

How to

**Market Your
Business on a
Shoestring Budget**

*Reach New
Customers
Without Breaking
the Bank*





When it comes to marketing, most small to mid-sized businesses have the same three questions:

1. How do I start marketing?
2. Where should I focus my marketing efforts?
3. How do I market when I don't have much (if any) money?

Before Answering, Some Definitions

Before we answer those three questions, it's important we're all on the same page with certain definitions. That way, our answers are sure to make sense.

Here are the definitions of some marketing-related terms we'll use throughout this guide:



ADVERTISING: Paying for exposure on various media channels.

MARKETING: An attempt to start a conversation with your target audience, promoting your brand or offer.

INBOUND MARKETING: Also known as content marketing - creating valuable content that attracts your audience so they start the conversation.

OUTBOUND MARKETING: Proactively reaching out to your audience (often via advertising), in an attempt to start the conversation.

NETWORKING: Plugging in to people and communities with the intent of growing your network.



Effort Can Replace Ad Spend

If you're just getting started and have little to no money to spend on marketing, we recommend you do not pay to advertise - ANYWHERE.

Paid advertising requires a consistent, solidified budget. Launching a paid campaign in January with plans to run it through April works only if you know you have money to spend. If you don't know your budget (or more likely, don't even have one), you might spend more time creating a paid advertising campaign than running it.

Instead, for those with little to no money to spend, we recommend focusing on marketing before advertising.

You can start your own conversations with your audience without paying anyone – using outlets like email, social media, and networking. Doing so requires time. It requires effort. But if you don't have money to burn, you have to invest TIME and EFFORT into marketing your business.

Fledgling businesses most often don't live or die based on investment capital; they live or die based on effort capital. Whether it's you or someone else in your organization, someone's going to have to suck it up and do the work if you plan to market your business without spending any money.

BUT IF YOU DO THE WORK, YOU WILL SUCCEED!



Finding Your Audience

So now you know the secret to low-cost marketing: replacing spending with time and effort. Now it's time to figure out how you should spend your time and where you should focus your effort.

When refining your marketing focus, we recommend you start by asking yourself three simple questions (which you likely already know the answers to):

WHO am I trying to serve? (The answer to this question determines your target audience.)

WHAT problems are those people trying to solve, related to my brand? (The answer to this question will determine your offer.)

WHERE is their attention? (The answer to this question determines where you should focus your marketing efforts.)

For example, when Butler Branding started out, we asked ourselves these questions. We knew we wanted to work with growing businesses in our area. We knew we wanted to help those businesses refine and more effectively deliver their messages. And we knew where they hung out – on Facebook, on LinkedIn, and within certain local business organizations.

So we created a strategy to attract and network with those businesses via various inbound, outbound, and network marketing strategies. And we stuck with that initial strategy for about six months – after which we assessed the results.

Which is exactly what YOU need to do. **After answering those three questions above, you need to formulate a simple four-to-seven month marketing plan – AND STICK TO IT.**



Make a Simple Marketing Plan

Now, most every business focuses its initial efforts on inbound marketing (which, if you forgot, is creating and distributing free content in an attempt to let audiences find your business themselves). However, while inbound is a great use of your time, IT'S A LONG-TERM PROJECT. Posting free blog content will increase your SEO, and giving away relevant downloadable resources (like this very guide) is a simple way to procure clients' contact info.

But inbound marketing efforts take time. Time to create, manage, and distribute all that FREE content – and time to see results. To make sure you see results right away, you'll need to operate a multi-pronged marketing strategy: one that includes not only inbound, but also outbound and networking tactics.

We recommend listing out one to three things you can do in each marketing category (inbound, outbound, networking). For example, you might establish a blog that you post to regularly (inbound), make direct calls to potential clients (outbound), and join your local chamber of commerce (networking).





Make a Simple Marketing Plan (continued)

Inbound Marketing Tactics:

Publish and promote your own blog; create and promote free, downloadable content (trading value for contact information); optimize your website's SEO.

Outbound Marketing Tactics:

Reach clients directly via cold calls or social media; knock on doors; (eventually, but not right now) paid advertisements.

Networking Tactics:

Join relevant groups (both physical and digital); attend events where your audience congregates.

Then, you need to execute on those efforts. But the most important thing is to not put all your eggs in one marketing basket. Networking and outbound marketing are HARD, but remember what we said above:

You have to **DO THE WORK IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED.**

With that in mind, the next (and final) part of our no-cost marketing strategy should come as no surprise.



Then, Stick to It

A lot of up-and-coming businesses start with a shotgun approach to marketing. They try anything and everything with no particular strategy. And when they see that their “plan” isn’t working, they switch gears – without giving their initial efforts enough time to succeed.

That’s why, again, we recommend solidifying and sticking with your initial strategy for about six months. You WON’T see returns instantly – that’s just not how marketing works. But if you deliver quality content, make calls, and attend events CONSISTENTLY (based on your plan) you will see results by month three, or four, or five. And you will move the needle for your business.

Now, that doesn’t mean you’re not allowed to tweak or spot-check your strategy as you go. Even the best strategies require iteration. But after you’ve established your initial plan, you should not “scrap it” before at least month four. It takes time to assess whether a strategy is working or not – and you won’t get anywhere if you don’t give yourself the time to actually test your strategy (and learn from the results).





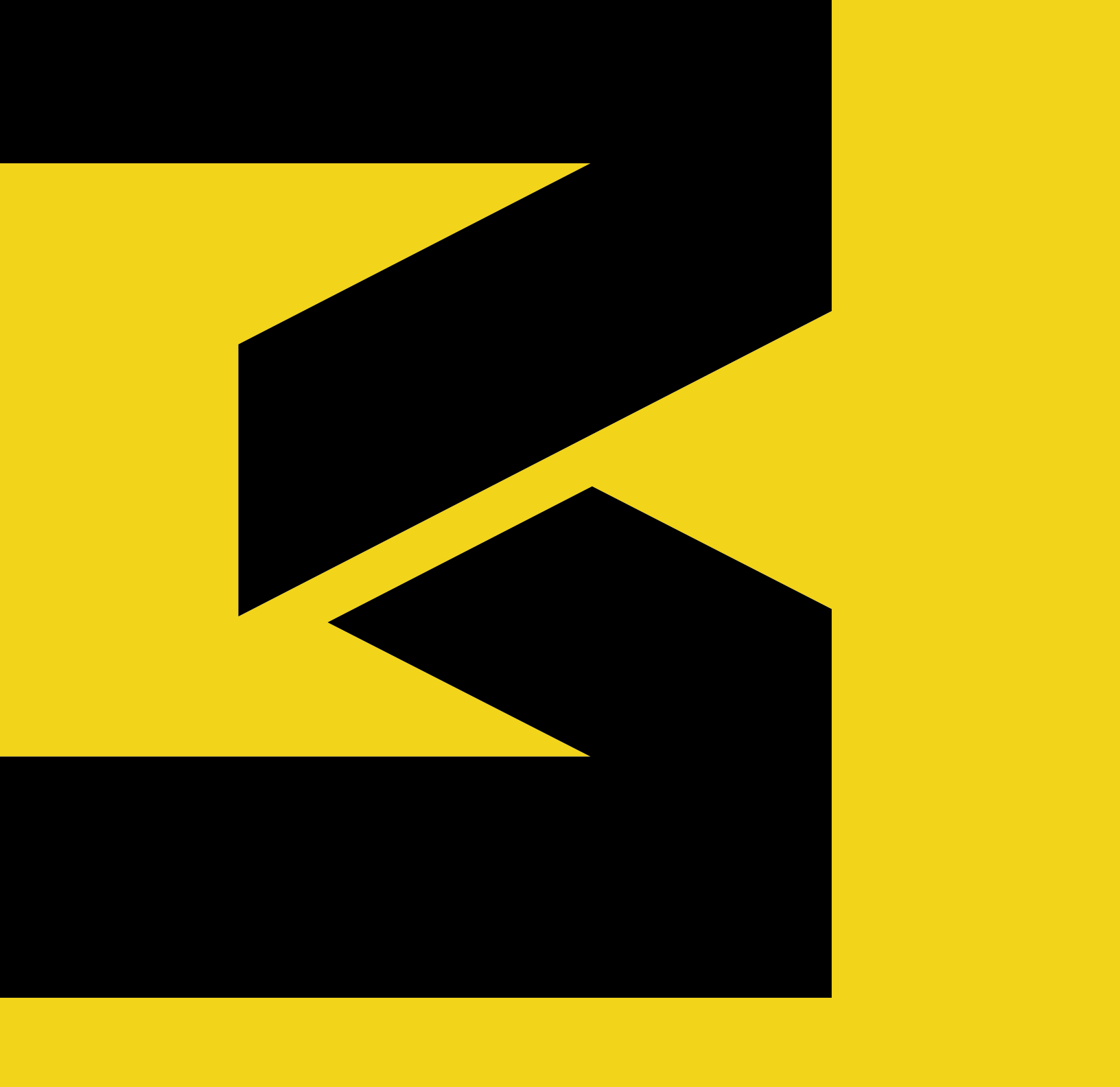
Go Forth and Market

To summarize, businesses without a marketing budget should:

- NOT pay to advertise anywhere (at least to start).
- Invest time and effort into marketing, instead of money.
- Find their audience, then make compelling offers.
- Make a SIMPLE, multi-pronged marketing plan, then stick to it.

If you do that, we know you can succeed at marketing without breaking the bank – because we did.

We'd love to hear how our low-cost marketing strategy helped your business, so don't hesitate to reach out to us via social media or email to tell us about your success! From all of us at Butler Branding, we wish you the best of luck in growing your business – and reaching your audience.



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