

The Beginner's Guide to

Online Marketing

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Simple Digital Marketing

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ONLINE MARKETING

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO ONLINE MARKETING

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PROLOGUE

Hello and thank you for downloading my eBook.

I have written this book for you – the small business owner.

I believe that it is possible to learn almost *any* subject if you are taught well.

A few years ago, as a small business owner myself, I realised that I was behind the times when it came to digital marketing.

I had a website, which I didn't know how to update. I had never placed an ad on Facebook or Google. My clients came from word of mouth and referrals.

I had tried to “boost” a post on Facebook, but I got no responses. And I thought my social media content was corny.

I knew I had a lot to learn. So I bought some books, enrolled on a course, and began my journey.

I gave up after just a few weeks. It didn't take me long to discover that:

- There were *thousands* of expert opinions about digital marketing. Each one claimed that they had “the best” way of advertising.
- Advertising on Facebook or Google seemed very complicated. If you've ever tried, you'll know what I mean.
- It was difficult to create good social media content for my business.

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- It was very time-consuming to post on social media.
- I wasn't great at writing copy.
- There were so many buzz words that I just didn't understand – PPC, CTR, ROAS, SEO, SEM, CPA, API, CRM.
- I felt like it was just too late in life for me to start learning all this, and it would take years to get my head around it all.
- The world of online marketing *changes* all the time. What I learned one week was no longer valid a few months later.
- There were many contradicting opinions about what works in marketing.

One year later, I decided to give it another try.

I re-started the course I had purchased, and I made sure that I didn't move forward until I fully understood what I was studying.

I also started testing everything I learned, in my own business.

I learned how to update my website. I even learned how to create a new website from scratch.

I started using Facebook Ads.

My first campaign didn't do well. In fact, I got no responses at all!

But I went back to my course and tried to figure out what went wrong. I gave it another try.

After a few failed attempts, one day I got a sudden, brilliant result. I spent £280 on a Facebook ad, and it generated over 100

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leads, and that eventually translated into over £30,000 in sales for my business.

With my newfound confidence, I tried again. But this time, I didn't get the same results.

Again, I went back to my courses and books and figured out why it didn't work, and I gave it another go. This time it worked even better.

I realised that I *could* get results with online marketing.

I decided to get more practice, so I reached out to some friends who have their own small businesses.

I built websites for them. I created marketing campaigns and strategies. I created social media pages for them and helped them to post content.

One of my friends got 178 leads from one ad. I had to help her to reorganise her business to cope with the huge influx of demand for her services.

I started **Simple Digital Marketing** with a simple mission: To make the world of online marketing *understandable*, so that small business owners can *use* these powerful tools to increase their bottom line.

Each chapter in this book gives you a basic understanding of one concept. It's not a complete course. But if it helps in any way to clear up the confusion of the online marketing world, then I'm happy.

Happy reading!

1: HOW MARKETING HAS CHANGED

Here's something I have learned in the last few years: The pre-internet way of marketing is dead, and many large companies haven't realised it yet.

Before the internet (which is the world I grew up in), marketing on TV, radio, billboards and in magazines was the way of the world. It was very expensive, and only the business giants could afford it.

For the rest of us (small business owners), we used leaflets, direct mail, cold calling, knocking on doors and even fax marketing (yes, there was such a thing!).

We made sure our business was in the Yellow Pages. Sometimes we advertised in local newspapers or magazines. We relied on word of mouth.

It took the internet about 25 years to settle into what it is today, and it has changed *everything* about marketing.

Today, the small business, with its tiny budget, can potentially generate massive returns and reach a global market.

Today, small business can select the *exact* audience they want to show their ads to. They can find tons of leads just by hanging around in the right social media groups.

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It's a level playing field. The little guy has the same resources as the giant corporation.

2: WHAT IS A SALES FUNNEL?

“Sales funnel” is a word that is used a lot in marketing.

You already have a sales funnel in your business. What is it, and how is it useful?

A sales funnel is simply the journey a customer takes, from being a stranger, to buying from you.

Maybe you send out flyers and get people calling in for a quote. You give the quote, follow up, and sign up a new client. That journey is the sales funnel.

Why's it called a funnel? Because it's shaped like one: Wide at the top and narrow at the bottom.



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Strangers to your business enter in at the top and go through to the sale at the bottom.

For example, 200,000 people see your Facebook ad. 200 of them click on it and look at your website. 20 of them request a quote. 6 of them buy from you.

Marketers talk about “top of funnel” and “bottom of funnel” a lot.

Let's imagine the client journey as a series of steps.

In the old way of marketing, when a prospective client was about 20% of the way through these steps, they were put in front of a sales person.

The sales person had to pull the client through another 80% of the steps, in order to get the sale. In other words, the sales person spent a lot of time building trust, educating the person and so on until finally the sale took place.

Today, if you do it well, the client is already 70% through the funnel before you speak to them.

You have already earned their trust.

You have already educated them about your product and company.

They are already quite interested. The sales person just has to push them through that last 20% of the journey.

3: WHAT IS A WEBSITE?

I know that sounds like a stupid question, but I want to give you a good idea of what a website really is.

Now, if you know something about websites, bear with me. I'm going to cover some very basic ideas here, for the benefit of those who don't know.

The first question to ask is, *where* is a website?

It's not on some "cloud" in the sky.

A website is just a bunch of files, located on an actual computer somewhere in the world.

Anyone with internet access can read those files, from anywhere in the world.

To have a website, you need to "rent" space on one of these computers. In other words, you need to pay someone to "host" your website on their computer.

Secondly, your website needs an address. It needs one of those "www" names which people can type into Google so they can find your website.

This website name is called a "domain name."

Thirdly, you need to build the website. This can be done by you (using a build-it-yourself website service), or you can hire someone to build it for you.

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To summarise: To have your own website, you need:

1. A hosting service
2. A domain name
3. The website itself needs to be designed

Hosting is cheap. I currently pay £1 a month to host my website.

A domain name is cheap. I bought mine for £15 (and I've seen them for as little as £1).

The build-it-yourself website services are cheap. Some cost £7.50 per month, and they include the hosting and domain name.

Hiring someone to build your website is not cheap. But it is worth doing.

I've seen ads that say: "I'll build your website for £99." More often, you can expect to be charged anything from £300 to £2000 for a website.

When someone builds a website for you, it is important to ask them how much they charge you afterwards to maintain the website.

You will need to update your website regularly. How much will the website builder charge for this?

Now that we've covered the basics, I want to tell you what a website *really* is.

WHAT A WEBSITE REALLY IS

Ask a group of people what a business website is. You'll get a variety of answers.

Some say it is a catalogue of your services. Others say it is a way of people finding you on Google.

They aren't wrong. A website does all those things, but it is *so* much more.

Above all, a website SELLS for you.

A website does what salespeople used to do. It explains your product and its benefits. It tells people how your product will solve their problem.

You would be *amazed* at how many websites *don't* do this!

Your website is a salesperson who works 24/7, never takes holidays, never demands a raise, and continues to educate people about the benefits of your product or service, day and night.

As a matter of interest, not all websites are about sales. The help page of a company might not have the goal of sales. It would more likely have the goal of answering peoples' questions well.

Websites must be "optimised for conversion."

WHAT IS “OPTIMISED FOR CONVERSION”?

Now, before your eyes glaze over and you fall asleep, let me explain this. It's quite simple, don't worry.

Conversion is a word you will hear a lot in marketing, and it's worth knowing what it means.

Conversion is defined as “the thing you want your website or advert to do.”

For example, if you want your website to sell furniture, then one “conversion” would be “one sale of furniture.”

When you're advertising on Google or Facebook, you can tell them what conversion you want.

You can tell Google, “The whole point of my ad is to get someone to buy my gadget.” Google uses its giant brain to help you achieve as many gadget sales as possible.

A conversion is whatever you say it is.

If you're running a Facebook ad, you can tell Facebook, “The goal for this ad is to get more followers of my Facebook page.”

Facebook's very clever brain will show your ad to people who are likely to follow your page. In this case, one conversion would be “one new follower.”

With your small business website, usually the conversion you want is sales of your product or service.

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If we say your website is “optimised for conversion,” we mean that we have done everything possible to make your website *sell* your product or service.

It means we have removed anything that blocks sales. We've removed anything that is confusing or unnecessary.

Conversion Rate Optimisation is the process of making sure that *every* detail in your website is designed to get sales.

Conversion Rate Optimisation is something of a science.

I'll give you some examples of ways that your website can be optimised for sales:

Visitors to your website must be able to tell at a glance:

- *Who* your product or service is *for*
- How your product or service solves their problem
- What the visitor should do now (otherwise known as “Call to Action”)

You would be amazed how many websites don't do this.

Your call to action should be clear:

- BUY NOW
- REQUEST A FREE QUOTE
- REQUEST A PHONE CALL
- CONTACT US

These are all calls to action. They tell the visitor what you want them to do. You should have several (three or more) on every page of your website.

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Your website should use *simple*, easy-to-read language.

I probably should have mentioned this one first. It's the most important. Studies have shown that complex language is the number 1 sales killer on websites.

Your website should be easy to read.

This means use shorter sentences. Use short paragraphs.

A *video* on your home page can be very effective. It depends on your business. *Show* your visitors what you do!

Your website *must* work well on a mobile phone.

Many websites don't pay enough attention to this. Today most users will see your website on a mobile phone.

Your website *must* answer peoples' questions.

The only way to really do this well is to *test* your website. Get your friends and family to visit the website and watch them navigate it.

There are many excellent products that can test your website in a variety of ways.

If you optimise your website for conversions, you will increase sales and profit in your business.

4: WHAT IS CONTENT MARKETING?

Sorry if you already know this. Bear with me. I must confess, I didn't understand content marketing for a long time.

The dictionary defines *content marketing* as:

"a type of marketing that involves the creation and sharing of online material (such as videos, blogs and social media posts) that does not explicitly promote a brand but is intended to stimulate interest in its products or services."

That's accurate enough.

But I'd like to explain it better.

Today, consumers are quite smart. They don't like ads. They don't like anything that *looks* like an ad. They don't completely trust "sales talk."

They like to do their research. They like to look up your product online, read reviews, check out your prices, compare you to the competition.

They want to get to know you. They want to trust you before they buy from you. They want to know that you're human, and not some giant, faceless corporation.

This is where content marketing comes in.

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Content marketing includes posts on your business Facebook page. It includes posts on any other social media page you have.

Content marketing does *not* include adverts for your products or services. It doesn't include anything that sounds like a sales pitch.

Anything that makes your prospective clients see the human side of you is allowed in content marketing.

Anything which gives valuable information to people is allowed.

Anything which makes people smile, laugh, nod their heads in agreement – can be used in content marketing.

Anything which makes people say “wow, that was really useful information” counts.

When you post content on social media, you're not trying to get sales. You're trying to build trust and get engagement.

Engagement means likes, comments and follows.

It also means replying to comments that people leave on your social media posts.

On social media, your content marketing can and should include:

1. Posts giving advice from your expertise in your industry
2. Posts that teach people useful things about your industry
3. Videos showing your team at work

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4. Videos of you talking, explaining something
5. Videos that show the human side of you and your team
6. Humorous images and videos

Your website can contain “content” as well.

You can write blogs that educate people. The funny thing is, your blogs can be completely free from any sales pitch about your business, and they will be very popular with website visitors.

For example, if you are a painter and decorator, you could write a blog about how to choose the best wall colours, or how to hang pictures. It's not necessarily a service you offer, but you know a thing or two about the subject.

You could even write an article about how to choose the right painter decorator. “Five things to ask your painter decorator before hiring him.” Make it honest. Don't try to sell your service as superior. Just give useful information.

Ask your sales people to list out all the questions customers ask. Write a blog to answer each question.

People really appreciate helpful content.

Some modern marketers say you can have over 500 articles on your website, offering helpful information about your field. After a while, your website could become the top source in the world about your industry.

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Anything that educates people in your field is actually doing the salesperson's job.

Helpful content builds trust in your business.

Once people trust you, they will come to you asking to buy, and you won't need to do a whole long sales pitch on them. They'll already be well-informed.

5: ONLINE ADVERTISING

Online ads are a very powerful tool.

I want to give you just a basic understanding of the tools you have available, and how they can help your business.

You could divide online ads into two basic types:

1. Social Media ads
2. Pay Per Click ads

SOCIAL MEDIA ADS

Spoiler alert: In case you didn't know, you can advertise on social media.

The most popular platform to advertise on is Facebook.

Facebook Ads are *very* effective in many industries, B2C and B2B. If you sell to other businesses, the owners of those businesses are on Facebook and will see your ads.

Social media advertising is what's called *interruptive* advertising.

The people seeing your ad are scrolling through their social media feeds, and your ad interrupts their scrolling.

At the moment when your ad shows up, they are not specifically searching for your product.

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Your ad has to catch their attention. It needs to stop them from scrolling.

Social media companies know a *lot* about their users.

For a marketer, this means that you can be very picky about *who* sees your ad. This way, you don't waste money.

Think about it – when you spent £10,000 a month on a billboard ad, what percentage of the people passing by are actually the kind of people you're trying to sell to? It's quite a small percentage.

With social media advertising, you are *only* showing your ad to people with specific interests and behaviours.

With social media ads, you have to provide the following:

1. You need to tell the social media platform what your advertising **goal** is (direct sales, leads, traffic to your website, Facebook likes, etc.)
2. You need to tell the platform what **audience** you want your ad to be shown to (behaviours, interests, age, location)
3. You need to provide **images** and/or **videos** to be shown on the ad
4. You need to provide **wording** (copy) for the ad
5. You need to tell the platform how much you want to **spend**, per day, on your ad
6. You must tell the platform what your **call to action** is

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7. You have to tell the platform what **website** to send people to when they click the call-to-action button

Note: There are two ways to advertise on Facebook. There's the simple, beginner way, and there's the advanced, professional way.

The beginner's method is where you post something on Facebook, and Facebook invites you to "boost" the post.

The advanced method is called Facebook Ads Manager. With this method, you can control every aspect of the ad. Your ads can have incredible reach and results using this method.

PAY PER CLICK ADS

When you search for something on Google, you get a list of results. You may have noticed that some of the results say "sponsored" next to them. These are paid ads on Google.

You search "plumber near me" and the first few results at the top of the page are actually ads.

Note that these look nothing like Facebook ads. There usually aren't any videos or images. They're usually quite short. They are ads that are made to look like search results.

Google advertising is called "*responsive* advertising." Your ad shows up as a direct response to someone searching for your product or service.

The people who see your Google ads were *looking* for your services.

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Google ads are “pay per click” ads. PPC for short.

Someone searches “beauty salon near me” and your paid ad comes up as the first salon on the page. So far, you don't pay anything. Now the person clicks on your ad, and is taken to your website. *Now you pay.*

Don't worry, the amount you spend each day is controlled. You can spend £2 a day, or £5,000 a day. Your ad won't exceed the budget that you set.

You can get great results as a small business spending just £20 a day.

Google ads are structured around key words.

You have to figure out what phrases people will type in the search bar when they're looking for you.

Now, what if you're a plumber and three other local plumbers are advertising on Google? How does Google decide whose ad to put first? What if all three plumbers have chosen “plumber near me” as one of their key words?

Google solved this by allowing companies to bid for key words. If you say “I will pay £1.20 per click to get my ad shown first,” and the other two plumbers will pay £1.10 per click, your ad will be shown first.

That's a simplified explanation.

Now this might all sound very complicated. But Google Ads makes it fairly easy to manage. You do need to put in a bit of time to learn the basics. But once you understand them, it is actually quite simple to use.

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Google is the best-known pay-per-click ad platform. But you can also run PPC ads on Twitter (now called X), LinkedIn, and other platforms.

Choosing whether to run PPC or social media ads depends on your business.

If you were a painter-decorator, I would suggest Google ads. People who are going to spend money redecorating tend to be searching for that service online.

If you were a driving instructor, Google would probably be the best place to start.

If you sold laser hair removal, I'd go with Facebook first. You want to advertise to people who are interested in beauty, but who aren't necessarily searching for laser hair removal.

If you make tailored furniture, you will most likely get similar results on Google and Facebook. I've run Facebook ads for furniture makers which generated hundreds of quality leads.

Many businesses advertise on both.

If you want to advertise B2B services, Facebook and LinkedIn would both be effective.

If you want to advertise to a younger demographic, TikTok might be better for you. But surprisingly, TikTok can also be good for an older audience.

There's more to learn about online marketing, but the above gives you the basic principles involved.

6: TESTING: THE KEY TO ONLINE MARKETING SUCCESS

I want to say something quickly about how to get great results in online marketing.

It is always better to follow a long-term plan in your marketing, rather than just placing an ad and hoping for results.

Your ads will most likely *not* get great results the first time you try them. You need to keep your focus on the long-term strategy.

It can sometimes take weeks to start getting excellent results in online ads.

There are some basic principles that you should use, which will increase the chances of your ad getting results.

But you never know *for sure* what is going to work well.

The way to get the best results is to *test* everything. Don't assume anything.

You can create an ad campaign that has 20 different ads in it. In each separate ad, you try a different variation.

You can test different images. You can test different ad copy. You can test different audiences.

Do this in an organised way. Plan it out.

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After 4 or 5 days of running all 20 ads, you will see which ads are performing well, and which ones are not.

You can simply switch off the ads that aren't getting results. This will channel your budget towards the ads that are getting good results.

This applies to social media and PPC ads.

The best marketers in the world repeat this advice over and over: The key to getting great results is **testing**.

7: THE POWER OF EMAIL

In my spare time I write music. I always wanted to write music for movies.

In 2017, I saw an ad on Facebook saying I could get a free e-book about how to write film music. All I had to do was give them my email address.

This was the first time I'd ever come across something *free* that promised to teach me something I really wanted to know about.

I clicked the button, filled in my details and the eBook was sent to me immediately.

The eBook was only a few pages long and it *was* very useful. It wasn't a college textbook on music composition. But I found it useful. It was written by someone who was a film composer.

Pretty soon I started getting emails from the company. The emails weren't flashy *sales* emails. I usually delete sales emails without reading them.

These emails were from a real person, and he shared fascinating stories and tips about writing music.

Some emails even had a link to a video. The guy in the video was entertaining and I always found his advice to be useful.

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After about 10 emails, I got an email offering me a course.

It was being sold at a discount – usually £299, but today it was being sold for £97.

The email was brilliant at explaining the value of the course. It came with a lot of free bonus material. I was hooked!

I bought the £97 course. I loved it.

If I didn't hear from the company again, I probably would have left it at that.

But the company continued to send me emails. A year later, they announced a new course, covering something that I really wanted to know about. This one was £199. I didn't buy it immediately, but after a few months I did.

I spent over £1000 with that company over two years.

It's interesting – good email marketing follows the same rules as content marketing. Don't just *sell* in every email. Use the email to give your prospects interesting stories, useful tips, and inspiration.

Not everyone will buy your product after 10 emails. Some will unsubscribe. But if your emails are good, a certain percentage will buy.

If your mailing list is large, this translates into good sales.

This series of emails can be fully automated. Tools like Mailchimp make this process very easy. Each new email address gets a scheduled series of emails.

8: THE SQUEEZE PAGE

Email marketing works very well in some industries.

But how do you collect email addresses of people? How do you grow your email list to a size large enough to get sales from it?

One way of doing this is called a squeeze page.

In the previous chapter, that music education school offered me a free eBook in exchange for my email address.

That was a squeeze page.

It's a website page that has very little on it. It has a space for your name and email address, and it promises to send you a free item.

What can your business give away for free, in exchange for someone's email address?

You can get quite creative about this.

You can give a free sample of your product, if you like.

You can give away a free eBook or PDF containing *valuable* information. It must be valuable and useful.

You can give access to a video in which you give them valuable information.

You can give them a free item if they pay for the postage. Many authors of business books do this. They give a

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free copy of their book, providing the person just pays the shipping fee.

This might sound like a costly thing to do. But in some industries, the book does the selling.

If someone reads the book, they're likely to become very interested in the person's product, and the cost of giving away free books is offset by the sales that come in.

If you're a self-published fiction writer, you can give the first three chapters of your book (in eBook format) for free, in exchange for their email address.

If you sell an online course, you can give them the first lesson for free.

Remember that if someone asked for the free sample or PDF from you, they are at least somewhat interested in your product already.

Sending them a series of emails should be quite acceptable for them, because they're already interested.

9: WHERE ELSE SHOULD I PROMOTE MY BUSINESS?

We've covered websites, social media, online ads and emails.

Are there any other places on the internet where you should leave your mark?

Yes, definitely.

Back in the pre-internet days, the Yellow Pages was an important place to list your business in.

There are some important places online where you should list your business. Most of them are free.

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

When you search for a company on Google, what do you find?

Often, you'll notice they have a profile on Google. You know – it shows their location, reviews, prices and so on. It has a link to their website. It shows their opening hours.

To get your company listed the same way, you need to create a Google Business Profile for the business.

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You have to prove to Google that you are a real company (this is part of the process of setting up your profile).

Do you want your business to be shown on Google Maps? This happens automatically when you create a Google Business Profile.

APPLE MAPS

iPhones have their own maps app – Apple Maps.

If you list your business on Google My Business, this doesn't mean you'll show up on Apple Maps.

The way to get on Apple Maps is to register your business with Apple Business Connect. You will need to create an Apple ID for your business, then follow the instructions to list your business.

OTHER BUSINESS DIRECTORIES

There are some other online directories which you should list your business on. Most are free and it's worth putting your business on as many as you can.

Some of these are: Yelp, Yell, Bing Places for Business, Nextdoor and Bizify.

There are also trade-specific business directories that you should look at. Treatwell is a great one to list your beauty salon on.

My belief is to promote yourself everywhere you can.

EPILOGUE

I hope that in some way this book has given you some ideas, and clarified things for you a bit.

Feel free to email me any questions you have on stephen@simpledigitalmarketing.co.uk.

I provide the following services for small businesses:

1. Web design (including conversion rate optimisation)
2. Website upkeep
3. Upgrading existing websites
4. Teaching you how to update your website
5. Social Media Accounts setup
6. Social Media Content Posting for you
7. Teaching you how to post good content
8. Done-For-You Social Media Advertising
9. Done-For-You Google Advertising
10. Teaching you how to run your own online ads
11. Consulting on how to improve your sales process to make the most of digital marketing