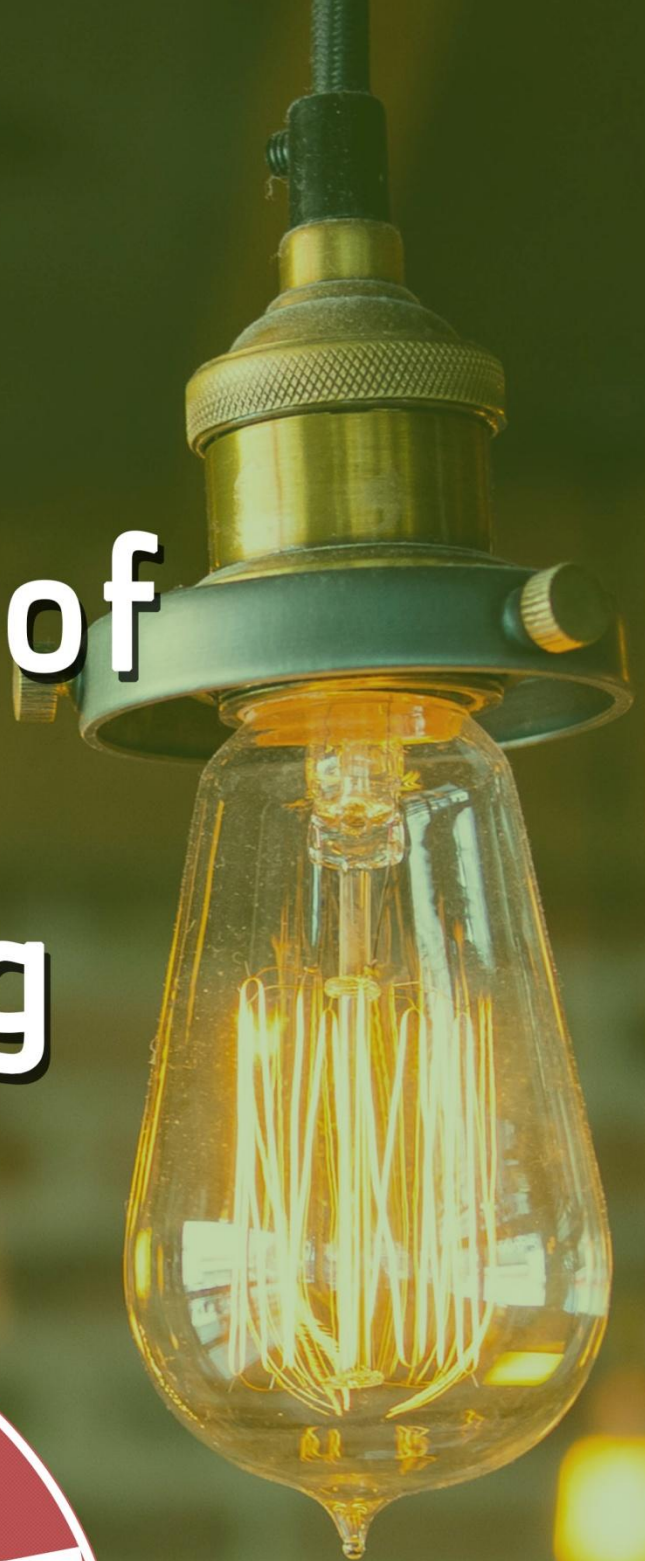




Content
Grasshopper

big book of practical marketing advice



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Introduction

I drink a lot of coffee. That's cool because I love coffee.

I drink a lot of coffee though because I meet a lot of people who want to talk about how my marketing skills and experience can help them. A lot of the time they aren't ready to engage me straight away but instead they want to know if I'm just another fast talking marketer like the rest they've come across.

The thing that I've come to realise, across many coffees, many years and many industries, is that they all seem to make some combination of the same mistakes.

I've helped a very wide range of businesses from cleaners to visa agents to builders and loads in between. I don't pass judgement because I know as much about cleaning, visas and building as they do about marketing. Plus, I'm a big believer in you don't know what you don't know.

The fact remains, however, that very few of their problems and issues fall outside this list contained in this eBook. I know there are loads of people who visit my site and never contact me, for whatever reason, but I thought they could still get some valuable advice.

So I've catalogued the common problems and mistakes I see businesses making and I've provided some examples and then some homework so you can address them.

If you have a problem that isn't covered in the book then let me know. I'll give you some free advice, probably on the blog, in a video or in the podcast, and if it is reasonably common or applicable then I'll add it to the book.

Enjoy.

PS - They aren't in any particular order so don't think I'm implying that one is more important than the other.

PPS - They are presented in a way so that they are all stand alone subjects. Although, as we know, none of this operates in silos so there are some recurring points integrated across multiple topics.

How People Buy

At running the risk of opening the can of consumer behaviour worms, I do want you to think a little about how people act when buying. That's why I have outlined a few key things to keep in mind before you read on.

Some of them are explicitly spoken about within other sections of this book but they should always be part of your marketing foundation. Here goes:

- People buy on their own time, not your time.
- People go through steps, known as the buyer decision process. It is,
 - Problem Awareness;
 - Research;
 - Evaluation;
 - Decision;
 - Purchase; then
 - Post-purchase Evaluation.
- 83% of people use Google to search for content to help them make a decision.
- An average of 10 pieces of content are consumed in the buyer decision process.
- Good content is four times more likely to be shared than advertising.
- People move 60%-70% of the way through the decision making process before contacting a business.

A lot of the time marketing, and moving people to a sale, is like a dating. You don't go out on the first date and end up staying over (well, not very often!). Instead, you both have to feel comfortable with each other and that takes time. It usually takes multiple interactions (dates) and you both do things to demonstrate that you are nice (can be trusted).

If you try and rush it then you might scare the other person off because you come across as needy and make it all about yourself. Businesses are no different. As soon as you try and be pushy, and rush the consumer, they get a bad vibe and you are likely to push them away.

Keep those things in mind as you read.

Don't Think Others Care About Your Business

No one cares about your business as much as you do. Period. Not even your bank manager.

Yet one of the traps marketers fall into, sometimes myself included, is taking an opportunity that is presented to us, to talk to our audience, and overloading them with information. But it is not acceptable to drone on about all the aspects of your business. You love it, granted, because it is your business, your brand, your baby.

They don't love it. Yet.

Don't believe me? Name one brand or business you love more than the owners and staff do. Sure you might be able to think of one or two but my money is on them being big brands. I'm guessing you aren't a big brand.

What the consumer does want to know is how you will solve their problems. They are also time poor. So get to the point.

Don't think this is your one and only opportunity to speak to them. Don't vomit all over them with loads of information.

Good content should leave the audience wanting more. That's where you position calls to action that capture leads. Then you have their contact details and permission to provide them with more awesome content and move them through the buyer decision process.

Your Task

There is no specific, actionable task on this point. Just spend some time reflecting or looking for those times when you are guilty of droning on about your business. Instead, focus on making it about them. A good place to start is your website and sales emails.

Benefits, Not Features

People like to talk about themselves. I know I do.

Whether it's emails, brochures, ads or copy on your site, when it comes to talking about what your business does, you need to speak less about what you do and what you offer.

Sounds counter intuitive?

What you do and what you offer are features. For example, "We are the largest hardware store in the state".

And ... ?

So what?

Why would I care if you are the biggest hardware store in the state? What does it mean for me? You can't leave it for your readers to make the same leap you do in your head and understand easily why that's important.

It's perfectly OK to talk about the features of what you do and what you offer. In fact, you should. But you have to talk about what the benefit is to your audience as well. For example, "We are the largest hardware store in the state which means that we have everything for your job under one roof".

The benefit is that I don't have to go to multiple stores.

Your Task

Print out a page from your site or grab one of your brochures. Grab a highlighter and highlight anywhere where you talk about a feature but it isn't explicitly clear to the reader what the benefit is.

Often, sentences focussing only on features really only need an 'and' or a 'which' inserted before talking benefit(s). Or maybe the next sentence simply needs to start with 'That means ...'

Now go back and fix them.

Passive vs. Active Voice

When you talk to a customer, or potential customer, face-to-face, on the email or on the phone, do you say things like "We help our clients ..." or do you say "We can help you to ...".

If it's the former then you must sound like a stooge. If it is the later, then you are normal. To be fair, using passive voice isn't wrong but it's often not the best way to communicate online.

Businesses, however, seem to cross over some weird bridge when they write copy for their marketing and stop talking to people in active voice.

They write things like "We help our clients achieve blah blah". You know the type of copy don't you? You read it, it sounds important, it's full of corporate and important words but when you get to the end you are not actually sure what you just read.

Next time that happens, stop, go back, and check if it is written in passive or active voice. I know where my money will be.

Not using active voice is a real missed opportunity. Using active voice engages the reader and it is much easier for them to understand and relate to the copy. If you are talking about outcomes and benefits then using an active voice also helps to project them into what life will be like once you sort out what ever problem or need they have.

Your Task

Pick a page on your website, a brochure or a standard email. Read it through as if you were a customer or potential customer. Does it connect with you? Is it written in an active voice? If not, highlight all the areas where there is an opportunity to change the words and make them active voice.

Then fix it.

Note: While your copy should be written in an active voice, your headings and sub-headings are probably better off in passive voice because, most of the time, that is how people will search in Google.

There is also some evidence that your calls to action should be in a passive voice. I recommend you test these though.

Website Pages Without Calls To Action

Calls to action (CTA) are one of the most important elements of your site; they are the things you want users to do. Without strong CTAs, your users may not take the action you desire and may end up in irrelevant sections of your site or leave your site altogether. Ideally, there should only be one call to action on each page but it is acceptable to have two.

You should know what you want people to do when they visit each of your pages. Is it to fill out a form, download something or call you? Don't let people go wandering off the important page you've made the effort to put up and get them to. Make sure it is clear what the next step is to be taken.

To position the next step for people to take you need to call them to action and you present this as a button. Not a text link; they are too weak. How large your call to action button is very important. A button that's too large will overpower everything around it. A button that's too small will get lost in all the other content on the page. You want your button to be large enough to stand out without overwhelming the design.

Colour can be used to great effect to help balance the size of your buttons. For larger buttons, choose a colour that's less prominent within your design (but still stands out against the background). For a smaller button, you may want to choose a brighter, contrasting colour to really make the button pop. In either case, make sure the colour you use sets the button apart without clashing with the site's overall design.

Where appropriate, use your call to action buttons to give visitors extra information about what they're going to get if they click on the button. For example, the main text in the button may read "See Pricing" while secondary text, known as click triggers, adds things like "30-day free trial" and "No credit card needed".

Your Task

Review each of your site's pages and ensure you are clear about what it is you want visitors to do on the page. What is the next step they should take? Remember, call us is weak as they are probably on your site because they don't want to talk to anyone yet.

Then, ensure that each page has a contrasting call-to-action button with both primary and secondary text as click triggers.

Use Good Testimonials

Too often businesses use boring, bleached, carefully typed out and reviewed testimonials from their customers. Scanning a copy of their letter or note is also lazy; no one is reading the whole thing. Stop kidding yourself.

Testimonials, however, are important because they are social proof that you can do what you say you can do. You can write all the fancy and carefully crafted words you want, and have them up on your site, but testimonials are the icing on the cake in terms of believability. They build trust.

Word-of-mouth is an important marketing tool but think of testimonials as written word-of-mouth recommendations that can work for you 24/7 as people visit your site.

You don't, however, get what you don't ask for so you have to be proactive in asking for testimonials on a regular basis. Maybe not after each satisfied customer but maybe every three to six months you could review your client list and see who might be suitable as it is important to keep them fresh and current.

Under no circumstances should you write the testimonials yourself. It's so obvious and makes you look dishonest. You are better off not having them at all. On the flip side, don't be a burden on your clients. They are busy enough. Besides, they'll think very carefully about what they are saying and word process it to within an inch of its life. As such, it won't connect with potential clients because it will sound wooden.

Instead, think about getting a third party to source testimonials on your behalf. The reason this is an effective tactic is that the third party doesn't have a relationship with the client so giving praise doesn't feel weird plus the subject feels like they need to educate the third party about what happened so they share even more great information.

Contact some suitable clients and ask them if it is OK if someone can ring them and ask them a few questions about their experience so it can be crafted into a testimonial. Tell them it will only take a few minutes and they won't have to write anything but they'll get to review and approve it.

Get the third party to ask questions such as:

- What services do they provide to you?
- How important is it that they do their job well?
- What is it like working with them?
- Are they responsive when there are any issues?
- Would you recommend them to others?

The external helper should record an audio file of the conversation (using Audacity to record with input from a USB headset taken from speaker phone is perfectly fine or use a landline on speaker phone and record to your mobile). The testimonials you will get from clients are so much better than if you or the client wrote them.

Note: The final question usually gets a simple "Yes". If, however, the external helper simply lets silence ensue, the testimonial speaker will feel uncomfortable and will break the silence by elaborating and share more great insights and words. It's amazing how it works every time.

Writing It Up

Playing back the audio recording, the external helper can get all the comments down on paper and then craft a testimonial that really connects with people because it sounds just like how your prospective customers talk. Don't forget to send the testimonial to the client for approval.

It's funny, about 70 per cent say "Don't worry about sending it to me first. Just use it." while 20 per cent write back saying "No changes". So only 10 per cent make any changes and they are always really minor ones anyway.

If you want some examples of this process then head along to <http://www.mmrcs.com.au> or <http://www.critiquebookkeeping.com.au>

Your Task

Find a third party.

Select 5-10 good clients who would be willing to help. Explain the process to them and tell them it won't even take five minutes of their time.

Pass the details to the third party, get them to ring, record the questions and answers and then write the testimonials up.

Pass to the subject for approval.

Get them up on your site, and other marketing collateral, and let them start working their magic.

Gate Content

Gating your content means asking people to provide their details in return for some content. Not gating some of your content is a mistake because you aren't using it to generate leads; to get people into the top of your funnel.

Most people won't contact you the first time they visit your site. But what if they never come back? How do you keep them up-to-date and nurture them?

A simple form, only asking for necessary details, completed in return for some of your awesome content will add more and more people to your sales funnel. You should, however, only ask for basic information. You can always ask for more information later, and build the profile, and people will be willing to give it to you if you've been helping them because they trust you to do the right thing i.e. not be pushy with sales.

Start with email and postcode. The reason you ask for postcode, or maybe country, is so you can determine whether they are in the geographic location to sell to. That way, when it comes to following them up, you know if you can help them.

If you really want a name field in the form then that is fine. Don't ask for a phone number, it just screams "We are going to call you soon". If they wanted to speak to you they'd call you. Your phone number is prominent enough on your site. Remember, people buy on their own time; not yours.

Sure some people may give you fake information but what does that tell you? They don't want to speak to you right now. Why worry about it? Do you have so much free time that you want to actively chase people who don't want to speak to you?

Don't gate all your content. Just some of it. Give the smaller, bit-sized content such as blogs, videos and podcasts away without registration. Put some of the bigger ones like templates, eBooks and whitepapers, or other premium content, behind a gate (form).

Your Task

Develop one awesome piece of content that you can gate and get it up on your site. Think about why people come to your site and play on that fear a little bit. For example, let's say you are a mortgage broker. A short eBook called *The Top Tricks Mortgage Brokers Use To Get You To*

Sign is going to capture the attention, and details, of lots of visitors. Who wants to get tricked? Especially when it involves the largest purchase most people will make.

Make sure you position the gated content it in a prominent place on your site and make sure it is clear that they are opting into your regular communications such as emails (if you use them).

Don't Use Too Many Words

I conduct website reviews for people and one thing it includes is looking at a sample of pages and determining if the word count is in the right ballpark.

I reviewed a site once that had 1,500 words on one page. I was basically confronted with a wall of text and I needed to scroll considerably to get to the end of it. There wasn't even any sub-headings or dot points to help me get through it. Just like I did, visitors find it very off-putting to be confronted by a wall of text early on in their buyer decision process (which is generally when they are browsing your site).

The general rule of thumb is a page should be between 200 and 500 words with the sweet spot being about 300 words. "But I've got so much good stuff to tell them!" you say. That may be true but it doesn't belong as a large lump of text on a page. There's no way anyone is reading it all. Trust me, no one cares anywhere near as much about your business as you do. Plus they are time poor so get to the point.

Instead, you have to find ways to break it up and present it well if you really do have something important to tell them that needs lots of words. Think about breaking it into multiple pages, or topics or moving it to a brochure or downloadable paper or eBook.

Save the long copy for things like whitepapers, eBook and case studies.

Your Task

Review the pages on your site. Simply copy and paste the text into a Word document and look at the word count.

Work to get any long pages under the 500 word count (ideally 300).

To help, be ruthless about whether that fluffy sentence you just read really tells the visitor something or is it just corporate chest thumping? You can also review sentences and look for words that can be removed without changing the message of the sentence.

Repurpose Content Across Lots Of Channels

Sometimes when I talk about the opportunities for content for an organisation they can freak a little at what sounds like lots of work. "I know we should have a blog but you are telling me I should also have video, and audio and SlideShare plus social media? This is all getting too much!"

That is understandable.

The reason I get so excited though is because I can see how one idea can really easily be turned into multiple pieces of content. Those pieces of content are then out there working wider and harder for your organisation and are in different formats which align with people's varying consumption preferences (audio, video, text et).

Think about it like this.

You have an idea, let's say it is *Top 10 Mistakes Mountain Bikers Make In A 24 Hour Race*. Most organisations would simply put that up as a text based blog.

Here is what they should do.

1. Grab the video camera and put someone in front of it and run through the Top 10 and cover off what people can do to avoid it. Upload the video to YouTube and Vimeo.
2. Strip the audio out of the video and send it to a transcriber who will pull the words out into a text based document.
3. Create a blog post and paste the video transcription on it (Google likes words).
4. Embed the video on the blog.
5. Provide a link to the audio only file on the blog (not everyone can watch video, for example, at work).
6. Create a slide presentation with big pictures and minimal words. Upload it to SlideShare.
7. Embed the slides on your blog.
8. If you have a podcast then use the stripped out audio as one of your segments in your next episode.

When you look back you will have a:

- text based blog;
- video;

- slide presentation; and
- audio.

These things will not only be on your site but also on multiple platforms and engaging your audience as well as driving traffic to your site. People are also more likely to share content that they know their friends/followers can easily consume such as video and slides.

Use your email list and social media channels to promote and distribute the content and drive people to your web site.

If you have an engaged audience then you could use a call to action to prompt people to send in questions about 24 hour races. Then run a webinar covering of those questions and even take live questions.

Call it *Your 24 Hour Race Rider Questions Answered* and record the webinar as a video. What do you know! You just covered off step 1 again. BOOM!

Now you just run through steps two to eight.

Go through that process once a week and at the end of any given year you will have 50+ videos, 50+ text blogs, 50+ slideshows and 50+ segments to pull into a podcast.

But wait, there is more! No, not steak knives.

At the end of the year, take the 50+ text blogs and turn them into an eBook. I once pulled a year's worth of blogs into an eBook, for a client, and despite 10,000 people receiving the blogs in their inbox, each fortnight, we still got over 1,500 downloads of the eBook in the first fortnight! All we did was write a one page introduction and put a nice cover on it!

All of these tactics are very cost effective and live much longer than traditional advertising. They also have far better reach and shareability.

Your Task

Obviously this is one you should keep in mind for your next blog but how about going back through any old blogs and seeing if you can repurpose them into slides, a podcast or video? After all, you've already done the heavy lifting.

Awesome Headlines

The headline, or title, for your content is a crucial element to ensure that the right audience can find you and are then enticed to click through and read your post.

In my eyes, the headline is the most important element and a bad one can render useless all the fantastic work you've done in the body of the content.

Google 'best headlines' and you'll find plenty of advice and effective examples. Most of this advice, however, wasn't written with the goal of getting content in front of people in a world where they research options online. The advice was mostly written for newspaper, magazine and direct mail pieces.

Some people say they spend just as long coming up with the headline as they do for the rest of the blog – can't say I've ever done that but following these few simple rules will help.

Reflect on the things that your customers are searching for

If you are using your blog to attract prospects through search engines then your headline needs to reflect the things that your customers are searching for. That's why questions make great headings – it is exactly what people are typing into Google. 'How to' titles are also good especially if your content is a video as that is what a lot for people are searching for on YouTube etc because they want to be shown how to do something. Did you know that YouTube is the second biggest search engine in the world?

The one thing you should avoid is trying to write catchy or intriguing headlines that are designed to be attention grabbing. They don't work – Google doesn't get that you are being catchy or funny. People are too busy and are looking for answers to questions and solutions to their problems. You aren't writing for Women's Day or Men's Health. Don't get cute. Get to the point.

Tell people what they will get

Your headline should describe what the reader will get if they read your blog. Using How, When, Why etc is powerful.

Use lists & numbers

People are very attracted to titles such as *5 tips for saving money this Christmas* or *15 essential apps to help you work smarter*. People love titles with numbered lists because they know exactly what they are getting.

Use keywords

Include keywords where possible. A lot of the time this will occur naturally if you've followed the advice about reflecting what your customers are searching for but keeping this in mind is important if you can't write a headline that matches what people are searching for.

Keep it brief

Try and keep your headline brief. Remember, you and others will probably share it through channels like LinkedIn and Twitter where characters are limited.

Long winded headlines also subtly imply that you can't quickly and clearly get your message across and that your blog post may be more of the same. People are time poor – get to the point.

A brief headline, if you then intend to use it as an email subject, is also more likely to fit entirely in the headline preview field. There's no use crafting a cracker headline only for the last three words to not be seen in the subject field!

Your Task

Go back through your blogs and audit whether or not they are titles that people would search for in Google and action where required.

You can safely change the headlines/titles of old blogs without losing incoming links as the URL won't change. You will only have issues with broken links if you change the *slug* (the editable part of the URL).

Don't Be Someone Different Online

Do you have contacts or suppliers who you have met offline or talked to on the phone? Great people, nice, friendly, maybe even a bit funny. Good fun to have a chat with. Genuine people who are interested in you.

Heaps of personality.

They are all good traits for the people who sell to you to have. They connect with you and they make you feel a little special.

But when you visit their website it doesn't feel like it is them talking to you. All the personality is gone. They play it safe but safe doesn't resonate with people unless you are selling something super serious.

Is your offline personality and online personality different?

Why?

What are you afraid of? Are you scared that people might think you can't do a good job unless you write long paragraphs, full of non-descript text, stuffed with fancy words?

It's the opposite.

They'll think you can't do a good job because your online personality doesn't connect with them and talk about how you will solve their problems. They'll think you don't care because you only talk about yourself and not them.

Your Task

Review pages on your site, and other collateral, and ensure it has some personality. Write in shorter sentences. Focus on the reader and their problems. Drop a few bits of humour in where you can. Definitely remove all the management speak and industry jargon.

Write it as close to how you would speak to prospective customers face-to-face.

Don't Expect People To Act Differently To You

This one is a doozy!

When you want information to help solve a problem or meet a need, what do you do? Some of us will ask some friends but then we all head to Google. In fact, 83% of us use Google in the early stage of our buying decision process and we do so because we are looking for quality content.

In fact, on average, people consume 10 pieces of content in the buyer decision process. The buyer decision process is:

- Problem Awareness;
- Research;
- Evaluation;
- Decision;
- Purchase; and
- Post-purchase Evaluation.

There is an important point to make here. Obviously we can go to a shop and find information and talk to a salesperson. But we don't and it is because we don't want to talk to a salesperson. We want to buy in our own time and, on average, we move 60% - 70% of the way through our decision process before we even contact a business, brand or salesperson.

Let's recap:

- 83% of people use Google to search for content to help them make a decision;
- An average of 10 pieces of content are consumed in the buyer decision process; and
- People move 60% - 70% of the way through the decision process before contacting a brand.

When I talk to businesses about how they, when they are consumers themselves, act and look for information they absolutely agree that the above behaviour is exactly how they behave.

Yet somehow, they expect their potential customers to act differently! Crazy.

A lot of the time the response is "But if they call us we will look after them. We aren't sleazy sales people. We are good people. We are a local business. We are trusted in this area. We are family owned!"

"Right.", I say, "Do those things make you pick up the phone instead of hitting Google?"

The response is always "No".

So stop expecting, for no good reason, consumers to act any differently to the way you act.

Your Task

Considering people consume an average of 10 pieces of content in the buyer decision process, ensure you have pieces of content that are aligned to the early stages. They should be designed to move the potential customer to the next stage and to that 60% - 70% point where they'll make contact.

For a great guide on what types of content are best suited to the various buyer decision process stages then check out the [Content Grid V2](#). It's a very quick questionnaire that generates a customer content grid for you.

I personally think that the X and Y axis' are a little off but you can see how the above buyer decision process and your sales pipeline easily lay over.

Great Email Follow-up

This is an example of a little exercise I run when I deliver content marketing workshops.

"Hands up those who go to sales meetings with prospective new customers?"

90% of hands go up.

"Keep your hand up if, after the meeting, when you get back to your desk, you send some type of follow-up email"

A few hands go down (usually not many).

"Keep your hand up, if, at the end of the email, the last thing you write is something like 'Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions'. Who does that?"

Again, a few hands go down (usually not many).

"OK. Keep your hand up if you only write that because you really don't know how else to finish the email"

All the remaining hands always stay up. At this stage, it's about 80% of the room.

Then I say something like ...

"If that's you, why do you write that? My money is on it is because you don't know what else to write. But it is a very weak call to action. Do you think the reader doesn't know who to contact if they have any questions? Do you think they need permission to call you?"

Think about it. When you get emails like that and you start reading that closing line, what do you think or do? You probably switch off and are disconnected from the email, already thinking about the next task or email.

The people you are trying to sell to are no different.

Here is what you should do.

During the meeting, make a note of any questions that you get asked. Obviously you need to answer them during the meeting but when you write the follow-up email, finish it off with

"During the meeting you asked about XYZ. Here are some blog posts we've written on the subject that I think you might find helpful". Then provide links.

If you get asked a question that you don't have a blog for, guess what you are writing about that day!

Guaranteed they will click on those links and visit your site and have more positive engagement with your brand in a non-salesy way. They may even find them so useful that they share them.

Your Task

Create a word document that has two rows on it. The top one should be about 3/4 of the page and the bottom one 1/4. Mark the top one 'Notes' and the bottom one 'Content'. Print out a bunch and take them to meetings.

The content row is where you make notes about the blogs, or other pieces of content, that you can send which further answer questions you get asked during the meeting.

Real Guarantees

I was in a client meeting once to kick-off to writing copy for their new website.

One thing they were keen on including in their site was a guarantee. They are very committed to customer service and have fantastic and happy clients.

Seems straight forward enough, right?

Not really.

Here's the thing.

Positioning a guarantee, especially at the end of a page, is a great "Now the ball is in your court because we've put ourselves on the line" call to action.

It has to be, however, a guarantee that spells out what you'll do if you don't deliver on what you say you will. Too many times I see businesses promising or guaranteeing things but don't outline what happens when they don't deliver. It means nothing. No one believes it. It is weak.

I pushed the client on this point because it was a real chance to differentiate themselves and have their guarantee stick in a potential customer's minds because everyone else's About Us pages are boring and their guarantees are pointless.

Me: "So how about you offer a \$100 gift card, personally delivered by the GM, if you don't meet the guarantee."

Client: "No way, that'll cost us \$100."

Me: "Why? You seem very confident that you will always deliver on the guarantee."

Client: "Yes, but some people will try and rot it."

Me: "How many? One or two a year? Who cares! So what if you spend \$200 on people who rot the system and you have to deliver a few \$100 vouchers? How many people do you think they will tell the story to? 10, 20? It isn't like the story paints you in a really negative light. No one believes a business is perfect yet you proved good on your promise of a voucher and that will stick in people's minds. \$200 to reach 20-40 people with a positive word-of-mouth story about your company – I reckon you would get that cash out of your wallet right now if I said I could do

that for you."

Client: "Hmmm"

Me: "Besides, you always deliver on your promise, right?" (grinning)

Client: "Yes we do."

Me: "Low risk then, let's do it."

Client: "OK!"

12-months later, when I checked, they hadn't had to hand out any vouchers.

Your Task

Remember, saying you guarantee something is, for 99% of you, impossible. No one, however, expects you to be perfect, so it's what you explain you'll do about it, if you don't deliver, that will truly connect with people and help you stand out from your competitors.

If you offer a guarantee then make sure you spell out what happens when you don't deliver on your promise. Be sure to update your site, brochures etc.

About Us Pages

Someone once told me that, in 90% of cases, the About Us page of a web site is the most visited (after the Home Page). It was a bit of an "Oh \$&*#" moment as I realised that it is as obvious as the nose on my face but I had never given it a lot of thought.

It seems a lot of organisations don't give it much thought either. Reading their About Us page, it almost seems as though it was an afterthought or something they have to have because that's the done thing.

Most of the time when I visit an About Us page I reckon if I swapped the name and logo over then it would read pretty much the same as their competitors. Too often they talk about the business and when it started rather than telling a story and aligning with solving problems.

What a massive missed opportunity.

If it is the most visited page on your site then you can bet your bottom dollar it's also one of the first two or three pages your visitors go to. That means it is right up there in creating the right impression, early, and connecting with potential customers.

The opportunity here is to have an About Us page that stands out from your competitors.

Google 'Tips on About Us pages' and you'll get lots of great advice but it all still really lacks an edge. It's either some whacked approach or it feels plastic and without life.

It is one of the easiest marketing pieces you can fix up straight away and have working harder for you immediately.

So it is the first page I start with when writing website copy and I make sure I nail it before writing any other content. It sets the tone.

Here are some of the things to keep in mind when writing your About Us page.

1. See It As The Foundation

If you are building a site from scratch then start your copywriting on the About Us page. Nailing this will set the tone for all your other copy so go hard and spend lots of time getting it right.

2. Word Count

You have to keep the words to between 300-500 (try and keep it closer to 300 than 500 though). Any more and the reader will lose interest because they are confronted by a wall of text and the need to scroll.

No one cares about your business as much as you do so don't be presume they want to know 'everything'.

3. Tell A Story

Your customers couldn't care less if "We were established in 1998 and have grown to be a local leader in delivering professional services to small and large private and government organisations".

Yawn.

Your visitors don't need a history lesson and they don't need long winded corporate sentences that don't tell them anything. Instead, tell a story about why you are passionate about what you do, how you help people or even where the idea for the business came from. Use examples wherever you can.

If you must include the boring stuff then put it at the end.

4. Talk About Problems

People are on your site because they need a problem solved. You MUST talk about how you solve their problems and possibly even what life looks/feels like once you've solved the problem for them.

5. Call To Action

The page should have a call to action, something like a click here for more, sign-up, call us or download this free resource. Don't just leave them hanging to find their own way - they will wander off.

6. Give It Some Personality

I read way too much corporate dribble these days. Sentences that are filled with impressive words but sentences I have to read 2-3 times to try and figure what they are trying to say. Funny thing is, in person, people from those organisations don't talk like that.

I'll let you in on a little secret - people know that real people work in your organisation. By trying to sound professional and sophisticated you are actually pushing people away because you can't connect with them. Put the corporate bleach away and write more like a person because people do business with people.

7. Spread It Throughout The Site

Take snippets of your About Us page and build them into the other copy on your site. See your About Us page as the foundation which other copy can build from.

Your Task

Go and read your About Us page and check off the things I've covered above that your About Us page has.

Then read your About Us page as if you were a prospective customer and the page was actually sitting on a competitor's web site. You might even copy and paste your words into a document and change your name to your competitors.

How does reading it make you feel?

Does it connect with you?

Does it make you want to do business with them?

If not, maybe it's time you went back and re-worked your About Us page?

Social Media Will Not Solve Your Problems

Let's say you buy a car but it won't start. The brochures and salesman promised the world.

But now it won't work like it is suppose to. This car was going to be your saviour, transporting you here, there and everywhere you needed to go!

Then you check to fuel gauge. Ahhh, empty!

It's pretty hard to run a car without fuel and social media is no different. Cars are just a mode of transport and social media is just a communication channel.

If you don't fill the social media communication channels with fuel (content) then they won't work. If you don't agree, re-read the section about how no one cares about your business as much as you do.

Think about it, on social media, you are competing with updates in news feeds about cats, kids, parties, bogans doing dumb stuff and their real friends. That's why you better have a pretty good plan about what you will CONSISTENTLY put in your social channels if you are any hope of making it work for you. It better be good as well; pictures of your brands BBQ or morning tea are boring if that is about all you post.

What you should do is be coming up with your marketing and content plans and, in those plans, judging whether social is the right channel for you. Too often people think others are having success with social and so they decide they need to be on it as well. So they set-up social media profiles and then wonder why the whole world hasn't liked their page, shared their content or commented on their posts.

Social media is just a channel. It still needs to be filled with good fuel.

Your Task

If you have social media channels, and you really do think you should have them, then sit down once a month and come up with a plan of what and when you are going to post. If you are already producing great content then look at how it can be promoted, or even repurposed, into social channels.

If you can't consistently come up with good content to post in social media then close them down. It just makes you look like no one likes you and/or you don't know what you are doing.

A good rule is the 4:1:1 ratio. Four useful, non-salesy, pieces of content to every one soft sale (such as an event invite) to every one hard sale post (such as a discount or offer).

Putting Prices On Your Website

So you are on the web, looking for a solution to a problem, or just something you want. There's lots of great information, testimonials, pictures, videos etc. But no prices. What does that make you think?

If you are like most people, you think the company has something to hide. Probably means they are expensive, right?

Or you get that sneaking suspicion that when you call you'll be sucked into some sales pitch that you really don't have time for. You'll contact them when you are ready to buy. You don't need help making a decision this early on in the process and you certainly don't want to speak to a salesperson. That's why you are on the net, and not the phone, but still, some prices would be useful at this stage.

That's how you feel. That's how others feel as well.

So why don't you have prices on your website?

Why do you expect your customers to act or think any differently to the way you openly admit to acting and thinking when you are looking for products and services on the net?

The little voice in your head probably just said "Prices are always a 'it depends' scenario". Give me a break. That's a cop out.

I used to work for a bloke who, whenever I said "We can't do that" would retort with "Daniel, we are doing this. This is a 'How can we?' challenge".

That would always mean I needed to figure out a way of making it happen. And that's what you need to achieve with your prices. So instead of saying you can't put prices on our site this is how you can do it if it isn't a simple X costs Y scenario.

Just write that on your site. Something like this:

"Pricing can be hard to determine unless we know your exact needs but some good examples would be an A with B would be between \$2,000 and \$2,500 and a C with D would be between \$4,000 and \$5,000".

Sorted.

At least your potential customers will know which ballpark you are in and when they visit your competitors sites they'll think they are the expensive ones or have something to hide.

You'd appreciate it on a site instead of no pricing information. So would your potential customers. Your job is to help them move closer to picking you. Why make their solution research step harder than it needs to be?

Your Task

This task is pretty simple ... get some pricing information on your site.

Create Awesome Landing Pages

One of the biggest mistakes businesses make is assuming that if they want people to learn more about how they can help then all they have to do is provide a link to their home page and it will be sweet.

If your site is like mine, it's a full-house of great content and information to help people. That's fine if people are coming to your site to 'have a look around' and it is OK if your navigation menu connects with them and then serves up the most relevant content (in saying that, though, people get distracted easily and could end up heading off in the wrong direction on your site or worse, clicking off it).

It also largely depends on what the goal of your site is.

It is not great though if you are advertising on Google Adwords for a specific offering and you simply provide a link to your home page and then expect (read 'hope') the visitor you just paid \$3-9 for will navigate all the way to the relevant page and do what you want them to do.

That is why thinking about creating a landing page is a very powerful tactic that can help you connect with potential customers better and elicit action. Best of all, you don't have to sink more marketing budget into it. Yay!

All you need to do is think about what target audiences you are trying to drive to your site and what information they will be looking for. You also need to consider 'what' you want them to do once they get to the landing page e.g. download a brochure, click to another page, fill out a subscription page or maybe buy something.

Here are some of the most important items that will make a big difference when creating landing pages.

Your Task

If you don't have landing pages for specific promotional tactics then think about creating some. Here are 11 simple things you should do on your landing pages. Even if you already use landing pages, read over the list and make sure you are doing all of these things.

1. Make sure you use an effective headline (and sub-headline).
2. Focus on a single purpose.

3. Design/write it in such a way that anyone could understand what it is about in 20 seconds. Don't assume. You are biased. Test in on some people.
4. Use a video as your main image (so to speak) that shows your product or service in use.
5. Remove any non-essential links so people don't go wandering off.
6. Explain your offering's Unique Selling Position.
7. Focus on benefits - not features. People want problems solved.
8. Use testimonials - They are social proof that what you say you can do you can actually do.
9. Make it clear what the person will receive/do when they take action/click the button.
10. Make your call-to-action button contrast and stand out from the rest of the page.
11. Consider putting a time limit on the offer you are making so as to create urgency.

Focus Your Content

If you use content to help market your business then one of the key questions to ask before you start writing or recording is "What does the potential customer need to know?" or even "How can I make the potential customer's life better?"

The obvious focus here is the customer which means it isn't you or the business. It isn't about what you can get out of the content.

When you create content you should never be thinking "What do I want out of this?". That is just a fancy sales pitch and it smells exactly like it. It won't engage customers, they won't share and it won't be effective. Focus on them instead.

Also, when you've finished your content, and before you hit the 'publish' button, ask yourself "Why would anyone care about this?". If you can't easily answer that, remembering that 'anyone' are the potential or existing customers, then you need to go back and re-work the content.

By not making your content about what you can get out of it then your audience will be more inclined to consume it. That means you can build trust and demonstrate your expertise. If you build your own audience, through an email database for example, then it also means that when you send them content that you aren't thought of as "Ho hum, here is another sales email. It's always about them!". You know the ones you get heaps of? Bet you don't even read them. Don't let your audience think the same thing.

Your Task

Print this page and then cut out the section below. Stick it on your wall or whiteboard and ask yourself the questions during your content creation and publishing.



YOU HAVE A CONTENT TOPIC IDEA

What does the potential customer need to know?

How can I make the potential customer's life better?



BEFORE YOU PUBLISH

Why would anyone care about this?

Use Your Email Database

You've been collecting email addresses for years now and you have a few hundred, maybe even a few thousand, on your database.

You don't, however, email them anything.

Here is the thing. Those people have given you their email which is essentially giving you permission to communicate with them.

The other important thing to note is that you own the audience. Think about it. You simply rent an audience' from every other communication channel. Even though they may like your Facebook page, follow you on Twitter, hear your radio ad or see your print ad, you don't own any of that audience. What would happen if Facebook closed tomorrow or started charging \$500 a post? You have very little control over the audience. That is why building your own email database is, most often, the absolute best content distribution channel.

THEY WANT TO GET GOOD STUFF FROM YOU! Why are you ignoring them?

A lot of the time businesses aren't very sure about what they should be emailing because they themselves hate the pushy sales-focussed emails we all get bombarded with. If you are struggling with ideas for what to include in your email campaigns then look at the key questions listed under the section *Focussing Your Content*.

A very easy way to get started is to write a blog once a week and then collate a small snippet and a link, fortnightly or monthly, in an email campaign. You can also include a section of relevant and interesting things you've read, listened to or watched over the period.

We still want to sell stuff and customers understand that. That's why, when you send your emails, it is OK to include some sales messages. It can't be too much though, otherwise you cross the line, and a good rule of thumb is 75% content focussed on them and 25% sales content.

By keeping your email campaigns focussed on sharing good content (yours or curated) then when you do have a truly great sales offer people are much more likely to be receptive because it is the exception rather than the norm.

Your Task

If you don't already run email campaigns then look into a platform called Mailchimp. It's an awesome, cloud based, email platform that helps manage your emails including design, subscriptions and unsubscribes.

It also provides awesome statistics like open rates and click through rates which you can compare to averages in your industry. You can even see who clicked on what links in your email.

You can even A/B split test headlines where it will send one headline to 10% of your database and another headline to another 10% and then send the remaining 80% based on which headline performed the best (based on either open or click through rates).

You can even put your email together and set a time for it to be sent. Plus they have an app.

Want more?

Best of all, it's free for up to 12,000 emails a month. That's either one email to 12,000 people or two emails to 6,000 or three emails to 4,000 etc.

Get on it.

Check out Mailchimp.

Don't Write Boring Copy

So you've don't lot's of hard work and got people to your site.

Then they read something like this:

Established in 2012, Big City Accountants services a range of clients in SA, VIC and NSW in relation to a variety of financial matters including budgeting, tax, BAS and bookkeeping.

Big City Accountants head office is conveniently located in the heart of the Melbourne CBD and we have branch offices in southern and northern Victoria. We also have agents in Adelaide, Sydney, Albury and Gosford.

At Big City Accountants, when you talk to one of our highly qualified accountants, you talk to a professional who genuinely cares about your problem. Our accountants take the time to listen and understand your problem and most importantly, your desired outcome.

That is an actual cut and paste from an About Us page on a website. I changed the locations and the industry to protect the guilty.

Did you read all three paragraphs? If so, well done because it is very boring. It doesn't connect with the reader and reads like it has had the company's personality completely scrubbed out of it. The other reason it fails is because it takes two paragraphs before it even starts talking about the visitor and how they will help them. It says that they " ... *take the time to listen and understand your problem and most importantly, your desired outcome*". Then why talk about yourself so much?

On the actual page, there is one more line that talks about outcomes and then another three paragraphs about their reputation and success and blah blah blah zzzzzzz.

Boring. We want to know how you will solve our problem. Don't abuse your customers attention. They are time poor. Don't write boring copy. Ever. Please.

Your Task

Review your copy. Is it boring or does it show your organisation's personality?

Do you talk about yourself mostly or do you focus on the customer?

Pyramid of Offerings

The definition of marketing I most subscribe to is that it is about finding people with a need and getting them to trust you.

It's simplistically beautiful.

A lot of people still rely on the sales meeting and the weak follow-up email as their main way to getting people to trust them. But we all know, in the sales meeting, both parties have their guard up, not wanting to get taken for a ride or lose the opportunity. All because there is no real trust there yet.

But how do you get people to trust you?

Content.

Think about it like this.

You might be attracted to someone and so you invite them out on a date. You go to dinner, have a few drinks and as the night draws to a close you wonder what might happen next. You really like the other person and would love to spend the night with them.

Sometimes it happens but if you put it out there too early, then you get rejected, you will probably never speak to the person ever again. Yes, maybe it's because you are ugly and, they aren't attracted to you, but it's also because they don't know and trust you enough yet.

It takes time. It takes more dates. They need to get to know you and trust you before they are willing to take the next step. And they'll want to do it at their own pace. During those other dates you show them that you are a nice person, can be trusted and aren't just in it for yourself. The relationship blossoms.

The point is, you don't go from step one to step ten very quickly, very often.

Your business is the same.

Often, people don't come to your site and buy from you straight away. They want to get to know you and feel comfortable that you know what you are doing, can be trusted and are nice to deal with. This is especially true if you offer things that are more complex than simple products or services.

That's what content does. It demonstrates your expertise and leads to people trusting you. It helps them move through the steps to purchase.

What is the process?

A great way to do this is to offer something for free. Once they get to know you a little and see you do good work, you can position something at a small price. Something that isn't a risk. Initially you might have a blog, newsletter, videos or podcast that are free and people can subscribe to or consume on your site. Then, you position something at a small price such as a small event, an eBook or an online forum.

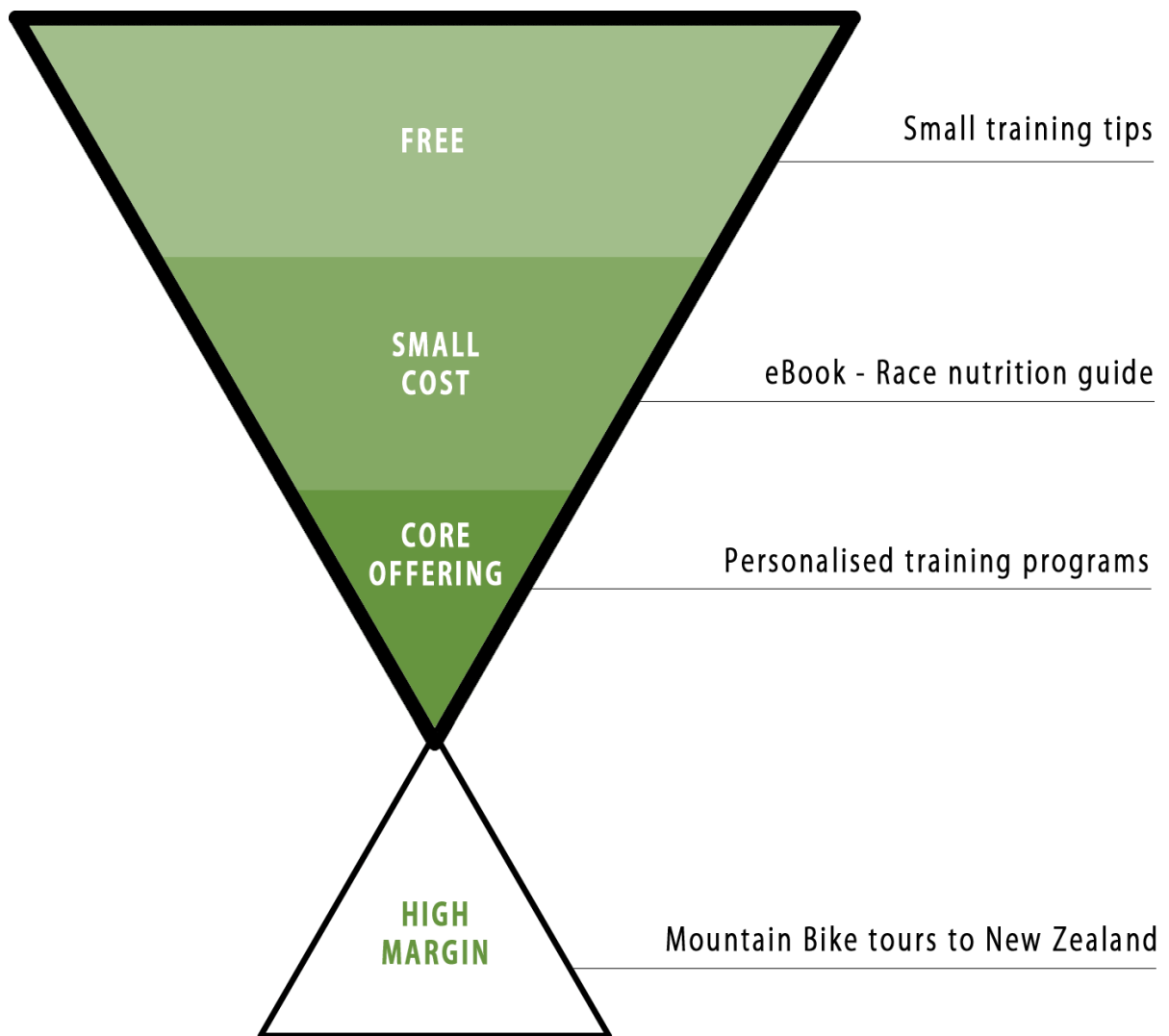
After those, that's when people are more likely to buy your core offerings because they've tested you, and trust you, because you've demonstrated your expertise, yet they haven't had to invest a lot in it.

To take it a step further, following your core offerings, you might have one really big offering that is expensive and makes big money for you.

It's just a different way of looking at your sales funnel.

An example

Here is an example using a mountain bike skills and fitness business.



Your Task

Draw the above pyramid out on a piece of paper and populate it with the things that you offer in each section. Consider whether each section supports the next and encourages people to commit a little more and trust you. You may need several pyramids if you offer differing products or services.

The End

Well there you have it. Some of the most common and practical marketing advice I give on a regular basis to businesses. Best of all, it is all easy to understand and implement. You just need to make it happen now.

If you want to keep up-to-date with ongoing advice then be sure to check out the Marketing Lab Podcast that I help deliver once a fortnight. You can find individual episodes on the [Content Grasshopper blog](#) or subscribe in iTunes or Stitcher.



On the site, I also offer some easy to you use templates including:

MENU: CONTENT ACTIVITIES

A simple to use menu which, if you have sizeable pieces of content, you can use to rank the importance of the theme/topic and easily create a campaign to promote it. [Download](#)

PLANNER: WEBSITE CONTENT

A easy-to-use spreadsheet that helps you plan out your site's pages and helps you consider, for each page, the audience, their buying stage, the one thing you need to get across, benefits, calls-to-action, keywords and phrases, voice, style/tone and images. [Download](#)

TEMPLATE: WEB PAGE CONTENT TEMPLATE

Explains the key elements to writing great website pages and includes a checklist to make sure you've covered them all. [Download](#)

GUIDE: HOW TO CONTENT QUICKLY

A straightforward guide on how to organise your thoughts to write content really quickly. [Download](#)

GUIDE: ULTIMATE CASE STUDIES

An in-depth guide on how to write properly structured case studies that will take your readers on a journey and help them create a vision of what life will be like after you help them. It provides lots of background information on best practice before positioning the critical elements of a case study and then outlining the process to bring one to a finished product. [Download](#)

About The Author: Content Grasshopper

Content Grasshopper unpacks your expertise and turns it into awesome content that attracts, converts and retains customers.

You are probably here because you have a marketing problem you want solved. That's what we do for you, we solve marketing problems. So it is important you ask yourself three crucial questions:

1. What problem am I trying to solve? Yes we know you want more customers/revenue but you need to think more deeply than that because that's a symptom of problem.
2. On a scale of 1-10, how painful is the problem?
3. What would happen if I do nothing about it?

Once we've figured all that out we can have a look at what marketing tactics you've tried in the past and come up with ideas that we think can work for you.

Mostly we'll focus on unpacking your expertise and turning it into awesome content that will attract, convert and retain customers.

And we'll do all that while using down to earth, practical, advice while following one of our guiding principles that "We'll never tell you to do something we wouldn't do ourselves if it was our business"

About Me

One of the things that makes me different, to a lot of other marketers around Canberra, is that I actually have marketing qualifications (Master of Marketing with Distinction and I've completed the Content Marketing Institute's content marketing course) plus extensive experience across a wide range of industries and organisation sizes.

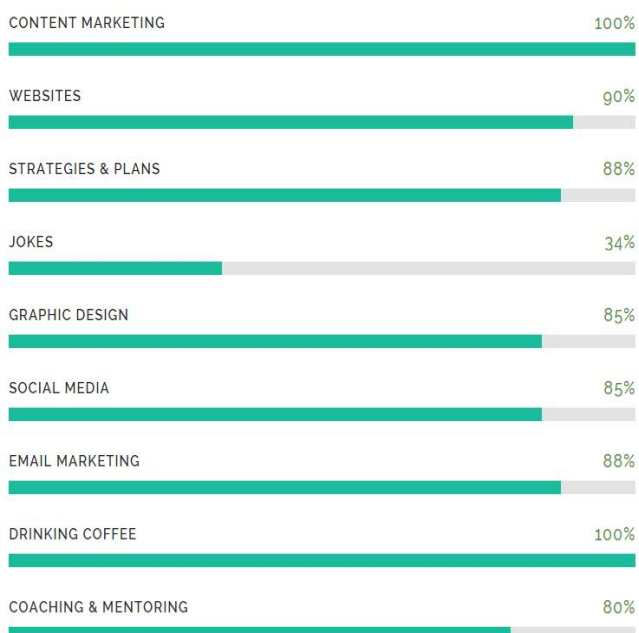
What that means is not only do I understand the theories of marketing but I've been applying them for long time in many different situations.

I'm a massive believer that more businesses should take a 'marketing through teaching' approach and utilise all the cheap tools available, think like publishers and create content.

Sadly, too many business are still trying to use marketing tactics that were designed to sell stuff to our grandparents. That doesn't work in today's digital world and I'm tired of seeing businesses get ripped off with bad marketing (it's hard enough to run a business, right?).

I also like to take a skills transfer approach wherever I can. That means I'd rather get you started, coach and mentor you to keep going and then get you to a place where you are confident and educated enough to be a better marketer all by yourself.

My Skill Set



Obligatory serious corporate profile picture.



What I mostly look like.

