

£2.50



**Magical
marketing
strategy
for SMEs**

commsPLUS[®]
Making complex information appear simple

Introduction

Jackie Barrie founded Comms Plus in 2001. It's a successful writing and design business that specialises in making complex information appear simple.

A trained journalist, her marketing experience comes from over 20 years in the industry. She works with corporates, sole traders and SMEs to create marketing communications that get results.

We appreciate the help of marketing guru and executive business coach, Chris Southam from www.chilloutuk.net, in preparing the content for this booklet.

"First impression – wow you are really talented!"

Jenny Sergeant, Possibility Trainer

Know yourself

SWOT Analysis is an effective way of identifying your Strengths and Weaknesses, and of examining the Opportunities and Threats you face. Here are some example questions to help:

Strengths

- Why do your customers choose you?
- What do you do well?
- What resources do you have?

Weaknesses

- What could you improve?
- What do you do badly?
- What should you stop doing?

Opportunities

- Can you stretch your brand to include new products or services?
- What are the emerging trends in your industry?
- Are there any gaps in your market?

Threats

- What challenges do you face?
- Does changing technology have an impact?
- Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?

"I just had a quick look at your website - it looks great. Clear, simple & to the point. Excellent."

Holly, Bluewatercruising

Know your context

PEST Analysis is a useful tool when considering the overall marketing environment including Political, Economic, Sociocultural, and Technological factors. Here are some sample questions:

Political Factors

- How stable is the political environment?
- Will new laws influence your business?
- What is the government's position on marketing ethics?

Economic Factors

- Will interest rates have an impact?
- Will inflation affect spending?
- What are the prospects for the economy?

Sociocultural Factors

- What language is appropriate to use?
- Do gender or diversity influences apply?
- Will green issues affect your business?

Technological Factors

- Can technology improve your manufacturing process?
- Can you use new technology as a route to market?
- How does technology affect your communication or distribution channels?

"I just wanted to say thanks so much for your wonderful presentation and facilitation of last night, I really enjoyed the networking Bingo that was great fun. I came away having made lots of great contacts and I am sure everyone else did too."

Andrea Waterhouse, Blissful Living

Know your market

The more you know about your target customers, the easier it will be to decide what they need, what they want, and the best way to reach them.

Why not draw a 'pen portrait' containing their typical characteristics, including what car they drive, what newspapers they read, their age, sex and geographical location.

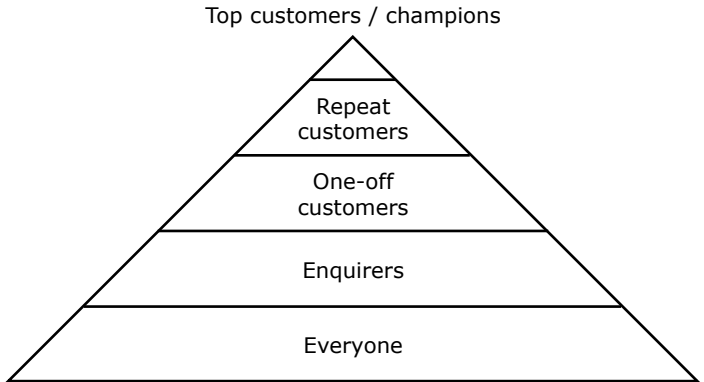
This process will help define the relevant language, style, and tone of voice to use. And it can be a lot easier for your copywriter/designer if they imagine they are communicating with one specific (imaginary) person than with a mass of undefined target customers.

"That [CMR] newsletter is absolutely fantastic! I love it to bits! It's really great. Of course, there's loads of stuff about us in it, but I love the layout and the way it's written as well."

Simon Groves, Atradius

Customer profiling

Consider the customer triangle – how it narrows from everyone in the world to those who become your top customers.



Your aim is convert enquirers into customers, then repeat customers, then top customers / champions.

"Jackie Barrie has done an outstanding job. She spent about two hours with us personally, interviewed us to find out what we really, really want. She then sent us her first draft, which was very accurate indeed. If you want a professional copywriter who works from her heart and understands your requirements, Jackie is the person for you."

Peter Gerlach, Outstanding Achievements

Marketing calendar

Monitor significant events throughout the year, so you can predict seasonal peaks and troughs in your business. For example, a chocolate company can expect to be busy around Easter and Christmas, while business consultants might find it quiet during the summer months.

You might also choose to theme your marketing communications around topical events.

Here are some ideas to get you started.

JANUARY	.....	New Year's resolutions
FEBRUARY	.....	Valentine's Day
MARCH	.....	Mother's Day
APRIL	.....	Easter
MAY	.....	Bank holidays
JUNE	.....	Father's Day
JULY	.....	Summer
AUGUST	.....	Holiday season
SEPTEMBER	....	Back to school
OCTOBER	.....	Halloween
NOVEMBER	....	Guy Fawkes Night
DECEMBER	.....	Christmas

"Thanks Jackie. You've come up with a simple but great idea yet again."

Martin Watt,
BRE Regional Partner - Scotland East

Routes to market

There is a wide range of marketing channels available to you, some will be more appropriate than others, depending on the product or service you provide.

- Advertising
- PR / editorial
- Sponsorship
- Direct mail
- Brochures
- Leaflets
- Web-site
- E-marketing
- Newsletters (printed and online)
- Word of mouth / networking
- Exhibitions
- Displays
- Demonstrations
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Telemarketing
- Oh, and tips booklets!

"You've done an excellent job, with only a few small tweaks that you couldn't have known about. Great job, thank you."

Nigel Woods, Abel Property Investment Group

Measure everything!

A classic expression is: "50% of your marketing budget is wasted, but nobody knows which half".

The only way to measure the effectiveness of your marketing spend is to record the results of all your activity. For example:

- Choose a web host that provides statistics so you can monitor 'hits' and 'stickability' on your website. This tells you the popularity of each page and helps guide future structure and content.
- Whenever a new prospect phones, ask 'How did you hear about us?'
- Print a reference code on all marketing communications for customers to quote, so you can assess the source of written enquiries.

Use this information to learn from your successes and eliminate anything that's not working for you.

"I love it, it is absolutely brilliant. I couldn't be more pleased. You have done a great job and I can't wait to see it in print."

Luke Smith, Travel Counsellors

Say 'thank you'

Segment your customer database via **Recency, Frequency** and **Value**. Those who have bought from you most recently are most likely to buy from you again. Those who have bought from you more than once show loyalty. Those who spent the most money are valuable. All these are customers you want to keep!

When you have identified your top customers, you need to reward them by lavishing them with attention as recognition for their contribution.

You also need to reward your **champions** – people who may not spend much money with you themselves, but who bring in business by recommending you to others.

The segmentation process will also help you identify '**sleepers**' in your database, those who have not generated any repeat business after a series of contacts. There comes a point where you recognise that any further investment is wasted.

"Jackie is a superb communicator with a sharp understanding of how to get any message across. She's also a nice person and fun to deal with."

John 'Web Design' Tomsy

Follow up

The vast majority (**68%**) of customers who leave a business say it's because of "perceived indifference". Make it a habit to thank them for their order, send a prompt when it's reorder time, and offer your best wishes if you find they've gone elsewhere.

For prospects, sending out a single marketing communication is unlikely to achieve the best results.

Some experts claim an advert needs to be seen **18** times before that brand will be at the top of a customer's mind.

It takes an average of **6-8** meetings to turn a networking stranger into a familiar contact.

Newsletters containing handy hints need to be sent every **4-6** weeks and you can't expect much response before **6-8** issues.

Direct marketing (junk mail) can generate **1% to 4%** response (if you're lucky), but this can be raised **over 20%** with a follow-up phone call.

"You truly are a goddess! Working with you is like having another member of staff."

Ashley Blackmore, Sterling Syncordia

**Newsletters
Copywriting
Web design
Proof-reading
Events**

Other tips booklets include:

- 10 top tips for effective networking
- Checklist for events that go with a bang!
 - 8 guaranteed ice-breakers
 - Ssh! Discover the secrets of successful communication
- Climb that marketing mountain, with ease

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