



Growing an Integrated Marketing Plan on a Budget

A measurable plan can help your IGC find areas where you can improve and ultimately focus on what is making money.

By Shannon Powell Rodocker

Anyone working in the horticulture industry today knows that profit margins can be extremely tight, making it crucial to watch budgets closely. Marketing can be a major factor in the overall business equation that will make or break your ongoing success.

Based on my experience in working with a variety of thrifty clients over the past decade, I have curated a simple set of rules to help maximize marketing dollars. Here are the top lessons learned in a decade-long quest to offer inventive ways to do more with less.

Keep it Simple

I always tell my clients I would rather see them do one thing exceptionally well than participate in several

marketing activities at a mediocre level. For example, if you do not have the capacity to manage four different social media outlets for your business, start with one.

A website, Google My Business profile and a business page on at least one social media outlet (such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.) are considered a must for businesses to maintain a digital storefront. Beyond that, you can really create your own rules.

When building an integrated marketing plan, think through the ways to repurpose content across all your marketing platforms. For example, if you are creating a direct-mail campaign, make sure to use the same elements in your e-newsletter, social media, website and in-store displays. If you are posting content on social media every

day, consider taking your top-performing posts and repurposing them to send out in weekly or bi-weekly highlight emails or a monthly direct mail piece. The key is to be consistent and look for opportunities to reuse and repurpose.

Streamlined Branding

Another way to keep it simple is through your branding. Less is more in branding almost 99% of the time. I am often shocked at the inconsistent branding in the industry.

A brand book with guidelines outlining the look, feel and tone of your brand is recommended. If you're just starting out building your brand, there are a few basic rules to help you keep it simple and focus on the bigger picture.

Have a professionally designed logo and make sure you request the working design file and multiple file formats (such as png, jpeg, etc.). That way you own the file for the life of your business.

A brand color palette should also be established. Consider having the designer who worked on your logo put this together for you and try to stick to those colors throughout all your marketing materials.

Finally, select a set of fonts for your brand and be consistent using those in all of your marketing.

Pro tip: Create design templates for different marketing initiatives to keep your efforts streamlined.

Inexpensive Resources for Marketing Success

If you don't have a full-time, in-house designer, an inexpensive resource to help get your brand profile set up is www.Canva.com. The site has a user-friendly, professional account option for around \$10/month that can help you create images, flyers, signage, videos and more.

Other sites like www.Fiverr.com or www.DesignCrowd.com can help with your logo design at extremely affordable prices.

You can also contact your local university's marketing department. Often these departments like to provide students real-world marketing case studies, and you may be able to benefit from this.

Have a Measurable Plan

This rule seems simple enough, but you would be surprised at the number of businesses that "wing it" with their marketing. Without a measurable plan, it's hard to monitor what is working. A plan also keeps you accountable to your goals and budget.

When I first started out in my career, it was difficult to find a useful marketing planning template for business, so I created my own. It consists of a very simple outline in a spreadsheet. A good plan does not need to be fancy, but it should outline all the marketing activities you need to accomplish on a monthly basis and tie those activities to both your marketing budget and measurable goals.

Your plan should have line items for website, emarketing, social media, digital ads, direct mail, billboards (out-of-home), public relations, events and telemarketing (text or voice) activities to start. Each business typically has its own custom items to add to this list.

Remember that this plan should be measurable, which means you need to build in ways to measure the results of

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each line item. For example, you can set a benchmark for web visits or web purchases and then create goals to grow from your initial numbers.

This is the first crucial step to help monitor your progress from year to year and look for areas where you can improve.

Focus on What is Making You Money

Once you have a good plan and a solid brand developed, it's time to focus on what is making you money. With your marketing plan set up correctly, you should be able to track how much each marketing element is costing you. Then, start tracking which items are actually leading to sales.

Every piece of marketing you create should be trackable. For example, use different coupon codes for mailed or digital campaigns. You can even use a different code for each marketing channel. Pick the winners and invest more money in those! The goal is to bring in more sales than you are spending on marketing.

Pro tip: Look for ways to help your marketing pay for itself. For example, include areas for complementary partners to advertise in your gardening tips email or find a marketing consultant partner (like me) who may be willing to work in trade for an ongoing supply of really cool plants. 🌱

Shannon Powell Rodocker is a PR and marketing strategy expert and founder of Remember Marketing, LLC (www.remembermkt.com). Her session at Cultivate'21, "Growing an Integrated Marketing Plan to Maximize Your Budget," will share additional tips on how to encourage word-of-mouth advertising, foster partnerships and help your marketing pay for itself.