

***Marketing – your new best friend***  
***An adviser's guide to marketing***  
***and the support available from SimplyBiz***

By Richard Ardron, DipMCIM Chartered Marketer

 **SIMPLYBIZ|GROUP**



## Foreword

As a Marketing Professional, I remain constantly passionate about my chosen discipline but, of course, whilst I am inevitably a strong believer in the role marketing can play in helping a business to grow, I do of course understand the daily pressures many are under, which in turn can often see marketing put on the back burner.

However, with the introduction of the RDR on 1 January 2013, I now believe that marketing must become a necessity for all adviser firms.

First of all, in regard to the changes to the way in which advisers are remunerated for the advice they give, marketing - or, more importantly, - marketing communications, can become a valuable tool. As part of the ongoing service clients must now receive, firms can build in a programme of regular communication to their proposition which, with the advent of the digital age, is now much easier and cost effective to implement.

The second element to consider is how a firm now presents their service in this post-RDR world. Existing, and indeed potential, clients will want to know how a firm or adviser operates, what services they offer and how they are remunerated for the advice given.

There is now a rich blend of marketing tools available for advisers and firms, from the recent explosion of social media platforms through to the traditional newsletter and at the SimplyBiz group, we are committed to providing support and solutions for every eventuality.

Within this guide, you will find advice and support to help you to set up and run a fully integrated marketing plan. Throughout you will find reference to the support and the tools that we have made available, all accessible via the Marketing Hub within the member and client websites.

I hope you find everything you need within the guide, but, of course, if you need any further advice, please do not hesitate to contact the marketing department at [marketing@SimplyBiz.co.uk](mailto:marketing@SimplyBiz.co.uk) or on **01484 439122**.

Regards,

Richard Ardron  
Marketing Director, SimplyBiz Group

## Before you start

When it comes to marketing, the biggest temptation is to assess the various tools at our disposal and to then simply select the ones we would most like to use. How many new businesses will start with these infamous words 'we need to be on social media, everyone's on social media'?

However, before you can determine which tools you are going to employ, you need to decide what it is you are looking to achieve and what factors will influence your marketing strategy.

Things to consider, for example are:

- How do I want my business to be perceived?
- What do I offer, is this different from other business in my area?
- How do I want clients to engage with me?
- What is happening around me that may affect this (e.g. politics, legislation)?
- What are my competitors doing, will this change when I commence marketing?
- Who are my audience, how are they behaving, interacting?
- What are the key strengths of my business?
- What opportunities are out there?



## The Plan

To take some of this thinking into planning, I have set out some of the basic areas you would expect to find in a standard Marketing Plan. Now, I know many of you will look at this list and perhaps be tempted to dismiss many of them, but even if you just walk through them and give one word answers, it gives you something to refer to when you start the implementation process.

### CURRENT MARKET POSITION

Before you can decide on any activity, it is advisable to conduct a mini audit of your current position and indeed any activity you may already be carrying out.

There are many ways to do this and many components to consider, but the simplest format is to use the tried and tested marketing method of 'the 4Ps'. Although a marketing term, it is something upon which just about all businesses base their entire strategy:



### PRODUCT

- what products or services are you providing, how will you position them, what do others offer etc.

**PLACE** (often called distribution or access) - where are you currently 'selling your product' - in essence, how do clients get access to you?

### PRICE

- what pricing policy do you have? How does this compare to competition?

**PROMOTION** - what types of activities are you currently carrying out?

## Market Overview

A common mistake when looking at marketing activity is to forget about the outside world and to just focus on what you want to do (we all do it!). What I mean is simply this; we do not operate in a vacuum, outside factors and influences, usually beyond our control, must be assessed.

Again, using the very simplest of tried and tested methods, I would recommend you carry out a high level 'PEST' analysis':

**P**olitical and **E**conomic – What will influence both consumer behaviours and your approach, for example will a new government affect the markets or legislation, what about interest rates, the budget and so on?

**S**ocial and **T**echnology – What do we know of consumer behaviour today, how do they like to access information and support, what role does technology play here - see my article 'Carry on at your convenience' at [www.simplybizblog.co.uk](http://www.simplybizblog.co.uk) for more on this.

On top of the PEST analysis is the need to look at your competitors – what are they doing today and is this likely to change, based on what you do?

### SWOT

The analysis that you have so far conducted will enable you to produce a quick 'SWOT analysis', which, as you will probably know, stands for:

**S**trengths and **W**eaknesses – consider your brand, the range of services you offer, do you have premises, are you online, how long have you been in business, what is your client base like etc.

**O**pportunities and **T**hreats – these are usually things that are outside of your business, often the factors referred to earlier that are out of your control. Use the PEST analysis you have prepared to assess these. Examples could be auto enrolment – opportunity - to move into the corporate world, banks offering advice – threat - and so on.

### KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

From the SWOT analysis you will start to build up a picture of where you want to focus your attention – what the key issues are going to be and what the opportunities are that you wish to explore.

### ASSUMPTIONS

Whilst we can carry out analysis of the various areas covers so far, it is clear that there will be some things we simply will not know. As such, any good plan will include a number of assumptions – for example, what will happen with interest rates or what a new government could mean and so on.

# What are you looking to achieve?

## OBJECTIVES

Right, it's time to move to the business end now (so to speak). We've done our analysis, both on the company and all that surrounds it, now it's time to quantify exactly what it is you are looking to achieve.

What you are going to want to do here is strike a balance and set yourself objectives that you are comfortable with, but you are going to want to be as specific as possible, setting objectives that are meaningful and that you can measure. For example, using increasing clients as a simple example, you can set an objective in one of two ways...

1. Grow customer base by 20% by year end

OR

2. Get more customers

Option 1 is very specific and gives you a clear end result to aim for, but you could set base levels (objective: level one remain static, level two 10% and level three 20% increase – ask yourself – what will you be happy with at the end of it all?).

On the other hand, Objective 2 is rather unspecific – if you take on one more client is that job done, or would you be looking for considerably more?

## STRATEGY

So, you know what you want to achieve, how are you going to go about it?

Here you need to define what your strategy is – for example:

- I'm going to introduce an integrated communication programme to existing clients to ensure they remain loyal and to increase penetration
- I'm going to buy in some new data and commence a marketing campaign to attract new customers
- I'm going to introduce a brand strategy so that all clients, new and existing, see the business as (insert here what you want them to think when they see your brand)

- I am going to increase access to the business via (for example) operating an online hub, opening a satellite office, offering calls after 6pm from home, via introducers (and so on)
- I am going to align the business with 3 local solicitors to tap into a wider customer base
- I am going to engage with all local businesses to increase my exposure in the corporate market and, in turn, to tap into the employees within each
- I am going to add (product) to my existing product range (e.g. will writing, GI etc.)
- I'm going to introduce a new pricing strategy for my existing clientsp

You will use all the analysis you have done previously to set your strategy – you will know where opportunities are, you will know what your strengths are.

## Time to market

Now that you have decided exactly what you want to achieve, it's time to look at how you want to market your business, and this is where the SimplyBiz Group can help.

As I alluded to in my foreword, there are two distinct elements here:

- Marketing communications: Designed to keep existing clients abreast of your services and to tell prospects about them in the hope that they will engage
- Brand and proposition: Designed to showcase your business once someone is engaged

When I am asked about which channels to use, I always revert back to basics - Marketing Communications is about getting...

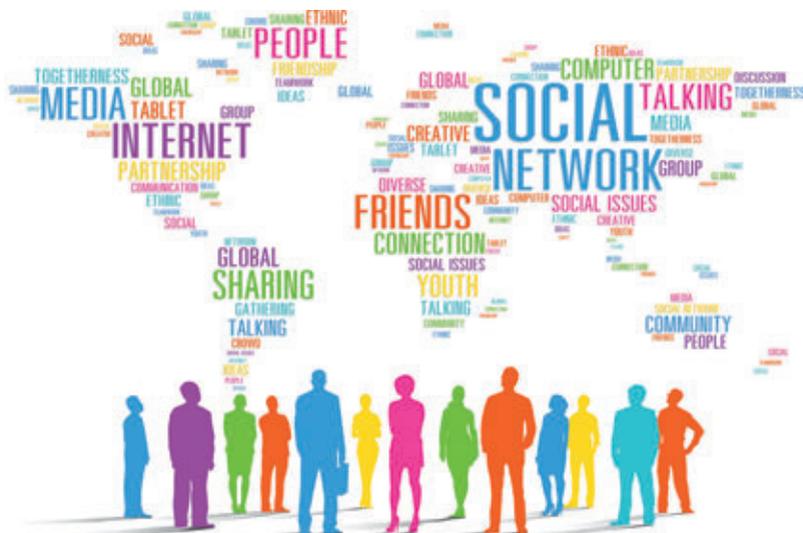
**...the right message...to the right people...  
through the right channels**

Devolving this further step – for me it's simply about two words – 'Integration and Relevance'.

Ensuring you use a good spread of communication channels (print, email, web, etc.) is the backbone to any good communications strategy, but what's more important is to ensure you are delivering your messages through the channels your intended target audience are actually using.

Oh, and, of course, this is all a movable feast – consumer behaviour will change, you just need to look for the clues (again, see my article 'carry on at your convenience' at [www.simplybizblog.co.uk](http://www.simplybizblog.co.uk)).

In this part of the report, I have provided details on the various tools at your disposal along with additional information about how SimplyBiz Group can help.



# Time to market

## WEBSITE

In today's digital era where consumers have an unquenchable thirst for information, all businesses, regardless of size, need a website.

Think for a minute about how you yourself behave when looking for, say, a tradesman. Unless it is a friend or a personal recommendation from a friend, you will no doubt check out the credential of said tradesman via their website – who are they, what's their credentials, what do they charge, what have other clients had to say about them?

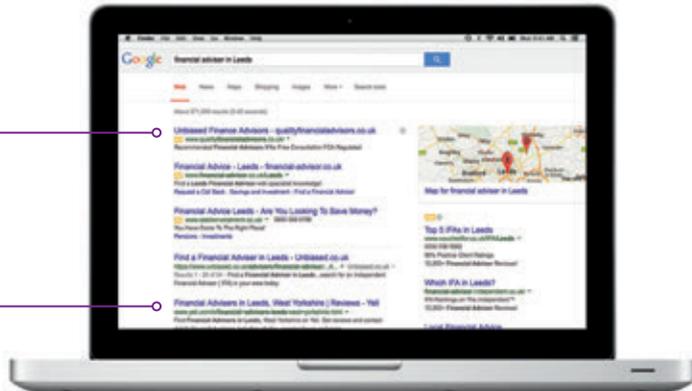
All of this should go into the makeup of your own site. You can start by simply having an online brochure showcasing who you are and what you can offer, but by building up client testimony, feedback mechanisms, contact forms, links to articles, blogs, options to link to your social media pages or even watch you via video, will bring your site to life.

A common mistake often made is assuming just because you have a site people will find you.

- Ensure your web address (or URL) is on all your material – business cards, letter heads, brochures, newsletters etc.
- Ensure the content of your site is relevant – 'key words' will help search engine to find you – so for example, if a client searches for a financial adviser in Leeds and on your website you don't mention that you are either (seems very obvious) search engines will not find you.
- Keep your content fresh – update whenever you can, new office, new member of staff, charity event, regular news and views, case studies, testimony, blogs etc.
- Perhaps consider '**Pay Per Click advertising**' (known as PPC) – here you can create small text based ads on say Google, that will show up when someone searches for an adviser. If you choose to pay for clicks and not impressions, you will only pay when someone actually clicks to visit your site
- Use directories, e.g. local directories showcasing local businesses and national ones

Pay Per Click advertising

Local directories



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## SimplyBiz Group can help

Check out the Marketing Hub for details on SimplySites, still the lowest cost entry website at only £6pcm – with no upfront build costs.

SimplySites offers a number of template designs, pre-set content and the ability to personalise your site.



You will also find further tips and advice for getting the most from your website along with details on our VouchedFor deal.

## EMAIL

Email has fast become the number one method of communications for business and personal use alike. It is one of the most efficient methods to get a message out to a large audience from both a time, resource and cost perspective.

So, it would make sense for email to be a part of your wider strategy and there are a number of things to consider here:

**1. Data** – it's important that you review your 'database' to ensure you have the relevant email address for your clients, you could even conduct an exercise to actually write to them telling them you would like to email them from time to time and to get an email address or check you have the right one (as daft as it may seem, writing out is the best method as you may hold the wrong email and thus they will not receive anything!)

**2. Content** – you need a title that will grab the recipient's attention and content that provides concise sound bites, encouraging further interaction (e.g. go to your website, call you, download a newsletter, watch a video, follow you on Twitter and so on)

**3. Type of email** – you can either simply use your usual email supplier, e.g. outlook, to send emails, or you could subscribe to a campaign management system that will enable you to not only issue professional looking emails that align to your companies brand (similar to the ones you receive from us), but will also provide powerful management information -such as who opened what and where did they go (e.g. clicked to look at your website, an attachment etc.)



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## SimplyBiz Group can help

Check out the Marketing Hub for details of our fully integrated email management solution which provides you with personalised professional templates, fully editable system, full list management and reporting and powerful MI on client usage PLUS you can also plug in our quarterly newsletter!

# Time to market

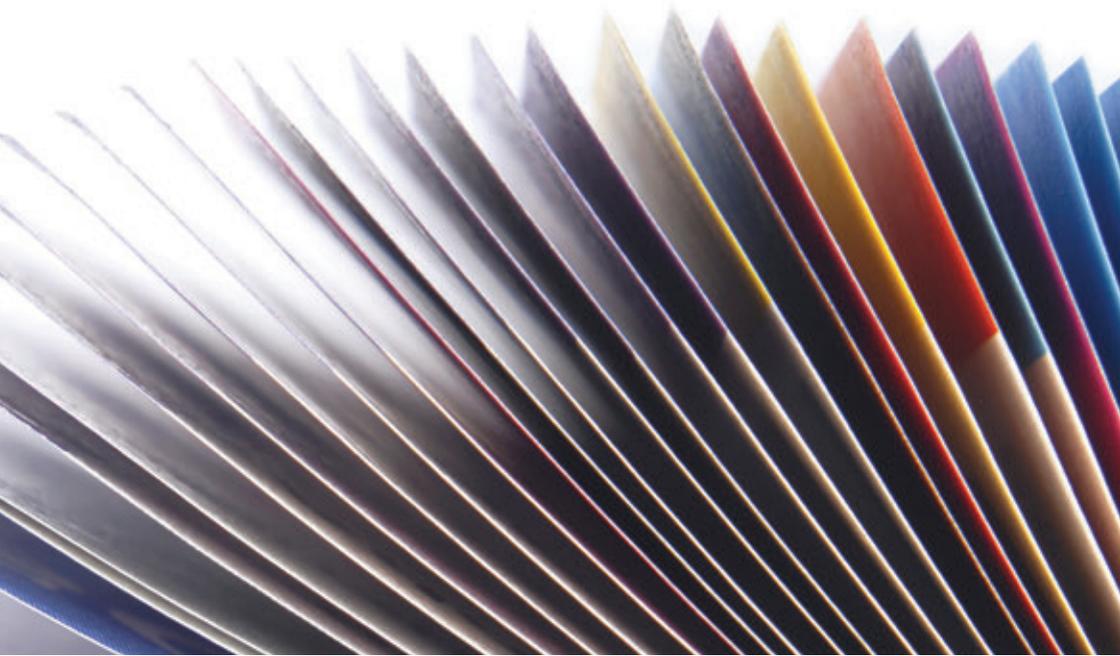
## CLIENT MAILINGS

'Print is dead, long live print'

In this digital age, you can be forgiven for thinking print is dead (I think it's died every year since I can remember!), but it clearly has not!

If you are going to look at issuing mailings, either to existing clients or prospects, there are a number of things to consider before you begin:

1. Purpose – this may sound obvious, but what is the main reason for sending out material? Will it be part of your service, is it to generate enquiries etc. – whatever the reason, it will have knock on effects (as per the below)
2. Frequency – you may elect to send something to all clients on an ad-hoc basis or on a regular basis, for example a quarterly newsletter
3. Opt in or out – will you simply issue clients with something (e.g. a quarterly newsletter) or will you issue one and ask them to indicate if they wish to continue to receive them? Of course you can do this one of two ways – the client only receives further information if they ask for it, or they continue to receive it until they ask for it to stop
4. Everyone gets the same – working on the same principles, will you elect to send all clients the same, for example, will some clients get a regular newsletter and others simply an annual letter, and so on?
5. Call to action – what response or action are you looking for from the recipient?, For example, do they request a meeting, a call, more information and so on. whatever your desired outcome, the item you send must have a call to action and, of course, you will then need to have the means by which to then deal with the resulting activity.
6. Format – this will be determined by a whole host of things – cost, resource, how you wish your business to be portrayed and even the relationship you have with the recipient. From here, you can then decide what to send – a letter, flyer, a newsletter etc.



7. Content – the most important one of the lot; what are you going to be telling clients, do you want to update them on market and product developments, or perhaps topical issues, for example changes to NISA rules and allowances, new tax year and so on. Are you going to cover specific financial needs, or add in some personal information about yourself or the firm?
8. Distribution – this may seem an odd one, but this is something you will need to consider. For example, if you decide to do a simple letter to 1,000 clients, who will print, fold and stuff the envelopes? Often outsourcing your mailing can be a huge advantage.

So, what may sound like the simplest of marketing tools to employ, there is still lots to think about to ensure you optimise any mailings you undertake.

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#### SimplyBiz Group can help

Check out the Marketing Hub to access pre-compliant approved letters, information about our free data auditing service and to access the simply marketing store where you will find an array of material including quarterly newsletters, market reviews and leaflets.

What's more, through the store you can even outsource your mailing.

# Time to market

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Whatever your opinion of social media, there is no denying that it has revolutionised the way we communicate with one another, and the way in which your clients and potential clients access information. Social media can be a great addition to your marketing strategy – you can use it to present the human element of your business. LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and many other platforms, provide you with the opportunity to interact with your clients in a more social environment and, in turn, you should benefit from the most powerful marketing tool there is – word of mouth.

Rather than profile the many social media platforms available, I'm going to focus on just two:

- LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the obvious place to start, after all it is the social media platform dedicated to professionals and the world's largest professional network with some 300 million users worldwide (at time of writing!).

LinkedIn can help get your brand, your firm and, most importantly, – you, out to a wide audience, showcasing your expertise along the way. You can engage with current and potential clients in an instant – and it's FREE.

- Twitter

Twitter is a great way to engage with your target audience in a quick and effective manner. Twitter is used by millions on a daily basis as a means to keep abreast of what's happening around them, and wider afield, if you are part of this, you will in essence be submerged into their everyday life.

Again, this is FREE marketing, PR, research and brand awareness....

If you don't think this is for you – go to LinkedIn and Twitter and see the many advisers who are already using them.

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### SimplyBiz Group can help

Check out the Marketing Hub for tips and advice for using social media, along with details on our readymade solutions to provide you with actual content for use on social media platforms.



## VIDEO

If we are to believe what is currently being written in all the marketing journals, video is set to make a comeback.

If your first question is – ‘Why, where has it been?’ then don’t worry – the answer is – nowhere! Confused?

Video as a means of communicating has grown year-on-year and, whilst it has continued to prove a valuable asset, only now is it beginning to emerge as a front runner in the marketing mix.

## WHAT’S CHANGED?

The birth of video based social media channels (such as YouTube) has seen the role of video transformed. Viewers are demanding a rich source of content, updated regularly and in different formats, from the traditional down to bite sized stings – teaser videos if you will.

So, what does this mean to you as an adviser?

Well, in the simplest form, you may wish to record a video of yourself introducing your business and the service you offer; as a service industry, nothing is more powerful than those actually delivering the service. You can either choose to do this informally sat at your desk or perhaps outside your office, or you could elect to use a more formal setting – lights, camera, action!

Whatever setting and format you choose, you will want to try and keep the actual footage to a minimum, short, snappy sound bites are more likely to be watched than a lengthy video.

In addition to a company overview, you could add regular snippets updating your website. For example, focussing on topical issues, almost like a 90 second news roundup (subject to compliance requirements of course).

One point I would like to add is this – you do not have to pay hundreds of pounds to shoot a video in a studio, with today’s technology, you can literally shoot a quick sound bite on your phone and upload it to the web, add it to an email – the end user is used to viewing this sort of video.

# Time to market

## BROCHURES & GUIDES

The way your company is presented, whether this is online via your website (covered earlier), or through the material you use, such as stationery and brochures, tells your clients and potential clients just what type of business you are and indeed what sort of service they can expect. What's more, these items allow you to showcase your services 24/7.

I have always viewed brochures as a necessary evil, I never like producing them and they are always subjective, but when they are well presented, it can make a huge difference when you are meeting with perspective clients for the first time, especially if they are comparing you to others.

If you are going to create a brochure, I would recommend you go back to the earlier planning referred to in the guide – take a step back and ask yourself - what do you want the brochure to say about your business and what do you want the recipient to take away from reading it?

Once you know, you will be able to work with your designer on brand, look and feel, imagery, tone, style and so on and then add in your content. From a content perspective, try and avoid too much, you need to give the reader confidence in your business and provide enough so that they know who you are, what you can offer and why they need to work with you.

## PR

Press is generally the one tool overlooked by businesses, with most making the assumption that 'the press won't be interested in anything I do'. However, the local media are always interested in running stories of a local interest, that's their main function.

There are two ways to secure coverage in the local press:

1. Provide them with newsworthy articles – a human interest feature, a case where you have helped someone out, your plans to expand to bigger offices and so on.
2. Provide financial commentary – approach your local press to offer your services, perhaps offer to run a column where you answer readers' questions, or provide expert opinion on topical issues

Identify your local press and make contact, introduce yourself, see if there are any opportunities, it won't cost you anything.

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### SimplyBiz Group can help

Check out the Marketing Hub where you can access a wide range of, pre-compliance approved and pre-designed prospecting leaflets and brochures for you to personalise and print.

You will even find branded folders in which to keep all of your documents.

## EVENTS & SEMINARS

Operating in a service industry, I am sure you will be the first to agree that there is nothing like face to face contact – ‘put me in front of a client and I can sell’. So, you will not be surprised to find events and seminars as a recommendation for your marketing tool kit.

There are two types of delivery to consider here and each has a number of elements to consider.

### • Regional seminars

A regional seminar is designed to get a people in one room to hear about a specific topic, and here are the things to consider:

- Location - this could be at your office, at a hotel, at the offices at a local firm, local centre - whatever works for you
  - Subject – you may wish to theme the day, perhaps talk about tax planning, pension planning or the broad scale of financial planning
  - Who do you want there – this will, of course, help you decide on the above elements, but also how you are going to promote the event
- Promotion – depending upon the venue you choose, you can use that venue to promote (notice, newsletters, meetings etc.), social media, website, local press, existing client (write to them) and so on
  - Just you? - as time is precious, you may benefit from aligning the event with others locally – e.g. if you are doing tax planning, split the day with an accountant, if you are using the local community centre, work with others to put on a day all about helping local people with real issues – finances, legal aid, education, anything goes!
  - What will you do – once you have decided the above, you need to decide what you will actually do on the day. Giving a presentation is the obvious thing, but then what? Will you put on refreshments, will you have other members of the team on hand to take questions, hand out material or even book follow ups?

### • Events, exhibitions & trade fares

Depending on where you are located, you may find that there are annual or seasonal events in which you can participate, perhaps getting a guest speaker slot, or having a presence in another way (sponsorship, a stand etc.).

Again, make sure you have the right items to give interested delegates, which could be material or even merchandise (e.g. pens).

# Time to market

## ADVERTISING

Advertising is often the first word uttered when you ask a firm – ‘so what marketing activity do you undertake?’ but in reality, you may be surprised to find that it’s often quite a way down the list of adopted routes.

Whilst advertising may seem to be an obvious route to adopt, it’s not particularly relevant for engaging with existing clients, that needs to be done via targeted engagement (using the tools revered to in this guide – letters, email etc.), after all, you know who they are, where they are and to a degree, what will interest them.

Advertising is really about taking a punt – you are making a decision to advertise on the hope someone who doesn’t know or use your services, will see it and will respond to whatever the message is and unfortunately, you won’t always know if it’s worked. For example...

- I walked past the post office the other day and saw an advert, it piqued my interest so I noted the web address
- I went to the website later that evening to have a look around, I was interested, but got side tracked (probably another one hour drama on Sky1!)
- The next morning I received a rather crudely designed flyer in the post from the same company, whilst it was poorly put together, it did prompt me to go back to the website (it was only a prompt and if I had received the flyer in isolation, I would have simply thrown it in the bin)

- Once on the site again, I note the phone number and give the firm a call
- ‘Where did you hear about us sir?’
- ‘.....your website.’

My point of course is that although the advert was the trigger, the firm will never know.

So, if advertising is a route you want to explore (for attracting new clients), again there are some basic decisions to be made – what I like to call ‘The Three Whats:

- What method of advertising – will you go in a directory, advertise in a community magazine or local paper, or perhaps on the wall of the local supermarket, or maybe



# Time to market

## MERCHANDISE

The growth in merchandise marketing is no real surprise, after all it's one of the best forms of marketing for having your name in front of a client or prospective client for the longest time – for example, a calendar with your brand on will be on a desk or wall for a whole year!

As with most methods of marketing, you will again need to just consider a few basics, such as:

- What will I put on the item (ideally a logo and a web address, perhaps a phone number)
- Who do I want to give the item to and how do they qualify (e.g. do all my clients get a calendar, do I give away pens at events and so on)
- What items do I think will work, pens, calendars, mugs, note pads etc.
- What's my budget?





## ***Implementation, Evaluation and control***

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So, we arrive at the end of the guide – you’ve done your planning, you’ve selected who you want to market what to and how, which means it’s time to implement your plan.

I would advise that you pull together a schedule of activity, nothing too complex, just something that makes a note of what you are doing and when. From here, you can then ensure everything is done, but also everything is tracked – after all, you can have the best plan in the world, but you need to know that it’s working.

One piece of advice that I would like to leave with you is this – do not be afraid to change your plan once you have begun. Imagine each of the elements you implement have dials – those that are working well, turn up the dial, those that are not, turn it down – the key is to find the optimum delivery and ensure your budget and efforts are being used in the right way

# The Simply Marketing Store

## - For all your marketing needs

### Online Store

Access and personalise off-the-shelf marketing materials

### Start-up Packages

Get started with minimum fuss

### Newsletters

Communicate with clients

### Integrated Email solution

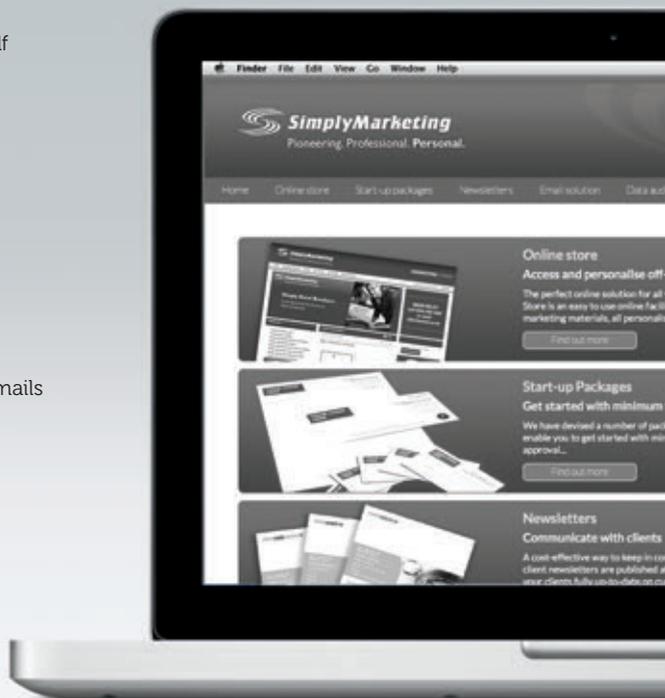
Create and send attractive HTML emails

### Data Audit Service

Cleanse and profile your data

### Social Media

Connect with your clients



For more information call us on **0845 468 1058**

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