



*101 small business  
marketing tips and  
ideas.*

*Practical ways to build a brand  
whatever your budget.*

**get smarter marketing**

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## *About the Author*

Michelle is Chief Angel at Marketing Angels, Australia's leading Marketing Consultancy for Small to Medium business.

Michelle is an entrepreneur who has built Marketing Angels from the ground up. Michelle and the team at Marketing Angels have worked with hundreds of small to medium businesses in the past 8 years from almost every industry.

Marketing Angels are the preferred marketing experts engaged by the ANZ bank to deliver marketing advice and education to the ANZ's Small Business banking clients via a series of workshops and their online community.

Marketing Angels is also working in partnership with the Australian Retailers Association, delivering Marketing services to ARA members under the ARA Marketing Services brand.

Michelle is a contributing author in the book, *The Secrets of Marketing Experts Exposed*, and writes a regular column in *My Business Magazine*, *Retailer Magazine* and *Manufacturing Magazine* and is a guest blogger for *Fast Thinking!*

She is often invited to comment on the marketing challenges facing Australia's business sector in the national press and is a regular guest speaker at events.

Michelle is also a busy Mother to 3 children, and lives in Manly NSW. She loves reading, riding her bike and the ocean.

## *Branding and positioning*

- 1 Be clear on what your business stands for. What's your promise is. Knowing this will not only help you put out consistent messages and attract the right customers, it will also help you hire the right people and develop products and services that are aligned with your promise. A must if you want to build a brand.
- 2 A good Corporate Identity should communicate the purpose of your business, the values that the brand represents, it should engage your target market, be simple and memorable.
- 3 Make sure all of your marketing materials- website, photos, flyers- have the same look and feel.
- 4 Ideally your name should describe your business, define the unique customer benefits, and reflect your business personality. If not, consider adopting a tagline (Nike doesn't mean anything but Just Do It – sums up their philosophy and appeals to action oriented, active, competitive consumers. A tagline can speak volumes about who you are, what you stand for and the reason why your customer needs you. "You're worth it", "The burgers are better" "Just do it" are just a few of the more well known ones!
- 5 Be careful about launching new brand names every time you come with a new idea for a product or service. The more brands you have the harder you have to work to raise awareness of each one. Having a masterbrand that tells your overall story and sub-brands that relate to the masterbrand will make sure that you build awareness more easily and keep your marketing costs down. If you've already got a stable of different brands consider working with a marketing expert to help you unify your brands.
- 6 Packaging is a key part of the marketing mix. It's the trigger which can attract and persuade a customer to buy your product. Is your packaging visually striking through design, colour or shape and communicating your brand ideals? If not it might be time for a revamp.
- 7 People love a good story. Craft your own around why you started your business and then tell it through your website, social networking pages and blogs or even write your own book. Let your story and personality shine through – it's another way to build trust and appeal to customers.
- 8 Use templates and create brand standards for your marketing materials. Apply the same color scheme, logo placement, look and feel throughout. You don't need to be fancy- just consistent!
- 9 If you are starting out, work on your personal brand to get that first contract/client over the line. Your appearance is an important part of marketing yourself. A tough issue to tackle but if you think you could look a little sharper - think about getting an independent opinion from an image consultant. If you feel drab, then you're probably creating that impression with your prospect
- 10 Use benefits and emotional language to engage your target market in your key messages. A masseuse doesn't have a "massage" in her brochure, but a "Massage Recharge - ease away the tension of a long day. Indulge in an invigorating treatment that loosens muscles & relieves fatigue". Be proud of what you offer, dress it up and sell not just a product, but an experience that appeals to your target market.

- 11 Fake it til you make it! An important skill of any small business is to be able to look bigger than you are. The easiest way to do this is by having polished marketing material, always being professional and although your business may be small, still thinking big!
- 12 How you treat staff is just as important as how you treat customers when it comes to building a reputation. What would previous employees say about your business. Ex-staff are also an opportunity for leads and new business.
- 13 Your staff are one of your most important marketing tools. Make sure their communication with customers conveys your brand message and represents your values. Reward them not only for closing sales, but for being great ambassadors for your business.

## *Products and Services*

- 14 Develop an iphone app if it can benefit your business and the customer. Some great apps which do both are for example the Dominos Pizza app, the Taxi's combined app, Wilson parking app. They are useful for the customer and the business!
- 15 Make sure your products and services deliver on the promises your marketing materials make. It's the easiest way to lose clients and damage your reputation. Go back to your core brand promise and use that to evaluate whether a new product or service fits with what your brand stands for.

## *Tactic*

- 16 Focus and consistency, will stop you wasting time and money on tactics that don't work. By relentlessly focusing on a few tactics your marketing WILL achieve results.
- 17 Need some creative work done but don't have a lot of money? Consider crowdsourcing your design work to sites like 99 Designs - [www.99designs.com](http://www.99designs.com) Just make sure you invest time in writing a clear and concise creative brief to get a good result. You could also consider outsourcing to sites like elance, odesk and freelancer.com
- 18 Sponsor a local sporting team to get your brand in front of your target market. You can provide branded merchandise such as drink bottles or sports bags to the junior team, have signage rights and logos on uniforms, sponsor an achievement award for up and coming players which can provide the opportunity to attend social functions and generate good PR
- 19 Identify businesses who you don't compete with who have the same target market as you. What could you offer them that would be of benefit to their customers. Think how yoga brand lululemon works with local Yoga teachers to offer Yoga classes in their stores. How could you add value to them and your customers.
- 20 Brand everything. Where possible have prominent signage, brand your car, if appropriate have staff uniforms/t-shirts, create a branded email signature, newsletter, use pop-up banners whenever you can for functions and promotions. You can even order things like branded ribbon for corporate gifts... at Marketing Angels we've ordered branded cupcakes for events. You can never have your brand visible in enough places.

- 21 Consider joining relevant peak bodies/associations to engage with your audience rather than purchasing mailing lists. Attending events associated with industry associations will help you create important relationships.
- 22 Keep on top of your competitors' activities and know what's happening in your market. These days its so easy to keep informed through blogs and social media, joining email databases and using services such as Google Alerts and Compete.com to track competitor activity online and offline.
- 23 Understand what barriers are facing your clients. What is stopping or would stop them from using your business? Tailor your marketing approach, your services and products to address these barriers. Some common barriers include an inconvenient purchasing process, perception of your brand, clarity and trust.
- 24 Make a list of the key influencers in your target market or local community (e.g. a hairdresser might target a beauty salon, or fashion retailer) and send them a free sample or discount for your services. Word of mouth is the best kind of exposure, and your generosity will get them talking.
- 25 Align with other like minded businesses and swap space in each other's newsletters. Provide a good deal they can offer to their database and this will help you to grow your own. If you suffer from seasonal ebbs and flows use those dips during winter, or during school terms to test and explore new marketing ideas. For example a restaurant or bar could offer per head discounts for groups to encourage bookings in larger numbers.
- 26 A strong database makes good marketing sense but also good business sense as it increases the value of your business. Try some of the new cloud based CRM systems to set up a great database. Some examples are Zohocrm, Capsule crm, Work Etc, Highrise, Pipejump.
- 27 What makes good direct mail? The secret to making it work is to think small (target your recipients), make it personal, add value, and follow-up. It will also help if the mail is eye catching! Follow up telemarketing or a postcard with similar creative to your original mail will increase your overall response.
- 28 Have a friend do a mystery shop of your business and give you first impression feedback of your marketing materials, staff, and website. Getting an honest third party perspective will give you some interesting insights!
- 29 Market research doesn't have to be expensive. It can be as simple as talking to your customers, run a focus group or develop a short questionnaire that they can either fill out in person, on line, or by phone. Websites such as Survey Monkey are an easy way to do this.
- 30 Always be prepared. Research your prospect, understand their needs, and how your product/service will benefit them. A potential client will feel much more inclined to do business with you if you are confident and prepared.

- 31 If you have a service based business or a product that's complex to explain – consider installing a “live chat” app on your web site. You can offer visitors to your web site the opportunity to ask a direct question using a “chat application” on your site. This will help convert site visitors to customers.
- 32 Track and regularly evaluate your marketing tactics. Have measurements in place so you know what is most effective- it will save a lot of time, effort, money and resources when you know what is working best for your business! Use a simple database and invest in web site tracking tools such as Google Analytics.
- 33 Always try to learn something from every experience- even if it's a bad one. If something doesn't work – don't be put off – learn what went wrong and why, so your marketing activities can only become more effective and improve your business results year after year. Make sure you get feedback from every lost prospect.
- 34 Use testimonials- they are one of the most powerful marketing tools. Positive, believable comments from real customers are proof to other potential clients that you are worthy of their business. Always ask for feedback and testimonials after a job well done.
- 35 Video is a powerful new marketing tool. Film yourself giving away tips, showing someone “how to” do something, your clients sharing how you've helped them, anything as long as it's useful. You'll be surprised how much video can create cut through.
- 36 Make the most of your current networks and relationships. Make sure your suppliers, friends, family, sporting team mates know what you do and what you can offer them. Add them to your database/social media networks. Start building your networks by making the most of what you have.
- 37 Building trust is critical to effective marketing. Especially when you sell a service. Think through how you can build trust with your marketing? Give away knowledge, volunteer your services for a charity or club. Create some FREE helpful materials, run some free events.
- 38 Be proactive with your marketing. See a new business open up in your local area? Introduce yourself, give a sample, drop in if you think you could provide them a service (e.g. printing, design, cleaning, their first coffee, etc)! Kick apathy out of the way and market with a proactive mind set.
- 39 There are many benefits to keeping your marketing copy short and sweet than just saving ad space. Clear and concise messages stand a better chance of being read in their entirety, versus long-winded messages weighed down with empty and overused words, such as “solutions”, “dedication”, and “exceptional”.
- 40 Preserve your cash when sourcing prizes for offers and competitions. Use reward points for prizes and incentives for customers to buy from you.
- 41 Advertising and Marketing are two different things. A small business can't afford to advertise as effectively and frequently as a big business. As a general rule, only advertise if it's targeted and you can do it frequently. Frequent marketing activity like speaking, writing, sampling, networking and email marketing may be more effective.

- 42 No single marketing technique works all the time for every business, so rotate your marketing tactics, vary your approach and take advantage of the thousands of ways available to communicate your value to customers
- 43 Save on your marketing budget by negotiating. Often the advertised price for media, sponsorship, exhibiting at events etc, is very negotiable. The next time you are booking advertising, taking out a sponsorship or exhibiting at an event, make an offer! You'll be surprised how much you can save.
- 44 Consider putting inserts into publications rather than taking out ads. Inserts in general give a higher response rates than ads printed on the page.
- 45 Use bullet points and bold in key copy on your web site, newsletters and direct mail letters. People tend to "skim" content (particularly online) so make sure your key offers, benefits and call to action stands out.
- 46 When doing email marketing send your campaigns out earlier in the week.
- 47 Getting your samples into goodie bags at events is a great way to build your brand. Services like [Source Bottle](#) often invite businesses to submit sample products or branded giveaways for free to be included in the goodie bags for large and high profile events.

## *Customer Relations*

- 48 If you don't have a reason to contact clients consider tapping into a theme to kick start the conversation. For example Halloween, 1st day of Spring/Autumn, Football Grand Final, Movember etc.
- 49 Use your current customers to generate referral- offer an incentive if they refer your business.
- 50 How do you deal with negative feedback from a client, even when you feel it's not warranted? To minimise damage to your reputation and brand, take it on board, see it as constructive criticism and don't lay blame. Learn from your mistakes, then move on.
- 51 Are you saying thank you to your clients, either for their business or referrals? It's a perfect way to reconnect and thank your clients for their support. Make sure each card or note is personalized - it makes a difference!
- 52 Treat each client as an individual. Each has different needs and values, so tailor your marketing to reach all the various customers your business could cater for.
- 53 Now more than ever, consumers are making decisions based on doing business with companies and brands that show a genuine involvement in supporting our communities and our world. Is your business socially conscious? Think about supporting local charities and take on environmentally friendly initiatives, and let your customers know you are committed to making a difference!

- 54 Give your customers free samples of your more expensive items or a free upgrade to a superior service. Having the exposure to a better product may entice them to upgrade on their next transaction
- 55 Increase sales by trying a “gift with purchase” strategy. A winner with cosmetics companies, it’s easy to do the same in small business! A consulting company could offer a free 1 hour follow-up session. A cleaning company could offer a free window clean. A hairdresser could offer 10% off a nail treatment (from a partner). Give more value and you are likely to receive more also.
- 56 Are you doing all you can to grow your database? Provide plenty of opportunities for customers to sign up. Don’t just stick to promoting your mailing list in your newsletter or website homepage. You should have the information on every piece of documentation you give the customer and one every page of the website. Also include a link to sign up for a newsletter in your email signature on all emails. You need to make it as easy as you can for them to sign up.
- 57 How well do you know your target market? What media do they use, what do they desperately need, what are their points of pain, what do they care about, how do they spend their time? Spending some time knowing what makes them tick will help you focus your message, offers and marketing.
- 58 Create some tools to warm customers once they’ve heard about you. A free sample, a guarantee, a free training session or consultation. It’s not enough just to promote what you do, you also need to generate trust by giving prospects a sense of what you can do at no risk to them.
- 59 Actively ask your clients to refer you. Especially at the time that they’ve expressed how happy they are? Ask for a linked-in recommendation, organise a lunch or event and ask them to bring an ideal new customer they know. Happy clients love to refer in general but sometimes a gentle nudge is needed.
- 60 Do your customers know why they need you? How can you educate vs sell? Offer a diagnostic, free consultation, run a webinar, write a book.
- 61 Do you have a loyalty program which benefits regular customers? Look after the customers you already have, and they will be more likely to refer you to others! The best ones are simple to use, e.g. a coffee club card that is stamped by staff and offers a free coffee after a certain number.
- 62 How often do you reconnect with lapsed clients? Let them know they’re missed - create an email campaign personalised with the customer’s first name and date of their last visit or purchase, and encourage them by offering them an incentive such as a discount or value add.
- 63 How quickly are you responding to the changing needs of your customers? Keep an eye on trends - changes in spending habits, the environment etc. Perhaps run some regular short surveys using survey monkey asking your clients what’s affecting their decisions with a giveaway? What have you done recently to respond to changing customer needs?

- 64 Talk to your customers on a regular basis - don't just wait until they ring you first. Have a communication plan to keep in touch with customers. This could mean using email, phoning major clients on a regular basis, or writing a newsletter. Try and use a communication method that will impact upon your customers, rather than just what's easiest for you.
- 65 Give people more than they expect. The best marketing tactic is to over deliver... Surprise & delight your clients to generate positive word of mouth and loyalty.
- 66 Publications are often looking for ways to expose their magazine or paper to more potential readers. If you are running a large event invite media companies to become a media partner. They get branding in turn for promoting your event.
- 67 Being first is a great way to win customers... Be the first to respond to an enquiry, question, create a facebook community, get that new product or service to market... Speed is a big factor in winning
- 68 Sell the problem... Focus on the pain points or problems that your target market have and tailor your message to that. Rule 1 – “what’s the problem” rule 2 “what’s the solution” – leave the boring details about features as supporting proof.
- 69 Attend an expo specific to your audience eg: Bridal expo, home show etc to display your services. This is a great opportunity to build your database by collecting information from visitors through competitions and giveaways.
- 70 Host your own event to value add to your business eg: makeup artists can host an event with an image consultant on how to dress for success.

## *Community*

- 71 Provide free services to a charity or fundraising event to give your brand more exposure to other stakeholders and any audience involved at the event.
- 72 Get involved in a fundraiser that already has a major event organised .e.g. Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Genes for Jeans Day, The City to Surf etc.
- 73 Build your business into the fabric of the community in which you operate. This allows for you to build relationships with people. For example a company that rents out branded marquee's might offer them to sporting groups, schools and local community groups to use at their events. database of contacts by offering to deliver/erect the marquee for their event
- 74 Always look local. If your local community provides the majority of your customer base, then you should be seen to be part of that community. When donating, choose to donate locally-support local sporting teams, primary schools, PCYC or animal shelter.

## *Online*

- 75 Use Google's local business centre and Google Places listings to make sure that you are prominently displayed in Google when people are searching for a product or service in your local area. Local search terms are now the most popular searches on Google.
- 76 Branding your business based on popular search terms is a great way to get to the top of the page on Google. If you are starting out do your research and possibly go for a brand and domain name that's as close to a popular search term as possible.
- 77 It's so important to protect the integrity of your brand. If you're reading over a blog post, tweet or Facebook update and not sure if you should publish it, have someone read over it first. Remember the Internet is permanent, so it pays to be careful and have a third party opinion.
- 78 Update the content on your site regularly. Since your website is generally the first place clients go, it's crucial the site's appearance, themes and content are current.
- 79 Rolling out an online store? Encourage your regular customers to follow you to the web by giving them exclusive online discounts. This will ensure your online store hits the ground running with a ready-made clientele.
- 80 Refine your social media efforts by testing different ways to improve your presence. Social media isn't "one-size-fits-all". Find what sites and tactics work best for your business. Taking the time to get it right will prevent it becoming a time waster in the future.
- 81 Just one look at YouTube stats proves that internet users love video. Why not use video to promote your product? It doesn't have to be expensive. You could demonstrate your product, give a tour of your site, introduce yourself or your services. It could make a difference to your site visits and sales figures.
- 82 An easy way to grow your online community and database is to cross promote. Include a social media call to action in every email newsletter- don't just rely on social media buttons. Also let your fans know when a newsletter is coming out and encourage them to sign up.
- 83 Let your customers know where they can find you online. Put links to your social networking on business cards, flyers, email signatures, on your signage. Every customer contact point is an opportunity to grow your online following.
- 84 Where does your target market congregate online? Think not only Facebook and Twitter, but also Foursquare, YouTube, popular blogs, online business hubs- do a bit of research today and make sure you're reaching the right audience
- 85 When doing email marketing, target your messages and segment your database, to ensure your communications are relevant to your contacts.

- 86 Do you have a social media policy? Develop your own, and have it play a part in your marketing plan. Make sure all online communications reflect your brand and image- putting something inappropriate online is the fastest way to damage your brand- once it's out there, it's out there!
- 87 Do you have an online shop? Selling on-line can be a cost effective way to reach a larger audience, while maintaining or reducing overheads. Without an online shop you might not be making the most of your website!
- 88 Conversion testing on your shopping cart is a must. You can often gain significant lifts in conversion by working with someone to improve the transaction process..
- 89 Make sure your sales emails and retention emails are split. Email marketing can confuse people if you are trying to sell something and offer useful information in the same email. Sales emails work better if it's about a single product with an offer and call to action. Try not to mix your messages.
- 90 Adding some social media sharing buttons to your marketing emails. Adding sharing buttons can increase your click through rate by up to 30%.
- 91 Are you making the most of company emails as a marketing tool? Use your email footer to promote products, services, positioning statement and special offers. Don't forget also to use auto response emails from your web site. Add marketing and promotional offers, these emails have an open rate that's 30% higher than others.

## *Promotion and Press*

- 92 Journalists love a good story, think through ways you can craft a story around yourself and/or your business. Why you started your business, any social or environmental trends that are relevant?
- 93 If you have specific publications you'd love to get published in make sure that you read them regularly. That way you'll get to know what the journalist is interested in.
- 94 Use sites like PR News Wire to upload press releases to. This will help get your release out to media that you don't have a relationship with but who might be potentially interested in what you have to offer.
- 95 Twitter is a source of material and sources for Journalists. Many Journalists use twitter to find new stories that are breaking and to find sources for different stories. Twitter can be a great way to start a conversation with a journalist you may never get to meet in person.
- 96 Conduct your own research project on your industry or customers, and then publish the results in a press release to gain PR attention. Make sure your research is designed to produce key or controversial statistics that will grab media attention. Don't be afraid to offer an incentive to increase responses as Journalists will look for stories that have an impressive number of respondents.

- 97 Join your local chamber of commerce or another appropriate networking group and volunteer for a key position. You'll raise your profile and generate word of mouth.
- 98 If you've never written a press release before consider using some online resources to help you get input from a professional. [Handle Your Own PR](#) has a service to help small businesses write press releases. You can also use Hub Spot's [Grader tool](#) that will Grade your press release for interest.
- 99 Create a compelling story about how your company was founded. This will serve to engage employees AND customers. People love a good story and it helps people talk about you.
- 100 Make sure you know when journalists are looking for a source for a story related to your product or service. Using call out services like [Source Bottle](#) will help you jump on top of short term media opportunities.
- 101 Enter into as many awards as possible. Winning or becoming a finalist builds trust and gives you an opportunity to get in front of the media. Don't be shy – spruik about your achievements.

## ***Making sure you get it right***

So now you've got some marketing inspiration, it's still a good idea to make sure you bring all your ideas together into a focused plan. Following a plan means you are less likely to waste precious dollars on marketing that doesn't work.

This where working with an experienced marketing consultant or investing in some marketing knowledge (through guides, books and seminars) can really help you get good return on your marketing investment.

Whatever your budget Marketing Angels can help you get smarter marketing through:

- ▶ [DIY marketing e-guides](#)
- ▶ [One on one ½ day marketing planning workshops](#)
- ▶ [Marketing coaching and mentoring](#)
- ▶ [Marketing consulting and outsourced marketing management](#)

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## ***101 small business marketing tips and ideas.***

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