

# Marketing Your Small Business on a Tight Budget

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*With more than 10 years of experience as a small business owner, Cash J. Miller has been helping other businesses succeed in the marketplace. Miller's company, [Small Business Delivered](http://SmallBusinessDelivered.com), provides a unique e-zine dedicated to providing relevant and well researched articles in a number of business related categories, such as management, business planning, finances, and e-commerce.*

Developing a marketing budget for a small business can be a true trial and error process.

It can take large amounts of time and patience before figuring out how much you will need to spend on marketing. You should start off small at first. Determine how many ways you can possibly market your products or services. Before settling on a marketing budget, your end goal needs to focus on determining your potential return on investment (ROI).

After you have chosen a possible marketing method, start your business off with a trial campaign. Do your best to track how much money you spend and how much you bring in. From there you can work your way up. If you can figure out your potential ROI, you will be well on your way to determining your overall marketing budget.

Different businesses can benefit from different types of marketing, but what works for one may not work for another.

Marketing essentially starts with your customer base. If you sell to other businesses, this can often mean you need a sales team pounding the pavement. If you sell to the public, on the other hand, you will need broader forms of advertising to reach your target market. Loyalty programs are always good for a business. It is far cheaper to keep an existing customer than it is to add a new one. Therefore, continually reward your customers so they will come back to you the next time.

Having an online presence can be of significant benefit to many businesses. A website combined with search engine advertising is the single best way a company can market itself on a tight budget. The results are fairly easy to measure, and you can set a strict spending limit.

Some factors should be considered first to determine if launching a website will prove effective for your business.

- What type of business are you planning on?
- Will you sell a product or a service?

If you sell a product, building an e-commerce site will open up a world-wide market base. Yet, if you run a local plumbing company, a service-based business, a website may not be as effective, since you can only work for customers near you.

Cost is a huge factor as well with internet marketing. If you are a do-it yourselfer, building a website for your business and learning how to advertise it can be a truly rewarding experience. For those who do not have the time or inclination to tackle such a challenge, you will need to hire an expert in the field. Having to pay someone else to develop a good site can become an extremely expensive undertaking, though.

Most of all, for any business owner who is thinking about launching a site, you will need to consider exactly what you are expecting to achieve through having an online presence. What kind of financial and time commitments are you willing to make for this kind of marketing campaign?

With whatever marketing strategy you choose, recognize that while there are sure-fire ways to make money online, there are many techniques that are more trouble than they are worth.

If your organization is on the internet, search engine advertising is the single best and biggest way to advertise your business. It does take a little self-education if you want to do this solo, but you can also hire a company that specializes in the field. The major advantage of search engine advertising is your ability to measure your results. Through metrics software, you will know how many people visit your site and how many products or services are sold.

For brick and mortar businesses, the old-fashioned telephone book ads still works. This method allows you to know exactly what you will be spending on marketing. In addition, many phone book companies can help you set up a simple website and provide you a listing through their own online service. You get both an old school method combined with new school techniques.

Two of the worst ways to advertise, especially for new businesses, are television and radio. Both have become diluted with too many channels to choose from as well as ways to avoid ads all together. Furthermore, a commercial or radio ad can be very expensive to produce. While radio and television does still work for some businesses, it is not the best way to go for a new business on a tight budget.

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\*\*\*Originally published as a Case Study in *How to Change Your Career and Do the Work You Really Love: A Step-by-Step Plan for Making It Happen*.