MARKETING BASICS: REACHING YOUR FIRST 100 CUSTOMERS

Low-cost ways to find customers, how to test what works, and how to spend more only on what brings in sales.

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AT A GLANCE

- Your first 100 customers usually come from **people you can reach directly**, **word of mouth**, **partnerships** and **local presence**, not big ad budgets.
- Try a few channels, **measure what brings in paying customers**, then double down.
- Every channel should have a clear next step: book, buy, call or visit.

Why it matters

Marketing without measuring wastes money. Small businesses don't have budgets to waste. Testing cheaply and tracking results lets you find the one or two channels that work, then grow them.

Low-cost channels to try

Channel	How it works	Good for
Your network	Personal messages to people you know	Everyone, at the start
Referrals	Rewarding customers who send friends	Services, local businesses
Partnerships	Teaming up with businesses serving the same customers	Local and B2B businesses
Local search and reviews	Google Business Profile and maps	Local businesses. See **L-04 Getting Found Locally: Google, Maps and Reviews**.
Social media	Regular posts and replies	Visual products and services. See **L-03 Social Media for New Businesses**.
Community events	Markets, festivals, school and faith events, sponsorships	Food, retail, services
Email and text lists	Updates and offers to people who opted in	Repeat customers
Flyers and door hangers	Printed materials in targeted areas	Home services, local food
Small paid ads	Social or search ads with a small test budget	Online sales, local services

Step by step

1. **Know your customer.** See **I-02 Who Is Your Customer?**.
2. **Pick 2 or 3 channels** that reach them.
3. **Set a small test budget and time**, for example $200 and 4 weeks per channel.
4. **Track where every customer came from.** Ask "How did you hear about us?" and use unique links or codes.
5. **Calculate cost per customer** for each channel. See **M-09 Unit Economics: What Each Customer Is Worth**.
6. **Double down** on what works. Stop what doesn't.

Referral programs

A simple referral offer can be your best channel: "Give $20, get $20." Customers who come from referrals often stay longer and spend more.

> EXAMPLE
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> **Rosa** tried three channels for a month, with $200 each. Door hangers in two neighborhoods brought 2 clients ($100 each). A small social ad brought 3 clients (about $67 each). A referral offer, $25 off for both the existing client and the friend, brought 11 clients at about $50 each in discounts, with no upfront spending. She stopped the door hangers, kept the ads small, and made referrals the center of her marketing.

Partnering with other businesses

Look for businesses that serve your customers but don't compete with you: a realtor and a cleaner, a gym and a meal-prep service, a salon and a skincare brand. Offer to cross-promote, share referral discounts or co-host an event.

Common mistakes

- **Spending big before testing.**
- **Not tracking where customers come from.**
- **Trying every channel at once.**
- **Forgetting existing customers.** Repeat business is the cheapest growth.

Your checklist

- ☐ Choose 2 or 3 channels
- ☐ Set a test budget and time for each
- ☐ Start asking every customer how they found you
- ☐ Launch a simple referral offer
- ☐ Calculate cost per customer after 4 weeks
- ☐ Double down on the best channel

Key words, explained

Word	What it means
Channel	A way of reaching customers.
Cost per customer	Marketing spending divided by new customers won.
Referral program	Rewards for customers who bring in new customers.
Conversion	When someone takes the action you want, like booking.

Where to go next

- **L-06 Selling: How to Ask for the Sale**
- **L-13 Marketing Calendar**
- **M-09 Unit Economics: What Each Customer Is Worth**

IMPORTANT
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