the BIG BOOK

# of WORKING SMARTER

OutboundEngine

Welcome to

THE BIG BOOK OF WORKING SMARTER

Are you looking for better ways to market your business? Do you struggle to tackle your to-dos every day? Want to make following up with your customers more efficient? This book is designed to free up your time so you can focus on doing what you do best — running your business. Read on for time-saving tips and some marketing best practices we've gathered over hours of conversation with business owners just like you.

Ever caught yourself writing a task on your to-do list just for the sake of crossing it off? We've been there too.

Today, business owners manage an overwhelming number of tasks that consume their days (and often nights). In fact, most entrepreneurs work an estimated 60-plus hours per week.

And the to-dos just keep adding up.

As a startup dedicated to handling online marketing for more than 10,000 businesses, we log a lot of hours on the phone to understand what we can do to make business owners' lives easier. We have conversations with professionals in industries ranging from real estate to wellness to law and everything between.

Based on those conversations, we've built and gathered tools and productivity resources (paired with some of our favorite work smarter tips) in one, easy-to-access place -- The Big Book of Working Smarter. We think it's about time there's a free guide to help entrepreneurs make the most of their hours.

Here's to working smarter, never harder.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

THE OFFICIAL ONLINE MARKETING CHECKLIST

Marketing your business is a full-time job.

And it’s easy to overlook the essentials. From your website to your email signature, every detail matters. Make sure you’re covering your bases. When running through your business marketing to-dos, cross-reference this interactive online marketing checklist before moving to the next task.

Your Quick Guide to A+ Marketing

- [ ] **SOCIAL MEDIA**
  Does your business have a Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn page? It should.
- [ ] **MANAGE REVIEWS**
  It’s important to manage your online reputation by responding to customer reviews.
- [ ] **EMAIL LIST**
  Building a healthy email list is how you use marketing to drive long-term revenue.
- [ ] **EMAIL NEWSLETTER**
  Newsletters should provide value to recipients and drive repeat and referral business.
- [ ] **SIGNATURE**
  Email signatures are a great space to promote your website and social accounts.
- [ ] **WEBSITE**
  Beyond maintaining your social and review pages, your business needs a mobile-friendly website.
- [ ] **FOLLOW-UP PROCESS**
  Following up with customers should be a high-priority component of any marketing strategy.
- [ ] **BROWSER TESTING**
  You need to see what your email and website looks like across multiple browsers and devices.

Chapter 2

TIME-SAVING TOOLS & TRICKS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS

Want to simplify your workflow?

There are few things more time-consuming than running a business, but being busy doesn't always equal productivity. Often, we're so busy putting out small fires and dealing with the urgent details of our day-to-day grind that we never actually get around to moving the needle on bigger things.

Here's a list of tips and tools we put together to help you improve your marketing productivity and free up more time to focus on your business.

Productivity Tools for Social Media

Buffer — See something you like online? Save it using the mobile app or browser extension and queue it up later to engage your audience across multiple channels. In addition to sharing other sources, the platform allows you to write your own content and schedule it to publish whenever you want.

Buzzsumo — Keep your finger on the pulse of the industry's most-shared content and an eye on what your competitors are doing.

OutboundEngine — We curate interesting content, write click-worthy captions and optimize every post with eye-catching images to make you stand out in any social feed.

Productivity Tools for Email

Boomerang — (For Gmail) Allows you to respond to email at your convenience and then schedule send times to avoid being bombarded by immediate client responses. (It also comes in handy when you're planning email newsletters!)

Inbox Pause — This app allows you to temporarily pause your inbox. What better way to take complete control over the flow of email during your workday?

OutboundEngine — Twice a month, our content team in Austin, Texas, writes engaging, entertaining emails that position you as a helpful industry expert.

Productivity Tools for Managing Reviews

Mention — This app monitors your online presence and sends a notification whenever you get a mention on any website, blog or social media channel -- and it's all done in real time! You can respond to mentions immediately, set up team projects, assign tasks, and track and analyze performance.

OutboundEngine Reviews — We help you get reviews from your best clients, keep you informed when people are talking about you (and your competitors) and encourage word of mouth online.

Other Productivity Tools We Love

Asana — Eliminate the need for status meetings or even email updates by keeping everyone on the same page from start to finish. Everything you need to get the job done is right here under one umbrella.

Pocket — Sometimes you find interesting content but you don't have time to read it. With this app, you can put articles in your "pocket" and come back to them later. Once content is in your pocket, you can view it on your computer, phone or tablet. You don't even need an internet connection.

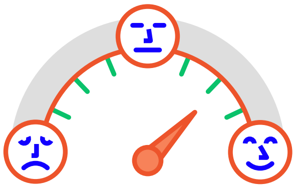
IFTTT — IFTTT, short for "If This Then That," allows you to connect your favorite apps by creating "recipes." For example, you can create an "IF Recipe" that says IF you post a photo to Instagram, THEN the photo will also be immediately saved to your Dropbox.

PRO TIP:

To really maximize your productivity, dedicate your break time to something unrelated to work. Consider working out, taking a walk around the block or reading a book. Your mind (and body) will thank you.

Chapter 3

WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS REALLY WANT



Why waste time providing solutions for problems your customers don't have?

Don't! No matter what industry you're in, your products and services are designed to provide solutions to the problems your customers face.

The truth is, sometimes our expertise comes back to bite us. We're so busy playing doctor, confident in our ability to relieve perceived pain points, that we never bother to ask the patient where it actually hurts.

To provide true value to your customers, you have to start by asking the right questions. Here are some recommendations to help you get more out of your conversations.

Avoid Assumptions

Whether you realize it or not, your preconceived notions influence your interaction with clients. For example, if you come in thinking your client's primary pain is poor time management, you may ask questions differently, inadvertently leading the conversation. As a result, you won't gather new information or insight into where your client could actually use your assistance.

Ask the Right Type of Questions

Unfortunately, there's no magic set of questions designed to reveal pain points across all industries. The types of questions you ask will vary by business, target audience and individual. Every conversation is different.

What you can do, however, is get into the habit of asking focused, open-ended questions. These are not only perfect conversation starters, but they also allow for a more open and mutually beneficial discussion. Consider the differences in the following real estate examples:

> Leading question: “Don’t you love the Victorian style?”
> Open-ended question: “What do you think of the property?”

The first question not only limits the conversation to Victorian homes, but also exposes how you feel about them and how you expect the client to respond. If you really want to focus the discussion on Victorian-style homes, try a more neutral question, like “How do you feel about Victorian homes?”

The second question shows no bias. It allows the client to comment on the property as a whole and pinpoint specific likes and dislikes. For example, the client may be thrilled with the curbside appeal but not so much with the limited closet space.

By leaving the question open-ended, you create an opportunity for learning. Clients are able to think and converse more freely, and they often learn as much from the discussion as you do, identifying pain points they didn’t even realize existed. This helps create a sense of connection and a willingness to accept your expert advice.

Actively Listen

In everyday conversation, it’s not uncommon for friends to interrupt one another with random thoughts or related stories. It’s how we make connections. But when you’re trying to discover a customer’s pain points, interrupting is counterproductive.

Instead, actively listen to what the client is telling you. Make your connection by asking insightful follow-up questions. The more you engage and show you care about the problem, the more your client will be willing to share — and the more you’ll learn.

After peeling back the layers, you may discover that you have experience and insight that will prove valuable to the customer — information that you wouldn’t have thought to share initially. You may find that the source of the client’s pain is in perfect alignment with one of your product offerings.

Find the Common Thread

While certain problems will prove unique to specific clients, many will be more universal. As you identify these trends, you can adjust your marketing strategies and reevaluate product offerings to address these common pain points and make customers happier across the board.

Now let’s look at a few general examples of open-ended questions you can tweak and use to discover pain points for any industry. We’ve also included a marketing-specific answer for each question to give you an idea of how one of these conversations might go.

What is the biggest challenge you're currently facing?

This is a conversation starter, a question that scratches the surface of the problem as the client experiences it. It's designed to get the client talking. You don't know exactly where the conversation will go, but you know you're going to learn something valuable.

What happens if the challenge is left unchecked?

Once you've identified a pain point, it helps to know what kind of havoc it's wreaking on the customer. This type of question helps you assess the risks of doing nothing against the benefits of making a change. It also gives insight into the client's motivations for wanting to make improvements.

What has prevented you from overcoming challenges?

This question not only helps you identify the obstacles a client is facing, but also the solutions they've used to address the problem. If they've tried other solutions, you have an opportunity to follow up and ask about those experiences. Knowing the history can help you pinpoint a better alternative.

What should a new system do to solve the problem?

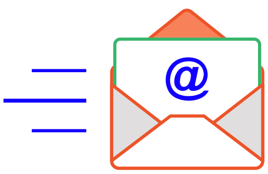
This question not only helps you identify the obstacles a client is facing, but also the solutions they've used to address the problem. If they've tried other solutions, you have an opportunity to follow up and ask about those experiences. Knowing the history can help you pinpoint a better alternative.

We've found that X is a common source of challenge for our customers. How do you feel about it?

Some people have a problem identifying specific pain points. This type of question helps by providing a frame of reference for the client. You're not trying to sell them anything or lead them to a specific topic. Instead, you're offering up a topic of conversation and allowing them to open up about their own specific problems in relation to a known pain point.

Chapter 4

MAKE EVERY FOLLOW-UP YOUR BEST FOLLOW-UP



Follow-up with your customers on a regular basis.

It keeps you top of mind and saves you time in the long run. It’s no secret that it takes less effort to keep your current contact base happy than it does to acquire new customers. You’re not getting the most out of those relationships if you’re not keeping in touch. But staying in touch can be time-consuming and overwhelming!

That’s why providing a quick follow-up to the questions and concerns of prospects and clients is an essential building block of long-term relationships. It shows them you care about their business and helps you earn their trust and respect.

Following up with potential customers should be a high-priority tactic of any marketing strategy. With that in mind, here are five effective follow-up tactics you can use to connect with interested prospects.

Make Time to Follow-Up

Creating a follow-up schedule, complete with notifications on your calendar, keeps the entire process efficient and effective. Today’s marketer is fielding leads from a variety of sources: phone calls, emails, website inquiries, social media, even snail mail. Mapping out your plan of attack isn’t only convenient; it’s essential.

Of course, a follow-up schedule is only a guideline for you. Your prospects are going to have plans and timelines of their own, and they’ll buy when they’re ready. The best you can do is to remain vigilant, nurture the relationship and stay top of mind.

Treat Potential Customers With Respect

Following up with potential customers shouldn't be tricky. The lead is warm, and the interest is there. All you need to do is initiate a genuine conversation that will hold their attention and nudge them gently forward.

Do your homework and have your talking points ready, but come prepared to listen. Your prospects don't want a thinly veiled sales pitch. Listen to what each prospect has to say. Get a feel for who they are and what they do, then figure out how you can make their lives easier.

When you respect the individuality of potential customers, your conversations resonate. And there's nothing more memorable than real advice from an industry expert, especially when it's tailor-made for the prospect's specific situation.

Providing a quick follow-up to the questions and concerns of prospects and clients is an essential building block of long-term relationships. It shows them you care about their business and helps you earn their trust and respect.

Provide Valuable Content

Your prospects are busy, and not every follow-up requires a direct conversation. You want to add value, not stress and aggravation. Content marketing not only allows you to bridge the gap with value during the in-between times, but it also allows you to expand your potential touch points.

The content you create and share should always be relevant to your prospects and your business. It should never be about the hard sell; instead, it should provide value and advance the overarching conversation. This positions you as an interested partner rather than a pushy salesman.

Remember, for 78 percent of consumers, custom content is the calling card of a company who cares. So whether you're creating infographics, FAQ videos or sharing images on Instagram, always keep the potential customer in mind.

Use Every Available Avenue

If you want to form a lasting connection with potential customers, meet them on their own stomping grounds.

If Joe Prospect is a phone call guy, give him a call. If he prefers email, use that to your advantage. If he's a social butterfly, maybe you follow up via Facebook or Twitter. It's his world; you're just trying to live in it.

The important thing to remember is that it's all on the table -- phone, text, email, snail mail, social media. Use whatever works. The more touch points you use, the better chance you have of staying top of mind.

Track Everything

If you really want to understand the effectiveness of your sales process, you have to track everything — when follow-ups were attempted, when contacts were made, how the prospects responded, etc. Having this information in your database gives everyone in your company a big-picture view of the buyer's journey as it relates to your process.

Go beyond the phone records; track social and email as well. Monitoring email open and click-through rates can be especially enlightening. For example, the right email automation program can add tracking pixels to your emails so you know exactly when your email is viewed by the prospect and whether or not they clicked through.

While you don't want to become "big brother" to potential customers, being able to monitor this information allows you to make timely follow-up attempts. Plus, you know exactly what prospects are interested in and how they're interacting with your emails. This allows you to improve your marketing message moving forward.

Lacking a follow-up process?

Download this free Customer Follow-Up Essentials template

PRO TIP:

Believe it or not, businesses have always been somewhat baffled by the concept of follow-up. In fact, Forbes reported that companies waste approximately 71 percent of qualified leads.

OutboundEngine

www.outboundengine.com