

# 100 inspiring ideas to market your business

No matter what your creative field, there are always days when work is quiet. During those slower periods, it's an excellent opportunity to not only catch up on all of your admin; it's also a perfect chance to market your business.

Whether you're just starting out as a freelancer or you've been established for years, marketing plays an essential part for any business. It's how people find out about you, and hire you.

But with so much competition and noise to crawl over, how can you get your business out there and attract new clients? The following essential list should help. It contains 100 inspiring ideas to market your business, so you'll never have any excuse but to make marketing a priority...

1. Get into your local newspaper

Write a press release about anything newsworthy going on in your business. Not sure how to write one? Read these basic PR tips or simply pick up the phone and speak to a journalist to see if they're interested in running something. If they are, they'll probably write the story themselves.

## 2. Create a newsletter

Publish a regular e-newsletter to your existing customer base – if you have their permission to contact them, that is. Tell people about what you're doing and any new products or services you've launched. It'll keep you on their radar and encourage repeat business.

## 3. Write a blog

Blogs are great opportunities to not only extend your digital marketing strategy by creating a whole range of long-tail keywords, SEO-wise. They're also a good chance to show off your expertise while building trust. Keep your blog updated with quality content and both Google and web visitors will love you for it.

## 4. Cold call

Start each day by following up any new leads or making several cold calls. It's always good to keep your marketing on track and investigate new opportunities that might come your way.

## 5. Carry business cards

Don't ever leave home without your business cards. You never know who you might bump in to. Make sure your business cards contain all your relevant information, including your website address and any social media accounts you might have.

## 6. Offer mini versions

Consider creating a 'mini' version of your product or service at a discounted rate. This will entice new or existing customers to part with their cash and might even lead to long-term business relationships.

## 7. Find a niche

Research and discover a niche in the market that could benefit from your product or service, then subsequently target. Find out what's missing and what people really need. Offer solutions to people's problems.

## 8. Talk to your customers

Don't be afraid to chat to existing customers to ask them why they hired you. And take the opportunity to ask them if you could be doing anything more to improve your services to them.

## 9. Use Twitter

Twitter is often referred to as the business-friendly social media platform because it's a great way to start networking online while giving your brand personality. But there's a right and wrong way to go about tweeting, so don't forget some basic Twitter etiquette.

## 10. Get testimonials

Nothing works better for your marketing than having a genuine testimonial from a happy client. If you haven't yet added testimonials to your website or marketing materials, do it now! Just make sure you ask full permission first.

## 11. Make friends with influential bloggers

There's a wealth of new blogs out there, so get researching and find some influential bloggers to make friends with. Get them to write a review about your business, product or service, if you can.

## 12. Advertise on blogs

Investigate online advertising opportunities by researching where your target market likes to go. Are there any blogs that appeal to your customers? Contact the blog owner and sponsor them in exchange for advertising space.

## 13. Write link-bait blogs

Make the most of your own blog by writing posts that naturally encourage people to link to them. The more people who recommend your articles, the more traffic you'll attract to your website.

## 14. Make the most of your email signature

Link everything up by adding links to your website and social media accounts from your own email signature. Even consider adding your main marketing message or company slogan. Remind people why you're so great.

## 15. Sponsor an awards ceremony

Although often an expensive option, sponsoring awards can really get your business out there. Remember, not all awards are expensive. There are always niche award ceremonies that better suit your business and budget.

## 16. Sponsor a competition

There are often media competitions. Consider sponsoring one of them to raise your profile. You'll not only advertise your brand and company name, you'll be putting yourself in front of a much wider market.

## 17. Give something away

Got something you can offer in a competition? Newspapers and magazines will give you free editorial space in exchange for a prize. Just be aware they'll always want minimum prize values.

## 18. Offer discounts for limited periods

Discounts at certain times of the year are always popular. Offer your own products and services at a discounted rate, for example – 'Summer Savings' or 'Winter Deal'. People always like a bargain.

## 19. Create an e-brochure

Hard-copy brochures can be expensive to design and print. Save your money and create a PDF version instead, available to download via

your website. Take the opportunity to really sell yourself and explain to potential customers why they should hire you.

## 20. Traditional mailers

Mail-drop campaigns are simply pushing marketing leaflets through doors or sending out postcards to your existing customer database. They might be old school but they shouldn't be underestimated. They can still work.

## 21. Write a column for your local paper

Get in touch with your local rag to see if they'd benefit from a regular 'ask the expert' column, then provide regular expert features for them to publish. Don't ask, don't get – so pick up the phone today.

## 22. Become an expert spokesperson

Journalists are always after industry experts to add a little something to their news reports. Contact your local TV, radio and newspapers to put yourself forward as a willing expert in your field. Be prepared to be

available for any interviews that might pop up and do some media training so you're ready to go.

## 23. Create a press kit

Pull together some background information about yourself and your business, ready to send out to any journalists. Have a 'press' section on your website where media can easily find out more about you and contact you.

## 24. Add interaction to your website

People want to interact with websites, so create something that will be appealing and helpful to your audience. For example, can you add 'live chat' and be instantly available to answer any questions? There are some fantastic, off-the-shelf solutions you can add quickly and easily.

## 25. Mobile advertising

Why not create a friendly sticker for your car and advertise your business whilst on the move? Don't forget to add your website link and telephone number. To make it more fun, add a special discount code – something people can use when they call you.

## 26. Charity auctions

Consider donating your product or service to a charity auction. A great way to network, meet potential new customers and raise your profile locally.

## 27. Teach your expertise

Organise talks, classes or workshops based on your expertise. Great with social media? You'd be surprised how many people still can't get their heads around Twitter. Teach others and you could find they turn into customers.

## 28. Guest blog

Find those influential blogs or high traffic online communities and offer to contribute and write articles. This will not only tackle SEO; it will help you to reach a bigger audience while adding personality to your brand.

## 29. Blog comment

Don't underestimate the power of commenting on blogs. Do it everywhere you can. Just make sure you write something intelligent and worthwhile. Something that will drive people to your own website.

## 30. Take advantage of forums

No matter what your creative field, there are plenty of forums out there that you could join and start contributing to. Many people use forums to find answers. Be as helpful as possible and you may attract more clients. Just don't forget to make the most of your own forum signature by adding in links to your website and adding in your company's slogan.

## 31. Don't forget your SEO

SEO is all about ensuring people find your website if they're searching for your products and services. Don't hesitate to make this a priority. Either hire an SEO firm to help, or learn about SEO yourself. Moz is an excellent place to start.

## 32. Create a Facebook Page

Facebook is more consumer-focused than Twitter, so only create a page if you think your business suits the medium. Post interesting updates to keep your fans hooked. Don't spam and don't self-broadcast. Apply a little monthly budget to advertise and 'boost' posts to various audiences.

## 33. Hook up your social media accounts

Don't forget to provide links from your website to all your social media accounts and vice versa. Make sure everything hooks up and don't forget to include them in all your marketing materials and literature.

## 34. Get your pricing right

Do some research and call around some competitors to see what they're charging for their products and services. Obviously, pretend to be a customer to cover your tracks. Once you've got a good idea of what the market is priced at, get your own pricing right. Still not sure? Read these tips on how much to charge for your freelance work.

### 35. Send thank you cards

Value your existing customers and send thank you cards whenever you've completed a job. It adds that personal touch.

### 36. Throw in some freebies

Whether you've just delivered some printed brochures or sent over a marketing plan, add in a freebie to make your client happy. One local design firm I know sends sweets with all of its deliveries. A small, but effective idea.

### 37. Reward repeat business

Won more work from an existing client? Reward them with your own loyalty strategy. How you reward them is up to you. Perhaps you could offer a discount. Whatever you choose, encourage loyalty by being loyal in return.

### 38. Add personality to your social media accounts

People don't want to talk to logos, they want to talk to people. Add a photo of a real person to your social media profiles and don't always shout about your own business. Instead, keep it real and don't be afraid to show the 'real you'.

### 39. Add an 'About' page to your website

People want to know who they're dealing with before hiring someone. Make sure your website has a decent 'About' page, describing who you are, your skills and experience and your business values. Remember, your website should build trust and an About page helps do that.

### 40. Invest in credibility

Nothing sells a business more than credibility. To get more for your own company, invest in schemes and accreditations that will demonstrate to potential clients how credible you really are.

## 41. Offer a guarantee

If you think your products and services are worthy of a 100% guarantee or 'your money back', then guarantee them. Offer to refund people if they're not fully satisfied with you. You certainly run the risk of some people abusing this offer, but this may outweigh the benefits of attracting more customers.

## 42. Have excellent customer service

Nothing beats referrals and word-of-mouth recommendations, so keep your existing clients extremely happy by offering superb customer service. Work that extra bit harder and you'll reap the rewards long-term.

## 43. Go to traditional networking events

Not all networking events are stuffy, irrelevant and boring. There are many out there that could really benefit your business. You just need to find the right ones. Go online, ask around and book yourself in to as many networking events as possible. Go armed with business cards, a warm smile and no expectations.

#### 44. Start a campaign to change something

Is something bothering you about your industry? Why not launch a campaign to raise awareness of the issue and fight to change it? You could even offer something from your own business to help resolve it. Create a press release and get local media involved. Fight for what you believe in and you'll really spark people's interest.

#### 45. Give your expertise away

You've been running your own business for some time now and you'll have learnt plenty along the way. You might not know it, but your experience is incredibly valuable to others. Share your trade secrets by publish articles on your own website. Don't be afraid to tell people how you'll help their business. Yes, some might steal your tricks. But most won't have the time and would prefer to call in the experts.

## 46. Enter awards

Put your business forward for awards whenever you can. Winning awards is great free publicity for your business and you can show off your trophies on your own website. It adds further credibility.

## 47. Set up a referral programme

Got lots of suppliers and associates you regularly work with? Set up a referral scheme that thanks them for any referrals they send your way. The reward could be anything from a percentage of the work's value to a £50 shopping voucher.

## 48. Put up your prices

Increasing prices will give a perception that you're a more 'premium' provider. This will help you to win higher value work while putting off those low-end clients that always seem to cause the most hassle.

## 49. Get your answerphone right

Outside office hours, make sure your phone has an answering machine. And, more importantly, make sure your answerphone message really sells yourself. Replace 'we're not here' with something more helpful or interesting, like: 'we're not available but please check out our website'. Encourage the caller to contact you via other means.

## 50. Book a show

Booking stands at relevant shows are an expensive option, without doubt. But if you've got something to sell and you really want to raise your profile, shows can often be one of the best marketing opportunities for your business.

Make sure your stand is beautifully decorated and appealing and have *plenty* of marketing materials, business cards and leaflets ready to hand out. Don't do it on your own either – take a colleague or friend and remember to write down the details of everyone you meet – making sure you chase them up after the show.

## 51. Ignore the competition

Only consider the competition when compiling your own marketing strategy. Don't become obsessed by them and always follow what they're doing. Because what they're doing isn't necessarily right for you. Concentrate on your own business and have confidence in yourself.

## 52. Use Google Local

People still search for products and service providers via Google Local, so make sure your business is listed. It's free and will certainly help with your search engine marketing.

## 53. Join forces with other firms

Hook your business up with someone else to attract more customers. What do I mean by this? Well, if you're a copywriter – why not approach web designers who don't have copywriting skills and offer your services at an outsourced, discounted rate? You'd be surprised how much work you can win this way.

## 54. Get a QR Code

QR codes are the latest marketing gadget that everyone's talking about. QR is short for 'Quick Response' and they are simple bar codes that allow people with smartphones to quickly access a website by scanning them. Get one for your own business and put them on all marketing materials.

## 55. Give and thou shall receive

Make friends with the competition and local suppliers, then recommend them to clients. If you give, you'll quite possibly get something in return. Because what goes around, comes around. And there's always plenty of work to go around.

## 56. Use Facebook advertising

Facebook advertising is actually really good, particularly if you're after targeted demographics. You can select the region, gender, age and even relationship status of people you'd like to target and create a bespoke campaign just for them. What's more, you can measure and evaluate your investment, so you know what does and doesn't work for next time.

## 57. Create videos

Multimedia content is incredibly popular and helps to make your website more engaging. Create 'how to' videos or even show people your team and your workspace. Videos help to build that essential trust. And if people trust you, they'll want to hire you.

## 58. Go green

We're all concerned about the environment these days, so it won't do you – or the environment – any harm to go green. Really go to town on your eco credentials and put an ethical policy in place. Show people that you care about the world by ensuring you have corporate social responsibility.

## 59. Get on Groupon or LivingSocial.com

Deal of the Day websites are becoming increasingly popular. Sites like Groupon and LivingSocial feature discounted gift certificates that are usable at local or national firms. As a registered user, you get sent a whole load of deals relevant to your own local area. From your company's point of view, you can contact these websites to give some

of your own products and services away. They're a really cost-effective way of getting your brand noticed.

## 60. Create an e-zine

Why not start an online magazine or blog about something you're passionate about? Obviously relating to your own business. Sharing commentary, industry news and things that interest you will act as a great online marketing tool as well as showing a different side to your company's personality.

## 61. Launch a free e-book

Good digital marketing is all about creating valuable things that naturally go viral. Get others to shout about your business by creating something that's free and helpful. A free e-book, for example, can do just that. Put together a well-written guide that includes all sorts of tips and tricks. But make sure it's something that's really interesting and shareable.

## 62. Monitor your online reputation

Public relations is about managing and enhancing your reputation. And part of that lies in effectively monitoring what people are saying about you online. Manage your reputation by tracking conversation and responding to anything accordingly.

### 63. Get a new website design

If your website just isn't cutting it anymore, consider having a design overhaul. Although web design isn't the most important aspect of a web build – it often gives the first impression. If people are bouncing straight off your website, it might be that there's something putting them off. Do some research before you take the plunge and create a website that's more appealing to your target audience.

### 64. Look into conferences

There's always something interesting going on. From geeky tech conferences to helpful seminars and talks. Make a point of attending at least one useful event per month and go armed with plenty of business cards.

## 65. Nurture your client relationships

Always prioritise and make your existing clients feel special. Make them feel like they're your most important customer and bend over backwards to keep them happy. Keep the communication channels open and never be afraid to pick up the phone or arrange meetings. Nurture your relationships.

## 66. Get the basics right

When you answer your phone, always say your company name and who's speaking. When you send an email, always make sure your email signature contains your company name and logo. Be polite and friendly at all times because you never know who might be calling. Get these basics right and you'll strengthen your brand and your reputation.

## 67. Name-drop online

When you write a blog or tweet about something, consider dropping a few names to attract their attention. They might return the favour by mentioning you on their own website or Twitter profiles. If writing a

blog, provide a hyperlink back to a popular article online and you could see traffic come back your way. Harvard University did this with my own business, Boomerang – and it drove lots of relevant traffic.

## 68. Create a funny 404 Page

404 Pages are those web pages that tell your web visitors that the 'page they were looking for can not be found'. Make your own 404 Page funny and it could turn viral as people talk about it and share it with their friends.

## 69. Be controversial

Really want to drive people to your website? Be controversial and write about topics that will generate links, discussions and comments. Pick on well-loved brands and people. Nothing encourages interaction than sparking a reaction.

## 70. Contact local universities

If you want to build helpful, local relationships why not contact your local university to offer yourself as a speaker. Universities often have strong links with the business community and you never know who you might impress or meet.

## 71. Start a podcast

Podcasts are in fashion again. And they're not too difficult to get started either. We'd recommend investing in a decent microphone, some headphones and an editing software kit – and then publishing your recordings on things like Soundcloud. Just don't forget to promote them.

## 72. Offer free tools

Is there something you can create and offer for free via your website? For example, are you an SEO firm that can create some free tools for other people to use? Tools can go viral and lead to lots of web traffic, if they're good enough.

## 73. Do something for charity

Get involved with a local charity and raise money for them. Do something unusual that might attract the attention of the local media. Shout about your achievements via your social media accounts and website. People will not only hear about your fantastic efforts and potentially want to hire you – you'll also be giving back to the community.

## 74. Join your local Chamber of Commerce

They might have been around forever but your local Chamber of Commerce can offer some valuable help. Join up so you can network with other local business owners.

## 75. Create a calendar

Design and print a special calendar with your business name and website address on it. Send it out to your existing customers and they'll hopefully display them in their shops or businesses, which makes fantastic free advertising for you.

## 76. Make better use of your business cards

People often overlook business cards and only print their contact details on one side. Make use of any blank space by adding your slogan or more details about your products and services.

## 77. Host monthly webinars

Web-based seminars, if you can host them, are a great way to interact with clients. They can really show off your expertise and turn those who watch them in to paying customers. There are many online services you can use out there, like GoToWebinar.

## 78. Offer package deals

Why not offer two services within one discounted package? For instance, if you're a web developer – you could offer a website that comes with free copywriting. You can hire outsourced support and ensure the package you offer is priced at such a rate that it covers everyone's costs, whilst making a profit.

## 79. Consider Paid Search

Google AdWords is a great tool to use if your website is new and your SEO efforts haven't yet paid off. It's also a great way to ensure your SEO campaign is going along the right path as you can track relevant keywords. But beware, paid search can often be an expensive marketing route. You'll want to focus on 'organic' long-term.

## 80. Use community boards

There are physical community cork boards everywhere – at your local supermarket and pharmacy, even your local library. Put up your own fliers because it's cheap and easy. Just make sure you get permission.

## 81. Send exclusive deals to your customers

Make good use of your customer database and send out regular marketing campaigns, offering some sort of exclusive deal. Make your deals timely by tapping in to different seasons of the year. This will encourage more business from existing clients.

## 82. Use your friends and family

Don't forget to use your own personal contacts to help get your name out there. Give friends and family some of your business cards and ask them to help promote you.

### 83. Do something different

Research your target market and analyse your competition. Is there anything you could be doing differently? Offer something out of the ordinary to make yourself stand out.

### 84. Sponsor a local school sports team

A really easy way to raise your profile is to sponsor a local school sports team. You'll find that every season, the players will need a new football or netball kit. You can have your company name printed on their kits in exchange for buying them for the school. Get in touch with the headteacher to see how you can get involved.

### 85. Give something away

Why not run a unique competition, giving your products and services away to one lucky winner? If you design websites, why not offer a free website? If you create beautiful wedding stationery, offer one lucky couple a free stationery set for their big day. Competitions are viral and always popular. They'll also help to advertise your business.

## 86. Make your business cards stand out

Don't waste a perfect opportunity to make your business memorable! Get a business card design that makes you stand out and keeps you in people's minds.

## 87. Become a walking advert

Get some t-shirts printed with your company logo and web address and wear them whenever you're out and about. If you've got staff, get them to wear branded clothing too.

## 88. Buy marketing lists

There are many services that give you access to lists of potential customers, all ready for you to target with your own campaigns. Although sometimes expensive, these lists can prove invaluable. There's MarketScan as an example but plenty of others are available. Type 'mailing lists' into Google to find something relevant for you.

## 89. Advertise on other people's e-newsletters

Know of a popular e-zine that sends out regular updates to its subscribers? There'll undoubtedly have advertising opportunities, so do some investigation and set up a campaign to take advantage of this targeted marketing.

## 90. Organise your own meet up

If you're struggling to network or meet new people, why not create your own event or meet up? That's what the people at GeekUp did and it worked very well for them.

## 91. Consider video testimonials or interviews

Create your own testimonial videos to put on your website to show off your happy customers. Nothing markets your business or builds credibility more than a satisfied client.

## 92. Make best use of online portfolios

A tip for the more visual creatives amongst you... get your work listed on as many online portfolio sites as possible. Behance and Carbonmade are just a few examples. The more you put yourself out there, the better.

## 93. Get yourself published online

There are so many creative blogs and online magazines with many opportunities to get your work published. Send out the best of your work and include lots of information about yourself. From Creative Boom, Pikaland and It's Nice That to The Creator's Project and many more. Get yourself out there and approach as many online publications as possible.

## 94. Make Twitter lists

Twitter lists are a great way to attract the attention of influential Twitter people who might return the favour and list you. Like all social media, be generous and build useful relationships on Twitter to help get your name in front of the right people.

## 95. Follow up leads

Never forget to follow up with any new people you meet. Develop relationships and keep your company fresh in their minds. Whether you talk to individuals at an event or over the phone, always follow up and try to turn that lead into a sale.

## 96. Pay it forward

The whole 'pay it forward' ethos means you should be willing to giveaway some of your expertise for free as it could lead to paid work in future. For example, if you come across someone who has a problem – resolve it for free. Or when you're at a networking event, introduce people who may be able to do business together. By being selfless and caring, people will remember you for it.

## 97. Build a strong brand

Consider your own branding and reassess it. Is it strong enough? Does it convey the right marketing message? If it's not up to scratch, consider refreshing your whole look and feel. Be bold, stand out and ensure your brand stands for your whole company ethos and values.

## 98. Sell yourself

No matter where you go or who you speak to, sell yourself! You're the main ambassador of your business, so get out there and sell it. Always keep your company values in mind and repeat them whenever you can.

## 99. Create a survey

Use something like SurveyMonkey to create a survey for your customers and encourage participation by giving something away. Once you've collected the results, you can turn your research into a newsworthy press release or you can put the data to good old marketing use and improve your business offering overall.

## 100. Last but not least, listen to your customers

Your customers will give you the most helpful insight into how you can improve your business and win more work. Listen to their feedback and put new systems in place to ensure your company thrives and survives.

Written by: Katy Cowan

Contact For Free Marketing Consultancy & Website Audit: [Landscape Marketing XYZ](#)