

# **SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING ON A BUDGET**

**MELISSA**

**FORZIAT**

**EVENTS**

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## About the Author

Melissa Forziat is the founder and principal of Melissa Forziat Events, an events and marketing consulting firm out of Seattle, Washington.

A competitive artistic gymnast for 18 years, she faced “retirement” at the age of 22 and did not like it. Finishing her journey as an athlete, Melissa decided to stay involved in sport in another way. This led to roles in planning and operations at the Olympic Winter Games in Torino 2006 and Vancouver 2010, the US Olympic Committee from 2007-2009, the Rugby World Cup in 2011, and the Pan American Games in 2015.

Through this work, Melissa developed a core understanding of how to create and represent a brand. She started coaching her personal contacts to successfully market their businesses using an adapted version of the knowledge she had gained on the world stage. It became clear that small business owners could benefit from learning effective strategies for marketing and brand building.

Melissa Forziat Events was born in 2012 with the vision to support small businesses and nonprofits in managing their marketing and events in a smart, strategic manner. Melissa is driven to help small business owners figure out the big picture of where they are now and where they want to be and then guide them through the action steps of the journey. The most rewarding part of her work is seeing the way her clients’ lives change as successful marketing yields business growth.

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## A Note from Melissa

Operating a small business can be a lonely endeavor. You have an offering that you believe in, you get your business license, you invest in the necessary equipment or training, and you are ready to serve the world. And you wait for the calls to come in.

You create pages on social media and invite your contacts to them. You print business cards. And you wait for the calls to come in.

You start hustling. You put money into AdWords, and you try to figure out what cost you should set per click. And you wait for the calls to come in.

You go to a party or networking event, and you tell everyone about your business. And you wait for the calls to come in. Well, the calls may be coming in, but perhaps not enough of them.

Or maybe you have been in business for years, and suddenly you notice that the marketing tools you were using before are not bringing in as many leads now. It is a new era, and you are losing time and revenue learning how to adapt.

As you try out these new marketing avenues, you begin to feel that “marketing” means wasting your time and money. It starts to sound like a buzz word. One that has no tangible results. People say it takes years to build a solid clientele, but you do not have years to wait.

I am a marketing consultant. I know what you are thinking: “Marketing consultant” is another buzz word for people who charge a lot of money and do not actually help you to bring in new leads.

In fact, my marketing consultancy started out many years ago helping close friends get their businesses off the ground so they could move from a state of struggle to making a sustainable living. I typically work with businesses that range from one to five employees. Often solopreneurs. The majority do not have extra money sitting around to spend on marketing support. Most clients are cautious about cash flow. They are looking for creative solutions to bring in new customers. They are not asking for the world. They just want to have security in their businesses.

I have supported clients in the transition out of a steady job into full-time self-employment. I have acquired up to \$40,000 worth of sponsorships for one event. I have grown email lists by more than 10,000 new contacts. And now I have created this eBook as a resource for people who are looking for good, honest advice on how to market a business without having to invest a lot of money.

**Small Business Marketing on a Budget** distills key lessons of marketing with actionable next steps so that you can apply them to your own business. Different sections will be relevant to different businesses, but the ideas provided here have the capacity to bring in tens of thousands of dollars of income. If you are committed and want extra support, you can also take advantage of the companion workbook and special discounted coaching packages available in this series. I will lead you through exercises, show you sample outreach messages, and provide resources to help you move forward.

To reiterate a boring term and condition, I ask that you not share or distribute the eBook or workbook without my permission. Significant time and effort went in to developing material of great value for you. Sharing it without my knowledge deprives the recipient of the further support I offer. If you know someone who would benefit from this eBook, I encourage you to share the sign up page so they can get their own copy. [melissaforziatevents.com/small-business-marketing-budget-ebook/](http://melissaforziatevents.com/small-business-marketing-budget-ebook/)

My goal is for small business owners to get access to the marketing support they need within a budget they can afford. This eBook has the tools you need to get you started. If you work through the exercises, you will find new ways to grow your business. Thank you for choosing this resource, and Happy Marketing!

Regards,  
Melissa

Cost ranges from \$ to \$\$\$; Time investment ranges from ⌚ to ⌚⌚⌚⌚

**1) Tell your family and friends** Investment: \$; ⌚⌚⌚

This is the first place to start. It may seem obvious, but have you actually gone through the exercise of telling EVERYONE you know? **Just because you are thinking about and working on your business non-stop does not mean the people in your life know about it.**

There are different levels of personal contacts, including:

- **The Inner Circle** – People with whom you communicate regularly and who know a great deal about your day-to-day life.
- **Close Friends and Relatives** – People with whom you communicate frequently and who know a lot of what is going on in your life, but not everything.
- **Acquaintances** – People who you have gotten to know somewhat through infrequent communication.
- **Contacts** – People with whom you communicate occasionally at best.
- **Distant Friends and Relatives** – People with whom you rarely communicate.

The people who are hearing the most from you about your business are likely the people in The Inner Circle. They know the trials and tribulations in depth. Although they are your nearest and dearest contacts, they are not the only people who would care about your business if given the chance.

Most of the people in these various levels are warm leads by the very nature of their relationship with you. They are not all your target market, but you have a free pass to tell them at least once what is going on in your life in a conversation, a holiday card, or wherever you run into them.

This may seem like a daunting task to think of and reach out to everyone you know. However, it is a realistic task if you break it into smaller steps.

**Step 1:** Record your contacts from address books, email address lists, social media follower lists, and other sources relevant to you.

**Step 2:** Plot people into each of the five categories.

**Step 3:** Craft a different message for each category.

**Step 4:** Send the messages to your contacts.

Those who are uninterested may not give you any feedback, but you stand to benefit by learning which of your contacts in different levels are excited about your business, relate to your endeavors, or want to know more.

There will be friends and family who prove to be interested and engaged with your business objectives. Make them a part of it. Give them a free sample or a trial run if you can. Tell them the stories of what drives you. Invite them to take part in what you are doing or spread your message. Give them enough of an inside look that they can become brand ambassadors for you and share their excitement with others.



## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Exercise 1: **Brainstorm Your Contacts** (Workbook Page 7)

Exercise 2: **Classify Your Contacts** (Workbook Page 12)

Resource: **Sample Outreach Emails** (Workbook Page 13)

Resource: **Sample Facebook and Twitter posts** (Workbook Page 16)



I'm telling you, just because someone knows you doesn't mean they know what you do. Even if you think you have told them – even if you are sure you told them all the right details – they are probably distilling it into key words that they can understand and remember. I learned this before I started my business when I worked major international sport events. I did planning and administrative roles for Olympic Winter Games, Rugby World Cup, and other such projects. They were admittedly cool jobs, traveling the world on contract to organize the events. But I was always in for a surprise when a friend from outside of that world would try to introduce me to someone they knew. **Take 1:** 'This is Melissa. She's an Olympic gymnast.' (I wish!) **Take 2:** 'This is Melissa. She works for the IOC' (10 points for using an acronym and for giving me a way more important job than I ever had). **Take 3:** 'This is Melissa. She does Olympic stuff.' (Undeniable and unspecific). **Take 4:** 'This is Melissa. She's on the Canadian Olympic Committee.' (10 points for knowing I was working in Vancouver, but the rest of the statement was false!). There were people who could clearly identify that, 'This is Melissa. She works in Press Operations for the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the Olympic Winter Games.' Those people who could accurately say that entire sentence were few and far between. As close as the others got, they were ultimately giving misinformation. Seriously, be very clear in your message. Word of mouth can skew it sideways quickly."



## 2) Recruit marketing partners Investment: \$,

Forging an alliance with another business that is talking to a different segment of your target market is a cost-effective way to increase your marketing power exponentially. This is a long-term plan that can be invaluable across the life of the relationship.

There are multiple reasons why cross-marketing with another business is a strong option:

- 1) Once you have agreed on the terms, you get exposure to your partner's audience through whatever marketing tool they use to share your message.
- 2) If your partner is reaching the same target market, their leads are already more likely to be interested in your offerings. These are not ice cold leads.
- 3) **Your partner has built trust with their customers, so when they endorse you to their customers it is the equivalent of a testimonial from a trusted source.** The typical conversion rate of a lead that comes from a testimonial is significant – often in the 30 or 40% range. Word-of-mouth marketing is a beautiful thing. It is an efficient tool for quickly converting leads to sales. It also saves you time and money in doing outreach. Business owners dream of the day when word-of-mouth marketing becomes a robust source of new customers. You can start the process for your own business by proactively developing partnerships.
- 4) It can be a boon for your customer retention plan. If one of your partner's customers is already a customer of yours, that customer will get a fresh reminder of your business by hearing about you from a third party. Seeing reminders about your business from another source may be all this customer needs to check in with you again.
- 5) Having a partner who can solve a different pain point for your target market can be a great value add for your customers. If they come to you with a problem and you are able to present a solution in the form of another professional, they will see you as a well-connected resource.

An option like this can be implemented with no outlay of money on your end unless you choose to print up a piece of collateral for your partner to hand out. What you save in money, you may want to spend in time. The more time you spend in researching potential partners and building those relationships, the stronger and more profitable they will be.

This is an advantageous marketing solution to explore in the early days of your business when you may have more time on your hands as you search for new customers. That said, this is also a method you can implement at any time, and you will find that you have more to offer potential partners to sell them on the idea as your business grows.

Here is how you do it:

**Step 1:** Make a list of all of the target markets you are trying to reach.

**Step 2:** Make another list of the other types of businesses that are trying to reach those groups.

**Step 3:** Craft a pitch and reach out to them.

**Step 4:** Those who respond and see the value in the idea you have presented are your cross-marketing partners.

## BUILDING REFERRALS

Once you have found willing partners, go the extra mile. Get to know them personally. Educate yourself about their offerings. Your partners will be encouraged to do the same.

You may even have a conversation about referral bonuses to create incentives within the relationship. You have a few options with this:

- **Pass the value on to the clients.** In this scenario, the customer would drop the name of the referring business when booking, making them eligible for a discount (usually 10-15%) on the offering. This makes the customers happy and establishes goodwill towards both businesses.
- **Create a commission structure for the partners.** In this case, when a customer drops the name of the referring business (“Business A”), the referred business (“Business B”) would give a commission (either a percentage of the sale or a set dollar amount) to Business A. This incentivizes the partners to work hard for each other to earn passive income.
- **Exposure exchange.** This involves both businesses showcasing each other’s marketing messages through social media, newsletters, displaying postcards or rack cards, verbal mention, etc. There is no direct income from this option. The purpose is to advertise each other to provide access to potential new customers.

Developing solid partnerships in a few different industries can result over time in a steady stream of referrals. Build your partnerships, build your business.

## Questions?

Looking for more support with this section? The companion workbook includes:

Exercise 1: **Identify Your Target Markets** (Workbook Page 16)

Exercise 2: **Identify Who Else Your Target Markets Are Talking To** (Workbook Page 24)

Exercise 3: **Build Your List of Contacts** (Workbook Page 25)

Resource: **Sample Outreach Emails** (Workbook Page 28)

Resource: **How to Track Referral Bonuses** (Workbook Page 29)



One time I had someone reach out to me on LinkedIn. He was building a start-up and saw that I had marketing expertise. He asked to sit down to talk about collaborating, and I agreed. A couple weeks later, we met in a coffee shop, and he started to tell me all about his app and how I could sell his app to my clients. An app that had nothing to do with my offerings or how I serve my clients. He offered no referral bonus, no affiliate link. He asked for my advice about how to promote his product. I sat there waiting for the moment when he would finally unveil to me something – anything at all – that made this conversation relevant for me. After 45 minutes to an hour, I finally said, ‘So, what made you think that I would be the right person to sit down with for this conversation?’ Now THERE’s an awkward moment! He had no answer. I was not trying to be rude, but he had completely missed his mark in terms of target market. Plus, he had unintentionally drawn me in with the prospect of a ‘collaboration’ that had turned out not to be collaborative at all. The critical component to being successful in proposing a cross-marketing partnership – or any partnership – is to show how both sides gain value from the win-win relationship. If it is an advice session...ask for advice!”



## IN-PERSON NETWORKING

### 3) Seek well-positioned third-party event booth or sponsorship opportunities Investment: \$\$, ⌚, ⌚

There are events happening all the time. All kinds of events for all kinds of audiences. Organizers could be for-profits, corporations, nonprofits, private groups, trade shows, conventions. They could be B2C, B2B, in-house trainings. **Events are being planned all the time and – in a lot of cases – organizers are looking for creative ways to get sponsors.**

As someone who actively acquires sponsors for event clients, I know the other side of the process, as well. It involves looking for specific companies – just like yours – that reach the same target market. Ideally ones that have great reach and engagement. We are all looking for the same thing!

Of course, the organizers are working hard to source sponsors so they can meet the bottom line for their event. So, just because an organizer approaches you whispering sweet nothings about the exposure and impressions you will get does not mean it is the right opportunity for you. Rather than waiting to see what companies solicit you, why not go on the offensive and aggressively seek the opportunities that are right for your business?

What makes an event the right fit for you? Here are some questions to ask:

- 1) **What is the event's target market?** Who are the organizers trying to reach with their ticket sales? How many people will be in the audience and what demographics do they represent? If you can find clear answers to these questions and the target market is the same as yours, the event has passed the first test.
- 2) **What types of sponsorship opportunities do they have?** This is as simple as asking the organizers for a copy of their sponsorship deck. Existing sponsorship levels should be listed in this document for your review. Collect sponsorship decks of a few events you are considering and compare notes.
- 3) **What types of exposure do you want?** Do you have a somewhat well-known brand and just want to drop your logo in front of everyone as a reminder? Do you want a vendor booth so you can interact with all the guests and add names of warm leads to your email list? Do you need space for experiential marketing? Do you want to add a branded giveaway to a gift bag so it can show up all over town? It is best to have a plan for how to use the exposure to start converting your leads. Then you can seek those sponsorship benefits.
- 4) **Compare your options.** You now know which events are reaching your market, you know what their basic sponsorship levels are, and you know what type of benefits are going to give you exposure that may convert leads. Look for the options that are in your price range and seem to give you the best opportunity. And, by all means, negotiate! Chances are that they would rather close you as a sponsor/vendor than lose you altogether.

Truthfully, event marketing is a more advanced option. It takes time to research and decide what the best options are. It also takes an initial money outlay for the opportunity of getting in front of an existing audience. And very often the best ways to leverage it involve producing some form of collateral, giveaway, or experience that will draw the attention of your customer. When your business is established enough, this can be a fun area to explore and pave the way for new partnerships.

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

- Exercise 1: **Brainstorm the Types of Events Your Target Market Attends** (Workbook Page 31)
- Exercise 2: **How to Determine Which Events You Should Approach** (Workbook Page 32)
- Exercise 3: **Assessing the Types of Benefits That Are Right for Your Business** (Workbook Page 34)
- Resource: **Sample Outreach: How to Make Contact** (Workbook Page 36)
- Exercise 4: **Evaluating Your Options** (Workbook Page 36)



Sometimes sponsorship marketing opportunities are right in front of us for the taking and we are sitting too close to even see them. One day I was talking with a client in the theatre industry in Seattle. The theatre runs one show for which the cast and the audience are encouraged to get high (because you can do that kind of thing in Washington). The client came to me looking for ways to build the audience for that show. And I said, ‘Have you talked to the local pot shops about sponsoring it?’ I mean, if ever there were aligned target markets, this was the time. It was one of those wonderful moments when you can lay a solid gold nugget at a client’s feet – and it’s the simplest possible solution. The show is now sponsored by a local pot shop.”



#### 4) Be on the Lookout for Outside-the-Box Networking

**Opportunities** Investment: \$, 🕒, 🕒, 🕒

By analyzing your target market and your target market’s behavior, you may open up an array of options to network with them that you never considered. This is about thinking through the day-to-day, week-to-week life of a member of your target market.

One client sourced high-end customers for his business through his part-time bartending job at a swanky urban hotel. Interesting example, right? He was being paid to be there. His target market walked straight to him at the end of a long day, had a drink to unwind, and told him what was on their minds. Sometimes he found a person whose pain point he could address with his other line of work. You might not think of a part-time job as a marketing gig. In that case, it was. If you open your eyes to your target market’s everyday behavior, you may see an unusual opportunity where you can be the only resource available in that space.

Again, **this all stems back to knowing exactly who your target market is.** This is an exercise that you have already tackled in sections 2 and 3. If you have defined them clearly, you will have an indication of where they go and what they do all day from your own brainstorming.

Better still, interview some of your clients to find out. Create a questionnaire that probes them to tell you what a typical day looks like. If you offer an incentive for completing the survey, your response rate will improve. Use this information to assess the important questions of where you can find your target market and when they might be receptive to your message.

Once you have a list of options, you can begin to look at them creatively. What opportunities do you have within your schedule and budget to be in those places? It is not about walking into a coffee shop and ambush marketing with a loudspeaker. It is about putting yourself in a space frequently over time and interacting with the people there. If you have done good research, the people you are talking to could become qualified leads as you build rapport with them.

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **How to Conduct a Survey** (Workbook Page 37)

Exercise 1: **What to Ask in a Survey** (Workbook Page 37)

“One of my clients is a photographer. After taking the big leap out of his day job and full time into his business, there was a lot of pressure to expand his client base quickly. We explored some of the more traditional marketing methods and found that sometimes they were resulting in people asking him for free or discounted services in exchange for ‘exposure.’ ‘Exposure’ is a dreaded word translating to: ‘Hey, would you just give us your professional services for free?’ So, in one of my favorite marketing moves, we reversed the process. We came up with a plan for him to give HIMSELF the exposure. Every now and again, he’ll show up to a well-placed event or networking opportunity wearing ALL of his gear. He’ll put his fancy camera bodies in his fancy camera holster and walk around at the event. He does what he does best: takes pictures. Every time, people go up to him and ask him about his services and to see his photos. And he says, ‘You know, I am not actually the hired photographer for this event. I am just shooting these photos for personal use. But, it looks like the event photographer is over there.’ Inevitably, the person he points to is holding less than half the gear. He has made some great connections this way for other events!”



## 5) Show off your branding in public Investment: \$\$; ⌚ OR \$; ⌚ ⌚

There are so many ways to display your branding. This tactic does not have to break the bank.

Think about an item that you would use regularly when you go out in public, such as a piece of clothing, an accessory, a bag, your computer, your personal vehicle. It should be something functional that others would have a chance to see as you are using it. When you dress up this item so it tells your story, you never know what conversations it will start for you.

For this plan to work, it needs to be clear what your branded item is saying. If you have a logo...great! Use it. If you have a business name...great! Use it. If you have a tag line...great! Use it. If your logo or business name or tagline do not tell the full story by themselves, then whatever item you invest in should have space to fit them all. Give interested onlookers enough information to want to look you up later or inquire with you on the spot.

Is this tactic going to have immediate high impact on your sales? Probably not. However, we must remember that marketing is a long-term endeavor. **The “Rule of Seven” tells us that it takes at least seven “touches” with a contact before that contact becomes a qualified lead.** Some statistics show that actually many more points of outreach are required before the contact becomes a qualified lead. In a world where you may need to prime contacts a dozen times before they are receptive to your offer, a tool like a branded item is an easy way to give them exposure to your company.

If you have contacts who are open to being ambassadors for your brand, consider printing a small quantity of your special item. Going back to Section 1, this is a perfect way to activate the people in your Inner Circle or others who demonstrate an enthusiasm for your business.

As long as you have the branding in place already, the time investment is minimal and the cost is dependent on what you want to brand. If you have not created any branding for your business yet, there are options of various price ranges available to you. Check out the workbook for a referral on a Melissa Forziat Events-approved resource.

*Remember:*

*DIY branding usually looks like DIY branding - and that reflects on your business, too. Investing in this area will immediately upgrade your credibility in the eyes of many.*

*Especially if you plan to show off your branding to the masses.*

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **Low- to Mid-Priced Options for Items to Brand** (Workbook Page 38)

Resource: **How to Find Printing Companies That Can Help You Brand an Item** (Workbook Page 39)

Resource: **Melissa Forziat Events-Approved Resources for Creating Your Branding** (Workbook Page 39)



But here's a tip from me to you. If you are going to brand an item, be VERY sure that your branding is both visible and accurate before printing. I have seen some mistakes in my day. **Branded Item Fail #1:** A hooded jacket with the company name written across the back...and covered by the hood. Doh! **Branded Item Fail #2:** A bag with a logo printed on one side, turned so the logo is facing in towards the wearer's body. This happens a lot! Please don't do this with your own item. **Branded Item Fail #3:** Car bumper sticker or decal with small print. I don't want to have to hit your car to be close enough to see your branding! **Branded Item Fail #4:** One time at a running event, the organizers were handing out t-shirts in bulk. They couldn't give them away quickly enough. I took one and immediately realized why. The previous year had been written on the shirt. The mistake was not caught in the proofing process, and they had printed up a couple thousand shirts with the wrong date. Whatever item you choose, make sure you get a mock-up from the printer and check to see it is both functional and correct before printing in mass quantities!"



## 6) Say “thank you” or “hi” to your customers Investment: \$; 🕒

Maintaining the relationship with existing customers is just as important as getting brand new customers. If someone has already bought your product or service, it may seem like you closed them once and now they are yours forever. Unfortunately, your work is not done with this audience.

Most industries are not monopolized by one company. This means that there are other companies competing for “your” customer’s attention. **You want your customer to continue to remember you in a positive way for further purchases or referrals.**

Of course, every industry is different in terms of average frequency of customer visits, shelf-life, and how often your customer may need a product or service like yours again. For example: If you run a spa, your customers may come back to you monthly or weekly. If you sell cars, you might not see a good customer again for another decade or more. However, when the time comes around to make a new purchase, you want to be on your customer’s mind.

Perhaps you are thinking that this principle does not apply in your industry. Perhaps your customers only need to buy your product or service once and then never again. Customer retention plans may feel like a lost cause, in this case. I am here to tell you that they are not. Your customers can refer you to other customers. There is still value in being on their minds.

There are many options for marketing to your existing customers. Most involve giving them something. However, it can be as simple as giving them a thank you message. Wishing them Happy Holidays. Acknowledging birthdays. You can personalize the message for that extra touch. The goal is to send a message that feels to them like goodwill with no agenda.

This does not have to be time consuming or costly. There are systems out there that can automate this process to varying degrees. You can plan out a couple of mass acknowledgement campaigns per year around specific times if that is easier to coordinate.

Of course, if your business attracts high-end customers, you might consider a gift of appropriate value with a message. When prestige is part of a buying decision, the leads need to be met with prestige at all levels of the communication process. In this case, you should plan to hold some budget aside for your customer recognition.

### *Remember:*

*The people who are already in your funnel are just as special as the new people you are trying to attract. Plus the likelihood that they will convert to repeat customers is higher on average than almost any method of converting new contacts into customers.*

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **How to Develop a Communications Calendar Plan** (Workbook Page 40)

Resource: **Calendar and CRM Tools** (Workbook Page 41)



One of my clients at the start of his business was disappointed with a slow holiday season. Getting frustrated by the low volume of calls in December, I encouraged him to spend his 'free' time on something productive for his business. We discussed the potential value of creating an eBook or PDF to visually represent his highlights for the year. He spent some time working on this, all the while wondering whether there would really be any value in this project. When it was ready, he sent out the eBook to all of his clients from throughout the year. No ask. No pitch. Just a Happy Holidays note and a pretty book. In the week between Christmas and New Year's he had a fair number of people respond with simple 'Thank You' and 'Happy Holidays' messages. On the first Monday after New Year's, when people started to get back into the office, he started to get calls to book jobs. One person who had declined him for a job a few weeks earlier contacted him to tell him that the eBook had changed her mind. He was really quite talented and she wanted to work with him. That person has now become a happy customer and is referring him for other jobs. And the best news of all is that – in a time when people can easily unsubscribe from your list – no one wanted to unsubscribe from his well-wishing Happy Holidays email.”



## 7) Build your contact list through targeted searches

Investment: \$; 

In some cases, you can look up specific contacts from your target markets in online searches and build your own list. Although you are building a list of cold leads, those cold leads are in your target market. As such, doing outreach to this list could still yield interest.

I have seen the response rate of outreach to lists generated in this way range from .25-1%. With a response rate like that, you want high-quality contacts or to play the numbers with a large volume of contacts (I am talking about thousands).

You may find that building your own contact list is as easy as finding directories published online and copying and pasting the information. Sometimes it takes a bit of sleuth work to find the best resources for list building. Creating lists manually takes time, though. A lot of time. Be prepared for that!

For those who do not have as much time to spend on this exercise, there is also the option of allowing technology to do the work for you. There are low-priced scraping tools available that can save you weeks of research. A scraping tool is a platform that allows you to extract data from a web site, and this is especially helpful if you are looking at one large directory with a ton of information in it versus a high volume of pages with only one useful contact.

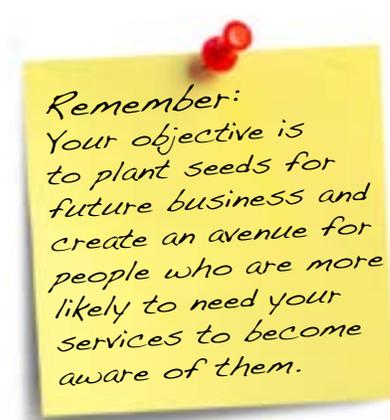
**List building can be a good option at any stage if you have pinpointed your target market and have a clear purpose for outreach. It is also particularly helpful in early stages of business or when the phones have gone quiet....too quiet.**

During slower periods like this, it can be easy to get discouraged or even give up. This technique is one that I would recommend if you are starting to struggle, because it is a productive way to meet those challenges that can benefit you in both the short and long term.

Once you have a solid list of contacts, you can do a simple outreach message to let those contacts know about your business and an offering that would be relevant to them. Ultimately, you are proposing yourself as a solution to a problem that you think they are likely to have. There may be a percentage of people who were realizing in that very moment that they have the problem. Of those who do not immediately need a solution, some will hang on to your message for future reference. You could end up hearing from them months down the line!

Just remember, once you have built the list, it is yours and there is money sitting in it. The bulk of those contacts will remain valid for a while. You may find that you convert new leads every time you do outreach to this list. It is now for you to figure out how frequently and with what messages you are able to do outreach so that you are warming those leads without losing too many of them. If you have the time right now to pursue this avenue, it can pay dividends.

With all this said, I would be remiss not to give you one cautionary note about this tactic. Any time you do outreach to a cold list, you should expect some people who are not happy to hear from you. Give them an option to unsubscribe. Repeat to yourself, 'I will not take this personally.' I am serious about that. If you are inclined to take rejection personally – as most of us are – make these words a mantra for yourself. It will serve you well in many situations.



*Remember:  
Your objective is  
to plant seeds for  
future business and  
create an avenue for  
people who are more  
likely to need your  
services to become  
aware of them.*

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Exercise 1: **The Searches to Run to Build Your List** (Workbook Page 42)

Exercise 2: **How to Build Your List** (Workbook Page 44)

Resource: **What to Do When You Find a High Volume of Contacts on One Page** (Workbook Page 44)

Resource: **Sample Outreach Message** (Workbook Page 44)

“I actually got my first job using a technique like this. I was interested to work for the Torino Olympic Winter Games. I had applied to be a volunteer, but the volunteer department told me that they would not be able to confirm my role until a month before the Games. That was a scary thought for me, as I would have to forego other potential employment in the waiting process. So, I went online, typed '@torino2006.it' and emailed every contact whose name came up in the next 50 pages of search results. I messaged them all with my elevator speech and resume. I got some memorable messages from people who were not in a position to help, such as 'I'm just a lighting guy. How did you hear about me?' However, a number of my emails landed in the hands of the director of the Press Operations department within a week. To make a long story very short, I did get a job in Press Operations. I was aggressive and focused, and I would not have gotten the job without using this strategy. Funnily enough, four years later one of my colleagues at the Vancouver Games told me that he was one of the people who had received an email from me!”



## 8) Blog Investment: \$,

A blog is an advantageous tool for a variety of reasons.

- 1) Blogs allow you to provide context for your offerings. They let you tell all the backstory, give all the insider knowledge, and share all the benefits of your product or service. Through a blog, you can show the personality of your brand and clarify the values of your business. Blogs done well can bring the mission and vision of your company to life. A person who finds out about your company and checks out your blog can immediately start to develop a connection to you and your offerings.
- 2) Blogs are variable in how much time or money you need to spend, and these variables are adjusted by you. You can write your own blogs and spend time on it. You can outsource the writing of the blogs and spend a little money on it (see a great resource for this in the workbook). You can build a DIY blog site fairly easily, which will take you time but hardly any money. If you have more money to spend, consider investing it into professional web design support so your blog functions as a web site with all the benefits of SEO (allowing new clients to be attracted to your material by the keywords you write). Be discerning about what your needs are when you get yourself set up on a blog. Think about what you need now and in the long term. There are options with this kind of tool.
- 3) **Blogs allow you to regularly update your web site with fresh content and also load your pages with relevant keywords in text and tags.** As web crawlers crawl your site, these are things that will be picked up and – over time – will affect your SEO in a positive way. The act of updating content with keywords that your target market is researching makes your page more relevant in an online search.
- 4) Blog posts can be shared to your social media pages and in groups where you are active as part of your long-term marketing strategy. This gives you content to share to your pages, but it also means that people who click on your posts from those social media pages will be directed back to your web site and will count as visitor traffic. Again, this shows search engines that your post is relevant.
- 5) A blog post can be a starting point for discussion on social media and in networking. Your blog is source material, and you should feel comfortable to reference it when it adds to a conversation. It is not about trying to work your link into every chat. It is about using it to make a point or counterpoint in a conversation already happening on this topic.
- 6) Regular blogging also allows you to invite strategic partners to guest blog. Guest blogging is an opportunity for both the page owner and the guest blogger to reach new audiences with relevant material, adding value for everyone. When you backlink to each other's pages it also gets picked up by web crawlers for – you guessed it – SEO.

For those who are unfamiliar with SEO, this is an important topic to grasp if you are planning to do any amount of marketing online. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization, and it is the process of influencing the search engine ranking (the unpaid results, not the paid advertisements) of a web site or page using various techniques. The higher your page ranks on the search results, the more people will happen across it. The more people that happen across it, the more people you have a chance to convert into customers.

Now, you may be thinking, “I don’t have time to write regular blogs. I don’t want to be saddled with having to think of something to write every day, week, or month.”

The truth is, though, so many of us are already spending a ton of time curating content for social media. I see people who post a dozen times a day! This is an amazing pace to sustain. Wouldn't it be worth it to replace a couple of those posts with one post of original content reflecting the ideals of your business?

A blog does not have to be a huge essay. It could be a quick tip, a captioned image, a little story about a customer interaction, a word of the week. You could even do a short opinion piece on someone else's post so that you are adding new material but deriving inspiration from existing content.

If the act of writing words is too daunting, video blogs are an option. You can also tag those with relevant keywords.

Whatever you decide, remember that you are in control of your blog, and you can create a schedule and a content plan that is realistic and beneficial for you.

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **7 Ways to Generate Blog Ideas** (Workbook Page 46)

Resource: **Examples of Different Kinds of Blogs** (Workbook Page 46)

Resource: **Melissa Forziat Events-Approved Contacts to Assist You in Building a Blog** (Workbook Page 47)

“That part about not wanting to be saddled with having to write regular blogs and constantly come up with content? That is pretty much a direct quote from me to my web designer about my own business. When she was creating my site, she asked, ‘Do you want me to build a page for a blog?’ My answer was an emphatic ‘Heck no!’ A few months later, we were talking again and she suggested we have another conversation about the blog because I was already writing a blog directly onto Facebook and not getting any of the benefit of it. Apparently, my little tips of the week were a blog the whole time! Something about the word ‘blog’ felt so final, I guess. She set me straight and created a blog page for me immediately.”



## 9) Reach out to your email list with regular newsletters

Investment: \$; ⌚ ⌚

You have been building your email list. Now what do you do with it? Newsletters are a logical next step.

If you remember from section 5, in the world of marketing there is such a thing as the “Rule of Seven.” When you make an offer in a crowded room, there may be people in that room who are desperately in need of your product or service at that very moment. Those people are the low-hanging fruit who will take advantage of your offer on the spot. But, when we look at the sales process, the vast majority of leads requires more contact from you to build trust.

Typical sales strategy tends to involve making a large number of “touches” with a contact before attempting to close a deal. A touch could be a voicemail, a phone call, an email, a social media post, a paid ad, or any other method that allows the company name to register for a moment with a lead. As time goes on and the lead gets more exposure to the brand, trust starts to build. As trust starts to build, the lead becomes more receptive to an offering from you and will begin to recall your company in association with your product or service.

**The beauty of a newsletter is that you can do regular outreach to your email lists that drops directly into your leads’ inboxes and becomes an instant reminder of your company.**

Like a blog, this does not have to be a time-consuming endeavor. Once you make decisions the first time about how to format your newsletter, you can and should attempt to stay consistent in future newsletters. If you are creating content for other platforms, such as a blog or social media, you can use that in your newsletter as well. Chances are that most people have not seen it yet, or they may even wait until they get your newsletter to read it. Newsletters can be short with a main point or two.

Make an effort to provide value in your newsletters that goes beyond pure sales outreach. If you do not already have a strong relationship with your email list, you will need to create that rapport through your newsletter content. If your readers do not understand your brand and value your product, they will not be interested in receiving product reviews, features, giveaways, or discounts. So, your initial goal is to show them what you are about. Then you can drop offers to monetize this tool.



Newsletter open rates tend to average around 25% depending on the industry, so do not expect that your entire audience will see every newsletter. However, a 25% visibility rate is a much higher percentage than most of the other tools out there. Think about the fact that a post on your business Facebook page could reach 4-6% of the people who have liked your Facebook page! Plus, among the people who did not open your newsletter, you may still have gotten the benefit of having a “touch” with them just by having them see your business name for a moment.

Newsletters are an affordable marketing tool. There are free and low-cost platforms out there (such as Mailchimp – which is free up to 2000 emails – or Constant Contact). The potential value for you in having regular contact with your audience through a platform like this is worth a look.

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **List of Potential Content Ideas for Your Newsletter** (Workbook Page 48)

Resource: **Example Newsletters** (Workbook Page 49)

Resource: **Newsletter Development Contact** (Workbook Page 49)

“If I am being totally honest, one of my favorite parts of a newsletter is all the information you get about your subscribers. In one client’s case, I use it to figure out who the hot leads are. If I just sent out a newsletter talking about tickets or sponsorships for an upcoming event, and I see that there are subscribers who opened the newsletter a large number of times, they are now on the list to get a casual email from me. ‘Hi! I wanted to send a personal message to you to make sure you saw this.’ Of course they saw it. I already know that, and hopefully they don’t realize that my message is both a favor to them and an aggressive tactic to start a conversation about something they appear to be already interested in!”



## 10) Interact with your audience on social media Investment: \$; ⌚ ⌚

OR Investment: \$; ⌚ ⌚ ⌚ OR Investment: \$\$; ⌚ ⌚, OR Investment: \$\$; ⌚

This is an interesting one. Some of you may have groaned and rolled your eyes when you read the words “social media.” Some of you may look at it as the Promised Land. Some of you have tried it and given up. I would like to make special point of what I called this section. “Interact with Your Audience on Social Media.”

Social media is about being social with other people online. People turn to social media to be informed, to be amused, to procrastinate, to get other people’s thoughts about certain topics, to reconnect with friends, to make plans with friends they see frequently. They usually do not go there to shop. Although some of the big players may be trying to change this culture, the culture is not yet changed.

### **Social media is a worthwhile tool if you are patient, willing to converse and build relationships, and prepared for the long game.**

Like a blog, social media allows you to add context and insight to your brand. You can post your own content or share others’ content. Whatever you do, it should all ultimately relate back to the purpose of your page. People who visit your page should be able to get a sense of your tone, mission, and values somewhat quickly as they scroll. They will make quick decisions about whether the message of your page is relevant to them and worth following.

Through social media you can demonstrate the values of your company, the benefits of what you do, and engage with people who may have a common interest. When you get good engagement on your page, it is a clear testimonial for anyone new who visits your page.

Can you do a sales post every now and again? Sure. Should it be more than 10-15% of your posts? Not unless you are sure that your audience is really committed. If they are engaging with your posts, that is a sign that they are committed. If they are not engaging with your posts, they are not going to start engaging when you try to sell them something.

The wonderful thing about social media is that there are many ways to sell without selling. And the very act of writing a post as your business page or engaging with someone as your business page creates those little “touches” that we talked about with the Rule of Seven. Social media allows you to have a high volume of those touches all the time.

Social media takes work, and you will see that there is quite a variation in how I classify the investment of time and money. You can use it for free and spend a lot of time. You can pay for ads and spend less time. Or you can fall somewhere in the middle of those extremes.

Stay tuned for a coming eBook about how to use social media efficiently and effectively for your business. There are tricks of the trade – including best and worst practices – and the more you know, the more success you can have using this marketing tool.

## Questions?

Looking for more support in this section? The companion workbook includes:

Resource: **Relevant Social Media Blogs from Melissa Forziat Events** (Workbook Page 50)

Resource: **Upcoming eBook!** (Workbook Page 50)

There are dozens of ways to creatively work the system with social media. What I personally enjoy most is using it for research. To be truthful, I hold the honor of having been identified as a robot by more than one platform without actually being a robot. LinkedIn may well have changed its search feature limits because of me, because who could possibly do that much research and be a real person? There is a staggering amount of information being held by social media platforms, and there are absolutely ways for us to access it and let it inform us. When it comes time to do market research for your company, remember that social media may hold the answers to your specific questions.”



## Useful Links

Now that you have read the different sections of this eBook, here are some blogs that may be helpful to you in the context of the covered material:

[What is Marketing Strategy?](#)

[Section 1: Word-of-Mouth Marketing](#)

[Section 2: Collaborating with Competitors \(an offbeat approach\)](#)

[Section 3: 'Tis the Season for Sponsorship Marketing](#)

[Section 4: Sales Tips for People Who Don't Like Networking](#)

[Section 5: Using the Recency Illusion in Your Marketing](#)

[Section 6: How the Holidays Can Be Part of Your Customer Retention Plan](#)

[Section 7: The Reality of Converting Your Leads into Sales](#)

[Sections 8 and 9: Keeping Your Marketing Relevant to Your Customer](#)

[And How to Craft a Great 'About' Page](#)

[Section 10: 4 Effective Social Media Principles for Small Business Owners](#)

And if you want to learn more about how to be effective on social media as a small business owner, you should check out my upcoming eBook exclusively on that topic.

## Are you ready to take the next step?

The process does not stop with reading this eBook. For you to monetize any of these options, it takes brainstorming and effort to see how it will apply to your specific business. But you do not have to be alone in the process!

For those of you who are ready to get started but want some support, I encourage you to invest in the companion workbook that goes along with this eBook. For only \$38 the workbook includes exercises, resources, examples, and/or sample outreach messages for each of the sections so that you can start moving forward today.

If you are interested to learn more about what is available in the companion workbook to see if it is a good option for you, here is a quick summary of the contents:

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The material in this workbook provides some of the value of one-on-one coaching for a more affordable price. Plus, for those who invest in the workbook and still need one-on-one support to answer specific questions, I have created a few different discounted packages for time with me to help you along.

I worked hard to provide quality content in this eBook and workbook. I am confident that – if you apply yourself to the exercises and resources – you will see positive results for your business. And if you feel like you got nothing out of it, you can contact me for your money back!

Ready to get started? [Click here!](#)



Thank you for reading! I hope this eBook has given you some ideas of things that you can do right now to help you grow your business and your audience within your budget.

I wish you luck and creativity in discovering all the ways you can apply these lessons to your own business so you can get more customers and make more money starting now!

