

SUCCESSFULLY MARKETING YOUR SCREEN PRINTING BUSINESS

Helpful ideas for.....

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MARKET
DEVELOPING YOUR MESSAGE
ESTABLISHING YOUR STRATEGY
IMPLEMENTING YOUR PLAN

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Every business - including your screen printing business - needs a solid **marketing plan**. A marketing plan allows you to establish your business within your community.

Through marketing, you can:

- **Raise awareness of your business**
- **Educate potential customers about your products**
- **Attract new customers**
- **Retain existing customers**
- **Create and promote your brand image**

Without a marketing strategy in place, your screen printing shop can produce the highest quality, most attractive prints but still fail because those who would seek your services don't know who you are or what you do.

Creating a marketing strategy can seem like a complex undertaking, and it can be. You have to know who your target customers are and what message you want to send them. There are traditional advertising routes and new social media and online advertising strategies.

It does take time and effort to create and implement a successful marketing strategy, but with some careful planning, you can get word out about your screen printing business and attract new customers.

Identifying Your Niche

It's understandable that you'd be hesitant to narrow the focus of your screen printing business. You probably know that you can put nearly any print on practically any substrate, and you wouldn't want to turn away any paying customers. But believe it or not, finding your niche and emphasizing that niche to potential customers can help you grow your business. With a niche, you can market your specialty services directly to the customers who feel your services will meet their needs.

Finding a niche can also seem intimidating, especially if your only goal thus far has been to run a successful screen printing shop. However finding a niche doesn't have to be intimidating or complicated. Your shop might already have a niche. To identify your niche, first think about the type of work you do most; ask yourself questions like :

- **Are you printing with water-based ink?**
- **Do you supply promotional items to local businesses?**
- **Do you fill order upon order of team t-shirts and athletic gear?**

These are all niches that you could put your energy into marketing.

If you don't already have a niche, consider the type of work you enjoy doing, and consider your local market: Where do you see a screen printing need that isn't already being filled by other shops in the area? You can find a great deal of business and a great deal of success by marketing yourself to a segment of the community that has screen printing needs – like local businesses, nonprofits, bands or athletic groups – that no one else is reaching out to.

Similarly, you can find success in doing different types of screen printing or offering special services that other shops in your area aren't, whether that's four-color process printing, printing with specialty inks, focusing on graphic design or providing eco-friendly screen printed goods.

SECTION I

Understanding Your Market & Developing Your Message



You simply cannot market your business effectively without a clearly defined product, market or message – but countless businesses try to do just that. Before you worry about how you’re going to reach your market or spend your marketing dollars, you have to identify:

- **What you’re selling**
- **Who you’re selling it to**
- **What message you’re going to send to appeal to potential customers**

That means the first thing you need to do when you set out to create a marketing plan is pinpoint your **niche**, your **target market** and your **business pitch**.

Understanding Your Target Customer

Once you identify your niche, you'll be able to take the next step in formulating a marketing strategy: understanding your target customer. With a niche in place, you'll be able to identify who your products and services are most likely to attract. For example:

- **If you're focused on printing marketing materials, you're likely to attract local businesses.**
- **Eco-friendly items may attract a younger, more socially-conscious demographic.**
- **If you're focused on athletic apparel, you're likely to attract local teams, clubs and sports shops.**



Understanding Your Target Customer

As you think about who your target customer would be, take note of the following characteristics:

- Age
- Social Habits
- Education Level
- Community involvement
- Shopping tendencies
- Brand loyalties

Go beyond statistics and aim to put together a profile of your typical customer. Be specific enough that you can put yourself in your typical customer's shoes. Think about what that typical customer would be looking to get from doing business with your screen printing shop.

Why is this exercise necessary? Understanding your customer will allow you to further your marketing strategy in two ways:

First, understanding your customer demographic allows you to tailor your message to that demographic. When potential customers see your advertising, you want them to feel like you're speaking directly to their needs.

Second, understanding your customers allows you to target your marketing efforts to media your likely customers come in contact with. If you're marketing to a younger demographic, for example, you don't want to waste your money on print ads they'll never read; you'll want to spend your marketing resources on social media ads and tech tools that will help them to do business with you.

Over time, you'll get a better picture of your typical customer. You'll learn more about their habits as you interact with them in person and through social media. You can also create surveys or provide customers with feedback sheets when they receive their orders to gain a better understanding of your customers.

Creating Your Marketing Pitch

To market your business, you need a message. When someone asks you what you do, you need a better answer than “I’m a screen printer.” You need an appealing message that allows your target customers to see the value in the goods and services you provide. This message goes by many names: An elevator pitch, a value proposition, a differential. Regardless of what you call it, you need to be able to say, in one quick sentence or phrase, what you offer to potential customers. Your simple pitch will help to shape your overall marketing message and, ultimately, your brand identity.

Creating your **marketing pitch** is where your niche and your customer profile really come into play. Both should influence your marketing pitch.

Your niche helps to set you apart from your competition; it creates your differential. It’s what you uniquely can offer to customers.

Your customer profile helps you to determine what you emphasize to your customers.

Would your customers choose you because you offer trendy prints on eco-friendly materials? For your professional-looking logo designs? For your wide range of jersey options? Your pitch should make it very clear what you are offering your clients to meet their screen printing needs.

Having a defined pitch will help you as you market to your customers. It’s what you want your customers to know about you. It doesn’t have to fully explain your business; rather, it should be concise and make potential customers want to know more. Then, as you grow your relationship with your customers through more in-depth marketing materials, such as social media posts, blogs, newsletters or email blasts, you can provide more information about your products and services. Even as you provide more in-depth content, however, you should keep your basic message in mind as a way to consistently promote your brand.

Establishing a Marketing Strategy

Never before have so many marketing opportunities existed. Traditional marketing routes – such as print advertising, mail marketing and networking – remain useful, and the internet opens up a host of new opportunities, from social media marketing to pay per click advertising. Trying to decide where to spend your time and marketing dollars can seem overwhelming. While your target customers will help guide your marketing efforts, your final marketing strategy should incorporate a variety of marketing media.

As you develop your marketing strategy, there are four things to keep in mind:

- **Your objective**
- **Your plan for meeting that objective**
- **Your budget**
- **Your metrics for measuring the effectiveness of your strategy**



You cannot effectively market without knowing the goal of your marketing campaign. Once you know your goal, then you can develop a strategy for meeting that goal. You must also have a marketing budget that includes not only hard costs, like the cost of an ad or a pay per click campaign, but the amount of time you or your employees will spend on the marketing campaign. Finally, you need a way to measure the effectiveness of your marketing strategy. Have metrics in place so you can track the return on investment in your marketing strategy. When it comes to digital marketing, some important items to track include:

Website visits: By carefully monitoring your online traffic, you can get an idea of how effectively your marketing efforts attract visitors to your site.

Conversions: When a visitor takes action on your website, like filling out a form, signing up for your email list or placing an order, they've made a conversion from **visitor** to **lead** or even better, **customer**. Tracking conversions helps you judge your marketing effectiveness and website performance.

Lead-to-customer ratio: Generating leads is a key marketing goal, but turning them into customers is even more important. Tracking how many leads result in sales will help you gauge how well your marketing and sales tactics are working.

II. Establishing a Marketing Strategy

Traditional, non-digital marketing strategies work well when you're focused on a specific group of potential customers, or on customers in a targeted geographical area. Here are some ways you can use traditional marketing to reach a target audience:



- **Advertising in local publications or sending mailers can help you reach the people and businesses within your community.**
- **Advertising in trade publications or in newsletters can allow you to target specific types of customers, like business owners, nonprofit groups or athletic groups.**
- **Advertising in school publications or posting flyers at relevant locations around town can help you reach the coaches, boosters and organizers of local teams, clubs and events.**

With so many cheap and free advertising opportunities available online, many small businesses have been tempted to forego traditional advertising channels, but this can be a major mistake. Incorporating traditional marketing methods into your overall marketing campaign helps to create additional visibility in the community you hope to serve. It also can help to build a more solid reputation for your business by providing something tangible, whereas it can be easy to blend in among the many businesses advertising online.

Employing Traditional Marketing Strategies

Traditional marketing isn't without its pitfalls, however. Traditional marketing can be more expensive than online marketing, and it can be difficult to track the success of your traditional marketing campaigns. Without surveying customers who purchase from you, it's nearly impossible to measure how many sales have resulted from your traditional advertisements.

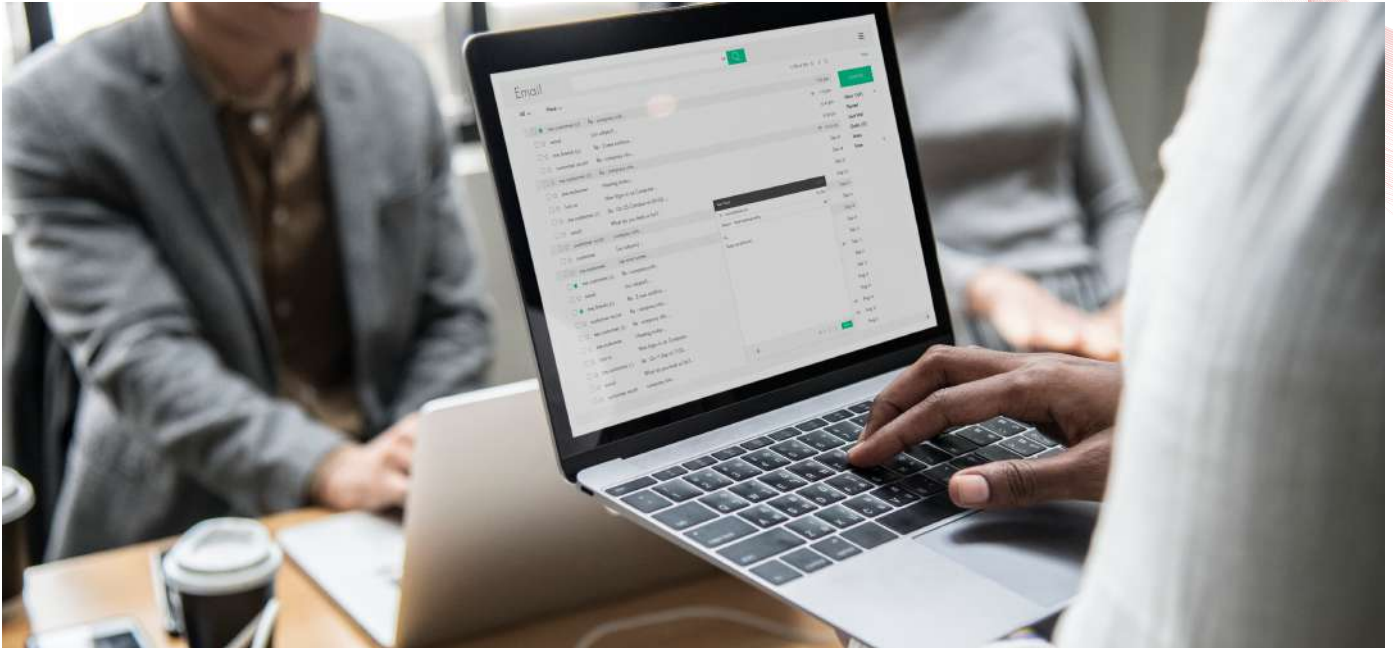
More and more with traditional advertising, there are opportunities for creating campaigns that merge traditional **print ads** and **online ads**. Many print publications, including newspapers, magazines and trade publications, have online editions as well. Often, when you buy a print ad through a publication with an online presence, you can bundle your print ad with online ads on the publication's website.



Marketing Your Business Online

Every business needs a strong web presence. Overwhelmingly, people now turn to the internet to find businesses to meet their needs. That means you need a webpage that's attractive, informative and easy to navigate. If potential customers can't find what they're looking for on your webpage, you're losing business. That's why your webpage should serve as a cornerstone to your overall marketing strategy.

Remember, nearly all of your other marketing materials, from print ads to business cards to social media posts, will refer potential customers to your website.



Content is key when it comes to your webpage; having a website with quality content improves your search engine results and lends credibility. In addition to clear descriptions of your products and services, adding more in-depth content helps build your website and your web presence. Examples of content include:

- Blogs
- eBooks
- FAQs
- Customer Testimonials

Think of the way people search the internet: Often, search requests are input as questions. That means that if a customer searches “How can I get my band image on a t-shirt?”, having a blog titled “Turning your band art into t-shirts” can get your website higher up in their search results.

Another must-have feature is **mobile compatibility**. More than 40 percent of website visits come from mobile devices, so your webpage also needs to be attractive and easy to navigate in mobile form. Additionally, having mobile compatibility helps you

improve your internet search rankings, as Google gives preference to mobile-enabled websites.

Once you have a strong website and you're ready to move on to other types of online advertising, you'll have no shortage of options:

- **Banner ads and social media ads can help promote your business to specific audiences.**
- **Pay per click ads can be effective, but they also can be costly and time consuming to manage effectively.**
- **Especially if you're working with a younger demographic or emphasize the ease of customization, you might even develop a mobile app that allows customers to design and order their apparel.**



One type of online marketing that most small business owners say you shouldn't be without is **email marketing**. Email marketing campaigns allow you to target customers you know have an interest in your products and services because they are usually sent out to people who "opt in." This allows you to send targeted information and promotions to the people who are most likely to do business with you. In fact, email marketing campaigns are so effective, small business owners in one survey listed email marketing as their most valuable online marketing tool and attributed up to 25 percent of their sales to their email marketing campaigns.

Making Connections with Social Media Marketing

In addition to standard online marketing, social media marketing should be a part of any small business's marketing strategy. Social media marketing increases your company's web presence. It can help potential customers find you. Perhaps more importantly, social media marketing gives your company the opportunity to develop your brand and build relationships with your customers.

On social media, you can give your customers a behind-the-scenes look at your company and put a face on your employees. It also provides an opportunity for you to listen to and converse with your customers.

Where you choose to focus your social media efforts will depend on your marketing goals and your customer profiles.



Facebook marketing is pretty standard for businesses; with Facebook holding 40 percent of the social media market, businesses can't afford to be without a Facebook presence.



If your clientele is likely to be younger or interested in the artistry of your work, Instagram can help you create a visual brand story.



If you're marketing to business owners, LinkedIn can help you to build relationships.

So what should you be posting on your social media pages? Steer clear of constant specials and sales; these can come across as desperate and can annoy your followers. Instead, try to post information that will be useful to your customers or help them to get a better sense of your business and your brand. Your social media posts can be a great way to promote your blog posts.

Post pictures and information on your projects, show your printers at work or even highlight your employees on your social media page to help build relationships. While your social media posts should be in line with your overall marketing message and strategy, their purpose is to build a relationship with your customers so that your customers feel good about doing business with you.

Reaching out to Potential Customers

As you work on an overall marketing strategy and incorporate traditional, online and social media marketing, don't forget the basics: You have to put in the leg work to reach out to potential customers. Networking, cold calling, knocking on doors and printing samples can be time consuming, but they're also proven ways to find customers.



Just like your overall marketing strategy, you should reach out to potential customers strategically. Look at your niche and your potential customers, and determine who your likely contacts will be.

Here are some strategies for forming relationships with potential customers:

- Joining your local **chamber of commerce** can put you in touch with many different people and businesses who may be interested in your goods and services.
- If you're printing for a particular sector of businesses or clients, **trade shows** can prove an excellent place to market your business and showcase samples.
- Sponsoring **events** or **local sports** teams can help you create a name and build visibility within your community.

Just like your overall marketing strategy, you should reach out to potential customers strategically. Look at your niche and your potential customers, and determine who your likely contacts will be.

Here are some strategies for forming relationships with potential customers:

Retaining Your Customers

It's far easier to retain your existing customers than to constantly cultivate new customers. Once you do a print job for someone, don't let them walk out the door without making a connection. Here are some ways you can form and maintain healthy relationships with your customers:

- **Have your customers sign up for your physical mailing list or your regular email list.**
- **Invite customers to follow you on social media sites.**
- **Offer specials to your regular customers from time to time, and reach out to them to follow up on their purchases and to see how you can help them with their printing needs in the future.**
- **Remember that word-of-mouth advertising is some of the best marketing; consider setting up a referral program for customers who send business your way.**

Executing Your Marketing Plan

Taking the time to understand your customers and your message and to establish a marketing strategy can be a challenge, but it's an essential part of making your screen printing business a success. Once you have a clear marketing message and a clear marketing strategy, it's time to implement that strategy. You have to put in the work to see return on your marketing investment. And as you go, it's crucial to measure, evaluate and tweak your marketing strategy so that it continues to support the successful growth of your business.

GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

As you explore different ways to market and grow your business, it's important to have equipment that will grow with you. That's why even the smallest Anatol machines are equipped with the tools and technology you'd usually only find on the biggest industrial models.

It's also why we tailor our solutions to fit our individual customers perfectly. We understand that no two businesses have exactly the same goals, so we strive to do better than cookie-cutter, off-the-shelf answers. Curious how Anatol screen printing equipment can help your business? We'd love to have that conversation.