

Marketing on a budget

Tools and resources

[Identify potential sales channels](#)

[Discover who your most valuable customers are](#)

[Choose the right advertising media](#)

[Online marketing guides](#)

Free business website

Getting British Business Online (GBBO) is an initiative designed to help small businesses create their first website free of charge and help them understand the opportunities offered by the internet. Find out more about [GBBO and how to get started](#).

Know and sell more to your most valuable customers

The better a business can manage the relationships it has with its customers the more successful it will become. Customer relationship management (CRM) is not just the application of technology, but a strategy to learn more about customers' needs and behaviours in order to develop stronger relationships with them and generate more sales.

Get closer to your customers

Knowing your customers' needs is vital to the success of any business, but understanding their changing needs is even more crucial in the current climate. By knowing your customers better you will be able to sell to them more effectively and win business from your competitors. Use our checklist to find [ten things you need to know about your customers](#).

Get more from your best customers

Do you know who your most valuable customers are and do you pay enough attention to your relationship with them? Read our guide to help you [identify and sell more to your most valuable customers](#).

Maintaining an up to date record of both existing and prospective customers will help with marketing costs, improved response rates, better targeting and more accurate communications by telephone, fax, post or email. See our guide for advice on how to [set up and maintain a customer database](#).

Once you have an accurate record of your customers use customer segmentation to target your resources more effectively and avoid wasted efforts. Read our guide to [segmenting your customers](#).

Keep your customers happy

A happy customer is much more likely to recommend your goods or services to someone else and word of mouth is proven to be one of the most effective ways of increasing sales and winning new business. It is also the cheapest! Managing customer care will help you to improve your relationship with your customers, gather valuable feedback and boost your reputation. See our guide to help you [manage your customer care](#).

Further information

Business Link's information library gives you instant access to information and tools to help you tackle key business issues. View our full range of guides to help you [keep your customers](#).

Generate more business through internet marketing

Promoting your website

Make sure your website can be found and give customers real incentives to buy from you. There are three main ways in which people arrive at websites - direct navigation, web referrals and search engines. Read our guide to [promoting your website](#).

You can also pick up valuable [tips on getting the most out of search engines](#) as part of our guide to generating business from your e-marketing plan.

Getting the most out of search engines

To help your business stay visible and to get more from its online presence, Microsoft have put together a guide to search marketing for small businesses which covers the main marketing techniques available to promote your website through search engines. Read the Microsoft guide to [search marketing](#) (pdf 500KB).

Use email effectively to promote your business

Now may be the time to consider alternative ways of promoting your products or services and email can be a powerful and flexible form of direct marketing. Using email you can communicate your messages quickly and cheaply and tailor messages to specific types of customer more cost effectively. Read our guide to [email marketing](#) to help you get started or improve your efforts.

Further information

Business Link's information library gives you instant access to information and tools to help you tackle key business issues. View our [sales and marketing: the basics](#) section for an overview of our guides to online marketing.

Develop your business network

Networking can be hugely beneficial as it creates a number of opportunities for you to bring in more business. Establishing partnerships with businesses in your sector or related industries provides the perfect basis for mutual referrals.

Choosing the right events

Networking is one of the best ways of getting new business. But time is money so you need to prioritise in order to use it productively, using every event as an opportunity to promote your name and your services.

Be selective about the events you go to. It's better to spend two hours once a month with a small group of people who have a specific interest in your field than attending a lot of bigger, more general events.

Move around

Most people find it difficult to talk to strangers but it's important to keep moving around and meeting as many people as possible. Quite often it will be the last person you talk to that really needs your help.

Contribute

If you go to a conference be sure to contribute to the discussion. Even making a short comment will get you noticed and raise your profile making it easier for other people to come and talk to you during coffee breaks.

Make your business cards work for you

Business cards are important when you're networking. They are the only way to be remembered and contactable after the event.

Collecting potential business partners' cards is equally important. All contacts should be followed up quickly with a letter, phone call or email offering to help with a particular item that came up in the conversation.

Business cards are the most common, but the most under-rated, sales tool around. Here's how to make your business cards more memorable and effective:

Business cards have been around a very long time, yet they've hardly changed at all - and largely, they are still filed away and ignored. But they don't have to be.

Style matters. Is your card modern, crisp, easy to read, eye catching and colourful? Or is it boring, flimsy and dog-eared? Use both sides for double impact – business details on one side and your unique selling points on the other.

Turn your card into something people can trade in. Offer free advice or discounts if people present the card.

Business cards don't have to be flat and rectangular. You might fold yours into a mini leaflet packed with sales info and handy tips. Nor do they have to be made of card. Make them useful instead - a tile company might put their company details on a small tile and turn it into a coaster. Similarly, a car salesman might put his card inside a plastic key tag.

One home delivery pizza company made theirs into fridge magnets. Within a day of handing these out on the local university campus, demand soared and the company recouped its outlay in a week.

People remember faces rather than names. So why not put your photo on your card? Make it in some way relevant to your business. If you sell fishing rods, have a picture of you landing that big fish.

Why stick to card? For special prospects, give them a show! Use PowerPoint to create interactive business cards on CD or data sticks. You can include as much info as you want, sales details, photos, prices, instructions about how to use your products, or testimonials from satisfied clients.

Collecting other people's business cards can generate more business than handing out your own. On average only about 10% of the people to whom you hand your cards will contact you. But you can follow up ALL the cards you collect. Each card is a potential lead. So it follows that collecting cards could bring you ten times as much business as distributing them!