

6 Questions to Create Your First Marketing Strategy



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Marketing can be complex, with dozens of campaigns across numerous channels feeding your bigger strategy. But it should be simple at first. In fact, a mistake I often see from startups and entrepreneurs – that I also made for years – is trying to do too many things too soon.

Your first marketing strategy should clarify the people you're selling to, the places you'll find them and the practices you'll use to connect with them. This six-question framework helps you do just that:

1. Who is your ideal customer?

You've got to know who you're marketing to before you can do it well. "Anyone" is not an ideal customer. You need a type. If you're stumped trying to figure out who that specific someone is, ask yourself these questions:

- Who is my favorite customer to work with?
- Who is my easiest customer to work with?
- Who is most likely to want this product or service?
- Who is willing to pay for this?

Where's the overlap? That's likely your ideal customer – the type of person you should be searching high and low for. If you think you have multiple "ideal customers," focus on one to begin with. This clarity is crucial.

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2. What do they need from you?

You know *who* you're serving, but *what* are you serving them? It's easy to start with your product in mind – i.e., "my software helps them do xyz" – but dig deeper, and start from the customer's view.

What challenge do they have in their daily life? What problem do they have to overcome to grow their business, save time or reduce stress? You aren't selling a product or service so much as you're selling a vehicle to take them where they want to go. Find out the destination, and make sure your marketing efforts demonstrate how you'll help customers get there. You'll get there faster by proactively talking to customers about it.

3. Where do they spend their time?

You need to be where your customers are, both physically and digitally. What online forums are they involved in? What events do they attend? Do they commute to an office or work from home? What newsletters or other media do they pay attention to?

Spend your time in these places, build relationships, and invest in marketing here. Create content (blogs, graphics, videos, text posts, etc.) specifically for those places to show your ideal customer how you can solve their problems. Most of this can be done organically – for free or with minimum budget.

4. When are you able to interact with them?

When are your ideal customers willing to give you their attention (or when are you able to grab it)? This could be a time of day, like when they watch the morning news or pick their kids up from school. It could be a time of year, like when they do annual planning or attend a conference.

These are opportunities for you to be present, to share your marketing message and start sales conversations. For example, you might run a commercial during the morning news or a radio ad mid-afternoon. You might send emails towards the end of their fiscal year or sponsor a conference you know they're attending.

You don't have to be everywhere with your target audience all the time, but pick one or a few places that you can reasonably manage and become a fixture.

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5. Why would they choose you over a competitor?

There will always be competition, but a common mistake is trying to compete on price. There are no winners here – someone can always undercut you. It *is* helpful if you cost less, but there should be some other reason for people to work with you. You solve their problem in a unique way, you're easier to work with, you have a valuable feature others don't, etc.

Customers tend to prioritize convenience, relationships, clarity or ease-of-use, and uniqueness. Find something within that realm to stand out from competitors, and lean into it. Bring it up in sales conversations. Weave it through your marketing messaging.

6. How are you going to get them into your funnel?

Now that you know everything about your ideal customer, it's time to turn them into qualified sales opportunities. You need:

- An opportunity for your ideal customer to interact with you
- A sales pitch
- An easy next step, or call-to-action

An **opportunity** could be a Google search, a post they made on social media asking for recommendations, a conference you're both attending or a reason you have to cold pitch them.

Your **sales pitch** is essentially "We help this type of person solve this problem with this kind of product or service."

That's about all you need, but you need it everywhere – website copy, emails, social media, trade show displays, ads, etc.

An **easy next step** can be a link to learn more, a meeting request form, a keyword to text to get more info. Just make it a low lift, and only ask for one thing at a time.

Related: 5 Steps to Create Successful Marketing Campaigns

What's next?

Put all of this together, and you've got a great first marketing strategy to position yourself properly in your market and to create sales opportunities. This framework works best when you're regularly re-evaluating your answers to each question – not every day, but perhaps once a quarter.

Talk to customers ongoing. Learn more about them, their problems and how you can support them. These details will inform your answers to the questions above and help you create a stronger marketing strategy. Remember: You can't do everything. Get the basics right in the beginning, and the rest will follow.

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