the marketing centre
Supercharged Fractional Marketing

Marketing Theory for Non-Marketers

The core marketing ideas every business owner should grasp

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Do you have a business without effective marketing?

Without a joined-up marketing strategy, businesses struggle to make sales and, in time, to exist at all.

Marketing strategy is built on marketing theory, and understanding that theory helps you, as a leader, to see which parts of your marketing need work, judge whether your agencies and staff are doing a good job, and know whether your spend is worth it.

You do not need to become a marketer. You do need to grasp the ideas that decide whether your marketing pays off.

Start by understanding your customers

Putting customers first is the basis of everything. It generates the data that drives your strategy and the repeat sales that deliver long-term profit.

The heart of it is **segmentation**: identifying the customers who buy the same things, for the same reasons, in the same way, so you can aim a campaign at the people most likely to buy and bring down your cost of winning them.

That understanding becomes **customer profiles**, or **personas**, which every business should build as early as possible. And remember that customers are talking about you whether you listen or not: **77 percent of consumers say they regularly read online reviews when browsing for local businesses**.

What people say about you is now part of your marketing.

Branding is consistency, not decoration

Your business has a brand whether you manage one or not, and there is a direct link between branding and profit.

Consistent branding can **raise revenue by 10 to 20 percent**, and businesses with high brand consistency grow at up to 2.4 times the rate of inconsistent ones.

Managed well, a glimpse of your logo calls to mind what you stand for and everything you have done well.

At the heart of a good brand sits a clear, consistent set of values, and a brand audit is how you find them.

It comes down to **five** questions: **your vision of where the brand is going**, **your mission of what you do for customers day to day, the values you stand for, the visuals you use,** and **the voice you speak in.**

The trap is empty words. Everyone claims to be the best or the most reliable, so those words mean nothing.

Meaning comes from what your business actually chooses to do.

Planning your approach

Most of the real work of marketing sits here, and it starts with return on investment. If an activity is not making money, it is not worth doing, so measure it by starting with the customer.

Work out what a customer is **worth** over their lifetime, then work back along the journey: **how many leads made a sale**, **how many contacts made a lead**, and **what each step cost**. That is **real ROI**, and it is a world away from vanity metrics.

Your budget follows the same logic. Do not start with a fixed sum and decide how to spend it. Work backwards from what you want to achieve and what it will cost, then settle at the point where the spend you can justify secures the result you want. A budget has to be understood by the whole leadership team, not handed down to marketing or demanded by it.

Your marketing plan is the navigation system.

It reads the market as it is now, sets where you want to be, and lays out the strategy, tactics and measures to get there. A good plan takes time, is never perfect, and only has value if it is a living document you check and adjust regularly rather than a report that gathers dust.

Lead generation sits inside this too, and it depends on sales and marketing agreeing what a lead even is, since a marketing qualified lead and a sales qualified lead are very different things.

Which brings us to alignment: when sales and marketing do not work together, leads go cold and customers get a hard sell they are not ready for.

Keeping customers is cheaper than winning them

Existing customers are among your most profitable.

The chance of selling more to one is roughly 60 to 70 percent, against just 5 to 20 percent for a new prospect, and acquiring a new customer can cost 5 to 25 times more than keeping an existing one.

Retention comes down to regular, genuinely useful contact, tailored to what each customer has bought before.

It is worth measuring how customers feel, too.

A simple one-question survey, asking how likely someone is to recommend you, gives you a Net Promoter Score you can track over time and benchmark against the businesses you admire.

Executing your plan

Two ideas matter most when it comes to putting a plan into action: channels and data.

Channels are how your message reaches people, and the rule is to use a few well rather than many badly. What works on Facebook will not always work on X, LinkedIn or Instagram, and most customers meet your brand several times before they buy.

There is no such thing as a Facebook customer or a phone customer, so match the message to the segment and keep it consistent across whichever channels your buyers actually use.

Data is the bedrock underneath all of it. Contact data more than a year old is probably out of date, and two years old almost certainly is, so start with an audit of what you know and do not know, then keep it clean, current and secure.

Handling it well is not optional in South Africa: regular data auditing keeps you compliant with POPIA, the Protection of Personal Information Act, and it makes your targeting sharper at the same time.

Where fractional marketing comes in

Without effective marketing, businesses cannot grow, and without theory, marketing cannot be effective. But knowing the theory and applying it, across customers, brand, planning, retention, channels and data, all at once and all the time, are two very different things, and the second is a full-time skill most owners do not have the hours for.

This is where fractional marketing comes in. In South Africa, The Marketing Centre gives businesses access to senior marketing expertise, fractional marketing directors, managers and digital experts, on a part-time basis.

You get the person who knows how to turn all of this into growth, for a fraction of the cost of a full-time hire.

Proven marketing leaders.
Real business results.

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