



For financial advisers only

Marketing your business

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Writing a marketing plan

Your marketing plan should be the reference document you use as a basis for implementing your marketing strategy. It sets out clear objectives and explains how you'll achieve them. Perhaps most importantly, it looks at how you can make your vision a reality.

Remember, marketing on its own won't guarantee sales. But, by adopting a well-researched and coherent plan, you have a much better chance of building long-term, profitable relationships.

Tips for writing a marketing plan

It's important for a marketing plan to:

- Set clear, realistic and measurable targets, for example 'increase sales by 10%'
- Include deadlines for meeting targets
- Provide a budget for any marketing activity
- State who's responsible for any activity

Make sure you think through each of your objectives logically. For example, you might set a target for the number of new enquiries. But if you don't provide the resources and training to turn these enquiries into sales, you'll have increased costs without any benefits.

The marketing mix (7 Ps)

The marketing mix is the combination of seven elements of marketing that aim to work together to achieve the objectives of a marketing strategy. These seven elements are **product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical.**

Marketing plan contents

When writing your marketing plan, you'll need to ask yourself where your business is at now, where you want to be and how you can get there. Below is a general outline of what you should cover, but you can adapt this to suit your own needs.

- Situational analysis (where you are now)
 - i Where your customers are
 - ii SWOT analysis
 - iii Competitor analysis
 - iv Market analysis
 - v Internal resources and capabilities
 - vi What's currently working well and what isn't
- Objectives (what do you want to achieve)
 - i Make sure they're SMART
- Strategy (how you're going to achieve it)
 - i Target market
 - ii How you'll achieve your objectives
 - iii How you'll position your business in the market
- Tactics (what you're going to deliver to achieve it)
 - i What components of the marketing mix you're going to use
- Action (what you're going to do and when)
 - i Activity plan
- Control (how you're going to measure progress)
 - i Key performance indicators/success measures
 - ii How you're going to measure this, for example website views, or how many sales you get from enquiries

Customer segmentation

Segmentation is a key part of business success. Splitting your customer list by different characteristics can give you a better understanding of their needs and how you can target them.

Why use segmentation?

- It will help you understand your customer base better.
- It will help you focus on the kind of customers who'll bring you the most income.
- You'll get a better understanding of how your customers would like to be treated, for example:
 - i the type of service they're looking for;
 - ii their financial priorities;
 - iii the sort of services and products they're likely to buy, and
 - iv the language you use to communicate with them.
- It will help satisfy many aspects of treating customers fairly.
- It's a chance to tell your customers how you're going to treat them in future.
- It shows you've done your research and followed recognised processes.

Some of the most common ways of segmenting customers include:

Age — this will give you an idea of how many of your customers fall into each life stage, so you can target the right people with the right campaigns/services at the right time. This should help you increase the response rate from each campaign.

Service — looking at the services your current customers have bought will help you see what's proved popular with particular types of people. You can then use this information to target the same type of people with the same type of product.

Location — you can use specific marketing software to see which customers live in the more affluent parts of the area you do business in.

Companies such as Experian offer consumer classifications that segment your customers according to their affluence based on where they live.

Gender — women may be more likely to have concerns over inadequate pension provision and protection, while men may worry more about tax and investment issues.

Occupation — the self-employed aren't covered by company pension and protection schemes, so they have different needs to employed people.

Financial wealth — this could be based on current earnings or existing wealth, or on future potential. For example, expected inheritances and career development.

Long-term value to your business — this allows you to see the potential income you can generate for a customer over the lifetime of your relationship with them.



Create customer profiles

This will help bring your customers to life and what their motivations are. It allows you to build an image of your customers, split them into categories and identify opportunities.

Example customer profile

Career-driven families:

I work in a fast-paced environment. I'm looking for smart, user-friendly investment solutions. My partner and I have built up a good financial portfolio.



Age
44



Household size
4



Stage of life
Building a career



Household income
£100,000



Value of savings with you
£33,000

Value of savings elsewhere
£207,000

Share of your business
15.9%

Key behaviours – average monthly savings
£500

Likelihood to use digital services
Very likely

Percentage of customers in this category
15%



In this example, you could have a huge opportunity to engage with this customer digitally, offer them advice as they build their savings – increasing the value of products they hold with you and their share of your business. Engaging with this customer could lead to a new generation of advice as they look to open junior products for children, pension pots and stocks and shares

Customer research

You should set out what you want to achieve, how you'll do it and how you'll deal with any hurdles along the way.

Stages involved in customer research

Any research process needs to go through the following stages:

- Define the problem — for example, you might want to:
 - i increase your number of customers;
 - ii improve customer loyalty, or
 - iii increase your average income of each customer.
- Establish objectives — these will be linked to the 'problem', for example:
 - i a new level of service, or
 - ii a target number of customers.
- Gather data
 - i Primary data is data you collect yourself (see sample questionnaire).
 - ii Secondary data is information that already exists, for example sales data or existing customer information.
- Analyse the data — once you've got all your responses you need to analyse them, and perhaps compare the responses by type of customer:
 - i Level of financial knowledge/sophistication.
 - ii Financial worth.
 - iii Potential value to your business.
- Prepare your report
 - i Describe your findings.
 - ii Highlight where you're going to take action.
- Take action
 - i Use the report findings to adjust your marketing plan, if necessary.

How to carry out your research

One way to do your research is to ask your customers your questions in your next meeting with them. You could ask open-ended and closed questions and explore particular areas of interest in depth.

The advantages are:

- Your customer will feel comfortable.
- You get their answers there and then — you're not depending on them taking the time to fill in and return a questionnaire.
- It gives you more in-depth answers.

The disadvantages are:

- They may not answer truthfully as you're not independent. You could get round this by employing independent researchers.
- You'll probably be limited to the amount of people that you can do this with.

Alternatively, you could use a questionnaire. This can be more suitable if:

- You want to do your research within a specific time period and have a lot of customers to survey
- You feel you'd get more truthful responses from a written questionnaire, or
- You want to contact customers by phone, email or post, rather than meeting them all face to face

A disadvantage is, that while a questionnaire gives you a lot of data, it might not help you explore a particular viewpoint in depth.

You can see a sample questionnaire on the next page.

Sample questionnaire

ABC Financial Advisers
4 High St
Anytown
AB1 5TG

Dear

Client survey 2020

At ABC Financial Advisers, we want to provide our clients with the best possible service. To help us, we would appreciate it if you could answer the following questions.

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire by ticking the appropriate box(es) or writing a short comment.

All responses will be included in a prize draw to win <prize>. To make sure that you're entered, please complete your details at the end of the questionnaire.

1. What services are you looking for from a financial adviser?

- Finding the best product/investment
- Finding the best deal
- Helping you understand a complex product
- Working out the financial implications of a life change
- Other (please give details)

2. Would you consider paying a fee for our services?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', what would you want from us for this fee?

If 'No', why not?

3. Would you consider paying a monthly retainer?

- Yes
- No

If 'Yes', what would you want from us for the retainer?

If 'No', why not?

4. Would you recommend me to a friend?

- Yes
- No

Please give a reason for your answer

5. How satisfied are you with us in the following areas?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	No strong feelings	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Finding the best product					
Getting the best deal					
Helping you understand complex products					
Working out financial implications of a life change					
Helping you get to where you want to be					

If you ticked 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied', please say why:

Please rate the communications I have with you or send to you:

Face-to-face	Very good	Good	No strong feelings	Poor	Very poor
Overall					
Frequency					
Topics					
Post/Email					
Overall					
Frequency					
Topics					

If you've ticked any as 'Poor' or 'Very poor', please give details:

Are there any other areas where we could improve our service?

To make sure you're entered into our prize draw, please complete the following details:

Name

Telephone number

Please return your completed questionnaire in the prepaid envelope provided, or email it to adviser.email@address.co.uk

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Running a marketing campaign

Potential new customers will only come to you if they know about you. So you need to get your name out there with an effective marketing campaign.

Now you've gained insight into who your customers are, what they want from you and how they want to be reached - we'll cover the main techniques you can use to not only target new customers, but also get more out of your existing customer base. We'll look at direct mail, webinars, advertising, PR and sponsorship and when you could look to use each one.

Direct mail

The success of any direct mailing campaign depends on targeting the right audience with the right message at the right time. And, most importantly, making sure your target audience act in the way you want them to after receiving your mailing.

Using your existing database

If you already have your own database of existing customers, you may want to try mailing people on this list. Your own customers have already used your services, so are more likely to buy from you in the future.

This is also likely to achieve better results than using a mailing list bought from a list broker. But if your objective is to generate new business from new sources, then an external mailing list could be the answer.

Using a mailing list

Mailing lists come in different types (for example business lists and consumer lists) and cover a wide range of prospects, from architects and building

service companies to executives and professionals. Mailing lists can cost between £100 and £150 for a thousand names and will usually have a minimum order of 5,000 names.

You should ask the following questions when buying or renting a list:

- When was the list last used and updated?
- How often is the list used?
- Who used the list last, and for what purpose?
- What's the cost, what do I get for my money and are there any restrictions, for instance is there a minimum cost?
- Can I have a phone number for each prospect?
- How will the list be supplied?

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

GDPR strictly regulates information held about individuals and how it's used for direct marketing purposes (for example, you can't contact people who have previously indicated that they don't want you to). Call the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on 0303 123 1113 or go to ico.org.uk for advice and guidelines on how data can be used.

Using a recognised list broker/manager can help you avoid the pitfalls — but it's ultimately your responsibility to follow the rules of the act.

Consider direct mail

When you want a cheaper, less risky tactic that you can personalise by customer profile. Always, be mindful of length of content and how engaging it is when it lands on doormats.

The mailing pack

The table below shows some of the dos and don'ts of creating a successful mailing pack.

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Type the letter, as handwriting looks unprofessional✓ Personalise the letter — make sure the addressee details are correct and you use the proper greeting✓ Get straight to the point — you don't want the reader to switch off✓ Focus on one product or service to avoid confusion and improve response rates✓ Use short sentences and paragraphs to get key messages across✓ Use bullet points and bold type to help the reader through the decision-making process✓ Finish with a call to action that clearly states what you want the reader to do, how and when✓ Consider using an incentive to encourage response (for example 'reply by <date> and you'll get a £50 voucher for <store name>')✓ Make it easy for the customer to reply — clearly display your address and phone number at the end of the letter or include a prepaid reply envelope✓ Sign the letter yourself — it's more personal and increases the chances of a prompt response,✓ Keep hold of any leaflets that you've seen and liked, and consider using something similar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Handwrite any part of the letter✗ Sign off with a pp (per pro) as this takes away the personalised touch✗ Save your best point until last — start with it instead✗ Make the letter too long (one A4 sheet is ideal, and any longer runs the risk that the reader will lose interest)✗ Have too many items in a mailer — this can be confusing and the reader will end up doing nothing✗ Try to be too clever and creative — your message needs to be instantly understood✗ Try to impress — be honest about what you're offering

Ways to increase your response rates

- Make a follow-up phone call.
- Send a follow-up letter.
- Use the services of a call centre.
- Stick to bite-sized chunks of information.
- Include a deadline for special offers to encourage prompt responses.
- Include your email address – many people find email more convenient than a phone call.
- Choose the right time of year – the most effective months for mailings are March to May, and September/October.
- Post your letters to arrive on a Friday or Saturday, so people have more time to consider your message and respond.

Use social media

Social media marketing is a powerful way to reach existing customers and potential customers, and enables you to interact with them directly. It involves creating and sharing content on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram to drive customer engagement, advertising and brand awareness.

Start with a plan

Marketing on social media follows the same principles as print marketing, and so having a plan is crucial to your success. Start by thinking about:

- What you want to achieve
- Who your target audience is
- Which platform best suits your target audience (this is where your customer research can help)
- What messages you want to send to your target audience

As a professional service, you may find there's more value in Twitter or LinkedIn where you can interact with customers and add value. But make sure you set up your social media profiles as a business, this will give you better insights about your page and allow you to advertise and boost your posts – more on this below.

Prepare and schedule content

You should also think about developing a content timeline or schedule. This will not only help you put your plan into action but also save you time as you won't have to craft your social media posts each day. There's lots of free downloadable calendar templates online to help you. Or for more advanced posting, there's also various social media management tools you can use to plan, create and schedule.

By preparing day-to-day content in advance, it gives you more time to engage with topical moments as they come up such as the Budget or Pensions Awareness Day.

Content is king (but so is sharing)

Ideally, you want to have good content and lots of it to get high engagement rates. So make sure you post regularly and offer information that's valuable to your target audience and it adds value to your service. And be creative – posts with images, videos and infographics often get noticed more than those without.

Don't forget to share content. This is a good way to engage and support businesses and information sources that you think will benefit your target audience. Plus it shows them that you're continually reviewing and keeping up-to-date with the industry, regulation and topical moments – building trust and reliability.

You can find more ideas about content marketing in the section Getting positive messages out there.

Create a call to action

Make sure you have a call to action on your page or post to direct your target audience to more information or a touch point to your business. This will also give you an opportunity to add tracking to each post. Most social media platforms offer preset formats designed to help you promote your business. Take a look at [Facebook Blueprint](#) for more information.

Set your advertising budget

Adding a budget to promote your business through social media gives you the potential to massively increase your reach. Although this is dependent on how much you want to spend. Facebook and Instagram are a good place to start as they'll give you an estimate of how well your budget and audience match your goals. Once you decide you can choose which posts you want to boost and who you want to target based on demographics.

Track and test

You'll want to measure the success of your social media campaign, giving you valuable insight into how many people are seeing, interacting and engaging with your posts. This will help you adapt your strategy and decide what works and what doesn't. To effectively track your campaigns, you can either:

- Use the analytics tool in the social media platform, or
- Use Google Analytics to create a campaign link <https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/> for your URLs.

Continue to review your posts and tweak to see how it changes the results. Boost the posts that give you the best results and adapt your future content to fit with what works well.

Consider social media

When you want to build new and existing customer relationships and improve website traffic. Plus it can help set you apart from competitors - but be mindful that it does need commitment to benefit you and your customers.



Organise a webinar

Now more than ever there's a huge opportunity to deliver webinars using tools like Zoom or Gotomeeting. Webinars are flexible and provide interaction meaning you may have more people attend than running an event.

Webinars can be an effective way of highlighting a particular financial need to a group of prospective customers and can also work well with existing customers.

We've included an example webinar schedule below.

Four months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set an objective and pick a topic.• Make a plan for the event, including:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i your message and how to get it across;ii who to invite;iii possible online service;iv financial worth, andv create a feedback form.
Two to three months before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send save the date communications to who you want to invite. Keep it brief and focus on sparking interest.
Four to six weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send formal invitation (include firm agenda and link to webinar).
One week before	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind customers about the upcoming event, keep an eye on the number of responses and tailor how you communicate with your customers.
Day of event	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Log in early to set up.• Encourage attendees to complete your online feedback survey after the webinar.• Do your presentation.• Host a Q&A session with attendees after the event – this could be more of an informal session and a chance for your customers to ask you questions that relate more specifically to them.
After the event	<p>Follow up with all your attendees to say thank you and answer any questions. You could personalise this based on their feedback forms.</p>

Consider organising a webinar

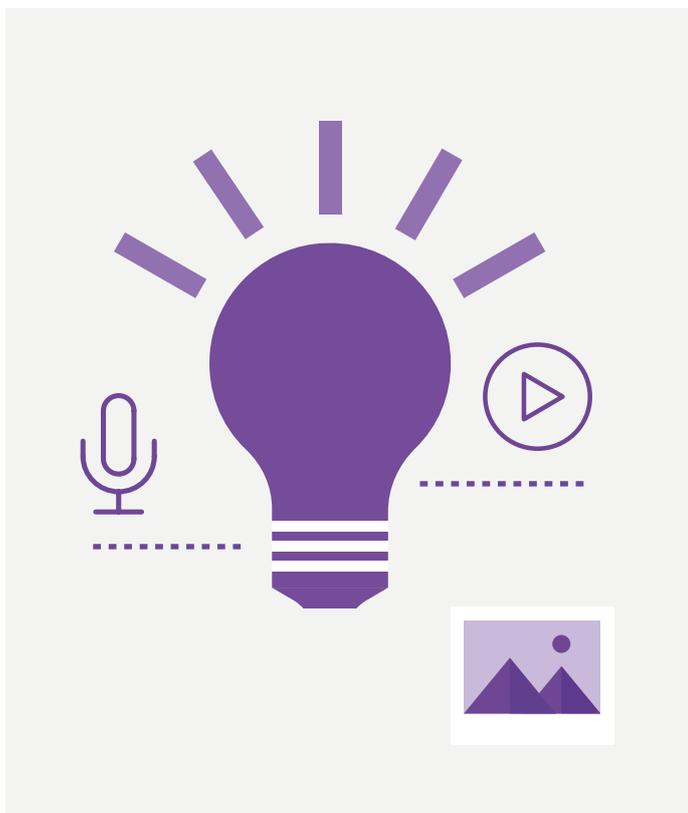
When it's important to reach and deliver a topic to a number of people at once. This could be a pensions awareness day or 'How to improve your financial wellbeing'.

Broadcast and online advertising

Advertising is the most visible part of the marketing process. It can cover a range of non-personal communications, from a notice in a shop window to an advertising campaign on social media.

Advertising can help you:

- Raise awareness of your business
- Generate more customers
- Promote a particular product or service



Planning your campaign

Advertising, like any tactic in a marketing plan, needs to be planned. You'll need to consider:

- Your objective
 - i What are you trying to achieve?
 - ii Is advertising the best way to achieve it?
- Your audience
 - i Who are you aiming your advert at?
 - ii Will your message be received by the right people?
- Your message
 - i What's your main message?
 - ii What do you want the target audience to feel or do after they've seen or heard it?
- Your budget
 - i How can you spend the money you have to effectively reach as much of your target audience as possible?
- The medium — depending on all of the above, you might choose:
 - i newspapers;
 - ii TV;
 - iii radio;
 - iv business directories;
 - v local trade directories, or
 - vi online and/or social media.

Consider advertising

When you have a larger budget and want a higher risk approach. It can be difficult for one advert to stand out, and you should think about how to advertise across a range of mediums and how they work together.

PR

The greatest advantage of PR is that it's free. Local papers in particular are always on the lookout for news submitted by the local community. Even more effective is editorial coverage, which has the advantage of being perceived as independent and credible. People often pay more attention to articles rather than adverts. It's a particularly good way for you to raise your profile in the local area, or nationally.

Background research is essential. You could start by doing an internet search to assess which newspapers have covered specific business protection and/or finance issues over the past quarter or six months. Check the name of the journalist to see what angle they cover, who else (if anyone) advertised around the article and who provided quotes or information.

Consider PR

When you want to share your expertise with a community and it's free. But you should still choose a topic that best suits your audience and is engaging.

Here are some ways you could promote yourself and your business in print:

- Find out a contact name in the news department of your local paper and email them relevant stories.
- Convince the editor of your local newspaper that a regular personal finance column would be popular with readers, and offer to provide the copy.
- Newspapers and professional journals often welcome informed opinion from experts on subjects that may be too technical for consultants to spend time understanding.
- Writing in professional journals can take a different angle. Rather than commenting on a particular product, journals can be used to promote and advertise your business and services.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship can be another effective way of raising name awareness, particularly locally. You could think about sponsoring local sports teams, a school activity or a table at a business event. And it's a particularly good way for you to raise your profile in the local area, or nationally.

Consider sponsorship

When you want to interact with local customers. As with advertising, make sure your message, sponsorship and audience match your target market.

Review and refine your marketing plan

It's important to carry out a complete review of your marketing plan, so you can improve everything you do and stay ahead of the competition.

Why review your marketing plan?

The whole point of a marketing plan is to improve your business. It's important to review your plan so you can use the business results to guide your future decisions.

You should continually review your plan so you can react and adapt to:

- Campaign success
- Major changes in the market situation
- New competitors
- New products on offer
- Changes to regulations
- New technology

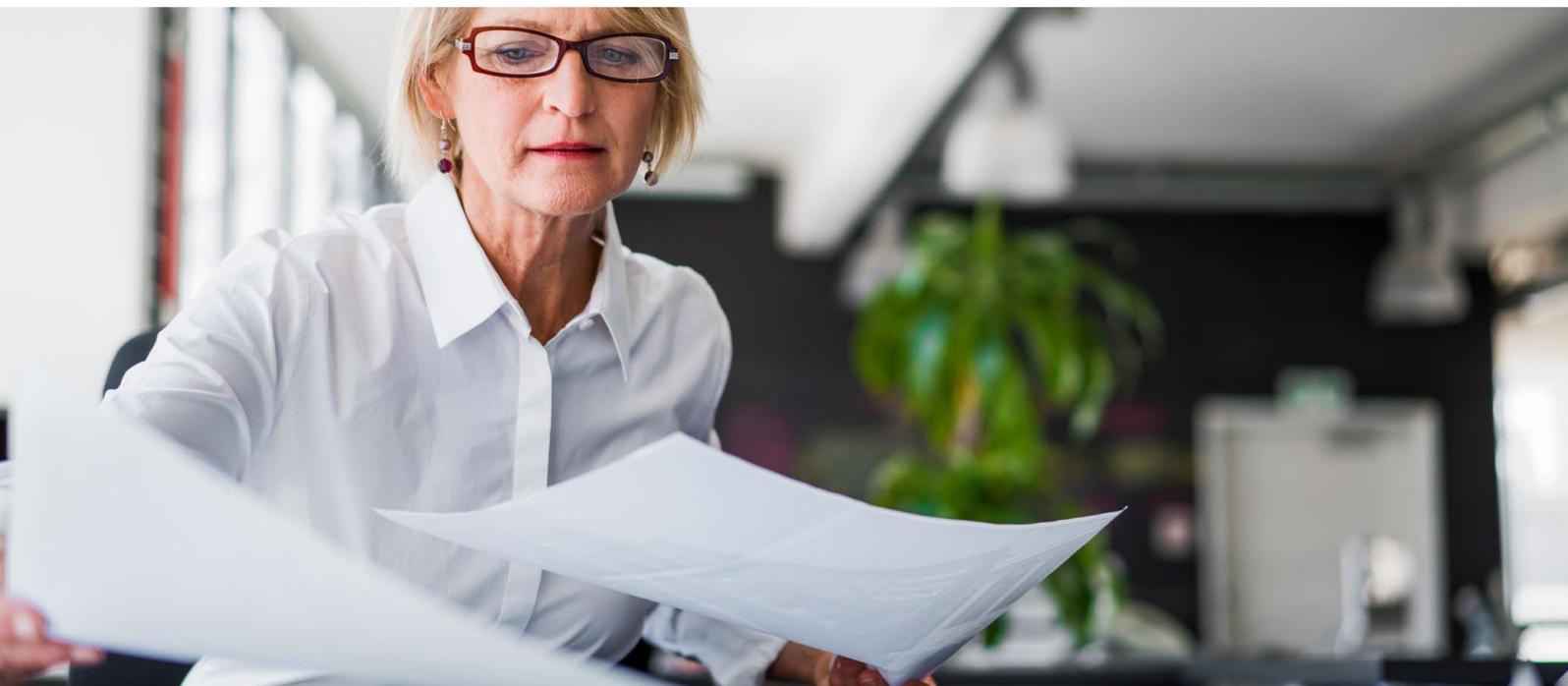
By reviewing your plan on a regular basis, you're more likely to successfully implement it and achieve your goals.

How to review

You'll need to decide how often to review your plan, for example every month or every quarter. You'll need to:

- Track results
- Analyse the difference between your plan and actual results
- Manage any changes
- Ask yourself:
 - i what went wrong, and how can we fix it?
 - ii what went right, and how can we take advantage of it?
 - iii what changes took place in the competitive landscape that could impact the plan?
 - iv what changes took place affecting our market that could impact the plan?
 - v what changes took place within our organisation that could impact the plan?

By repeating this process regularly, you'll have a better grasp on your business, your market, and everything else that happens within your company.



Connect with customers digitally



A digital customer experience is about more than reaching customers through advertising, social media or emails. It's about building lasting relationships and increasing customer satisfaction as the world begins new ways of working.

And so, it's a good idea to make sure you're kept at the forefront of your customers' minds as they navigate through life – so you're their first call when they're looking for some help. One way to do this is to use digital pathways to connect with customers.

We recognise the importance of professional expertise, and our [Supporting Your Business hub](#) has lots of support material to help you, your customers and your business.



Using the right technology

The technology you use should be based on your customers' and your business' needs and it's important to adjust your digital strategy to meet their expectations.

Think about technology you could use to:

- Make it easier for your customers to contact
- Communicate with different groups of customers
- Build loyalty
- Optimise how your customers interact with your business

This could be something as simple as using an online booking system – meaning your customers can see your availability and book an appointment for when it suits both of you. And, it could help reduce the number of calls and emails into your business.

Do your research

Take a look at what's being used in your professional community – this is where having those connections come in handy to give you ideas of how your competitors are already interacting with their customers.

You could also use feedback forms to get an understanding of how your customers want to interact with you and then implement these ideas – it helps your customers feel listened to and can build up their loyalty towards your business.

Keep it simple

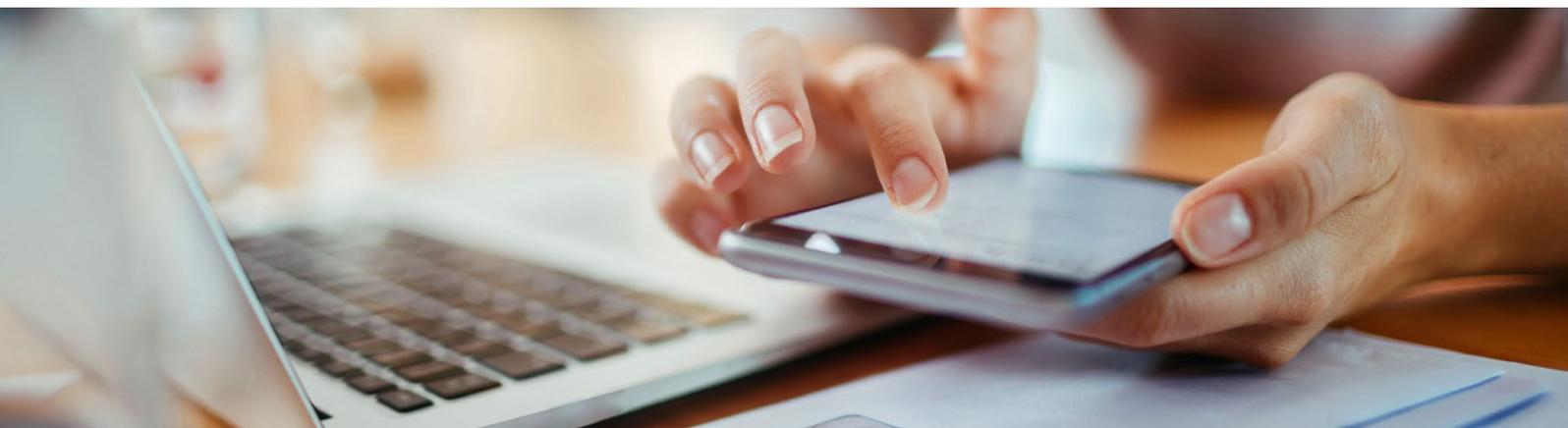
It's better to harness a couple of ways to connect with your customers digitally, than trying to keep up with everything.

Again, think about what could be most beneficial. If you know you could improve how you communicate with your customers, consider how you could use email and elevate that with social media. A multi-channel approach gives you the opportunity to build consistent messaging, highlight 'must-see' content and reach more people.

Example

If you send an email to your customers monthly about your services, financial trends to look out for etc, you could partner this on social media by posting more regular snippets of information or links to articles from your last monthly email.

Plus if you add an option to sign up to receive future emails it's a good way to encourage potential customers to see how you could help them.



Getting positive messages out there

As more of us spend longer online and specifically more so in our professional lives, we're starting to realise the potential of video, online events and working remotely - and the benefits a digital world is starting to have for customers, and ourselves.

What is content marketing

Content marketing helps humanise your company and it's a way for you to connect with your customers and to your industry without directly promoting your business.

Plus issuing useful, unbiased information to a targeted audience can help attract attention and not only generate new customers, but also more loyal ones.

How to produce good content marketing

Think about your target audience – when producing content consider who you want to appeal to. Think about who they are, how they might communicate, what language they would use normally and choose your writing tone to match.

Straddle multiple platforms – content marketing can boost visitors to your social media so make sure you include clear call to actions, such as a link to get in touch or a link to your website.

How does it help?

Using multiple platforms (your website, blogs, social media, forums etc) can help you reach your target audience, regardless of what technology they use. In turn this increases their engagement and generates new business.

How does it help?

Sharing content that's relevant to your customers keeps them engaged with your company and encourages them to listen when you launch a new service or want to promote your business at another time.

Use emotional and personal connections – the success of content marketing is down to timing. Use big social, economic or political events to your advantage and produce content to help your customers in a snapshot of time.

Stand out from the crowd – visual content is becoming more powerful. You could use infographics, photos, quote graphics or GIFs.

Quantity and quality – particularly on social media, accounts that post at least once a day, sharing high quality content and interacting with their followers tend to have better engagement rates. But remember quality is more important – but if you can do both, then do.



Apply behavioural principles

In this section we explore how behavioural principles can help you create a better customer experience.

If you want them to take notice, attract their attention:

- **Send personalised messages** – personalised communications (for example 'Good morning Peter') help attract your customers and builds a personal connection between them and your business.
- **Send from an authoritative figure** – such as a CEO or Head of Investments. You're more likely to persuade your customers into reading your email and taking your messages into consideration – whether it's educational, a service promotion or a business update.
- **Keep it brief** – keep communications succinct so your customers can quickly take away your key points. Short, descriptive email subject lines help them stand out from the crowd and entice customers to read more.

Once you have their attention, offer something that's attractive

- **Highlight what's important** – personalise the messages you send them based on their existing products, interests or future plans – insight that you may have from previous interactions with your customers. What's attractive to your customers will differ.
- **Highlight opportunities** – reframe how your customers think. Openly share knowledge that could provide different opportunities to them, for example in times of volatility there can be opportunities to increase tax-savings or take advantage of market weaknesses.
- **Use introductory offers** – this is best used once you've segmented your customers to make sure your offer is relevant. When there's real value for the customer, there can be real value for your business.

If you want (prospective) customers to do something, make it easy for them

- **Get in touch** – this is your main conversion point between a prospective customer and your customer. So think of all the ways your customers accesses your business (website, social media, email etc) and have the conversion point on them all, and make it visible.
- **Take advantage of offers** – make sure your offer and the call to action prompt are clear. Digitally, this is usually a button that links to the business' website. But you could also consider providing a code to quote and how to contact you.
- **Build trust** – educate your customers on how they can best share their experiences of you and your business. Regularly ask them to leave a review on your social media, website or online communities - you may even have customers willing to do a video testimonial. But it's important to encourage all feedback, not just the positive.
- **Have options** – offer a range of ways your customers can stay in touch with you digitally. It should be an extension to your usual service, rather than a replacement. For example, your customers may prefer face-to-face meetings most of the time but may also enjoy the option for a short video call when they need it.



Make group references

Find evidence for what many other investors or most of your customers are doing

We're far more likely to do what others are doing too. For example, if most of your customers have used recent market uncertainty to review their investments you could reach out to those who've not yet done so advising that "most of my customers have taken the opportunity to...".

If there's no majority, you could refer to what customers are increasingly doing. "An increasing number of my customers have started reviewing..." People don't want to be on the wrong side of history so likely to jump onto an emerging norm.



Be on time

- Think of disruptive moments – people feel ready to make a fresh start (or act on the thoughts they've mulled over recently) at the beginning of a week, month, or year. So try using this as the opportunity to advise your customers – prepare your communications on a Friday, but send it on the Monday morning, as it's likely to get higher engagement and interest.

Example

Consider turning on your Google or Facebook ads in time with market volatility (when markets go down, people feel loss more and are more likely to take action).

- Prompt customers at key points – analyse your customers' behaviour to promote different services. For example, if they move house, change name, their age ends in nine. Customers are likely to be more receptive after a life shift.

Our Centre for Behavioural Research specialises in helping advisers apply existing behavioural insights to help advise customers to the right long-term savings approach.

Digital tools and how to use them

In this section we look at some digital tools that you can use to promote your business and how to use them to build better relationships with your customers

Google and Google Maps

Google is the most used search engine in the UK (as at June 2023) and presents an opportunity to promote your services to a wide audience. We also asked our customer panel if they would search for a financial adviser on Google, with 40% of respondents agreeing they would. But where do you start?

Claim your business profile

The best place to start is to make sure your business profile is up to date. You can do this through Google My Business. The key things to add are:

- Your logo
- Your location
- A link to your website
- Your contact details and opening hours
- Customer reviews

Having complete business information also helps boost your listing on the search engine and builds trust with potential customers. Plus, this is another place to add your conversion point – **Get in touch**.

Be visible using Google Maps

With users often searching 'near me', setting your location means your Google search listing will feed into a local market of potential customers.

You can also set geographic limits which works well if you only want to operate in a certain area – this is beneficial if you have multiple offices across the country.

Remember to update your business profile regularly – this may be to add upcoming bank holiday hours or even new photos of your office, awards or customer reviews. Refreshing your profile will help to attract new and returning customers and move to the top of Google search results.



How to position adverts on Unbiased

Making sure your advert on [Unbiased](#) stands out follows suit from your Google business profile – location, contact details and logo are very important.

But advertising on an industry-specific website means you can be more personal. You can add information such as:

- What makes your business great – go into more detail about you and your services, what makes you stand out against competitors;

- Details about your preferred customers, such as minimum investment values
- Vital statistics such as monthly leads from your business profile

Our research² shows that customers want to see experience and a good response time in an Unbiased advert.

Video calls

As we explored earlier, giving your customers options to engage with you is becoming more focused around video and video calls and helps you build strong customer service. So here's some tips to keep it professional:

Be in a well-lit room

Natural light works the best. Make sure you face towards a window or natural light source rather than with your back to it.

Keep your camera at eye level

Similar to how you should position your monitor, you want to keep your camera at a height where your head and shoulders are visible. It's also easier for you to look directly into the camera and keeps customers engaged.

Be aware of your settings

Before you start calls, make sure you know where the mute button is. When you're not speaking, go on mute to avoid unnecessary background noise – even if you're alone.

Don't overthink your backdrop

Our research shows that some customers thought it better to have a professional backdrop (books, award etc) rather than family photos – and others didn't. So don't over-engineer it – make sure it's simple, clean and reflects your business.

Chances are, customers won't take much notice of the backdrop when you're doing a good job.

Dress as you would in the office

We found customers would prefer a financial adviser to be more overdressed than smart casual, with hints that older and immediate value customers like to see an adviser dress as they would in the office.

² Carried out with 1,889 members of Aegon's Feedback Community, May-June 2020.

Take a look at our guides [Creating a powerful business plan](#)
and [Develop professional connections](#).

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