

Marketing 101 Guide

Number Two

Marketing on a shoestring

This guide is designed to assist you with developing your marketing campaign on a 'shoestring' budget. It highlights the importance of maintaining marketing activities; utilising a diverse range of marketing tools; and the necessity of tracking and measuring your marketing activities.

Marketing 101 guides form part of IOOF's Adviser Alliance™ program for advisers. Adviser Alliance™ offers a range of marketing and sales tools that you can utilise to promote your services and your business to current and potential clients.

IOOF Adviser Allianceä provides a range of high-quality marketing tools – from brochures to direct marketing letters – enabling you to promote your business with ease. Check out IOOF's online marketing and business support resource, *Adviser Allianceä* at <https://www.adviser.ioof.com.au>

The logo for IOOF, consisting of the letters 'IOOF' in a bold, green, serif font. The 'I' and 'O' are connected, and the 'O' and 'F' are also connected.

Adviser Alliance™

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Introduction

In challenging economic times, countless small businesses fall into the trap of neglecting their marketing strategy. While many claim they can't afford a marketing budget, one must ask, can they afford not to? We'll show you how to maximise your marketing spend on a limited budget with a range of simple, yet highly effective ideas.

To begin, you will need to set a marketing budget. There are two commonly used approaches you can adopt. The first is to nominate an unvarying monthly spend. Finding the money may be a challenge in lean months, but it will ensure your profile remains consistently visible. The alternative approach is to nominate a percentage (say 10 per cent) of your monthly business income. The benefit is that your marketing spend is flexible and stays in line with what you can comfortably afford. The downside is that during quiet times, when you could most benefit from marketing your services, you will have little promotional activity.

In addition to money, you will need to spend time on your marketing. Set aside a specific period each week to focus on growing your business. This will ensure you never lose momentum. Marketing should be considered a normal part of your business routine, not an exercise conducted annually before Christmas. Just as you wouldn't neglect your accounts receivables for three months, nor should you put your marketing activities on the back burner. Importantly, marketing should not be considered a cost or liability - if approached strategically it could be your greatest investment.

When starting any marketing initiative don't expect instant results. Diversity and long-term objectives are not limited to the realm of investment alone. Remember - ongoing marketing activity will always out perform a one-off campaign. And a well-planned marketing strategy focuses on long-term, rather than short-term goals. Therefore, your marketing strategy should be integrated, rather than a sporadic series of unrelated activities.

The following are some suggested marketing activities you could consider.

1. Branding your business

Take a closer look at your logo. How well does it represent your services and what your business stands for? If your logo is less than satisfactory, ask a designer to help you create a new image. While their rates can be quite expensive, a good designer will be worth every cent. Once you have a logo you're happy with, make sure it appears consistently on all your marketing collateral.

Some dealerships allow you to run your own logo concurrently with theirs, whilst others only allow you to use their own logo. Check with your dealer group's compliance team to ensure you are complying with their requirements.

2. Good quality stationery

Your business cards and letterhead greatly enhance your professional image.

Think of your business card as a miniature marketing brochure. It should not only clearly display your contact details, it should also make it instantly clear what you do.

Once again, ensure you comply with your dealership's guidelines or risk having to incur the cost of destroying non-compliant stationery.

3. Direct marketing

Create your own database of clients and prospects and keep in touch with them regularly. This will keep the database fresh and help build a long-term relationship with them.

It is crucial to update your database as changes are received. Not only will it save you money by minimising undeliverable mail, it can also avoid embarrassing situations such as sending information to "Mr and Mrs X" when they have been recently divorced, or sending mail to the deceased.

Standard commercial software packages like Microsoft Access are ideal for creating databases and are generally quite easy to use.

Remember - your client relationship shouldn't end with a financial transaction. Send clients and prospects periodic promotional material either by email or post. But be sure to give them an 'opt out' option. You don't win business by sending unwanted marketing collateral.

In financial services, a soft sell as opposed to a hard sell can work best. Let clients know you're interested in them and their needs, not just in making a sale. Some suggested direct marketing communications are:

- a letter congratulating them on taking the first step to develop a financial plan and thanking them for their business;
- a letter suggesting an annual review of their financial plan to ensure their changing needs are still being met; or
- an email including a link to an article you felt may be of interest to them (e.g. an article in the *Financial Review* or *Money Management* about the recent ASSIRT ratings).

Another simple way of making a client feel important is sending a personalised birthday card. If you are going to send out birthday cards on a regular basis, it would be worth having them professionally designed and printed with your business name (or logo) featuring prominently to increase brand awareness.

An efficient approach to sending out the birthday cards is to write them all in advance and file them away by date. At the beginning of each week, you can then simply post that week's birthday cards.

It is also worth considering a monthly or quarterly newsletter to keep clients up-to-date and your business fresh in their minds.

Modern desktop publishing packages allow businesses to create newsletters in-house. If this is not suitable for you, consider hiring the services of a graphic designer. Most of the design costs are in creating the initial template. You'll find that the costs for subsequent newsletter editions will be significantly less.

If your database is particularly large, you may find it more cost effective to distribute the newsletter via email. Seek a graphic designer with web and email marketing experience to assist you in developing an electronic template.

As for the newsletter content, try to keep the articles short and interesting. If you are including a very dry subject matter, try balancing it with something a little lighter. For example, an article about changes to superannuation regulations could be balanced with a lifestyle article or a profile of a successful client.

The choice of articles is limitless, and could include changes to tax legislation, social security or an introduction to a new staff member.

Even if your dealership produces a newsletter on your behalf, don't be shy about making recommendations on the topics you'd like included. After all, you know the needs of your clients. If you are going to produce your own newsletter, ensure your dealership's compliance team signs off on the material before you finalise it – even if you have sourced the original article from a fund manager.

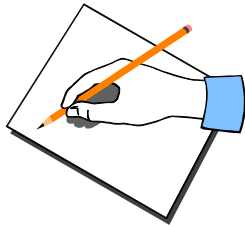
4. Sponsorship

Sponsorship is not a marketing tool reserved solely for big business. Smaller businesses can also reap the benefits of being perceived as a socially responsible member of the community. Like most marketing initiatives, it's important to ensure that your target market, and the organisation you choose to donate to, are aligned. For example, if you are targeting retirees, then a donation to a local kindergarten is not really appropriate.

From schools and hospitals, to local charities and senior citizens groups, there are a vast range of organisations to choose from. Ask them about sponsorship deals and what they can offer you. Perhaps they may include your logo on all written correspondence or display your signage.

5. Testimonials and referrals

Word-of-mouth is one of the most potent promotions for your business. Make it a habit to ask satisfied clients for their praise in writing. You will be surprised how many will be happy to do so. Testimonials can be used in promotional brochures, corporate profiles and on your web site. You may also wish to display these letters in your waiting room. It may be enough to persuade a potential client uncertain about the benefits of financial planning or investing.



A satisfied client can also be a great source for referrals. Introduce a process of requesting referrals into your workflow. For example, you may send out a standard direct marketing letter to clients thanking them for their business and inserting a voucher for a free initial consultation which they may pass on to friends, family or colleagues who may also benefit from your services.

6. Advertising

If you don't do your homework, it's easy to blow your entire marketing budget with a couple of poorly placed ads. That being said, advertising can be an excellent lead generator and can really boost the profile of your business. The key is to ensure your advertising is well targeted, which means your target market (e.g. middle aged empty nesters) matches the audience of the publication, radio station etc.

Circulation and demographic data can be easily obtained by contacting the advertising representative. Local newspapers and community radio stations offer reasonable advertising rates and have the bonus of targeting people within a

particular locality. Mainstream media (e.g. television, daily metro newspapers) are generally price prohibitive; you don't get adequate return on your investment if you're only targeting a narrow target market segment, or a particular locality.

7. Public relations

PR is not the exclusive domain of expensive, top-end-of-town agencies. If you have a good grasp of the English language, try your hand at drafting a press release. Start with the basics of who, what, when, and why, and always have an angle. Be sure to reserve press releases for times when you have something publicity worthy to say. Think revolutionary and be sure to send the press release to targeted media - don't waste your time with the scattergun approach, do your research first. For example, if your target audience is predominantly within your geographical proximity, try your local paper.

Think creatively. Perhaps you have an employee who also happens to be an Olympian or has an otherwise newsworthy past or hobbies. Local and community media are often interested in generous acts of corporate philanthropy. If you're making a sizeable donation to a school or hospital, be sure you let the local media know about it. Don't be afraid to approach the institution you are donating to and ask them to help you secure publicity – they may even have a dedicated PR person in house who can help you.

As with any direct marketing, once you have emailed, faxed or posted your release, call the journalist you've sent it to, to ensure they received it and whether they need more information.

In addition to distributing press releases, you may be able to become a regular contributor. For example, your local newspaper may be interested in a weekly or monthly column about financial planning advice. If your writing skills are not up to scratch, source your articles from fund managers or your dealership. Alternatively, consider hiring a 'ghost writer' (someone who will write an article under your name) to help structure the article and develop your initial concept. It's money well spent if your article is published. The benefit of having an article published (whether it's about you or written by you) is that it establishes you as a credible authority figure. Even if you didn't actually write the piece yourself! Once again, ensure your dealership compliance team sign off on your copy before you distribute it.

8. Web presence

Most small businesses (not all) can benefit from creating a web site. Start with a basic internet wish list detailing everything you would like the site to achieve, and then balance that with your budget.

Shop around for a web developer. Depending on the complexity of your needs, you may be able to get a developer that can provide both programming and design, which will reduce your costs. However, don't trust them to write or edit the copy. This is best handled yourself, your dealer group, or, if your budget permits, a professional writer.

When preparing the copy, try to focus on the information that potential clients would be interested in, versus company promotion. As a rule of thumb, make it interesting and relevant; or risk clients leaving your site, never to return. Keep the content updated to ensure repeat visits.

As you know, the financial services industry continues to change at a breakneck speed. Therefore it is critical that your web site content is up-to-date and compliant at all times.

9. Free information

It is crucial for a financial adviser to foster trust. A great way to do so is by providing clients and prospects with free financial services information, thereby establishing your expertise in the area. This can be done via posting information on your web site, sending out direct mail pieces, or by inviting clients and prospects to an information seminar, where the focus is less on gaining sales than on gaining leads. Remember to take the contact details of all attendees (or web site visitors) and follow up with a letter, email, phone call or special offer.

Holding a seminar need not be expensive. Reduce costs by holding the event at your office premises. A breakfast or pre-dinner seminar could be catered for fairly inexpensively, and often fits in well with the busy professional.

You may also want to consider approaching your local Lions, Rotary or church group to see if they'd be interested in your running an information night at their premises. This would enable you to potentially save on venue and invitation costs.

If you are going to post free information on your web site, be sure your clients and prospects are aware of this and give it the promotion it requires to drive visitors to your site. This could be achieved by placing an advertisement in a local paper, emailing clients with a link to your site, or including it in your Yellow Pages ad.

10. Personalisation

Clients like to feel like they are important and valued, not just a number. Some people achieve this easily and effortlessly in their delivery. They seem to have a special knack for remembering clients, the names of their children and husbands or wives, and even the football team they support. They can, at will, weave these details seamlessly into the conversation, making the client feel at ease, and in the company of a friend.

If your memory is not this good, be sure to take notes each time a client drops one of these gems. Before your next meeting you can quickly glance through the file and have the information fresh in your mind.

11. Tracking

Every good marketing strategy includes some form of measurability to ascertain where your business is coming from. As a rule, keep track of which activity is generating new enquiries by asking where clients found out about your business – advertising, word-of-mouth, direct mail etc. This way you know which marketing activities are working best, and where to invest your future marketing spend.

In summary, your marketing success is dependent on:

- *consistency – make marketing a regular and ongoing business activity;*
- *diversity – use a range of activities to ensure you reach your target market; and*
- *measurability – track the impact of your efforts to ascertain which approach is working best for you.*