

Marketing M.o.T

Mark Goldfinch



Forming the basis of the respected Marketing M.o.T programme, these are the vital 50 questions your business needs to answer to start truly driving your marketing.

50 Questions + You =
Your Marketing Strategy

REFLECT

OWN

PLAN

ACT

LINK

About the Author

Mark started as a language professional and specialised early on in Arabic. After a stint in the British Army Intelligence Corps, he worked for the British Council in Cairo and wrote a history of Egypt called *Steel in the Sand*. He later worked in London for advertising and PR companies such as J.Walter Thompson and Hill & Knowlton. Over the years he has worked as an interpreter, translator, writer, presenter, teacher, videographer and digital marketer. He spent over 4 years in Iraq as a civilian working in strategic communications and afterwards wrote *Life Junctions* to share some of his life experiences.

Back in the United Kingdom, he set up Drive Your Marketing to help individuals and companies get their marketing communications right, and developed the respect OPAL Dashboard. Mark has written two other books to accompany *Marketing Meditations* which are the *Marketing MoT* and the *Marketing Logbook*.

He has a BA in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies and a MA in International Relations and lives in Kent.

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M.o.T

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Other Books by Mark Goldfinch

Marketing Meditations
Marketing Logbook

Life Junctions
Steel in the Sand



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Introduction

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Can you Predict the Future?

Marketing is a term that covers a huge quantity of activities in the digital and real worlds. In essence though, it remains a simple concept. It relates to the markets your business sells into today and - because today will soon be gone - in the future. In my view it is the problem of predicting these future markets together with the right activities to concentrate on that cause the most difficulty for people in business.

So, no, you can't predict the future with total certainty. But the future is not going away and - if we still want to be in business tomorrow - we still have to try to predict it, so my solution is to look at the big picture and break it down. This way busy people can make a series of smaller decisions about the future in a smart, systematic way. Naturally some of these will be 'ideas' decisions, but my aim is always to be practical. So my approach is to offer a series of practical questions for you to answer about your business now, with an eye on the future. These questions - and your responses - are all in context and they accumulate to become transformational strategic decisions.

I call this smart, systematic success.

My background in various communications roles, working in three languages in various countries around the world, means I've done nearly every marketing activity. I have written books, scripts and articles, presented on stage and in board rooms, taught, made videos and podcasts, created websites, done SEO, done research and managed social media accounts. I have worked with amazing people everywhere, been involved with local networking, with individual solopreneurs and with corporate strategic communications at international level. Not everything has worked of course and I have been involved in some sorry failures, but there is much to learn from projects that fail.

My main lesson is that success is strategic, and I want as many people as possible to be as strategic as possible, so you can be as successful as possible.

Who is the Marketing M.o.T for?

I run the Marketing M.o.T as a successful consultancy programme for businesses of all types, from startups through established small businesses to larger enterprises. I devised it to give my clients a 'quick-win' in helping to organise their marketing activities. With so many competing marketing activities, my aims are to reduce confusion and inefficiency and replace them

with clarity and efficiency, with marketing clearly serving the goals of the business.

Naturally I can't see every business personally but, because I want as many businesses as possible to be as clear and efficient as possible, I'm sharing my Marketing M.o.T in this book. It is deliberately quick and designed for people in a hurry. The 50 questions in this programme are intended to be done in five one to two hour sessions, so you can do the whole lot in a day or two.

The Marketing M.o.T is a quick-hit version of my longer Marketing Meditations programme that contains 365 questions, but I recognise not everyone has the level of time or interest to invest in a long programme.

So this book is for you if you want a swift way to review or reconfigure your marketing, or just to check you haven't left anything out, or to reassure you that you can choose to ignore certain things, or just prioritise and do them later.

I would ask you to remember, however, that although this Marketing M.o.T book and programme is short, if you are doing it right and give it serious thought the results will be long-term and will endure through the years ahead. You can always return every year to check the original decisions you made and tweak them in light of different circumstances in the future.

What is an MoT?

Every vehicle in the United Kingdom must pass an annual test of roadworthiness and this test is known by the initials of the Ministry of Transport or MoT. It is a comprehensive check of almost every part of a vehicle, and failure can mean the vehicle is banned from being on the road. It can't get a licence or insurance. While people might grumble about the costs, especially if tyres or parts need to be replaced, the advantages are very clear. The roads are full of safe, clean vehicles.

Nowadays people use 'MoT' to describe many tests away from vehicles such as medical health-checks and technology maintenance.

Why MoT your Marketing?

I think it is useful to view marketing as a series of activities that will take your business on a journey into the future. For this your business needs:

1. A clear destination
2. A roadworthy vehicle
3. A confident driver

So this book concentrates on ensuring your marketing is fit for the journey your business needs to take.

- The first stage encourages you to reflect on your destination. Where is your business going, and how does your marketing support that? These are more high concept questions but still fundamental to your success.
- The other four stages, OPAL or Own-Plan-Act-Link, are rooted in practicality. They begin with an audit of the marketing infrastructure your business currently owns. Is it fit for purpose? Then they move on towards practical steps to help you plan and begin to implement that plan by acting on it. The final stage combines everything you have begun to create in the previous stages and works through how you link your business into the outside world using various different channels and techniques.

Before the end of these five stages you will know that your marketing is roadworthy, and that will also boost your confidence and make you a confident driver for the journey.

What is the Approach?

I created my own organising system called the OPAL Dashboard to help business owners and individuals like you get into the driver's seat with your marketing communications. My system has four stages that I label Own - Plan - Act - Link. Within these stages there are twelve modules that comprehensively cover many marketing activities. It is designed to build from stage to stage to create a fully-comprehensive transparent plan that all parties in your business understand and agree.

I use a content marketing approach aimed at creating a core audience of people who will actively want to hear from you and who will be prepared to buy more of your products and services in the years ahead. It is a long term activity that draws from strategic communications and from content marketing, which the Content Marketing Institute defines as, "... a strategic marketing approach focussed on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action." I strongly believe every business, and every serious person, should own our own marketing infrastructure.

How to Use this Book

I've written the Marketing M.o.T to be a practical book you can use over five short sessions, not a set of theories that sits on the shelf. Start by giving yourself some space for an hour or two to consider seriously the questions in each stage as they relate to your business.

I designed this book as a workbook with plenty of space to write your responses to the questions. If you do so, it means you can set certain benchmarks and starting positions to help your review processes in the months and years to come.

Results

I would like you to use your Marketing M.o.T to make some key decisions about your business and then set out putting them into action to help your business flourish. That way, I believe you will gain three benefits:

1. You are more likely to have a trouble-free journey when you set out with your destination clearly in mind. This means when you have a clear vision and mission for your marketing, you are more likely to achieve your business goals, which usually equate to higher sales.
2. When you have a roadworthy vehicle that has been serviced and maintained, it won't cause you to worry it is burning too much fuel, or running inefficiently. The engine, windscreen wipers, gauges and heater will work. This means you can concentrate on the journey and direct your energy and resources more wisely.
3. People are more likely to want to travel with you if you are a confident driver who is prepared and relaxed about the journey and the vehicle. This means you will stand a better chance of having better dealings with your customers and with your marketing partners. You become more confident and more knowledgeable, less stressed and less intimidated.

Next steps

For more detailed approaches to your marketing you can use one of the consultant-led Marketing M.o.T programmes. Alternatively you can move to the Marketing Meditations programme that gives a more detailed approach over 365 daily questions over five stages, twelve modules and nearly 50 topics.

Good luck on your journey towards smart, systematic success!



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17. If your business takes payments, what hardware, software and payment gateways are used?
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About the Stages

Reflect

The first 10 questions are ten of the most vital question any business must consider when it is setting out to represent itself to the world - especially the smaller specific parts of the world called markets that contain people who might become loyal engaged customers.

Own

This moves to 10 searching questions about your marketing and digital marketing infrastructure. As you fill in your answers, take the opportunity to tackle any gaps in your knowledge of your suppliers and any technical jargon and processes you are unfamiliar with. This will help you gain confidence as you understand the technical jargon and how all the elements fit together.

Plan

This moves from the present to the future, with 10 essential questions to get you planning what future communications your business will commit to. This approach relies on your organisation creating material and content on an ongoing basis, and so planning it requires a disciplined documented approach, goals and reviews. Plan your efficiencies from the outset.

Act

This covers all aspects of what you plan to create for your target customers and what channels you will use to communicate with them. As always, your content creation must serve business goals, so these 10 crucial questions help you plan your content creation and channel selection to ensure your marketing is relevant, as well as being enjoyable to make and receive.

Link

The final 10 questions ask you to decide on how you link your business to the outside world. These cover all aspects of social media, face-to-face and email engagement. As you see these confusing tasks in context and prioritise your approach, you can start looking forward to doing them with confidence.

Conclusion

Well done! Once you have successfully tackled all 50 questions, you will have effectively created an initial strategic marketing plan. This document then becomes both the document of record and the document of intent for marketing your business. You will be free to commission marketing tasks from specialist suppliers from a position of knowledge and clarity of purpose. In short you will be free to Drive Your Marketing.

1. What vision will guide your marketing activities?

While it's crucial to have a vision for your business, we believe you should also have a vision for your marketing in the form of a marketing vision statement. If your marketing is a journey, it needs a destination and this statement expresses your destination. The statement should not be more than a sentence but should be ambitious and aspirational. What marketing activities would you like your business to be doing years from?

2. What route will your marketing journey take?

This relates to your marketing mission statement, which consists of 1-2 sentences and explains what broad range of marketing activities you intend to use to achieve your marketing vision, in support of your business operations. The marketing mission statement should mention what general approach to marketing you will be using, and what people you intend to target.

3. What is your business vision?

If you think having a business vision statement is a woolly waste of time: stop! Think again. A business vision describes in one or two short sentences the future you envisage for your business. Find out if your business already has one. If not, take a few minutes today to consider the future you want for your business. You are allowed to be ambitious as your vision might guide your business activities for years into the future, perhaps even beyond your own retirement. Having a business vision means you are working to a purpose and gives you and your team something beyond the daily, weekly and monthly short-term activities in which it is easy to become submerged.

4. What is your business mission?

If the business vision sets out the desired future state of the company, the company's business mission statement defines its business, its objectives and the way it plans to move towards accomplishing its objectives. This is all in a short statement of 2-3 sentences that you should really be able to remember.

5. What are the values you want your brand to demonstrate?

What are the images that come to your mind most quickly when you consider your brand? It can be quite a revealing exercise to do this. If you shrug or are indifferent, why is your brand not exciting you? Is it time to refresh it... or you? If on the other hand you get warm images, focus on these and write them down to capture the language you use. These might be helpfulness to customers, pride about great products or services; or warm images of family and community connections. Whatever they are write down the images and work out how you can use them to underpin your marketing.

6. What are the elements of your brand story that tell about the people and places your brand is associate with?

There is a reason why your business is located where it is. Of course, it might be because you live there or that's where your customers are. For more established companies, the reasons might be because the founders lived there or the reasons might even be lost in history. The business might have moved location many times, perhaps growing and needing larger premises, or perhaps adopting a virtual presence and moving away from a geographical location. Over the years too, many people will have helped to create your business and they all form part of your brand story. Could you tell people about them, for example about an anniversary of founding or moving?

7. What are the elements of your brand story that explain why you developed your products and services?

There is a reason why your business offers the particular forms of products and services it does. Perhaps it was originally set up to offer exactly these things and the brand has become associated with traditional craftsmanship and skill. For many businesses however, technological change, fashions and market variations mean their original purpose is no longer relevant. In these cases, the brand might have acquired associations of innovation and responsiveness. Creating a timeline of when your business began its products and services and its various experiences can really help explain your business to potential customers and help them understand you better.

8. What does your target customer look like and how does he/she like to be communicated with?

This is a deceptively simple question until you start to focus on it. How much detail do you have on those nice people who buy your products and services? These might be individual consumers in a B2C relationship, but even if you're selling to other businesses the purchasing decisions will be made by individuals or committees of individuals. How clear are you, as an organisation, about who these individuals are and why they are choosing to buy from you? These are important considerations in order to make better relationships with such people and more like them. Ultimately this should grow sales, but it should also ensure you target your marketing resources more efficiently.

9. What goal-setting and performance indicators for marketing does your business use?

When it comes to measuring marketing activities, things can still be somewhat vague. Yes, more can be measured than used to be, but that does not mean the measurements are useful to your business. This is where certain businesses get distracted by 'vanity metrics' such as total traffic to their website or Facebook and Twitter followers. These only become useful when they begin to convert into subscribers or customers, after they have engaged and you can start having a better - measurable - relationship with them. It is far better to try different indicators than not try at all, but it also pays to experiment with different types.

10. What keywords do you, your customers and your associates use about your business and its products and services?

If you take the trouble to discover what words your customers use about your brand, business, products or services - as you should - it makes sense to use them in your marketing activities. You can even use negative perceptions as powerful tools if you can demonstrate what your business does to alleviate such ideas or counter them. There are many good examples of big brands that have tackled negative perceptions, which often turn out to have been erroneous or based on a narrow understanding. The brand can then explain itself better than if it ignored such negatives.

11. Who designed your logo and where are the master files stored?

A logo is simply the design image your business uses, and that represents it in nearly every marketing situation. So your logo is the starting point for most people's relationship with your brand, and ultimately with your business. It makes sense to stand back and assess how it reflects your current business. It might have become traditional and much-loved, and therefore acquired some equity. Mainly however, is it clear in all the formats you need to use it in? Does it work in square and rectangular formats? If there is text, is it clear even when printed badly and shrunk to a small size? Does it match your aspirations for where your company is heading in the future?

12. What colours and fonts does your business use?

It might seem straightforward to say your brand uses certain colours, typefaces and fonts but each has a different technical description. Graphic designers and printers will need to know exactly what the description is. Professional designers will use and supply you with a stylesheet that will list the various colours using their Pantone, hex, RGB, CMYK and other descriptions. Do you have such a sheet and do you know where it is stored? If not, take a few minutes to consider how detailed you can be about your brand colours, fonts and typefaces, and how consistently you are using them.

13. What domains and SSL certificates does your business own?

With this topic it pays to start with a basic check. How familiar are you with domain names? Essentially these are one of the main ways people have navigated around the internet. Another way is to search using a search engine like Google. You can type a domain name directly into the browser bar at the top of your browser window to go to a website. Usually you buy a domain name from a domain registrar like GoDaddy or 123-Reg. SSL certificates are increasingly required to ensure security if you take payments via your website.

14. How is your website hosted and who is responsible for it?

Unfortunately many smaller companies struggle with their hosting and this can be a large reason for confusion, muddle and a lack of control over updating a website. Take some time today to check who your business has contracted to host your website, the fees and renewal dates. If the relationship has got lost, take some time to renew it and also make some clear records. Don't be afraid to change the hosting provider if the relationship has stopped working for you, or your website is too slow or you can get a better deal with another provider.

15. Who built your website and how?

Although it has become easier to create a basic website, most websites are created by professionals outside the main business. This can be a very complicated and fraught process with misunderstandings on both sides. It can take a long time and cost a lot of money. So what happens when the professional 'finishes' the website to the specifications you agreed with him or her? Personally I don't think a website can ever be 'finished' as content will be added constantly. It is good practice to maintain links to the website's designer, and be open and honest about its specifications which will require professionalism on both sides.

16. Does your business have its own email address and mailbox?

I still find it surprising that anyone in business uses a personal email address for their professional and marketing communications. Obviously there might be good reasons for this, and there can also be good stylistic reasons for certain types of business to do so. However on the whole it is better practice to use the domain your business has registered for its website to create its email addresses. Mailboxes often come free with the hosting package you use to host your website and these are straightforward to set up. Is anyone in your business using the 'wrong' email address?

17. If your business takes payments, what hardware, software and payment gateways are used?

When you think about the range of products and services your business offers, which ones do you sell online, or could you? You might sell directly using your own website, or by means of third parties like Etsy, eBay and Amazon. For services there are agency sites like Fiverr. For events there are sites like Eventbrite. Of course you might not sell online at all, but have you ever considered it? If you are using e-commerce, what administrative processes has this helped, for example in customer relations, service and billing?

18. Does your business use dedicated customer relationship management (CRM) software? Who is responsible for it?

With all the expense and efforts you make to gain a lead or a customer, do you then put their basic details in a spreadsheet? This is fine as a minimum: at least you are collecting the information and storing it in an accessible way. Just make sure the fields match what your organisation needs to know about each person, and that everyone in the database will be satisfied that you can produce everything you have on them if they request their records. This helps you comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Better is to use a proper CRM system to help your business keep track of its relationship with its contacts, at whatever state this is from initial contact to long-term customer.

19. How does your business share documents with colleagues, customers and third party suppliers?

This is important for managing your marketing because, when you use a content marketing approach, you will be creating and sharing numerous types of content (such as document files) and multiple versions too. So for a start it is important to have back-ups of your computer files, preferably stored away from the originals and better stored securely outside your office building. This has become easier to do and keep up-to-date since the advent of the cloud. Instead of having mechanical devices like disks, CDs and memory sticks, back-ups can be scheduled directly to areas you rent on the cloud. Cloud-based platforms also make it easier for groups of people to share stored documents, for example in Google Drive, Dropbox, iCloud, Podio and others.

20. How does your business use phones, including landlines Skype and VoIP?

This is an area of marketing that can be overlooked, particularly as making phone calls has become less fashionable in recent years: eclipsed by social media. There are a number of ways to answer this question too. First, what phone numbers does your business publicise? If it's only a mobile number some people might view that as temporary or amateurish. You could get a landline number with your local area code for a few pounds a month, for example as a VoIP number or SkypeIn number and forward the calls. Second what is your response to a call? Is this a chance to add a particular phrase or adopt a particular attitude: to make the caller feel welcomed? Third, what messages do you use in voicemail and switchboards?

21. What tools do you use to develop your leads and customers?

Of course in a small business, this might just be you. However, I would argue that almost everyone in a business has some form of responsibility for marketing, not just those directly tasked with it. After all, everyone will talk about their job to their family and friends. Hopefully this is positive rather than negative but in either case what do they say? Has your business set out its brand values and keywords, and does it adhere to them? Does everyone know your company's brand story... and do they care? Is everyone able to capture up-to-date information on calls and contacts in CRM systems?

22. Do you use customer relationship information to predict behaviour?

You can perhaps call any software you use to manage your relationships with your customers a CRM system, because it is really about the processes not the package. That means you must understand the ways people really behave with your business, the processes, for example how long they take to respond. My advice is to always start from how you and your customers relate to each other in the real world before you overlay a complicated computer system. That is because the computerised system can often start to warp the processes and if you are not clear on the outcomes you want, you will end up with fragmented computerised tasks that might not reflect these outcomes or deliver them.

23. What key performance indicators (KPIs) do you use to benchmark your marketing activities?

The important word in the question is benchmark. This means that you, as a business, must start somewhere, anywhere, to create a starting point. Where there is investment, you might be able to measure a return on it (RoI). If the KPI or goals turn out to be misplaced, no matter: the point is you've started and can continue to refine them in the years ahead. Of course it pays to identify your marketing activities and have KPIs to suit them. For example, sending emails to people who never open them is a waste of everyone's time. You need the right software to track this. However, sending emails to people who open them but never act on them, performing the actions you would like them to perform, is also a waste of everyone's time. So this becomes a process of identification of what is important, and then refinement to improve, either to enhance profitability or increase efficiency and effectiveness.

24. How does your business plan its approach to search engine optimisation (SEO)?

Search engine optimisation (SEO) has changed considerably in recent years and there are many articles on the subject. To try and prevent fraud, and people gaming the system for example, Google has continually changed the algorithms it uses to affect what websites it lists as search results. With so many companies deeming it vital their website figures appear prominently in search results, which is not likely to change in the near future, coupled with constant technological change, the key conclusion for any business is to be flexible and current with SEO techniques and not wedded to any particular model. Using your keywords and rich content, trying to ensure it is of value and interest to visitors, is the most cost-effective ongoing activity. Alongside that read the updates from Yoast and All-in-One-SEO, and ask your professional SEO suppliers for their advice.

25. Does your business have a list of keywords to use across different marketing activities?

When relatives or friends, let alone leads and customers, ask you about your business what do you tell them? What do you say most often? If you have been in business for years you should have rehearsed this very well in different situations. It is good practice to have a short 'headline' of a dozen words, then a longer explanation of, say, 50 words. The words you use in this short opener are truly the powerful ones that form the basis of all your brand values and marketing activities. Take a few minutes today to consider what words you use most often. Have you used keyword tools (eg from Google Adwords) and could you improve any of them?

26. What marketing budget do you have and how do you plan it?

The basic question here asks is this a separate distinct budget, or is it part of your overall running costs? As with so many topics that I cover, this reveals how much planning a business does. A budget shows the business has given consideration to the next financial year. So if a business has a separate budget, I can assume it has thought about - at least - the basic marketing activities it will do through the year. This can also be part of a longer strategic approach. The business is driving its marketing. The opposite is true too, where a business just has ad hoc expenses for printed marketing materials or occasional help, it shows there is probably not a strategy. The business is not driving its marketing.

27. How do you manage marketing resources and allocate responsibilities?

How does your business manage its marketing activities? If it is just you, it pays to have clear sets of tasks and procedures that you do regularly. Others in your business might have skills that could be useful in different marketing activities. Most businesses will also have dealings with marketing suppliers too. These are third parties with whom you contract to provide specialist marketing services such as SEO, copywriting and editing, social media communications and website maintenance. How do you manage the coordination and what happens if the relationship starts to go wrong? What about the problems of mission creep? Here it pays to adopt some procedures for resources and people as early as possible. It might avoid headaches later.

28. What does your content creation calendar look like?

A content creation calendar is one of the most important documents in your business, because it should govern time management, resource management and customer development for at least one year ahead, in detail. This is not a question about how pretty or complicated your Editorial Calendar might be. It is about whether you use Excel, Google Docs or another spreadsheet type, and how logically you set out the information. Are you trying to load too much information into a document? If so do you need to break the document or spreadsheet into multiple pages or worksheets? Finally, should you print and display parts of your calendar?

29. What is your editorial mission statement?

You have a business mission, a marketing mission and, if your business is creating content regularly, you should have an editorial mission. This describes what content you create, why and for whom. No matter whether you're creating articles, blogs, tweets or videos, everyone engaged in the act of creation for your business should buy into the editorial mission so they don't drift off into creating content that is 'nice to have', irrelevant or unbranded and therefore less useful for your overall business objectives.

30. What timescales is your business working to for its marketing activities?

If you're planning a week or a month in advance, that's ok, but you're missing a trick. Real ambition can be accomplished if you begin using your Editorial Calendar to plan material for potential customers a year or more in advance. For example if you know ultimately you want to create a video but don't currently have the budget for it, start developing content that might form the script or storyboard through the year so that, by the time you film, you are certain about the purpose and the audience you want, and have had time to budget properly.

31. What material does your business produce to attract attention?

If you are trying to attract attention, much of what you provide will be free. So you should be very clear about what role it plays in supporting your business, sales and marketing. Free content is a cost to your business in the time, resources and money you spend to create it. Every blog, upload, update, post or tweet falls into this category. Do you actually know exactly why you are providing free content? Perhaps you began because you knew how, or because you planned to do something else and didn't quite finish it, so ended up providing the free content because it was 'easier'. Easier does not mean better or more useful. Take a few minutes today to consider what you're doing and how you can target it better to attract the right people who you might convert.

32. What material does your business produce to help increase your lead database?

This question certainly goes to the heart of the purpose of content marketing. Content should always support your business at some level, and few things are more important than lead generation. This type of content should demonstrate the benefits to potential customers of the product or service you are offering them. To these benefits you can add elements that strengthen your own credibility and reassure people that other customers have already benefitted from the benefits you are highlighting. Depending on the product or service, this might be customer testimonials, ratings, videos or blogs. Think about what a potential customer sees or reads when they visit your website or talk to you or otherwise touch your business, and how they experience it.

33. What material does your business produce to encourage people to buy from you?

Naturally your business invoices for its products and services, or it wouldn't actually be a business! This question relates to whether your business should also start charging for certain content products or services which you are currently offering for free. For example it might be that everything on your website is freely available and you're happy with that. Take a bit of time to assess what you're offering and what you could 'gate'. Some newspapers have now gated all their content behind paywalls that readers must pay to access. See if you can repurpose your older material out of the archive and repackage it as a paid-for ebook. Demonstrate that you have certain content you are so proud of that you're not offering it for free but offer at low affordable prices.

34. What material does your business produce for your everyday business services and products?

As you're in business you should understand the business model your business uses, and what are its standard everyday products or services, your bread and butter. Once you have identified these, consider what specific content your business uses to market them, as opposed to marketing the overall business brand and attracting custom. Do your sales staff (or you) have material to take out that references specific products and services? Is it clear how these fit into the overall business and where else buyers can go after they purchase their first. Is all this clear on the website too and in the scripts you and your colleagues use?

35. What material does your business produce for your premium business services and products?

In addition to your main everyday products and services, your business might offer a range of premium refined products or services at higher price points. Take a few minutes to consider whether you are offering such products and then what material your business has created to support them. This material should match the quality and aspiration of the products you have. Importantly, the material should also aim to move customers up from your range of everyday products and show the benefits of doing so. It should provide a clear path towards making the decision to trade upwards. All of these points should be as clear on the website as they are in printed material and in the words you and your colleagues use.

36. What is the content composition of your website?

When was the last time you read your website? You might think your brand and your business are stable and your website represents both to visitors. It's surprising how often businesses innovate with their products and services; how often personnel change and how changing markets might affect the positioning of your brand. If you haven't reviewed your own website recently, take a look now and review it. Make some notes and also ask your colleagues, and perhaps some people outside your business too. Be honest with yourself about whether your website truly represents what your business currently does and where it is going in the future.

37. How do people navigate through your website along defined paths?

If your website looks pretty but does not encourage visitors to move towards certain actions that could help your business, you are missing a trick. Here the secret is to work out what actions you would like visitors to do and then construct pathways through your website that help guide people towards them. Some people find the idea of this rather manipulative but - on the contrary - if you really believe what your business offers is of value to people you should use every means to move them towards that value: gaining it; buying it; at least understanding it. Naturally you can use your creativity to make the pathways through the website more 'scenic' in that they are useful, interesting and engaging for the visitor.

38. How does your business use audio, such as voicemail, podcasts and webinars?

One reason for the success of podcasts and webinars, despite the complexity and commitment of recording them for many businesses, is the intimacy with which the listener experiences the show. In this respect, these shows are similar to radio programmes. Listeners experience shows quite often by themselves through headphones, commuting to work, or in the gym. It is a passive learning activity that has large rewards for those who get the chemistry right. It is worth considering whether your target customers might also be a target audience for a podcast series. If so, you could start planning to develop one.... but it is not a short-term undertaking.

39. How does your business use video?

Although you can do instant videos with your phone, creating a longer video is not something to be considered lightly. What would you like to portray and say? Who would do it and how will the finished video look? How does it fit in with your other marketing activities? Perhaps most importantly of all: how will you budget for it? Planning your marketing activities has many advantages, and one is you can start being more ambitious about the activities you undertake. In this way you can start a year before, create your preparatory work over the year, allocate resources and know that you will have your video at the end of the year. Of course, if you want to experiment, you can use phones and tablets to film events to go on social media and less formal blog posts on your website.

40. What offline channels does your business use (eg print advertising)?

Concentrating on digital channels makes sense because they are relatively cheap to experiment, amend and upload and distribute. In contrast, traditional print channels are more expensive and less flexible. However there are interesting ways to use print channels that might be useful to your business in conveying your message to different types of potential customer. These include putting your message out in newspapers and magazines as advertisements. These days technology also helps you create your own magazines (or ezines) or publish books (or ebooks).

41. Does your business use email marketing? Who is responsible for it?

How do you feel when you receive a marketing email from a business? If your heart sinks then they're doing it wrong. When was the last time you had a mass unsubscribe from the emails you receive? Now think of anyone to whom your business sends marketing emails. Do you get positive responses, engagement and feedback or is there a deafening silence? What open and response rates do you get? Importantly is there a dedicated team or individual who sends the marketing emails to ensure continuity and consistency? If not, how will your organisation tackle these questions?

42. What email marketing systems and processes do you have in place?

This question relates to the software package your business uses to send marketing emails. Are you familiar with it and do you have processes to help you review and update it. Can you log in to it to check what's going on in terms of statistics and past performance? If you cannot, ask yourself why not and whether you should remedy the situation. You might be leaving yourself vulnerable if you delegate the creation of these emails to other colleagues or outsourced partners. That can be because you don't get a 'feel' for what works and what doesn't, and so you can't drive the business to improve.

43. How do you target and segment your recipients?

Although the names and details are in a list (either as a spreadsheet, database or 'proper' CRM), these still represent people at different stages of engagement with your business. Your marketing database should reflect these differences. Spend a few minutes considering how your business segments your contacts. How you do this should reflect your business. So you might segment by customer type, or by the extent of their interaction with your business. A useful aim is to segment in order to move contacts on a journey that - over time - increases their relationship with your business.

44. What social media channels does your business use? Are they all appropriate?

There has been consolidation in social media around the established big names like Facebook and Twitter. However, other huge social media channels exist and your business can choose where to go. Of course, this will depend on where you assess that your target customers are. It also depends on your business type and its social media strategy. If you have content that can be photographed, Instagram and Pinterest might be suitable. For text-based content, that depends on whether you use long-form content that can go towards Medium and Tumblr, or short-form content that is better for SnapChat. Take some time to consider your social media strategy and whether it matches the current social media landscape - and where your target customers now are.

45. What digital advertising does your business use?

Digital advertising costs money but the benefits from getting it right can be lucrative. The first key factor in success is that you understand - as a business - exactly who you want to target. That way the advertisements you are paying for stand a better chance of being read by people who are actually interested in what you are offering. Facebook has unrivalled demographic information to help you refine your targetting. Second, choose your channel and your content. Different content targetted at different audiences might work better at sponsored Tweets or LinkedIn updates, as well as Google Ads.

46. Does your business use any social media automation tools?

I don't recommend automating everything on your social media channels. That is the route to staleness and dullness. Automation is very useful when you are clear what you have created and simply need help to ensure it appears in public at the right time. Nobody realistically can sit on social media all day simply to post at regular intervals and engage with responses. HootSuite is a good example of software that enables you to schedule regular posts at the same time every day. This means you can allocate a block of time, say half a day, each week to create and schedule all the regular updates. Then for the rest of the week - if you've done it right - you can enjoy engaging with responses for short periods each day. Automation and prior scheduling are, or course, also very useful when you need to organise a holiday for a week or two.

47. Does anyone from your business attend events or staff stands at stalls?

Even with all the digital sophistication of websites, videos and social media channels, face-to-face engagement should remain one of your company's main marketing activities. This is true for engagement with customers (B2C), but arguably even more so when selling to other businesses (B2B). Does your business have a policy for networking in its strategic marketing plan? Has anyone done an assessment of who does what where and when? It might be that nobody is doing anything, or the opposite might be true that your staff are duplicating their efforts needlessly. If you're not doing any business networking, it makes sense to start, no matter what stage of the business cycle you're at.

48. Are you a member of a business networking organisation?

Networking groups abound in most areas and come in a variety of formats. So it is worth taking some time to work out what groups meet in your area and who attends. You should also be very clear about your objectives for networking so you can decide what is the best fit. Many groups work best for medium-term and long-term building of business relationships. This way your business can build up its social collateral in terms of credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity. This is a slow process that can take months or years to achieve. This activity will help generate leads, reputation and business but the process will take more than a handful of visits and should be considered a long-term commitment.

49. Do you have a formal influencer strategy?

No matter how large your business and how senior you are, there is generally always someone better connected and with a better media or social media profile. So much the better if that person is in the same industry and likes what you and your business does. You can work with them to help them spread the word about you. They might be a blogger or a Twitter specialist, with large audiences. You can also seek out people with a good reputation or profile beyond your own industry, as advertisers have been doing for decades with endorsements by sports professionals and actors. Your strategy for approaching and working with such people must include the value they receive from being associated with you, which may or may not be financial.

50. Do you speak at industry events or in front of potential customers?

How much thought have you given to becoming a respected authority in your area or your industry? This might seem unattainable from your present circumstances, but if you decide you want to do this, be ambitious and then start planning accordingly. Take some time to consider where you are now and where you would like to be in a year or two. What assets would you need to create to support your authority. These might include longer articles or videos. What will you speak about? Plan to write articles and establish clear coherent profiles on your website and social media channels. Who would you need to reach out to in your area or industry who could help you, and how would you do that? Start with the ambition and then plan to achieve it.

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