



HEY. A Guide to Marketing Channels

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1. Introduction:

This guide has been designed to assist you in researching and selecting the right marketing channels for your business to use, in support of your sales and marketing plan. It describes what marketing channels are, why they are important and the key elements you should consider when selecting channels as well as how to construct the best content for these channels.

This guide also contains a series of practical steps to help you gather the information you will need to understand and plan your marketing efforts around the most appropriate marketing channels suited to your business and target customers. There is also a template to use that will assist you to plan quickly and effectively the marketing channels you will use and the content you will produce for these. This template can be used as a 'stand-alone' planning document or can be used as a monthly template to re-focus your marketing channel plans consistently.

Taking the time to understand the marketing channels that are best suited to your business and target customer groups will enable you to effectively construct marketing plans which successfully reach your target customer groups and support you in developing a strong sales and marketing plan document.

Intended Readers:

This guide is primarily aimed to assist:

- Individuals who are thinking about starting their first business venture, who are exploring a business idea and the potential opportunities that may exist for it in the market.
- Individuals who have developed their business idea and recently started their first business venture. This includes those who are at the stage of having conducted some Market Research and are now beginning to promote their business and plan marketing campaigns using different marketing channels.

The information provided in this guide has been prepared for individuals as an initial 'First Step' towards better understanding how to prepare and use marketing channels for their business. This is a key area of business development for reaching new customers, so it is recommended that you read around the topic area when using this guide to further broaden your understanding of each of the marketing channels. You should also consider speaking to a professional business advisor who can answer any specific questions you may have.

Other Guides in the Series:

[A Guide to developing a Business Plan](#)

[A Guide to understanding your Target Market \(Market Research\)](#)

[A Guide to developing a Sales & Marketing Plan](#)

[A Guide to Branding](#)

[A Guide to Financial Forecasting \(Cash Flow\)](#)

2. Case Study: Raven Hill Brewery



Whatever your business a passion for the product is essential, and at Raven Hill Brewery the founder Mark Savile is literally living the brand.

Mark admits that he left the University of Leeds with a Masters in chemistry but little idea of what he wanted to do with it.

During the years which followed he began to find out as his business experience focused on agronomy and then more specifically on malting, and his leisure time took him from the challenges of the Wolds Way and other Yorkshire trails to the heights of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Aconcagua in Argentina.

The Summit beer brewed as a nod to Mark's success in conquering some of the world's landmark peaks has now made way for more recent products

including Trail, Chasm and Ascent, a pale ale which features in Mark's blog on the Raven Hill website and has clearly become a favourite refreshment after he's completed a climb or a trek.

He said: "I wanted to create a beer that brought it all together - the people who love the outdoors and like celebrating with others after a day of adventure."

The magic happens in a converted dairy at a farm in Kilham, between Driffield and Bridlington where, after researching big international brands and tiny craft breweries in such far flung locations as Asia and South America for some major corporations, Mark started to produce beer in 2018.

The lockdown of spring 2020 did indeed leave Raven Hill staring down a chasm as pubs closed and beer festivals were cancelled but a shift in strategy brought greater capacity and access to a canning line.

Now there are more beers, a brand refresh and plans to recruit Raven Hill ambassadors who are well known in the field of outdoor pursuits.

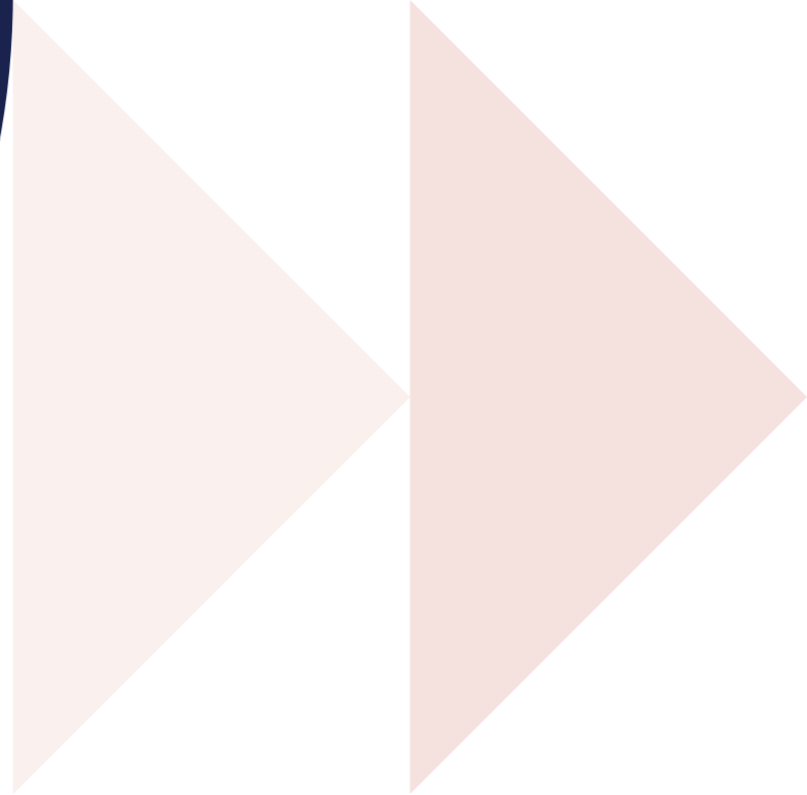
Outlets include Roberts & Speight and Sewell on the go in East Yorkshire and the customer base extends across the rest of the county as Mark plots a sales chart which he hopes will be as steep as his learning curve.



"After researching breweries of all sizes worldwide I was conscious I'd found out everything about beer except how to make it! But we tackled that and then worked out how to get cans out to customers and we've had some great feedback."

Mark Savile
Raven Hill Brewery

3. Marketing Channels



What is a Marketing Channel?

Marketing is the activity you participate in to promote your business and reach your target customers. A marketing channel is the platform or system which you use to communicate with your target customers, such as a social media platform. Content is the information, both written and visual, which you create to publish on a marketing channel.

However, marketing is more than just promoting your business, it is about communicating with your customers, engaging them in conversation and building relationships. This is why choosing the correct marketing channel is so important to ensuring that you are successful in reaching and communicating with your target customers and generating an outcome of sales or customer interactions.

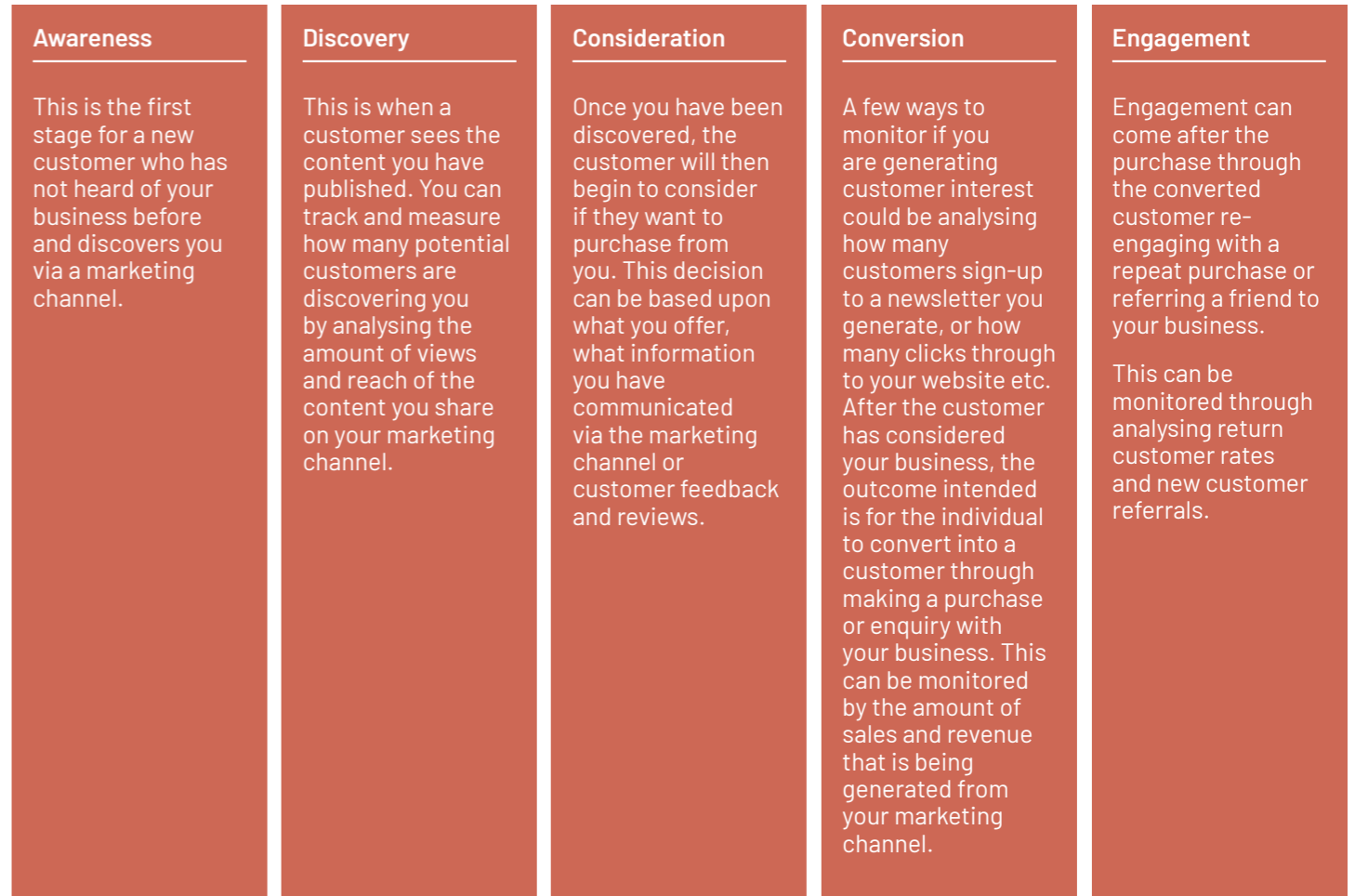
Why are Marketing Channels important?

There are numerous reasons why spending time on researching and selecting the best marketing channels for your business is important for your business, your marketing and its success, here are just a few:

1. The right marketing channel will enable you to increase awareness of your business and brand. This is one of the primary purposes of conducting marketing to reach new potential customers who have not yet heard about your business and inform them of who you are, what your business does and what problem you solve or the value you provide for your customers.
2. Using the right marketing channel which aligns with your target customers will enable you to build customer relationships through engagement. This can be done by encouraging conversation on topics or responding to customer questions. All communication that is done via marketing channels with new or existing customers provides you as a business owner with an opportunity to develop a long-standing relationship with your customer to increase brand loyalty to your business as well as enhancing your customer support services.

3. Marketing channels also provide an opportunity to get to understand our customers better. This can be through conversation as described in the above point, or our target customers and competitors' interactions and engagements to get a better understanding of common popular content and interests. This will help you to further understand the market landscape and how to interact with your target customers.

4. Using marketing channels and participating in marketing activities will be executed to achieve a result or outcome. This is often a financial target to increase sales revenue. Using marketing channels effectively can provide a great source of revenue and sales. The below diagram examples the stages a customer will go through when seeing your marketing activities through your marketing channels:



What do I need to understand before I select a Marketing Channel?

Before you choose the appropriate marketing channel(s) you will use to market your business, it is important to consider the below points in detail to ensure that your marketing efforts are focused and productive.

1. Who is your target customer group(s)?

It is important to firstly understand who your target customer group(s) is. This will impact which marketing channel(s) are best suited to your business and to reaching your target customer. For example, if you are selling B2B (business to business) the most appropriate marketing channel(s) could be very different from if you are selling B2C (business to consumer).

2. Where will your target customer group(s) be?

Once you have identified who your target customer group(s) are, it is then crucial to begin to understand which marketing channels you will find your target customers on.

3. What type of content will your target customer group(s) be interested in?

After deciding which marketing channel will provide you with the best opportunity to reach your target customers, it is also important to understand what interests your customers on these marketing channels. As well as communicating your business's USP's and Value, it is also important to research thoroughly the types of content which engage and compel your target audience.

4. What are your primary Call To Actions through your marketing channel(s)?

A Call To Action, is the outcome which you are encouraging the customer to take after seeing your marketing activities via your marketing channel. An example of a Call To Action could be to sign up to your e-marketing newsletter or to make a purchase. Being clear on your Call To Action is important to ensuring that the appropriate content is created to generate the best outcomes through your marketing channels.

5. What resources are required for your selected marketing channel(s)?

Finally, it is important to consider what resources such as time and people are required to support the marketing efforts for each marketing channel chosen to ensure that you can successfully manage and develop appropriate plans for each of your marketing channels.

4. An Overview of Digital Marketing Channels

Below are a number of core marketing channels which you can explore to utilise your marketing activities for your business. Once you have chosen suitable marketing channels for your business, you can use the worksheet attached in the appendix to help structure and plan the content for each marketing channel.

Online Marketing Channels:

Websites

A website is an online web page which is created by or for your business. A website can be used for different functions such as a *Landing Page*: which is a website with the main purpose of providing information about your business and will include contact details and information about what your business offers. A website can also serve the function of being an e-commerce store: which is a website which is more like an online shop and allows customers to purchase directly with you and check out online.

Having a website for your business can be a crucial part of your marketing plans as often, any other marketing channels and promotions you do online, will have the outcome of driving customers to visit your website. However, it is important to note that some businesses choose not to have a website and concentrate on other

marketing channels. This is dependent on what you want your customers to do when they find you online, and what your Call To Action is from each of your marketing activities.

Example:

- *Do you want your customers to purchase online from you?*

If so, having a website can provide this function, although you can also sell via online marketplaces such as Amazon instead.

- *Do you want customers to sign up to an e-mailing list?*

It is not essential to have a website to offer this function, as will be explained later in the emails section; however, this function can also be completed via a website.

Having a website has many different benefits including:

1. Providing an online presence for your business 24/7. No matter what time or time zone your customer is viewing your website, it will always be available and provide you with a consistent base of information.
2. A website is really the core place for all of your business information which is vital for customers to know, such as opening times, contact information and frequently asked questions. By having a core place with all this information which potential customers can view at ease provides a better customer service level than customers having to dig for the required information or wait for responses on frequently asked questions.

3. Having a website can also provide a stronger credibility and professionalism for your business.
4. Website data (information on what happens when customers visit your website) can be set-up quickly and easily with Google Analytics, which allows you to track visitor behaviour to your website including the source of the visitor (for example if they have clicked to your website from Google or a social media platform), how long they spent on your website and what was viewed etc. This can provide you as a business owner with a great insight into your customers behaviour.
5. Finally, a website can offer further growth opportunities too as it provides a base for international outreach and can be a strong place to refer potential investors too if you are requiring further finance for your business growth.

The top things to consider when creating a website for your business is that it has simple navigation and is easy to use for the customer to achieve your call to action and convert. An attractive design and helpful content is also important. You can create a website yourself using pre-made templates with a number of website platform providers or you can work with a designer and coder to have a bespoke tailor-built website for your business.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

SEO is how to optimize your website to generate as many organic (un-paid) visits to your website by receiving a higher ranking on search engines such as Google. There are many factors which will contribute to your website's SEO, but one of the main factors is the use of keywords across your website content.

Keywords are commonly used search terms which people often use search engines to search results for. This could be a question which the individual wants to find the answer to or could be a specific product or service which an individual is searching for.

To optimize your website to be easily found by new and existing customers, the use of keywords is extremely important. You can use free tools such as Google Keyword Planner which you type a term in to and it will present all of the associated keywords searched for and the volume of searches each term creates. It is important that when using keywords, you use them in context and do not just repeat them unnaturally.

SEO can also be enhanced by the use of links. If your website link is listed on another website or marketing channel, this provides search engines the confidence that you are a trusted and reputable business, and this can also increase your search engine optimisation. This can be done by collaborating with other businesses and bloggers to get your products or services featured on their websites or social media channels.





Blog

A blog is an online place, usually part of your website, which can form a journal approach to sharing key information about your business and products. It can also be used to discuss broader themes and topics which would be of interest to your target customer groups.

As with the above information, it is crucial to ensure that you have conducted keyword research before blog writing. Blog writing is another marketing channel which can be used to boost your SEO and website traffic (number of views your website receives). It can also encourage customer engagement and relationships, as often customers can comment and share their views/experiences/opinions on the blog topic you have written about.

When writing a blog post it is very important to understand your key target customer and what information they would want to read on a blog post. As well as integrating keywords a blog post must also have headings and sub-headings (think of it a bit like a mini essay). It needs to have a clear structure which is easily readable for anyone. It should also include some imagery and if possible, links to other websites as well as quotes as these will also help with your SEO.

Email Marketing

Email marketing is the act of sending a message to a group of individuals via email and is usually used to promote your business, such as new products or services, new blog posts or relevant information that your customers would find interesting.

Email marketing has many benefits including:

1. It is often voted the number one communication channel as 99% of people check their emails on a daily basis so it is a great way to consistently reach your target customers. It also encourages communication with your customers as they can reply directly to your emails with any feedback or questions.
2. A benefit of using emails as a marketing channel is that as a business you own the customer's data. Other marketing channels will own the customer's data and therefore make it harder for you to re-contact and re-engage customers. Whereas, once a customer has signed up to your email marketing (providing your sign-up procedure follows all necessary data protection compliances), you have the customer's permission to re-engage and re-target them with any future marketing activities.

3. Email marketing allows you to segment your customers and send more personalised marketing emails to different customer groups based on their interests and reasons that they shop with you.

When designing email marketing campaigns, it is important to consider the subject line and what will speak to your customers and encourage them to open your emails. To assist you with this, it is important that once you have sent a few emails you re-assess how successful they have been and monitor the open rates as this will help you understand which subject lines have had a better impact.

Within the body of your emails, it is important to make sure that your emails communicate a professional and recognisable presence. This can be achieved by creating a header in your emails which displays your logo and business information. You should also combine images and text within your emails and ensure there is a clear call to action for the reader. This could be a link to your website or to your social media channels.

Pay Per Click Advertising

This marketing channel is a paid form of advertising where you pay the channel (usually a search engine) who is hosting your advert (*for example: Google*) each time your advert is clicked.


Pay per click advertising can be used to increase traffic to your website and is a way to increase the ranking of your website on a search engine (how high up your website is listed in the results). Although this channel requires a marketing budget and spend, it is often viewed as a cost-effective approach as you only pay for the advertisement once a customer has engaged and successfully completed the call to action - to click through to your website.




The benefits of using a cost per click strategy are that it is often fast performing; or at least it is a much faster option than building natural SEO as explained earlier in this guide. Cost per click advertising can often be set around specific targeted customer groups, such as just being shown to people in certain geographic locations. This enables you to use your budget wisely and only target your specific customer groups.

Social media marketing is using social media channels to engage and communicate with your potential and existing customers. A social media channel can also provide a business with the opportunity to engage their customers in conversation and to share their brand messages.

There are numerous social media channels which you can consider for your business and marketing. The below diagram explains each of the types of social media channels, their uses and any best practises when using these channels.

For all social media channels, it is important to understand that the essence of them is to be 'social', this means to encourage communication, reactions and interactions with your customers to build better relationships and establish trust. It is also a great way to build and offer outstanding customer service support with your replies and engagements across these channels.

Social Media Channel	Key Uses	Best Practises and Considerations
 <p>Instagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very visual platform which is great for product imagery - Instagram is very photo reliant (you cannot post anything without an image – although your image can include text). You can also share videos to your story, create video reels or go live with Instagram TV (IGTV). - Instagram also offers a shopping facility where the products displayed can be tagged and then clicked and purchased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A photography budget or production time should be considered when choosing such a visually focused marketing channel. - If you are a service-based business, Instagram can also be very useful to share imagery that relates to your company cultures as well as the faces of the brand. - Ensure that you do take time to research appropriate hashtags as this can really increase the outreach of your content to a wider audience. - Going live is one of the best features on Instagram as it will send every follower you have a notification that you have gone live, reminding them of your business.

Social Media Channel	Key Uses	Best Practises and Considerations
 <p>Facebook</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facebook is more text focused and offers one of the most characters available to use for your content. - However, imagery and videos can also be shared on this channel. - Facebook offers groups where multiple individuals can join a group with like-minded individuals. These groups can be a great place to network and also a great way to build a 'community' and further customer relationships. - Facebook offers you the option to create a professional business page as well as your individual profile. - It also offers purchasing options through creating your own Facebook store. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you choose to pay for advertising with Facebook you can select very specific criteria to target your advertising at. - Facebook often prioritises individual posts over business posts (at the time of writing). This can make organic (un-paid) outreach harder; however the interactions you can make in groups can be very beneficial towards building brand loyalty.
 <p>Twitter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twitter uses a very minimal amount of text. - Twitter is a very conversation platform and encourages debate and conversation quickly due to the limited amount of words allowed to be shared in a tweet. - Hashtags should be used and researched to encourage more outreach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twitter can be used to show the personality of your brand by sharing easy and digestible content. - Twitter can also increase your SEO as individual tweets can appear on Google searches. - Journalists predominantly use Twitter to conduct research so using Twitter regularly can be a great way to network with journalists and bloggers which can lead to further exposure and coverage for your business.
 <p>LinkedIn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LinkedIn is predominantly used for building business to business connections. - It is a more formal and professional channel and therefore can assist you with industry credibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If your business sells direct to the consumer LinkedIn can still be a useful channel for you to use to make connections with potential investors or to assist with recruitment of staff. - LinkedIn can also help with your SEO as LinkedIn posts will also be listed in Google.

There are many other social media channels which you can also consider such as Pinterest which is another very visual platform or YouTube which is purely video content.

Whichever channel(s) you decide to focus on for your business and your marketing activities, it is important that you remain consistent in your content posting.

Example: *You post twice weekly or twice daily.*

One way to assist you in remaining consistent with your social media channels content is to create a content planner and set themes for each month, as the below diagram suggests:

Monthly Theme (E.g. Pollution)						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Theme of the day (E.g. #mondaymotivation)						
Content Plan (Match the monthly theme with the daily theme to create content. E.g. on a Monday share motivational quotes which communicate ways to help reduce pollution).						

You can also use social media scheduling tools such as Hootsuite or Later.com to pre-schedule your social media posts so that you have them planned, prepared and organised.

Offline Marketing Channels:

As well as the broad variety of digital online marketing channels, it is important to also consider offline marketing channels as these also may be suitable and successful for your business.

Partnerships and Collaborations

A partnership or collaboration is the act of working with another business to achieve a common goal. It could be that the business has a similar target customer group to you, even though you produce or sell different things.

By engaging in a collaboration to work together in some format, for example: Creating a bundle which includes your products/services as well as the other businesses products/services, this can enhance the outreach of your brand and reach new potential customers by both businesses working together and sharing their customers with one another.

Print Advertising

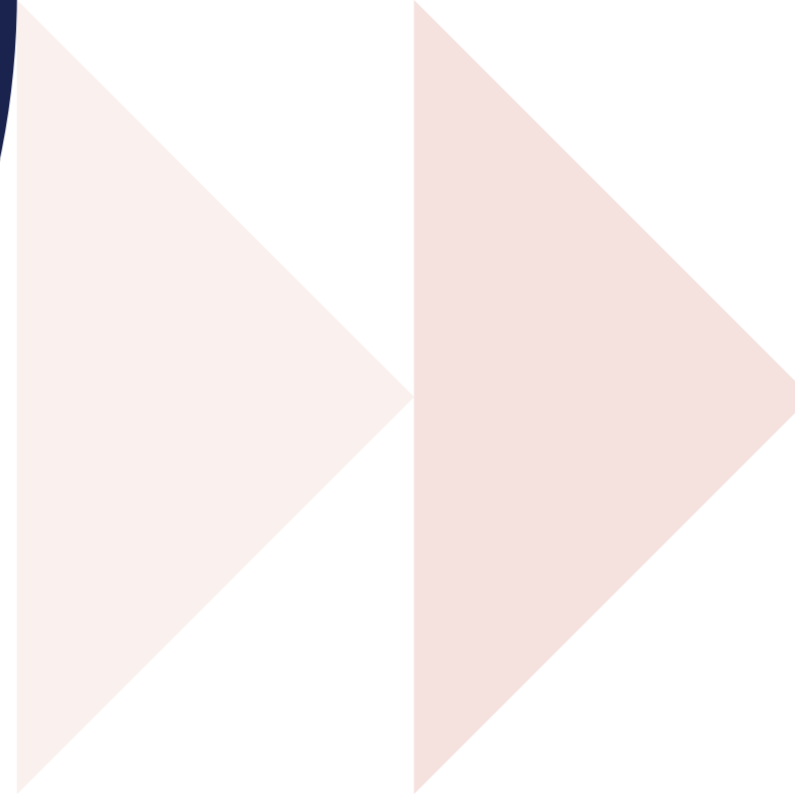
Printed advertising can be in the format of designing and printing leaflets or other marketing materials such as business cards or brochures. It is important to consider what information is essential to be shared on your print and how it will reach your target customer.

For example: Will you post leaflets in your local geographic area or will you leave them at a shop premises?

Printed marketing materials can be a great way to provide a physical reminder of your business and the key information a customer would need; however, it is also important to consider your budget and the return on investment (ROI- How much money you intend to make compared to how much you invested on the designing and printing of the marketing materials).

You can also consider paying for advertising in popular magazines. This is a great way to generate exposure for your business, however when committing to this budget, it is important to consider where you would find your target customer (what publication/magazine they would read) and how to compel them to take action once they have seen your advertisement.

5. Tips and Tools for Content Creation



6. Marketing Channel Content Plan

Content Creation Techniques:

Copywriting

Copywriting is the act of specifically writing text for the purposes of advertising and marketing your business. Copywriting is different from content writing as, whereas content writing is designed to tell a story and build trust with customers over a longer period, copywriting has more of an emotional connection with the audience, making them want to take action immediately. Copywriting is therefore used more for advertising purposes to drive sales and leads. Content writing is usually more suited to blog or article writing.

The essence of copywriting is to understand your target customer(s) needs, problems and pain points. If you understand this in detail, this will enable you to write compelling copy.

Example: An example of a copywriting formula is:

Problem – *Identify the problem which your target customer faces.*

Agitate – *Explain what will happen if they do not address the problem they have. (How could it get worse in the future?)*

Solution – *Describe how your business can offer a solution to the problem they have and how they can avoid what would happen in the agitate explanation you have just provided.*

By following structured copywriting formula's this can help you to create appropriate and compelling copy for any advertising or promotions to generate sales for your business.

Trend Monitoring

Trend monitoring is analysing the popular search terms and keywords which are used in search engines. Monitoring these trends can be useful to ensure that your content is relevant and up to date. It can also increase your outreach and SEO if you are creating content around popular and 'on-trend' terms and topics.

You can use Google Trends to track the most popular search terms within your industry or on specific topics as well as also viewing options such as twitter trends to see what hashtags are being most frequently used.

Company Name:
Date:

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Company Details

Company/Business name:

Business Owners Name(s):

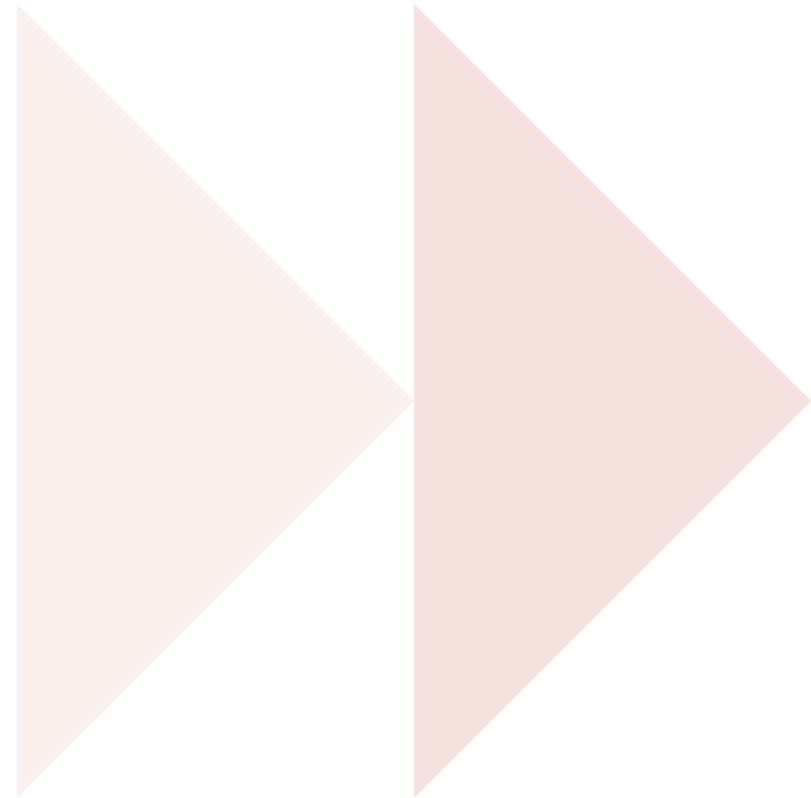
Business address:

Contact Number:

Email address:

Content Planning Table Example:

Marketing Channel	Customer Group	Structure	Tone/Topic	Plan of Action	Budget	Assigned to	Desired Outcome
Instagram	Target Customer: Individuals who are looking for eco-friendly produce	Structure will be to post twice weekly to engage eco-friendly shoppers. I will also go live every Friday for a 'round-up' of eco-friendly news. I will also allocate 15 minutes per day to engage with other posts and reply to customers comments and interactions.	Will your content be educational, emotional or promotional? Tone will be focused around: - Raising awareness of what eco-conscious means and how our business is eco-friendly - Discussing eco-conscious success stories in the news	What steps do you need to take and what research do you need to do? 1. To research hashtags and trends every week. 2. One product photo to be taken weekly and one stock image photo to be used weekly	I will allocate: - 3 hours per week to planning and scheduling content - I have a £200 photography budget	- Myself for content planning, writing and scheduling - Freelance photographer which we will use quarterly for photoshoots	To drive 50 visits per week to our website.



Content Planning Table:

Marketing Channel	Customer Group	Structure	Tone/Topic	Plan of Action	Budget	Assigned to	Desired Outcome

Content Planning Checklist:

- Have you identified your target customer group and that they use the channel you have selected?
- Have you conducted research to understand current trends to ensure that you understand what your target customer group is currently thinking about and discussing?
- Is the content you are creating suited to the channel you are creating it for?
- Is the content still on brand? (Does it communicate with your customers your business values and what you stand for as a business?)
- Are there any additional sources you need to use for this content such as links or attachments?
- Have you researched keywords and considered SEO in the creation of your content?
- Have you set a structure and plan for your content on your chosen marketing channel?





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ups



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European Regional
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