

50
Vital Questions

Personal Marketing Workbook for Career Boosters and Switchers

Mark Goldfinch



Based on the respected
Marketing M.o.T programme,
these are the vital 50
questions you need to answer
to start truly driving your
professional 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 respected OPAL Dashboard. Mark has written two other books to accompany the *Personal Marketing Workbooks* which are *Marketing Meditations* and the *Marketing MoT*.

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

Other Books by Mark Goldfinch

Marketing Meditations

Marketing Logbook

Personal Marketing Workbook for Freelancers

Life Junctions

Steel in the Sand

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Introduction

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 professional self 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 uncertainty and difficulty for people looking to boost or switch their careers.

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 making professional progress tomorrow and throughout our lives - 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 professional persona now, with an eye on the future. These questions - and your responses - are all in context and they accumulate to become transformational strategic decisions.

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 certainly switched jobs and careers, surviving changes in regimes and technology alike. I've 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. 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. This approach gives you some control. It is not a guaranteed insurance policy, but it can help you with smart, systematic success in your career.

Who is the Personal Marketing Programme for?

I run the Personal Marketing Programme as a successful consultancy programme for all types of professionals, from students to mid-career professionals and retirees. I devised it to give my clients a 'quick-win' in helping to organise their marketing activities. With so many competing marketing

Marketing M.o.T

activities, my aims are to reduce confusion and inefficiency and replace them with clarity and efficiency, with marketing clearly serving your personal and professional goals.

Naturally I can't see everyone personally but, because I want as many people as possible to be as clear and efficient as possible, I'm sharing my Personal Marketing Programme in this workbook. 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 Personal Marketing Programme 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 Personal Marketing Programme workbook 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.

Think of it as 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 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 professional self on a journey into the future. For this journey you need:

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 you need to take through your professional career.

- The first stage encourages you to reflect on your destination. Where are you 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 you 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 yourself 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 professionals 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 support you, refer you, hire you or buy from you 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 serious person, as well as every business, should own our own marketing infrastructure.

How to Use this Book

I've written the Personal Marketing Programme 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. As you do so, 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 Personal Marketing Programme to make some key decisions about your professional self and then set about putting them into action to help your career 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 personal and professional goals, which might mean more money.
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 family, friends and colleagues. You become more confident and more knowledgeable, less stressed and less intimidated.

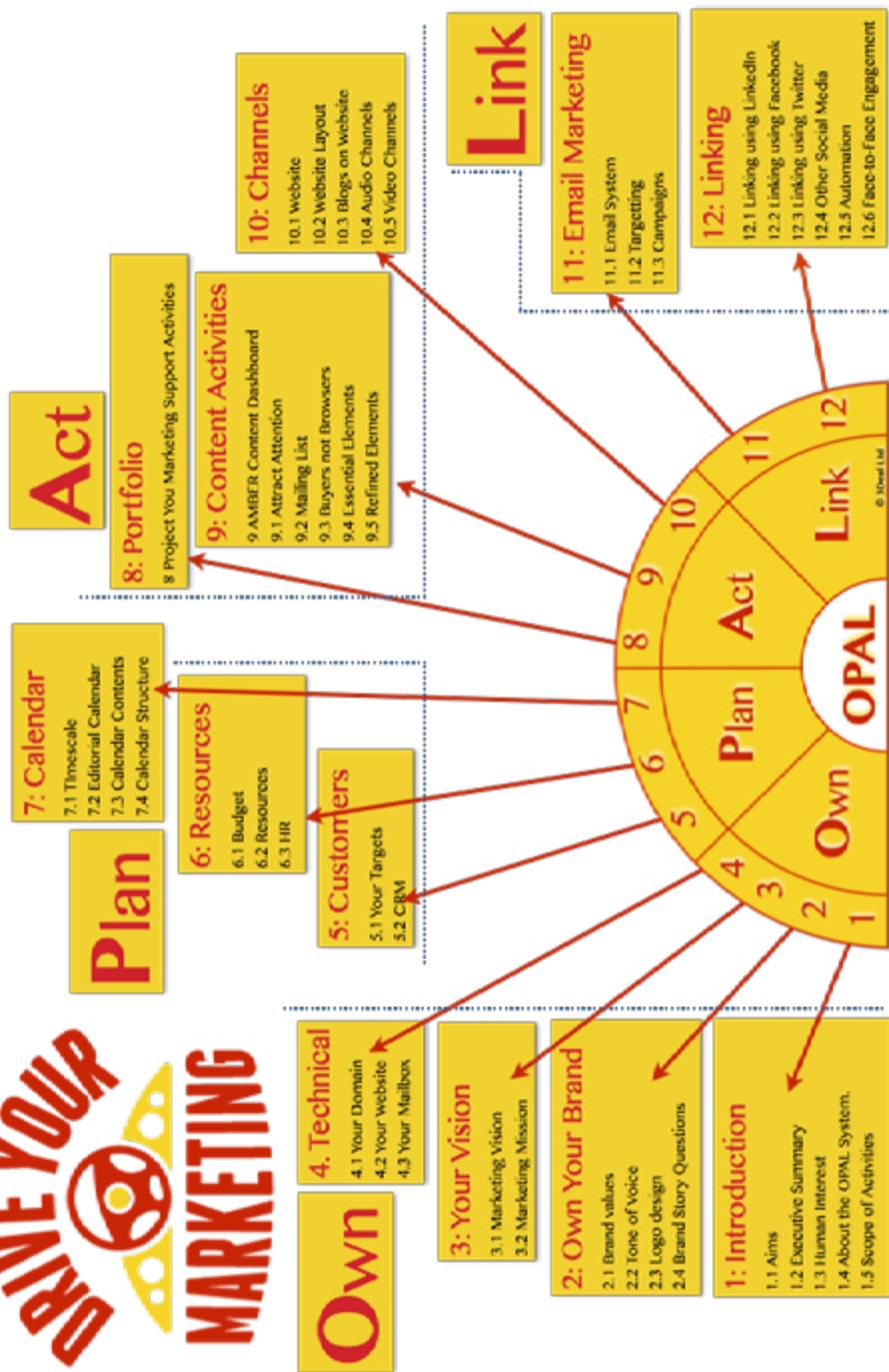
Next steps

Visit my websites for more free details and resources, such as the consultant-led Personal Marketing 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!



DRIVE YOUR MARKETING



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About the Stages

Reflect

The first 10 questions are ten of the most vital question any of us must consider when we are setting out to represent ourselves to the world - especially the smaller specific parts of the world called markets that contain people whom we might wish to attract to become long-term supporters, readers or viewers.

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 you will commit to. This approach relies on you 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 supporters and what channels you will use to communicate with them. As always, your content creation must serve professional 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 yourself 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 yourself. 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.

Stage 1 - Reflect

1. What vision will guide your marketing activities?

While it's crucial to have a vision for your career, 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 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 career activities. The marketing mission statement should mention what general approach to marketing you will be using, and what people you intend to target as allies and supporters.

3. What is your career vision?

If you think having a career vision statement is a woolly waste of time: stop! Think again. A career vision describes in one or two short sentences the future you envisage for your professional self. So take a few minutes today to consider the future you want for your career. You are allowed to be ambitious as your vision might guide your career activities for years into the future, perhaps even beyond your own retirement. Having a career vision means you are working to a purpose and gives you something beyond the daily, weekly and monthly short-term activities in which it is easy to become submerged.

4. What is your career mission?

If your career vision sets out the desired future state of your life, your career mission statement defines your chosen professional areas, your objectives and the way you plan to move towards accomplishing your objectives. This is all in a short statement of 2-3 sentences that you should really be able to remember. You might even frame it and hang it on the wall so you can remind yourself of it every day.

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

The combination of our life and personality can be viewed as our personal 'brand'. What are the images that come to your mind most quickly when you consider your personal '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 colleagues and society, 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 you are associated with?

There is a reason why you are located where you are. Of course, it might be because you have always lived there, or your family is there or that's where your current job is. If you have been rooted for a while, the reasons might even be lost in history. Alternatively you might have moved frequently and not put down roots at all... yet. There are stories associated with all of these aspects, which can be useful to explain and entertain. Over the years too, many people will have helped you in your life and career and they all form part of your brand story. Could you tell people about them, for example about an anniversary of founding or moving, or about a particular individual?

7. What are the elements of your brand story that explain why you developed your mix of professional skills?

There is a reason why you offer the particular mix of professional skills that you do. Perhaps you originally set out to learn exactly these things and your brand has become associated with traditional craftsmanship, professionalism and skill. For many people however, technological change, fashions and market variations mean their original purpose is no longer relevant. In these cases, if you have had to reinvent yourself, your brand might have acquired associations of innovation and responsiveness. It can be useful to create a timeline of when you began to learn and implement your career skills, and when you had certain formative experiences. These can really help explain your professional life to potential supporters and help them understand you better.

8. Who are your audience and how do they like to be communicated with?

My approach encourages you to develop through the course of your career your own audience of listeners, viewers, readers or plain professional peers and colleagues, which is a long-term strategy. It should not be a cynical exercise, but it should be a deliberate and considered process. Your audience does not have to be huge, but it should be people you can maintain cordial relations with for years to come. Again, I stress this should ideally be about mutual support and value over the long-term, not about exploitation or long-term gain that benefits one person but not the other. Take some time to consider what value you can offer via whatever channels you select (face-to-face, blog, video, podcast, social media), based on the mix you identified from your brand story and professional skills. Having an audience that engages with you will help you achieve greater independence in your professional life.

9. How will you measure how your marketing is working?

If you are taking the time and trouble to take a serious approach to your personal marketing, it makes sense to take note of what works and what doesn't. This is purely to help you experiment and learn, and most definitely is about the quality of the results not the quantity. It is not about the numbers! For example, don't worry about 'vanity metrics' such as total traffic to your website or your total Facebook and Twitter followers. These only become useful if they begin to convert into subscribers or active supporters so they become people you actually know. Check to see where they are in the world (for example using Google Analytics). After they have engaged you can start having a better 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 and not check statistics too seriously.

10. What keywords do you, your audience and your associates use about your professional and personal life?

If you take the trouble to discover what words your audience, colleagues and associates, even friends and family, use about your brand and professional skills - 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 you are doing 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. Should you have a logo?

A logo is simply a design image a business uses that represents it in nearly every marketing situation. For a private individual to have a logo is a bit strange, and heraldic devices have fallen out of fashion! However having an element of design associated with you can be very useful. Is there something based on your name or family, hobby or favourite items that you might turn into a standard image? If you then standardise that design across email signatures, business cards, websites and so on it can become the starting point for most people's relationship with your 'brand', and ultimately with you. Whatever you choose, ensure it is clear in all the formats you use it in, and be consistent. 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 career is heading in the future?

12. What colours and fonts does your business use?

As with a logo, the ideal here is to be consistent so that your audience, colleagues and associates recognise that certain colours and typefaces reflect you. What would you choose? 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 you 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. Of course we know an easy 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. Even as they seem to become less important, I believe it is still useful to own your own domain, starting with your own name.

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

Once you have a domain, you can buy hosting for it and set up a website. It doesn't have to be expensive and can be nearly free. Unfortunately many people struggle to understand their hosting and this can be a large reason for confusion, muddle and a lack of control over creating and updating a website. If you don't have a website, it is straightforward to buy from the company you bought your domain name from (but you can switch). If you do, take some time today to check who you have 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?

Having a website remains the single most effective way to differentiate yourself from other people, most of whom don't have one. You own it forever, and you control it, and what you put on it. Although it has become easier to create a basic website, many are still created by professionals and the costs of this can vary. 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. You can of course begin with a free 'site-builder' website from your hosting provider and set your own up very cheaply, which is a good place to experiment initially.

16. Does you have your own email address and mailbox?

In terms of personal branding, using your domain hosting to add a mailbox can be impressive. This means you can send and receive using your own names and branding instead of relying on generic providers such as Gmail, BT, Hotmail and Yahoo. As well as using this as webmail, you can arrange to send and receive as normal on your own devices. I still find it surprising that anyone serious uses a generic email address for their professional and marketing communications. It is like headed notepaper. Mailboxes often come free with the hosting package you use to host your website and these are straightforward to set up. So, take a few minutes to consider whether this is something feasible for you.

17. If you take online payments, what hardware, software and payment gateways are used?

Imagine a future where you might create material of sufficient value to sell straight from your website. Even if you don't create such material yourself you might arrange to sell other people's material, such as real-world products or digital download ebooks. When you think about the range of products and services you can offer, which ones do you sell online, or could you? You might sell directly using your own website, with free or cheap plugins such as Shopify or WooCommerce. Or you might sell 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 you with, for example in customer relations, service and billing?

18. How do you keep track of your audience and associates?

Your aim in attracting people to engage with you is to create a resource and an asset that can bring various degrees of interest, rewards and independence to your life and career. Again, this is based on value not exploitation! As your supporters, viewers, readers, listeners increase, it makes sense to know who they are so you can speak to them consistently and regularly (but not by spamming them). It can be sufficient to create a simple list. 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). As your lists grow, it can be better to switch to a proper Customer Relationship Management system to help you keep track of your differing relations with different contacts.

19. How do share documents with colleagues, associates 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, OneDrive and others.

20. How do use phones, including landlines, Skype and VoIP?

This is an area of personal 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 do you publicise? You might not want to publicise your home telephone, especially if you move occasionally, so that leaves your mobile number, which can seem temporary. Another option is to rent 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. That number can then move with you yet also seem more permanent. 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, consider what messages and tone you use in your voicemail messages.

21. What tools do you use to develop your audience?

This question asks you to consider a basic public relations strategy to help people talk about you - whenever they do - consistently to their own family, friends and colleagues. Especially when you have taken care over time to ensure your activities are based on substance and value, this can be a considerable enhancement to your reputation. The basic building blocks of this personal PR strategy are mentioned in previous questions. So, has your business established its brand values and keywords, and does it adhere to them? Does everyone know your company's brand story... and do they care? Are people in general aware of what you do and where you want to get to?

22. How do you use audience relationship information?

Rather than viewing this in a cynical way, look on yourself as your own community manager and remember it's a two-way street. Different people will do different things at different times and, as you get to know them, you should start to understand why they do. Perhaps you changed roles or jobs recently, and former colleagues are no longer as close. Might it be an opportunity to reach out and make a special effort? Alternatively, as you get to understand certain people personally and certain types of people generally, there might be opportunities to give them some value, proactively and unbidden. I would not advocate setting up a full Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for this - which would be overkill! - but there is no harm in putting side notes in your address book or contacts list.

23. How do you measure what is working?

When you start out on your personal journey, it is useful to take note of a few things, like the number of people you have in your address book, or the LinkedIn contacts you have. It's also useful to work jot down why you are doing this and how you feel when you begin. The important word is benchmark. This means that you must start somewhere, anywhere, to create a starting point. From there it becomes a question of keeping records about what works and what does not. Remember: this is more about quality than quantity! After a while, you will probably get a 'feel' for what works for you, and then you can stop doing less useful activities. After six months or a year, take a look at your original notes, and see if you feel better, if you have a better quality of life, or just feel better about having more control over your life and being in the driver's seat.

24. Should you bother with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)?

The quick answer is: do you want to be discovered in search results? If you're simply boosting or switching your career, the answer is probably a resounding 'No!' Many consider it vital their website appears prominently in search results when people have been searching. This shows little sign of changing in the near future. Coupled with constant technological change, the key conclusion for anyone 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. Do you have a list of keywords to use across different marketing activities?

When relatives or friends, let alone colleagues, ask you about your career what do you tell them? What do you say most often? If you have been in the same career for years you should have rehearsed this very well in different situations. If you have switched, it can be more difficult but is equally important. 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. Could you improve any of them?

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

The basic question here asks if you have a separate distinct budget, or is it part of your overall expenses? As with so many topics that I cover, this reveals how much planning you do. A budget shows you have given consideration to the next financial year. So if you have a separate budget, I can assume you have thought about - at least - the basic marketing activities you will do through the year and prioritised some over others. This can also be part of a longer strategic approach where you are driving your marketing. The opposite is true too, where you just have ad hoc expenses for printing marketing materials or occasional help, it shows there is probably not a strategy. You are not driving your marketing as effectively as you could. So give a few minutes thought of how you might set a budget. Even £20/month could pay for your website hosting, VoIP number and printed materials.

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

How do you manage your marketing activities? It pays to have clear sets of tasks and procedures that you do regularly. Others in your community might have skills that could be useful in different marketing activities. As you become more ambitious you might 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 you can create. That is because it should govern your time management, resource management and audience development for at least one year ahead, in detail. It should establish the rhythm you maintain for your marketing communications, daily, weekly, monthly and annually for years to come. For everything you create, it should answer the question: 'Why?' If something every month is sufficient for you and your audience, that is plenty. Don't force yourself to be too ambitious too quickly. 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 career mission, a marketing mission and, if you are creating content regularly, you should have an editorial mission. This describes what content you create, why and for whom. It governs the level of creation, formality, channels and length. No matter whether you're creating articles, blogs, tweets or videos, everything you create in this regard should conform to your editorial mission so you don't drift off into creating content that is 'nice to have' but irrelevant or unbranded. It should all be targeted and shaped according to this statement.

30. What timescales are you working to for your marketing activities?

If you're planning a week or a month in advance, that's a start, but you're missing the real trick. Truly ambitious tasks can be accomplished if you begin using your Editorial Calendar to plan material for your audience 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 do you produce to attract attention?

Yes, I realise the art of self-promotion is a very un-British thing. However, this is all about value and helpfulness rather than vanity. 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 professional and career objectives. Free content is a cost to you 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 love producing it. Great! 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.

32. What material do you produce to help increase your audience?

This question certainly goes to the heart of the purpose of content marketing. Content should always support your career objectives at some level, and few things are more important than audience-building. This type of content should demonstrate the benefits to potential viewers, listeners or readers of whatever you can offer them, so they give permission for you to stay in touch with them directly. To these benefits you can add elements that strengthen your own credibility and reassure people that other audience members have already enjoyed the benefits you are highlighting. Depending on the product or service, this might be good feedback, testimonials, ratings, videos or blogs. Think about what a potential member of your audience sees or reads when they visit your website or talk to you or otherwise encounter you, and how they experience it.

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

This is where it starts to get more advanced. This question relates to whether you should start charging for certain material tht 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, but that's extreme for a private person. Instead, see if you can repurpose your older material out of the archive and repackage it as a paid- for ebook. That way you 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. This encourages a change in the way others view you, but also can make you feel better that you're not just giving everything away for nothing.

34. What material do you produce for your everyday career activities?

Staying on the advanced level, in your normal career you probably have a range of activities and you might have material that supports these activities. If you created it yourself, that's a great source of material. Even if the Intellectual Property is owned by your current or previous employers, so you cannot use it directly, you can reference it in blog posts and focus on the story of the this material. If you offer certain products or services as part of your work, or even as a freelancer, consider what specific material you use to market them. Is it clear how these fit into your overall career goals? Is all this clear on the website too and in the telephone calls and meetings you attend?

35. What material do you produce for your premium career activities?

This question addresses the pinnacle of your content creation. In addition to your main everyday career and job, you might also be an expert in certain other tasks, and these might not even be related to your job. For example, someone having a hobby can be very passionate about their hobby tasks and consequently become extremely good through practice. Take a few minutes to consider whether you do anything like this and then what material you have created - or could create - to support. This material should match the quality and aspiration of what you do. Importantly, this premium material can also aim to attract some or many members of your audience for your everyday activities.

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 activities are stable and your website represents both to visitors. Yet when you review it might be surprising how often you have innovated with different activities; how often the people around you change and how changing markets might affect the positioning of your personal brand. If you haven't reviewed your own website recently, take a look now and review it, thoroughly, one page at a time. Make some notes and also ask your family and friends and others you trust to give you honest feedback. Be honest with yourself about whether your website truly represents what you currently do and where you are planning to go 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, you are missing a trick. Here the secret is to work out what actions you would like website visitors to perform and then construct pathways through your website that help guide people towards them. Keep it simple, perhaps to 2-3 defined pathways and actions. Some people find the idea of this rather manipulative but - on the contrary - if you really believe what you offer is of value or interest to people you should use every means to move them towards that value: enjoying it; 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 you could develop an audience for a podcast series. If so, you could start planning to develop one.... but it is not a short-term undertaking. It will take a strong pipeline of guests and material, and a huge commitment. Perhaps you could appear as a guest on a podcast instead...

39. How does you 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. Then ensure you create a dedicated channel for these business-related videos on YouTube or Vimeo.

40. What offline channels do you use (eg print)?

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 you in conveying your message to different types of audience members. These include putting your message out in newspapers and magazines as articles or advertisements. These days technology also helps you create your own magazines (or ezines) or publish books (or ebooks). You can also innovate with small printed objects such as postcards and business cards that can be fun and stylish.

41. Do you use email marketing? Are you responsible for it?

It might seem strange for a private individual to be doing email marketing, and those old round-robin emails from families are not perceived as good practice. Yet, this is still an effective technique to stay in touch with different groups of people. The trick is to be as personal as you possibly can be with your contacts. After, all, 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 you email socially. Do you get positive responses, engagement and feedback or is there a deafening silence? What open and response rates do you get? Importantly do you have consistent processes, such as planned dates and formats, to which you can commit to ensure continuity and consistency? If not, how will you tackle these questions? As set out in previous questions, it is crucial to have created an editorial calendar in advance that governs the flow of material, so you know in advance what each marketing email will contain.

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

If you are aiming to boost or switch your career, the more personal you make the emails you send the better. This means they are better coming from your regular email accounts like Outlook or Apple Mail rather than email marketing software such as MailChimp. You definitely don't want to spam friends, nor have people realise you've put them on a mailing list! You might however want to use templates and alarms to remind yourself it's time to write to a particular contact (or contacts). Are you familiar with the software 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.

43. How do you target and segment your recipients?

If you are going along the route of sending regular emails to your contacts, you will probably be storing them in some form of list. Although the names and details are in a list (either as a spreadsheet, database or 'proper' CRM), it is important not to forget these still represent people at different stages of engagement with you personally, your brand and your professional activities. Your marketing database should reflect these differences. Spend a few minutes considering how you segment your contacts. How you do this should reflect your career goals. So you might segment by where you met them, or their profession, or their interests, and also by how well you know them. LinkedIn is also a good system to sort out such links. A useful aim is to segment in order to move contacts on a journey that - over time - increases their relationship with you and your professional goals.

44. What social media channels do you use? Are they all appropriate?

The most important thing here is to decide how to much to separate your personal social media activities from your professional ones. The decision often rests on how formal or informal your professional life needs to be and how much extravert personality you are willing to reveal. It also rests on where your audience goes, so there might be a huge difference between a party planner and a book-keeper. There has been consolidation in social media around the established big names like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Take some time to consider your social media strategy and whether it matches the current social media landscape. Finally, be aware that you should communicate consistently across all the different social media platforms you choose to use, with language, colours and designs and contact details.

45. What digital advertising does your business use?

Private individuals would probably have little use or budget to be doing digital advertising, but it is there if you choose to move to the advanced levels of personal digital marketing. It certainly costs money but the benefits from getting it right can be lucrative. The first key factor in success is that you understand 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 targeting. Second, choose your channel and your content. Different content targeted at different audiences might work better at sponsored Tweets or LinkedIn updates, as well as Google Ads. If your budget allows, you might also consider advertising on YouTube videos.

46. Do you 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 on a variety of social media channels. 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, of course, also very useful when you need to organise a holiday for a week or two.

47. Do you attend professional events?

Even with all the digital sophistication of websites, videos and social media channels, face-to-face engagement should remain one of your main marketing activities. This is true to maintain engagement with your audience, where I suggest a good ratio is eight digital touches to one handshake and personal greeting. Of course this might be impossible due to distance and time. So do you have a policy for networking in your strategic marketing plan? Has anyone done an assessment of who does what where and when? It might be that you are doing nothing, or the opposite might be true that you are duplicating efforts needlessly, or wasting your time with certain activities despite your best endeavours. If you are not doing any professional networking, it makes sense to start. It is also important to be visible at seminars, conferences and trade shows so plan your time and budget accordingly.

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 a business can build up its social collateral in terms of credibility, trustworthiness and authenticity. However many networking groups are unsuitable for career enhancement so it pays to be selective. Also this is a slow process that can take months or years to achieve so if you move occasionally it might be better to focus on joining a national or international organisation instead such as your most appropriate Chartered Institute, of the Institute of Directors or Federation of Small Businesses.

49. Do you have a formal influencer strategy?

No matter how large your experienced 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 do. The material you should have produced by now, plus your reputation and social media presence, will all help enormously with attracting an influencer to help you rather than the next person. 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 that will take research and planning, and should form part of your content creation calendar. 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? Finally, improve your speaking skills by joining groups like the Professional Speakers Association or Toastmasters. Start with the ambition and then plan to achieve it. Good luck!

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