which links to another page which links to your order page - if that's what makes sense for your business and audience. It's all about understanding your audience. What are they looking for? What are their problems? What information, will they need, and in what order, to make a purchasing decision?

The two most important types of content are Landing Pages and Blog Posts.

Landing Pages - These are static pages within your site that are designed to educate a visitor and convert them into a lead or sale. Landing Pages can include video and images and as much or as little text as you need to be successful. Since, of course, we're only guessing initially as to what information a particular landing page needs in order to be successful, it's a good idea to routinely review and test your landing pages. Make a change that you think will improve how a page performs and then monitor the results. The success of a landing page is typically presented as a *Conversion Rate*, which is a simple equation of how many successful actions were generated (i.e. orders) over the total number of visitors for a given period.

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For instance, a landing page that generated 336 orders last week, out of 4,500 visitors, has a conversion rate of 7.5% (not bad!).

Blog Posts - Blog posts, on the other hand, are a little different. First, let's dispel the myth that blog posts are personal journal entries from you on what you've been doing since the last time you blogged. While some bloggers certainly write like that, that's not a business blog.

A business blog is a growing collection of content that helps educate visitors on specific topics. By so doing, the business introduces itself to the visitors and establishes its expertise and authority on those topics.

In other words, your blog posts should demonstrate that you know what you're talking about.

Blog posts do not have to be any particular length, and can include all of the different kinds of content we mentioned: text, images, audio or video.

Some bloggers create their content on third-party platforms - for example, video bloggers typically use YouTube to publish and share their content - but that's not our purpose here. We want our blog content to reside within our website, so even if we create a video or some other form of content on a third-party platform, we're going to embed that within a blog post on our own site.

While there is some benefit to taking advantage of another platform's inherent audience and reach, the harsh reality is that anything you do on someone else's platform is not owned by you. You could potentially lose any such content. Additionally, your website should be far more effective at impacting and converting visitors due to its design and additional elements (like a sidebar), making it the preferred platform for the majority of your content.

Blog posts, then, are just pages of content that are designed to talk about a specific topic and make readers aware of our business. For this reason, you don't even have to have a "blog platform" - a system like Wordpress to publish and house blog posts. If you're going to blog a lot, such a system is nice, but hardly necessary. If you can create pages for your website, you can blog.

"Content is anything that adds value to the reader's life." – Avinash Kaushik

PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

Social Media

Social Media refers to all of the networks and sites where people are able to create profiles and connect with one another in a social way. Not all social networks work the same, and not every one is suitable for promoting a business. In fact, some networks, like Yahoo's image platform Flickr, specifically forbid using the network for business purposes, so be sure to review the Terms Of Service before you start promoting your business on a new network.

For our purposes, we will only discuss here the networks that *are* suitable and permissible for business.

Facebook - Facebook is one of the largest social networks, and is one that has specific features for businesses. You will create a "Facebook Page" that talks about your business, and use that to attract interested readers and prospects. Facebook also offers an advanced and effective advertising system that allows businesses to place relevant ads in front of highly targeted Facebook users.

Businesses post status updates to Facebook that can include text, images or video. Fans of your Facebook Page who see your updates can "Like" the post to indicate interest, as well as Share or Comment on the post. Because not everyone is on social media all the time, and because Facebook tries to show content to Facebook users that they may actually be interested in, your Facebook status updates will only be seen by a small fraction of your total number of fans (generally <5%).

Do consider allocating at least a minimal Facebook advertising budget of \$100 / month for this reason.

Facebook also offers a community feature called Facebook Groups, which allow Facebook users of similar interests to gather and hold discussions.

Twitter - This social network has often been described as a firehose, due to the rapid, non-stop frequency of status updates being posted. These are referred to as 'tweets.' Each tweet is based on a maximum of 140 characters of text. You can link to web pages, as well as include an image or video. Twitter followers who see your tweets can Favorite, Retweet or Reply.

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Due to the nature of the activity on Twitter, it's estimated that, within 18 minutes, your tweet will have already reached its half-life, meaning that it will have been seen by the most of the people it will ever be seen by.

While Twitter doesn't have a separate account or profile requirement for businesses, the network does offer a similar advertising system to Facebook, giving businesses the opportunity to put their tweets in front of a wider audience than just their current followers.

LinkedIn - Often seen as the professionals' network, LinkedIn certainly is focused on connecting employees with potential employers. But the network is far richer than that. LinkedIn profiles can just as easily be used to highlight the services you offer and problems you solve, and the network is fantastic for connecting with both prospects and potential partners.

LinkedIn does offer a business profile option called a Company Page, though the capabilities are quite limited. If possible, you should focus your efforts on a personal LinkedIn profile. A profile also gives you the option of publishing to the LinkedIn Pulse network which can help you reach a wider audience.

LinkedIn's community feature is called LinkedIn Groups.

Google+ - Google's network is often overlooked due to the somewhat higher learning curve associated with it. Google+ uses a concept called Circles to help users manage their connections and status updates. It's a powerful concept and technique, but is so radically different from other networks that it takes some getting used to.

Once you've learned how to use and leverage Circles though, you'll find Google+ to be extremely powerful. Google+ is uniquely suited to helping business owners connect with other experts and prospects in various industries and niches. And of course, content and activity shared to Google+ is of great benefit to search.

Google+'s community feature is called Google+ Communities.

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YouTube - The video platform is arguably the largest and most active social network - yet not without its limits. Clearly, the only content that can be shared there is video content. But once shared, such content can be found in search, liked, shared, commented on, and even embedded elsewhere.

Businesses can choose to leverage YouTube's popularity and other user's content through video ads.

Pinterest - This social network is designed essentially as a bookmarking and project management tool. Pinners can 'pin' images to specific boards that they create, resulting in collections of images and content. Businesses therefore can create boards regarding specific topics within their industry, and pin relevant articles and content.

Vine - This social network, like YouTube, is only for video content. Six-second videos, to be specific. It's owned by Twitter and has found a very niche fanbase. If your business can create and utilize video content, definitely consider giving Vine a try.

Instagram - Facebook owns this network devoted to sharing images. You can edit and apply filters to shared images, and followers can like and comment on images. However, Instagram images cannot be shared (unless you use a third-party tool), and they cannot contain working links within the descriptions, making the network useful primarily for branding.

Instagram also supports a 15-second video format, similar to Vine.

SlideShare - LinkedIn owns this network which is devoted to sharing slideshow presentations. Network users can like and comment and share presentations, as well as embed them. The presentations also work seamlessly with your LinkedIn profile. This is a highly underutilized network.

Periscope - This, like a competing network called Meerkat, is a live video streaming platform. From their phones, users begin streaming whatever it is they're doing or seeing. It's great for behind-the-scenes looks, live events, or sending quick video messages to followers. Periscope is owned by Twitter as well.

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Other Networks - These represent just the top, most popular and most useful social networks. There are literally *thousands* of social networks in existence, with more being birthed regularly. Tumblr, Ello, Tsu, Empire Avenue... just to name a few. For the moment, just be aware that there are far more networks out there to discover and think about, but we will review how to determine which ones to focus on in a moment.

“Social media are tools. Real time is a mindset.” – David Meerman Scott



PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

There are many ways to get more traffic and interested readers to your content and website, but few will rival the power of search engines. Google, and to a lesser extent Yahoo and Bing, exist to help people find the answers they're looking for. If your site can provide those answers, you'll rank well in search and, most importantly, bring more and more targeted traffic to your site.

And while search engines are constantly evolving to try and improve their results, there's a lot that you can do to help Google and others understand what your site is about and who you're trying to serve. This is referred to as Search Engine Optimization, or SEO.

SEO consists of modifications and adjustments to your site to make it more appealing to search engines. But it *also* means doing appropriate research and planning before you even begin writing your pages and posts.

"Organizations who can't match up in content creation and promotion may find themselves losing out to content marketers who learn the basics of SEO." ~ Rand Fishkin



PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Another way that you can leverage the popularity and targeted nature of search engines is by placing ads above or near relevant search results. This is referred to as Search Engine Marketing, or SEM.

You may also know it as Pay Per Click advertising or even Google AdWords.

When you know people are searching on a particular topic, you can place ads on those search results and bypass all of the competitors who are trying to rank organically within the results. Generally, you'll only pay when someone actually clicks on your ad, and then it's up to your landing page to educate and convert that visitor.

"The key is to present the right content to the users at the time they need it in an engaging manner, across all channels they visit." ~ Jim Yu

PART I - THE DIGITAL MARKETING LANDSCAPE

Email Marketing

The final critical element to your marketing plan is Email Marketing. Through email, you have an opportunity to regularly keep in touch with your interested prospects and customers. You can share new content with them, news, specials, and explore other ways to be helpful.

The key to a successful email marketing campaign though is to **start building your list immediately**. Don't wait until later to give people a reason and opportunity to sign up for your list.

"A year from now, you'll wish you had started today." – Karen Lamb



PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Now that you're familiar with the moving parts, it's time to consider your overall strategy, and put everything together into a cohesive plan.

As we mentioned earlier, there are four steps in this process:

- **Goals**
- **Assets**
- **Techniques**
- **Metrics**

For this next part, you're going to start making notes and plans. You can use a Word document or Evernote note or even a text file. Personally, I recommend using an Evernote note or Google Doc - something that you'll be able to access easily from multiple devices and locations, as well as share with others. Remember, you're going to want to not only refer to this, but also revisit and change the plan over time.

I've included some examples of what I might have written for my own blog that look like this.

"If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time." – Zig Ziglar

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Goals

Start by identifying what your business goals are. Think about the nature of your business, and what would make it a success. And follow the reverse of our digital marketing funnel. Are you looking for sales or referrals? Leads? Traffic? Brand mentions? Social Followers?

Note and prioritize each.

Now, think about some specific performance levels, and how quickly you want to reach those levels. How many sales do you want to target? How many leads will you need to be able to convert that many sales? How much traffic will you need to generate that many leads?

A good rule of thumb here is to use “1%.” One percent of your traffic will convert to leads, and 1% of those leads will convert into sales. Over time and through testing and experimentation (and depending on industry), we’ll work to rise above that level. But for planning purposes, it’s an acceptable place to start. It may seem daunting to think you might need to get to 1000 visitors for just one sale, but it’s also reasonable. I’d much rather be pleasantly surprised because I underestimated, than to find myself disappointed and unprepared because I overestimated.

When it comes to social media, rather than place emphasis on specific follower counts or social signals, the preferred methodology is to watch for increasing trends. We want to gain more followers each week. Get more likes and +1’s and shares, day after day. So to that end, we’ll be watching what we do and try on social media and paying attention to the techniques that yield the most fruit.

So now you should have some notes that look something like this:

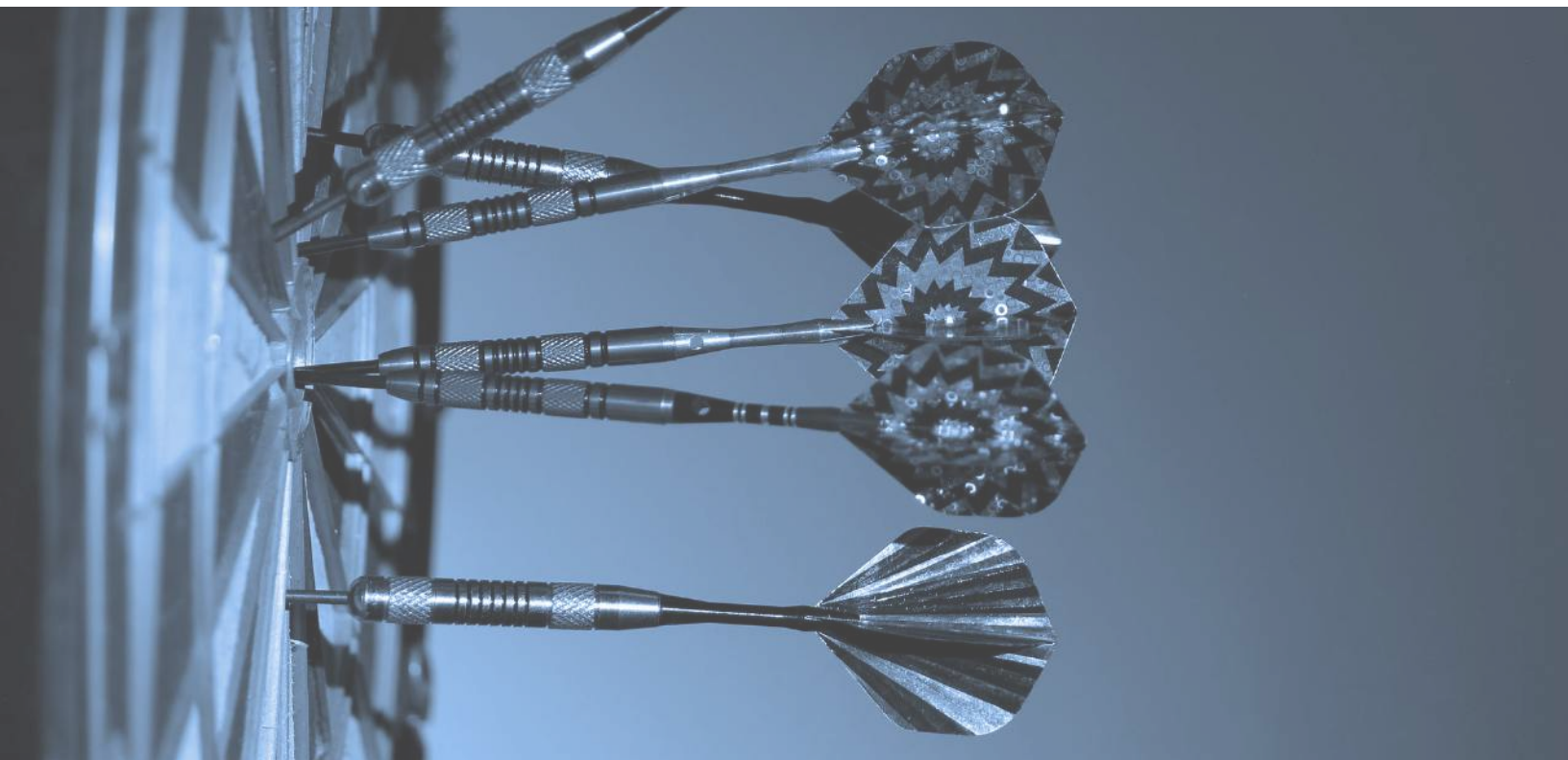
1. Sales - 10 within first 30 days
2. Leads / Email Subscribers - 1000 within first 30 days
3. Traffic - 10,000+ within first 30 days
4. Increasing Brand Mentions on Social Media
5. Increasing Followers on Social Media

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Of course, every business is different. Inexpensive products that target regular consumers are easier to sell than expensive B2B services. But you'll likely need less traffic and fewer leads to achieve profitability with a high-end offering. And remember that paid marketing and advertising can put you and your offerings in front of targeted leads at a much faster rate than what you'll achieve organically.

The less money you have to invest in marketing, the lower your expectations may have to be.

"Whether B2B or B2C, I believe passionately that good marketing essentials are the same. We all are emotional beings looking for relevance, context and connection." – Beth Comstock



PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Assets

Which brings us to assets. While you can effectively promote a business with little to no cash investment, carefully consider how you can use money to increase rates of traffic and lead generation. How much can you afford to allocate to your marketing budget today?

Budget: \$500 / month, including site & tools

Other than you, is there anyone else who can or will be assisting you with your marketing? Make a note.

Staff: Me, myself and I

If you don't already have a website, that needs to be in the plans. SiteSell is uniquely positioned to help you not only build a site, but to build a business. With SiteSell's **SBI!** product, you'll be able to put together a professional-looking site in short order, as well as take advantage of the extensive documentation on how to build and grow a business within the **Action Guide**. And most importantly, you can use the **Brainstormer** tool to research your niche, as well as the topics your audience is interested in learning about. If you know that blogging is going to be a big part of your strategy, consider the **bizXpress** system which incorporates SiteSell tools and methodology into a WordPress site. ([learn more here](#))

Website: WordPress + bizXpress

Do you have existing profiles on any social networks? If so, list them here, along with your current follower/fan base. If possible, make a note as to where those followers came from and how relevant/interested they are in your new business topic.

Twitter: 15,400 followers interested in tech and social media

Facebook: 1,300 family, friends and colleagues

LinkedIn: 2,500+ connections and followers

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Finally, note all your existing marketing materials and assets. Do you have a logo? A slogan? Any brochures and other materials that you've created that you might draw from?

Pull all of that together. If you're starting from scratch, that's OK too.

At this point, consider who your target audience is and what you're going to say to them. You'll need language on your website that immediately communicates to new visitors who you are and what you do, and why they should care. You're going to need an "About" section for all of your social profiles too, which may be very similar.

And of course, for every service you provide or problem you solve, your website needs a page that talks about that.

"Our jobs as marketers are to understand how the customer wants to buy and help them do so." – Bryan Eisenberg

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Techniques

At a high level, your marketing technique will be to create interesting and helpful content that educates readers on the subject, presents you as an authority, and puts them in a position to be interested in hiring you or purchasing from you.

Here's how you do that.

1. Content Schedule
2. Content Topics
3. Social Media Prioritization
4. Social Media Activity
5. Search Engine Optimization
6. Social Media and/or Search Engine Paid Advertising
7. Email Marketing
8. Metrics

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

1. Content Schedule

First, create a plan on how often you're going to add new content to your website. Whether it's in the form of pages or blog posts, that's up to you. But you need a publishing schedule and, initially, it needs to be inviolable. If you allow yourself to stray from this schedule early on, it will be too hard to get back on track and before you know it, you're way behind in your marketing.

Now, for a startup business and website, it's important to get rolling as quickly as you can, and that means a high rate of publication at first. Generally, I recommend **at least** three to five pages or blog posts per week for the first six months. After that, if things are going well, you can ratchet down to two to three per week, and then eventually down to one per week.

A couple of years ago, HubSpot, a marketing platform, did some analysis of business blogs and their relative search engine traffic and lead generation. On average, most business blogs began to see an exponential increase in search engine referral traffic after they'd published more than 50 pieces of content. Lead generation rose accordingly.

That means that typically, if you post just once per week, it will be a year before you begin to see real gains in referral traffic.

When I first launched my own blog, I tried to publish a couple of times a day during the week, resulting in a publishing rate of 6 - 12 times per week. And while not every blog post was 1000 words, they were all interesting and useful, and helped establish a large audience of readers.

Publishing Schedule: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

2. Content Topics

Next, you'll need to think about what you're going to write about. Again, this is going to be a combination of Landing Pages and Blog Posts.

Your Landing Pages should be very focused on the areas in which you are delivering authority. For each main landing page, consider two to three topics which you could write on and add as sub-pages. And then, for each one of those sub-pages, think about two to three blog posts that you can write that relate to those topics.

Landing Page: Facebook Marketing

Sub-Pages: Facebook for Business, Facebook Advertising, Facebook Insights

Blog Posts: How to Use Facebook's Power Editor, How to Read Facebook Insights, How to Grow a Facebook Audience, My Love-Hate Relationship With Facebook Ads, Using Facebook Pages

When you're through, you will have all of your site's most important content mapped out. You don't necessarily have to write it all overnight, and you can certainly mix in other blog posts into your publishing schedule as topics come to mind. But now you have a plan.

One of the great uses of the Brainstormer tool is to brainstorm content topics. You can actually see the phrases (keywords) that people are searching on and develop ideas for new pages or posts from that.

For instance, if I'd wanted to use this book as an article, I might have focused it more on social media and referred to it as a "Social Media Marketing Template" as I know from the Brainstormer that a *lot* of people are searching for that, but there isn't a lot of competition.

Try to tell stories as you write. Whether on your landing pages or in blog posts, it is stories which bring your audience into the room with you, while you weave in details of your expertise.

"Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but about the stories you tell." – Seth Godin

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

3. Social Media Prioritization

Next, think about the social networks that you're going to be active on. There's no "right" answer here. Rather, there are a number of considerations for you, such as:

- Which social networks are you already active on?
- Which social networks have an audience that seems best suited to your business?
- Which social networks favor the type of content that you prefer or are able to create?
- Do you have a personal preference?

While considering those points, what we want to do is put the major social networks into tiers. While I think you should create a professional profile on **every** social network, you only need to maintain constant activity on one or two.

Tier One: Google+ and Twitter

Tier Two: LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram

Tier Three: YouTube, Vine, SlideShare, etc.

For Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn and YouTube, you will need a "cover photo" that is a custom graphic branded to reflect your business (and tie into your overall marketing image). And for all social profiles, use a professional logo or professional-looking headshot for the profile image. If you don't have the budget for a graphic designer, check out Canva.com.



PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

4. Social Media Activity

Instruction on how to use each individual social network is outside the scope of this book, as it would be extensive to outline techniques and best practices for even just the top five or six networks. Suffice to say, there's ample material within the [SiteSell Blog](#), forums, Action Guide and other sources to refer to.

Here's what you need to keep in mind, and what you need to integrate into your marketing plan.

Social Media is not an advertising medium. It's an opportunity for you to connect with prospects and readers and potential partners. It's a place where you can share content and information, offer value and assistance, and create a reputation for yourself.

Don't blow it. :)

If you always think about how or whether a particular post will be interesting and helpful to your audience, you'll make good progress.

*"Build it, and they will come" only works in the movies.
Social Media is a "build it, nurture it, engage them and they may come and stay." – Seth Godin*

First, every time you publish a new piece of content to your website, share it to social media. Once you've selected your top priority network, research best practices for sharing to that network so that your shares look and perform optimally.

For instance, when I share a new blog post to Google+, I include a bolded title in my post, an introduction that gets people interested and talking, the link, hashtags and an image.

Every social network has its own unique set of best practices, so be mindful of them. Also, you'll only share new blog posts to Facebook once, but you should tweet them three to four times the first day, one or two the second day, and then have it in a rotation to be routinely tweeted along with your other content. LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest will all tolerate a second share later in the day.

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Second, when you're not sharing new blog content, you're going to want to share content and articles from other sources that will also be helpful and interesting to your audience. This is called "curated" content. The easiest way to do this is to identify several sources of information that regularly publish new posts and aren't direct competitors. You can then subscribe to their RSS Feeds using Feedly. The RSS Feed just shares new content, and a reader like Feedly allows you to see it (and even share it).

Sources: hootsuite.com/blog, sitesell.com/blog, thesocialmediahat.com, mashable.com

Third, try to find some other experts in your field and industry who are active on social media, regularly providing value, and with whom you would be interested in forming a stronger relationship. These people are "influencers" and represent a powerful marketing opportunity. If an influencer in your niche decides to share one of your blog posts, you might see more traffic in a day than you did all last month. So pick a few, begin following them, and regularly reshare some of their helpful material.

Influencers: *Guy Kawasaki, Peg Fitzpatrick, Martin Shervington, Chris Brogan*

Finally, prepare a series of business-related messages that you can use to remind your audience who you are and what you do. These will only be shared sparingly - perhaps once a week. But you want to make sure that you're including them. It might be a sales message, invitation to subscribe to your newsletter, or just a link to follow you on your primary network.

You can now set a social media activity schedule that looks something like this:

Facebook: *New Blog Post share, One curated content share*

Twitter: *New Blog Post share x 4, 4 curated content, 2 influencers retweets, 2 archived posts*

LinkedIn: *New Blog Post share, One curated content share*

Google+: *New Blog Post share, One curated content share, One influencer share*

Modify as needed to reflect your own network priorities and desired levels of activity.

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Use a tool like Hootsuite or Buffer to schedule much of this activity in advance, leaving you free to focus on your day-to-day business needs. However, you will want to spend a little time each day on your most important social network connecting with others, commenting on posts, and simply engaging with people.

Also, be sure to keep an eye out for comments and mentions from your followers and always respond and thank people in a timely fashion.

“Today it’s important to be present, be relevant and add value.” – Nick Besbeas



PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

5. Search Engine Optimization

When it comes to SEO, as was mentioned before, one of the best things you can do is research your topics ahead of time using a tool like Brainstormer, and then create content for those topics.

Beyond that, here are some general tips to keep in mind as you go:

1. Register your site with a free Google Webmaster Tools account to monitor your site, see how many pages have been indexed, and to submit a sitemap.
2. Use your targeted keywords as often as possible while still sounding natural. Do not “stuff” them by using them excessively.
3. Use lots of images and use keywords in image filenames and ALT tags.
4. Don’t worry about the Keywords meta tag, but do fill in all other meta tags appropriately.
5. Use a tool like SEMRush to routinely audit your site and note errors and issues that you may need to address.

"We should be thinking about social and search as channels that need a unified approach, because the best content should appeal to both channels and the cross-over benefits/economies of scale are potentially huge." ~ Will Critchlow

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

6. Social Media and/or Search Engine Paid Advertising

Between your website, hosting, and a few other tools (like Buffer or Hootsuite), so far you're probably only spending \$100 or less per month on marketing. Assuming you're willing to create content and manage your social media yourself, you should be able to invest some money then into paid advertising.

While there are many options, like banner ads, Fiverr campaigns and so on, in my experience, you'll get the most bang for your buck with Google AdWords and Facebook Ads. Depending on your business and target audience, you might also consider ads on Twitter, Pinterest and/or LinkedIn. But they tend to have a higher cost (Cost Per Click, or, CPC) than the alternatives, so let's focus on Google and Facebook.

Google - When you decide to advertise with Google, you have a lot of options and decisions to make, but let's at least get you a high level perspective so that you can decide if it's interesting to you or not.

We mentioned earlier that using Google ads, you can place advertisements above or near search results that are relevant to your business and brand. Additionally, Google serves ads on actual websites and you can choose to place your ads in the "Content Network" and reach people who are, perhaps, reading about a topic and not necessarily doing a Google search.

When you place ads, you will set a bid amount and a daily budget. The bid amount is the maximum amount you're willing to spend per click (i.e. \$0.25), and your ad then competes against other advertisers interested in reaching the same audience. Ads with a higher bid are displayed first.

Again, you're only charged when someone clicks your ad, so you'll want to find a balance between ranking high for your ad and getting enough clicks and leads and sales to make it worthwhile.

Your ads will continue to display until you reach your daily budget, so it's up to you how much you spend.

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Facebook - When you decide to advertise with Facebook, you can either create a new ad, or choose to use a status update that you've already shared.

The ad fee structure is similar to Google in that you can set a click daily budget. But you don't set a bid per click. Instead, Facebook will begin showing your ads and the more interest people show, the less per click you'll be charged.

So it's in everyone's best interests to create Facebook ad posts that are interesting and compelling.

I typically recommend a 45/45/10 split in your Facebook advertising budget. Put 45% toward an ad campaign that links to a specific landing page, 45% toward promoting new blog posts and status updates throughout the month, and then just 10% toward attracting new Page Likes for future marketing.

You can also set up a remarketing pixel - a snippet of code that's installed on your website - so that Facebook can track users who have been to your website and allow you "re-market" to those individuals with an ad.

So your marketing budget might now look like this:

Website, Hosting, etc.: \$75/month

Buffer: \$10/month

Hootsuite: \$10/month

Google AdWords: \$100/month

Facebook Ads: \$250/month

That still leaves you some room to buy stock images for blog posts and social media activity, and so on.

"Nobody counts the number of ads you run; they just remember the impression you make."

– Bill Bernbach

Part II - Creating Your Plan

Email Marketing

As we mentioned earlier, email marketing is your opportunity to keep in touch with interested prospects, fans and customers. There are aspects which can and should be automated, and other aspects which will require more deliberate and timely effort.

First Step - Build Your List

Your email list will quickly become one of your most valuable business assets, if done right. To build it up with people who are genuinely interested in you and your business, you need a targeted approach.

The best technique is to offer your website visitors something of value and interest that will help them, like an ebook. The ebook should be designed to appeal to people who fit a certain demographic or persona - your target audience. It should be helpful and interesting, but still leave room for you to assist if their needs are great enough.

This ebook that you're reading now is a perfect example. People interested in reading this are likely those who want to start their own business, and that's exactly who SiteSell wants to reach.

Using a tool like MailChimp, you can create a simple signup form, embed it throughout your website, and automatically deliver your ebook to new subscribers.

Other options include free consultations, white papers, access to premium content, email courses, quizzes and surveys.

Second Step - Create An Autoresponder

Once someone has subscribed to your list, it's important to take advantage of the fact that you have their attention, and you know that they have a particular interest in your business and the topic of your giveaway.

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

With that in mind, compose a series of emails designed to further educate your new subscriber on that topic, your business, and the solutions you offer.

These are called autoresponders. Your email marketing software will automatically send these emails on whatever schedule you specify to each new subscriber.

It will take a lot of time and careful planning to set this up, as you will need to consider exactly what information someone will need and what it will take to get them interested enough to take the next step. And throughout all of the emails, you want to balance your desire for them to purchase, with their need to receive value.

In other words, focus on making sure that each email you send is helpful and interesting. Very much like the blog posts that you write.

Step Three - Keep In Regular Communication

Once you have your autoresponder in place, create a schedule for yourself and try to stick to it. If you're blogging more than once a week, a weekly newsletter would make sense. You can include teasers and links to that week's blog posts, as well as an additional message or some resources for that week.

The key, once again, is to provide value. Your subscribers should look forward to seeing what you have to say in your newsletters. If the emails feel boring to you, re-think your strategy and content.

"A small list that wants exactly what you're offering is better than a bigger list that isn't committed." - Ramsay Leimenstoll

PART II - CREATING YOUR PLAN

Metrics

In line with the goals we determined earlier, you will need to be able to track the success of your marketing efforts.

Traffic - We'll start with traffic because this is where everyone should start. Simply sign up for a free Google Analytics account and make sure it's connected to your website. Once that's in place, you will be able to use the account to see not only how much traffic is coming to your site, but where it's coming from, how long they're staying, and what they're doing.

Conversions - The easiest way to track conversions is to make sure that you have a Thank You or Confirmation page once the conversion action has been completed by a visitor. You can then set up a Goal within Google Analytics to track that.

Leads - There are lots of options when it comes to lead management and email marketing, and one may work better for you and your business than the others. My preference is usually to use MailChimp. I can insert a signup form or page with whatever offer I want and track how many people choose to subscribe. And for new businesses with small lists, MailChimp is free.

Social Media - What you can track and how you can track it will vary depending on which network(s) you're starting with. Some, like Facebook, offer built-in analytics with their business accounts. Others, like LinkedIn, really don't tell you much at all. If you need more than what a particular network is offering, consider a third-party tool like Hootsuite or Steady Demand.

"Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement.

If you can't measure something, you can't understand it.

If you can't understand it, you can't control it.

If you can't control it, you can't improve it."

- H. James Harrington

PART III - MAKING COURSE CORRECTIONS

First of all, congratulations on getting through this far! Thinking about all of these marketing concepts and strategies can be pretty intense. Hopefully though, you've been taking notes and working through the process, and that should make it a lot easier than if you'd just attacked this on your own.

You'll also find a Marketing Plan Worksheet in the final section that you can use as guide or even print out and complete.

But the work we've done so far is just the beginning. We need to be open to whatever the data tells us so that we can improve or pivot as needed.



PART III - MAKING COURSE CORRECTIONS

Customer Feedback

One of the best ways to learn about your business and target audience is to... wait for it... **talk to them!** As Steve Blank put it, “Get out of the building.”

Make sure that you’re leaving time and space to talk to your customers and target market. This could be in the form of interviews, focus groups, surveys and more. I strongly recommend reading *The Lean Startup* and then following that up with *Running Lean* which, together, will give you a perfect understanding of how to start a business lean, and how to learn from other people.

By talking to other people, we give ourselves and our business the unique opportunity to learn and adapt quickly, rather than waiting for monthly, quarterly or annual reports to see that something’s wrong, but still not quite knowing what it is.



PART III - MAKING COURSE CORRECTIONS

Reader Feedback

Along the same lines, make sure that you give your readers an opportunity to comment on your blog posts and content if possible. Comments may sometimes be harsh, if our content is lacking, but sometimes we need that jolt to see past our own noses.

And comments are also an opportunity to further help our readers and establish a real community and audience.

Inviting email subscribers to reply to you with questions and comments works along the same lines.

“A man's character may be learned from the adjectives which he habitually uses in conversation.” - Mark Twain

PART III - MAKING COURSE CORRECTIONS

Analytics

Reading and comprehending the various analytics reports that are available is really more of an art than a science. That's because the reports contain nothing more than data, and it's up to us to apply context.

For instance, what if I told you that a certain blog post received 200+ social signals last week and over 240 visitors, and that out of those visitors, there were a dozen new leads. Is that good or bad? The conversion rate might seem good, yet the overall traffic might seem poor. Just 240 visitors? But if you learned that the site itself was just **3 weeks old** and that this was the **first blog post ever promoted** from the site, the traffic now seems more reasonable. Perhaps even great!

That's context, and while it has to be applied to everything we read and see, it's just as challenging to know what context to apply and when. Often, there's context and variables at work on the data that we're unaware of.

This is incredibly important whenever you're reading about other people's blogs and websites and they start sharing real data with you. They'll talk about XX,XXX visitors a month but what you need to keep firmly in mind is how long they've been up and running, how much content *they've* created, and all of the other marketing methods they've employed over that time.

With that perspective, watch your daily, weekly and monthly statistics. Over time, which pages are getting more traffic than others? Can you improve them? Do you need to do something about your other, less popular pages? Where's your traffic tending to come from?

You want to look for opportunities to capitalize on what you're getting, and improve the areas that can be improved.

PART III - MAKING COURSE CORRECTIONS

For instance, I routinely watch which pages and posts are getting good, organic referral traffic from Google. When I see some content start to get more traffic, I take note. That's an opportunity to 1) improve that content to get even more traffic, and 2) make sure that the content is optimized for my digital marketing funnel. Is it linking to the best possible landing page, with a strong call to action?

You see, you might have done a great job with that content when you published it, but this style of Content Marketing is a marathon, not a sprint. Months, even years, after you've published a piece of content, it might begin to rank well and get more traffic. And in the meantime, your business focus may have shifted.

So be mindful of what people are doing and reading on your site, and always be looking for ways to improve the experience.

The same holds true for social media metrics. It's easy to be caught up in the vanity of large numbers.

Don't.

Instead, work to create relationships with people on social media. Social networks exist to make that as easy as possible, but it's still a one-at-a-time process.

"Our job is to connect to people, to interact with them in a way that leaves them better than we found them, more able to get where they'd like to go." – Seth Godin

conclusion

So now you're on your way to promoting your new business! We hope this book has been useful to you and offered some insight into how digital marketing and a marketing plan can help you grow.



Your next step is to put these plans into action. Along the way, you're going to have questions. Lots of them. And that's OK. Fortunately, when it comes to marketing at least, there are lots of great resources out there. Take advantage of them. But always keep in mind that the single greatest marketing method for your business is to provide a great product or service. Your customers will appreciate it and tell others.

“Great service is like giving your customer a big hug.” - Ken Blanchard

RESOURCES

There were quite a few resources mentioned throughout this book. We've compiled them all here for easy reference:

WEBSITE BUILDING

- SBI! - <http://buildit.sitesell.com/>
- bizXpress - <http://www.bizxpress.com/>
- WordPress - <https://wordpress.org/>

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

- Hootsuite - <http://hootsuite.com>
- Buffer - <http://www.buffer.com>

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

- Brainstormer - <http://www.sitesell.com/more-info/biv3.html>
- Google Keyword Planner - <https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>
- SEMRush - <http://www.semrush.com/>

PAID ADVERTISING

- Google AdWords - <http://www.google.com/adwords/>
- Facebook Advertising - <https://www.facebook.com/business/>

OTHER

- Google Analytics - <http://www.google.com/analytics/>
- Google Webmaster Tools - <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/>
- Canva - <http://canva.com>
- MailChimp - <http://www.mailchimp.com>

MARKETING PLAN WORKSHEET

Complete the following fields:

My Business Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Social Networks

Tier 01: _____
 Tier 02: _____
 Tier 03: _____

Sources:

Influencers:

Activity

Network: _____ Frequency: _____
 Network: _____ Frequency: _____
 Network: _____ Frequency: _____
 Network: _____ Frequency: _____
 Network: _____ Frequency: _____
 Network: _____ Frequency: _____

My Business Assets

Total Budget:
 Total Staff:
 Website:
 Social Profiles:
 Materials:

Content

Publishing Schedule:

Landing Pages:

Sub-Pages:

Blog Post Topics:

Targeted Keywords

01: _____
 02: _____
 03: _____

Google AdWords Budget:
 Facebook Advertising Budget:
 [Other] Advertising Budget:

Tool: _____ Cost: _____
 Tool: _____ Cost: _____
 Tool: _____ Cost: _____
 Tool: _____ Cost: _____
 Tool: _____ Cost: _____

Keep this in Evernote or a Google Doc for easy reference.

ABOUT MIKE ALLTON

Mr. Allton is SiteSell's Chief Marketing Officer. Mike manages the marketing and social efforts of the company to educate and engage budding entrepreneurs and small business owners. Mike has spent years studying the intricacies of content marketing, is a prolific blogger, and author of The Unofficial Book on HootSuite.

Originally from Ohio, Mike currently resides in the St. Louis area with his wife and two girls where they regularly watch and attend St. Louis Cardinal games.



ABOUT SITESSELL

SiteSell Inc., a privately held Canadian-based company with a worldwide reputation on the Net, has achieved rapid growth due to its dedicated focus on helping small business owners and solo entrepreneurs build successful online businesses.

SiteSell started as an ebook publisher, with its first publication, "Make Your Site SELL!," spawning a popular line of "Make Your __ Sell!" titles in the late 1990's and early 2000's.

Recognizing how small business owners have traditionally been underserved and nickel-and-dimed in their quest for a Web presence, SiteSell seized the opportunity to create affordable, easy to use business solutions that would level the playing field.

The flagship SBI! is a comprehensive, integrated, business-building system. In addition to best-of-the-Web functionality for keyword brainstorming/research and viral traffic building, SBI! value-bundles step by step guidance and a suite of over 85 site building, hosting, and marketing tools into its all-inclusive subscription.

SiteSell's newest solution is bizXpress, a plugin best described as "SBI! for WordPress." Building upon its expertise, SiteSell adapted SBI!'s business-building approach to meet the needs of WordPress users. bizXpress delivers a proven combination of logical process, enterprise-level tools, best-of-breed resources and unparalleled support/community.

By also tapping into the widespread popularity of the WordPress platform, SiteSell reaches small business owners wherever they are and provides them with two effective website and business building choices, SBI! or bizXpress.

Headquartered in Montreal, Canada, SiteSell Inc. has been profitable since its inception in 1997, due in large measure to positive word-of-mouth promotion by its broad base of over 130,000 customers and affiliates. The SiteSell Affiliate Program, first launched in 1999, is well-respected for its revenue-sharing approach, innovative marketing tools and extensive affiliate educational resources.

ABOUT SITESELL

SiteSell's continued growth is based on its guiding set of principles:

- Over deliver on customer expectations.
- Empower the customer to succeed.
- Develop cutting-edge proprietary technology.
- Sell at the most competitive price.

Led by Founder and CEO Ken Evoy and President Allan B. Abrahams, SiteSell Inc. contracts 65 professionals worldwide, from the Canada, United States, Europe, Australia, Central America and South America.

As a result of customer success and Ken Evoy's commitment to "overdelivery," SiteSell's customer fanaticism is well-known and is SiteSell's greatest pride. Evoy regards loyalty as a two-way street and is firm in his resolution to constantly improve SBI! and bizXpress with innovations that keep customers in the Top 3% online.

SiteSell has created an innovative model that holds tremendous promise, and which starts with visionary, principled and engaged leadership. The company combines the development of advanced, proprietary technology and healthy business growth, with the goals of community service and environmental friendliness. This gives everyone at SiteSell a sense of purpose, mission, and care for the customer and the community that is unmatched.