

Putting Your Business on the Road to Success



**“The savvy entrepreneurs down and dirty,
step-by-step guide to creating a powerful, 2-page
Marketing Success Action Plan™ for attracting
customers, making sales and
exploding your business”**

By Stacy Karacostas

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About the Author



Stacy Karacostas began developing her knack for driving small businesses to success at a very young age...She was just six years old when she went to work in her parent's animal hospital. By the time she was 14 she was helping run the practice and the entrepreneurial spirit had seeped into her blood.

Today, after more than 20 years experience working in and running small businesses—including four of her own—Stacy truly understands the unique difficulties entrepreneurs face. Although her impressive client list includes large organizations like the Small Business

Administration, Eddie Bauer, Philips Medical Systems and REI, her passion is helping small companies grow.

A prolific writer, Stacy has published more than 100 articles on marketing, copywriting, sales and small business success. Over the years, she has developed a variety of proven tools, tips and tricks that take the struggle out of marketing your small business.

When she's not working hard on building her business—or those of her clients—you can usually find Stacy skiing, whitewater kayaking or biking in the mountains around Seattle with her wonderfully supportive husband and two dogs.

To learn more about Stacy, or find out how she can help your small business become a big success, visit www.success-stream.com.

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WARNING! You hold in your hand a powerful tool for exploding your business. However, you can't just read it and expect to see big results. The only way to experience the full value of this book is to take action. So settle in to a comfy chair, grab a pen (or your keyboard) and get ready to charge ahead into a future filled with success.

Introduction

Congratulations! You are on the road to success!!

How do I know? Because you are reading this book, and that tells me two things...

One, that you are a savvy entrepreneur who is always exploring new ideas and trying to improve your business. And two, that you understand the importance of marketing your business—and doing it right.

Which is terrific for you! Because your chances of beating the statistics and having the successful, revenue-generating business of your dreams has just gone up more than tenfold.

You have heard the statistics, right? Most small businesses fail within the first five years, and half close their doors in two years or less.

It's a wonder anyone ever goes into business with those kinds of odds.

But do you know why so many new businesses go under?

According to a study by Jessie Hagen of U.S. Bank cited on the SCORE - Counselors to America's Small Business Web site, the main reasons businesses fail are:

- **Poor Business Planning**
- **Poor Financial Planning**
- **Poor Management**

And...

- **Poor Marketing**

Specifically, ***“more than 64% of the business surveyed in the marketing category failed because they did not place enough importance on promoting their business.”***

That does not necessarily mean they didn't spend enough money. Some people spend a small fortune on marketing that doesn't get results. While others find plenty of ways to market their business effectively without breaking the bank.

The real problem is that far too many entrepreneurs simply don't put enough time, effort and thought into their marketing. Or they just don't know enough about marketing to get good results.

And you know what happens then? Not much—or at least not enough—business comes in the door.

Because hardly anyone even knows their business exists, let alone why it is different or better than their competition.

Unfortunately, if customers don't know you are out there—or why they should buy from you instead of someone else—then your business is dead in the water. Or at the very least, it is destined to grow slowly and painfully.

Unless you market your business effectively, chances are your sales will never really take off. And without sales, well, you don't really have a business.

But you are different!

With this step-by-step guide, you'll glide right through the process of writing a realistic, easy-to-use, 2-page marketing action plan.

Why just two-pages?

Because in today's fast-moving business world, a small business has to be nimble to survive.

You don't have the luxury of spending months agonizing over marketing decisions, or debating whether to launch a new product or pursue an opportunity.

Besides, who has the time to write 30-pages on marketing their business? Especially when a plan that size is destined to become nothing more than a shelf-top dust collector.

That's why when you use this workbook, you end up with an agile little marketing action plan that is easy to read, use and update as your business grows.

Best of all, ***your new plan will keep you moving forward towards your goals.***

It will ***make it easy for you to decide which new opportunities to embrace, and which to reject.***

Plus, it will **give you a way to monitor the success of your marketing initiatives.**

Once your plan is finished, you can (and should) hang it up on your wall and refer to it regularly to help you stay on track.

Let's get started. Just turn the page to find out what you need to do to get your business on the road to success.

How to Use this Handy Workbook

For modest success, you can just read the chapters and learn tons about marketing and growing your business. But, if you want to squeeze every last drop of benefit out of this workbook and have slam-dunk awesome success, start by printing out the worksheet labeled Marketing Success Action Plan on pages 81-82. This is the template for your marketing plan.

As you go through the book, I'll ask you to answer a variety of thought-provoking questions and do some simple yet highly informative exercises to help you fill in the blanks. By the end, you should have a complete marketing plan designed to take your small business to the next level.

Want to make copies of the worksheets?

Great idea! You can find specially formatted versions of all the worksheets in Appendix A. And just to make things even easier, I've included a CD with two versions of the worksheets in Microsoft Word.

One version is designed to be printed (labeled PRINT), and the other is all electronic forms with fill-in-the-blanks (labeled EFORM) so you can do the exercises and create your new plan right on your computer.

Want to see what your finished plan might look like?

Check out the Sample Marketing Success Action Plans in Appendix B.

Clear as mud?

Excellent. Read on...

POWER TIP

You can use the E-FORMS (on the CD included with the print version) to do the exercises in Microsoft Word.

1

Getting on the Road to Success

How many times have you asked someone “How’s business?”, only to hear “Oh, you know, up and down...”

When I opened my last business, I swear I heard that phrase from just about everyone. At first I thought it was the poor economy. Then I thought maybe it was just certain industries.

But for many businesses, sales have not gotten steadier even though the economy has improved. And I’ve now heard this same story from consultants and graphic designers as well as restaurant owners and even veterinarians.

The interesting thing is that most folks seem to believe the cyclical nature of their business is beyond their control. That they are somehow at the whim of a great natural force that decrees you will go through periods of boom and bust.

Well I’m here to tell you that is a big fat lie!

The reality is, in most industries the dramatic ups and downs of small businesses can be explained by one simple thing...inconsistent marketing.



You see, your business is a lot like a car. In order to make a car go, you have to give it some gas. And when it comes to your business, effective, consistent marketing is the gas that makes it go.

Because marketing is what lets people know that you exist. It’s what lets people know who you are and what you offer. And it is what keeps your business in the top of their minds until they decide to buy.

How most entrepreneurs approach marketing

Sadly, far too many small businesses market sporadically at best. And they usually don’t have a specific goal in mind (like, say, increasing next year’s sales by x%).

Instead they just place an ad or two, run a promotion, or hit a few networking groups then get busy taking care of the new business that comes in.

The problem with this strategy is that once you are done handling all the new business, there isn’t any more because you took your foot off the gas. And since you didn’t know where you wanted that marketing to take their

business, you end up in exactly the same place you were in before the last wave of customers came through your door.

Imagine what would happen if people drove their cars like this...

First, there would be a heck of a lot more wrecks. Because every time someone finally got up to cruising speed, they would take their foot off the gas. Or they'd constantly be stopping and starting. And since they wouldn't have a goal in mind when they pulled out of the driveway, chances are they'd get nowhere fast.

That's why the main goal of this workbook, and everything I do or offer at SuccessStream in fact, is to help you keep your tank full, your foot on the gas, and your business rolling forward.

Alrighty then. Now that we've gotten that out of the way, it's time to put the pedal to the metal and get ready to take your business from 0-60 mph.

Grab your pen. Take a deep breath. Relax. And let's get this show on the road.

POWER TIP

Your business is a lot like a car. In order to make a car go, you have to give it some gas. And when it comes to your business, effective, consistent marketing is the gas that makes it go fast.

2 Putting Your Business in the Fast Lane

People often talk about your marketing plan being a roadmap. And it is. But over the years I've realized that this definition doesn't really do it justice.

Because when you write your marketing plan, you are doing far more than just creating a map. You are preparing for your journey from struggling start-up to small business success. And getting ready for any big adventure involves way more than just choosing a route.

Think about this for a minute...

Have you ever taken a road trip?

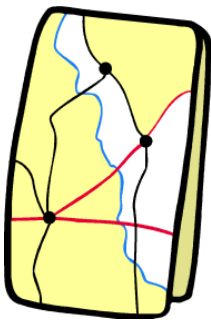
Maybe moved across the country? Toured the National Parks with your family? Or just hit the road with friends?

It doesn't matter what the road trip was. Any kind will do as long as you had:

- A reason (any reason) to go
- A particular goal in mind when you were planning your trip
- A set amount of time to complete your travels

Now think back...

What steps did you take to get ready for your big road trip?



If you are like most folks, you decided where you wanted to go and why. Then, you figured out how much time you had to get there, got a map and chose the best route based on your particular needs. Next you calculated how much money you would need to make it happen

Once you had all the major logistics worked out, there were still a few other details to take care of, like...

Making sure your car was in good shape with the tires inflated, the oil changed and no major mechanical problems. And creating a packing and to do list.

Finally, when the big day arrived you loaded up your car, filled it with gas, put the key in the ignition and hit the road.

Of course, even with the best planning the unexpected can, and often does, happen. You might stop in an interesting town, have car trouble, or drive a bit out of your way to see the local sights.

But you've decided to be at your final destination by a certain day. And you've mapped a particular path to get you there. So, ideally any spur-of-the-moment changes or unexpected occurrence won't stop you from getting to your destination as planned.

Still with me? Good.

Now, imagine what might happen if you packed up and hit the road without a map and a plan...

You could run out of money. And if you don't have a route mapped out, who knows where you might end up.

Let's take this one step further...

What would happen if you decided to just hop in your car and drive, with no preparation, no money, no map and no idea where you wanted to go?

Well, you might get lucky and have a pretty interesting and exciting adventure. Or your trip could easily become a horrible nightmare.

POWER TIP

Planning to grow a business is a lot like planning for a road trip—only it's a bigger adventure and more is at stake.



No matter what, the chances are pretty good that you are eventually going to end up somewhere you didn't want to be (and you might very well be broke, broken down and not sure what to do next).

So what exactly does all this have to do with business and marketing? Let me explain...

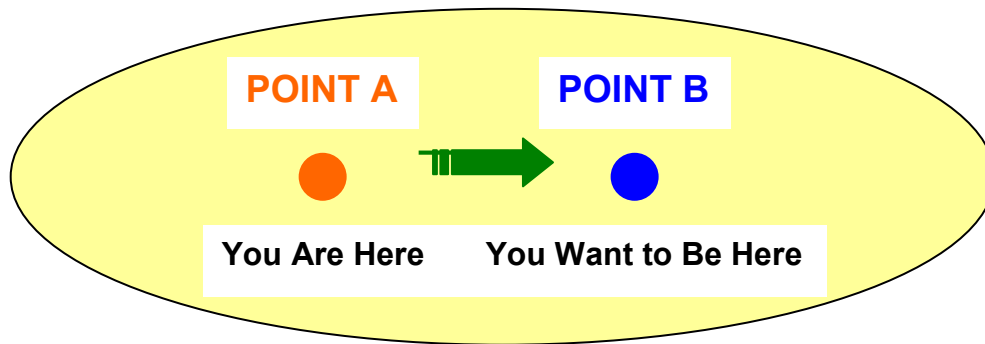
In my years as an entrepreneur, manager and marketing consultant, I've figured out a simpler way to think about your marketing plan and all its different components. And once you get it, it makes deciding what to include in a marketing plan the most intuitive thing in the world.

Here's the upshot:

Planning to grow a business is a lot like planning for a road trip—only it's a bigger adventure and more is at stake (though ironically, most small business owners will spend way more time planning a vacation than they ever do planning how to grow their business).

How so?

Well again, just think of your business as a car. The goal of writing your marketing plan is to figure out how to take your business from Point A (where you are right now) to Point B (where you want to be one, two, five or ten years down the road).



- The reason for your trip is your mission statement—or why you've undertaken this crazy entrepreneurial adventure to start with.
- Long-term goals are your destination, or Point B. Short-term goals are just like the hotels or towns you are planning to stop at on your route.
- Your route is the set of strategies you choose to help you reach Point B, based on your needs, abilities, budget and interests.
- The terrain and environment you are going to be driving through is your target market. Just like you have to adapt your car and driving style to drive in the snow, you have to adapt your marketing to suit your target market.
- The money for the trip is your marketing budget.
- As I mentioned earlier, your marketing tools and efforts are the gas that makes it all go. Without this fuel, you go nowhere. No matter how good a car you have, or what route to success you have mapped out.

Like a car, your business needs more than just any old fuel (your car probably wouldn't run too well on a diet of kerosene or natural gas). You need the right kind of marketing to make that finely honed business engine go.

- Finally, if you want to make the journey a successful one, you have to make sure that your business, just like your car, is ready to handle the trip.

Of course, you can't just make a plan and fill up the car with gas. You also have to take action.

How? By putting the key in the ignition and the pedal to the floor.

Because if you don't get in the car and drive—and keep on driving—I can promise you one thing...

You will never get where you want to go.

So just think of growing your business like planning for a road trip. You need to know where you are going, why, and in how much time. Then you choose the route and stops that make the most sense for you and your goals.

Just to make sure you've got it, I'll break it down again...

Writing a Marketing Plan is just like Planning a Road Trip

Your Car = Your Business

Reason for the Trip = Your Mission Statement

Point A = Current Business Status

Point B = Long Term Goals

Hotels & Stops = Short Term Goals

Route = Strategies and Plans to Reach Your Goals

Environment/Climate = Target Market

Money = Marketing Budget

Gas = Marketing Tools and Strategies

Make sense? Then you are ready to put your own business on the road to success!

So don't delay. Head on over to www.success-stream.com/products.htm right now to grab your copy of this handy workbook and get started.