



Business Development Foundations Inventory Guide

Want to build a strong, reliable marketing program that pays for itself? Here are the basics.

While anyone can use this guide, it is best implemented under the guidance of skilled marketing experts. This information only scratches the surface of best practices & possibilities.

MARKETING STRATEGY

- **Budget: Understand your limits & ability to invest.**
 - Ideal marketing budgets can be anywhere from 5-20% of revenue, depending on the industry
 - Proper strategic planning makes budget allocation easier
 - Robust reporting will help avoid waste by providing a clear picture of what works & what doesn't. Avoid a sunk cost mindset & be willing to move on if the numbers don't add up
- **Buyer Personas/Audience Buckets: A rulebook that identifies which people are most likely to become your customers/clients. This will maximize marketing efficiency & clarity.**
 - Customer Demographics
 - Age
 - Gender identity
 - Income/budget type
 - Geographic location
 - Other relevant identifying factors
 - This can be anything that helps you zero in on the right audience, ranging from hobbies/interests to education level or profession
 - Customer Needs/Pain Points
- **Approach & Activities: Be intentional in deciding how best to promote your business. Don't just follow the crowd.**

- Assess marketing channels (e.g., social media, email, referral, influencer) and platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube) to determine which ones best fit with your industry, business, budget & goals
- Define a publication schedule/cadence for each platform (i.e., how many posts per week/month? Should you post more during certain seasons?)
 - Emphasize quality over quantity when you communicate with your audience on any channel. Be strategic & goal-oriented; less is often more!
- **Security: Mitigate risk & create strong infrastructure that can stay in place as your team scales.**
 - Passwords are stored securely, shared carefully & changed often
 - Admins & users for high-value accounts (e.g., social media accounts, website content management, etc.) are selected deliberately. Don't just give access to anyone; make sure the people with access truly need it & are trustworthy. Remove access for former employees/contractors as soon as possible after the relationship ends
 - All accounts should be owned by a legacy business contact such as the owner, CEO or CMO to ensure the business maintains access to the account regardless of personnel changes
 - Keep an internal record of admins for all relevant accounts to ensure clear chain of command in case you lose access
- **Assets: A collection of graphics that represent your brand & compels your audience to engage with your content. These images should look & feel consistent across all marketing materials & channels. Most digital marketing channels are highly visual, so a lack of assets can be a major obstacle for businesses hoping to compete.**
 - Photos
 - Stock photos are OK in a pinch, but ideally, you'll have actual images of your products, store/office, team or location as applicable—the images should be distinguishable as representing your brand so you can make a lasting impression

- Videos
- Designed graphics
- Logos
- **Marketing Team: Create long-term stability that can withstand personnel changes, trends & business strategy shifts.**
 - Roles & responsibilities for key positions
 - Marketing responsibilities should be clearly spelled out & assigned to specific job roles rather than being left to whatever person is most willing to do the work
 - If you hire contractors for this work, who is responsible for monitoring their performance & enforcing their contract?
 - Approval hierarchy
 - Who needs to review & approve content before it's published?
 - Reputation management
 - Ensure there's a clear point person who is responsible for responding to reviews, comments, DMs & other interactions from the public on your marketing channels

BRANDING & CORE MESSAGING

- **Business Bio: A rulebook that ensures consistent storytelling about your brand. Give it to marketers, HR, customer service reps & other team members involved with public communications.**
 - Brand Persona
 - What archetype does your business represent, and why is this aligned with your audience's needs/desires?
 - What "voice" best suits that persona: Formal? Informal? Straightforward? Irreverent? Mature? Youthful?
 - Unique Value Proposition (UVP)
 - What distinguishes your business from others offering similar products/services?

- What do you do better than anyone else, or differently in a way that will benefit customers and make them choose you?
 - Mission
 - Can you succinctly describe your business' reason for being in a way that attracts top talent & motivates your current team?
 - What core goal will keep your business on track in tough times and simplify major decision-making?
 - Boilerplate/Elevator Pitch
 - Can you succinctly describe how your business helps your customers/clients or otherwise improves/enriches their lives?
 - Can you quickly summarize your business' persona, UVP & mission in a way that's distinctive & unique?
- **Brand Design Style Guide: A rulebook that defines exactly which visual elements belong to your brand. Give it to creatives such as designers, web developers & photographers to ensure all graphic assets are easily identifiable as belonging to your brand.**
 - Fonts
 - Colors
 - Logo
 - Image Treatment & Style
 - Combine with Business Bio to help creatives understand more about how to create distinctive collateral that's visually consistent & on-message
- **Competitor Analysis: A survey of how competing or similar businesses market themselves. This information will ensure your brand is unique & avoid any issues with plagiarism/intellectual property infringement. It can also help ensure you maximize your budget by avoiding unnecessary competition.**
 - How do competing brands define themselves?
 - Is your brand persona too similar to competitors?
 - Does your brand's visual identity stand out?
 - Are you using similar language in your core messaging?

- What level of polish are your competitors bringing to the table? Is your marketing material measuring up in terms of sophistication & strategy?
- Which of your competitors show evidence of effective marketing?
 - Coverage in major publications
 - High-profile strategic/influencer partnerships
 - Strong audience engagement & content quality
- Where are your competitors investing in marketing? How much are they spending?
 - Are big-budget corporate juggernauts competing for the same space on major platforms?
 - Does a particular brand seem to have a monopoly on your audience's attention?
 - Are any platforms not well-suited to your industry as evidenced by audience engagement?

VISIBILITY/DISCOVERY

- **Website:** Though it's not the only way customers can find you, a website is an essential part of any marketing plan. If you intend to hire professionals to create your website for you, make sure they're knowledgeable & accountable in the following areas.
 - Consistent Design & Messaging
 - Homepage clearly communicates your UVP
 - Colors, fonts, images, graphics & copy adhere to Style & Messaging Guides
 - Copy adheres to brand persona & other core message elements
 - Audience-Focused Content & Layout
 - Site navigation emphasizes your most important products/services and provides clear paths for site users to find what they need

- Site design is adaptive for different screen sizes (e.g., mobile vs desktop)
 - Clear calls to action throughout the site to facilitate desired purchase/engagement behavior (e.g., SHOP NOW, ADD TO CART, CONTACT US, BOOK NOW, etc.)
 - Content emphasizes the customer, not the business
 - Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
 - SEO best practices are in place, including proper indexing of all appropriate pages, keyword-focused copy & code/content that allows pages to load quickly
 - Security Optimization
 - URL security via SSL certificate
 - Privacy policy
 - Accessibility Optimization
 - ADA compliance
- **Accounts & Listings: Ensure discoverability anywhere prospective customers might search for businesses like yours.**
 - Maps & Directories
 - Social Media
 - Review Platforms

ANALYTICS

- **Goals & Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): The primary objectives around which your marketing strategy is oriented.**
 - Define specific, measurable, achievable, time-based marketing goals for your business
 - Identify the data points that will best indicate whether you're on track to accomplish your goals. Think about this strategically & in terms of customer behavior—what actions might a customer take that lead up to a purchase/sale/conversion?

- **Reporting: Set a precedent for strategy-based decision-making & accountability for your team.**
 - Use the right analytics tools—make sure your staff is clear about which tools they use & when they report
 - Google provides a number of highly informative & beneficial analytics tools free of charge, including [Analytics](#), [Search Console](#) & [Lighthouse](#)
 - Individual marketing platforms often offer analytics for free such as your website content management system (e.g., Shopify or Squarespace), email client, (e.g., Mailchimp or Constant Contact), directories (e.g., Google Business Profile) & advertising channel (e.g., Google Ads, Meta Ads)
 - Define a reporting cadence. We recommend quarterly and annual reports as monthly reporting can provide too small a sample of data for optimal interpretation
 - Ensure reporting is written into the job descriptions/contracts of appropriate personnel—analytics are a requirement, not an optional add-on!