

# YALIENTREPRENEURS

## YALI BRAND BETTER WORKBOOK



YALINETWORK

Create. Innovate. Prosper.

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#YALIENTREPRENEURS



U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE



# YALI Brand Better Workbook:

## Build an effective marketing strategy

**There are many different aspects of marketing that you should consider when you are strategizing for your business or organization and you are trying to expand to new markets. There are also many different kinds of strategies and campaigns that you could employ.**

**In this workbook, we will cover the building blocks for an effective marketing strategy — including content marketing, email campaigns, social media platforms, paid advertising, and audience analysis — in order to build or expand your business successfully.**

- **BASICS OF DIGITAL MARKETING**
- **FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE**
- **CONTENT IS KEY**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

# BASICS OF MARKETING

## Marketing defined

Here are some definitions to get you started recognizing the concepts around marketing and expanding your business before we dig deeper.

**Brand:** Think of it as your organization's reputation. It determines how many times, how often, and in what ways people interact with you. Your brand is what people think of when they think about your organization. Make sure to complete the first Brand Better Workbook to learn more about your unique brand.

**Value proposition:** The unique value a company promises to deliver to customers should they choose to buy its product or service or support its organization.

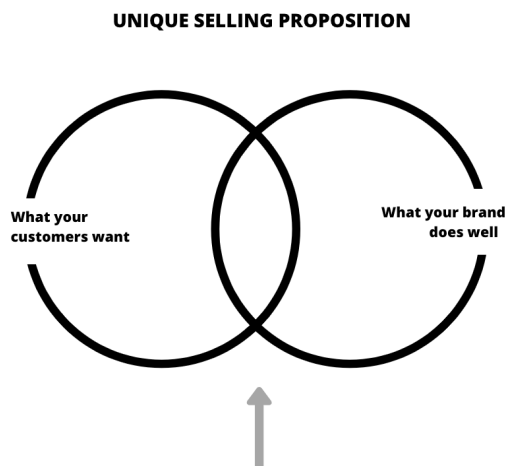
**Digital marketing:** Using online platforms and tools (like social media) to promote your brand in a way that reaches your audience and resonates with them.

**Social media:** Forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.

**Target audience:** The specific group of people you want to reach with your digital tactics. Your target audience will likely be united by some common characteristics, like demographics and behaviors.

## Understanding your unique selling proposition and your value

When telling your brand story and communicating your business via digital marketing strategies, it is important to first understand what you have to offer, as it will help you guide the rest of your marketing streams.



**What is a unique selling proposition (USP)?** – The one thing that makes your business stand out from the rest. A compelling USP communicates what makes your brand unique.

What is the solution to a specific customer's problem? What is the advantage that you have over your competitors and what do your customers expect?

**Tips to crafting a strong USP:**

- Figure out your target audience's greatest challenge.
  - How will your business solve that problem?
- Identify what differentiates you from your competitors.
  - Why is it valuable to your target audience?
- Decide what promise you are making to your customer about your product or service.
- On your website and your social media, make sure you communicate your USP clearly.
- Be consistent and follow through with your promise.

What is your USP?

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What are your goals for your marketing strategies?

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3. 

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## Why use a digital marketing strategy?

### THE ROLE OF MARKETING



Source: [Lumen Learning](#)

It can be hard to see how building your brand translates into more revenue for your organization. You know that it's good to have a strong and unique online presence, but how can you use that presence to increase your organization's income?

- **Competitiveness:** Imagine two restaurants that offer the same food at the same location. Only one of them creates a strong presence on social media. Which restaurant will people think about more? Do you think this will influence where those people will go to eat?
- **Creating an Experience:** When you tell the story of you and your organization online, your customers are getting more than just a product; they are getting an experience. They may be willing to pay more because of it.
- **Increased Professionalism:** Investors and partner organizations like to know that they are working with someone who uses all the available resources. A robust online presence signals that you are a serious and proactive organization.
- **Customer Loyalty:** Engaging with your audience regularly online builds a community of people who are excited about your product. This community will support your mission again and again.

### Types of digital marketing strategies

There are many different ways to engage your community and your potential customer base. Here are a few of the most common types of digital marketing campaigns.

Content	Social Media	Email	Influencer	Paid Search	Video
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It is often said that “content is key” when it comes to digital marketing. Compelling and appealing blogs, social media posts, and infographics all rely on content as a base for a digital marketing campaign to educate customers, increase awareness of your brand and convert interest into sales and support.	Social media is where most people will find new businesses and organizations. There are many different platforms to share product information, communicate your vision, grow your customer base, and create community. Maintaining consistent social media messaging is key to keeping this base engaged.	Email marketing is a form of direct marketing that can easily reach customers where they already are: their inbox. It can be difficult to stand out though among the many mailing lists people are subscribed to, so make sure your email campaigns are attention-grabbing and offer enticing calls to action.	When social media is key and exists as the new “word of mouth” marketing, there will be key influencers on any platform. Working with these influencers to promote your product, speak on your organization, or recommend you in some way will lead their followers to your organization easily.	Promoting your business via paid advertising is a great way to get your content and product or services in front of a new audience in a new way, given an allotted budget. People are already searching for a particular topic, and this type of advertising will promote yours steadily.	Depending on your capabilities, video marketing campaigns are a great way to think outside the box on your current social or content marketing campaigns. Keep in mind that while people come to videos to educate themselves on something, they also have a short attention span and need the content to be sharp and quickly insightful.
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## FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE

If you market to everyone, you market to no one. For companies to thrive in the digital era, they must adopt key marketing strategies that help their companies grow. A crucial step toward reaching this growth is the use of a target audience.

### Define your target audience

“Target audience” is a term used to describe the group of people you hope to bring into your business who will engage with the products and services you provide. It’s vital to have a target audience in mind, as it will be the driving force behind the content you create and the platforms you decide to publish on.

By incorporating a target audience into your marketing strategy, you can narrow your audience and expand your reach. In turn, it will save you time and help you make meaningful connections with your customers. Defining your target audience will help you eliminate vagueness in your marketing promotion and open opportunities to set your business apart from competitors. Another way to think of your target audience is to think of your ideal customer.

*Now it's your turn!*

**Exercise: Market to your target audience**

**Step 1: Picture your audience.**

- In this first step, write down features about your target audience. These features can include demographics like age, sex, occupation, language, or location.

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- Once you have visualized your audience, focus on an ideal customer.

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**Step 2: Dig into your ideal customer's background.**

- Write down the areas of your customer's life that will help you understand the customer better. What goals do you envision your customer having? What are your customer's interests or challenges? How do your customers spend their free time?

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**Step 3: Tie it back to your organization.**

- The final step is to tie the information about your customer to your organization. How can your organization's products and services interact with the goals of your customers? By answering these questions, you will be one step closer to improving your marketing strategy.
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## CONTENT IS KEY

What is content marketing?



*"Good content is not storytelling. It's telling your story well." — Ann Handley, Writer*

Content marketing is a strategic approach to marketing that revolves around consistently creating, curating, managing, and distributing resources and materials that are engaging to attract, drive traction, and convert your audience to support your organization or utilize your products or services. Content is the base for your social interactions and community-building practices that attract and maintain loyal customers and support.

Creating a strong brand and knowing how to tell your story well are essential when you begin thinking about your content marketing strategies. To learn more about brand positioning, complete the YALI Brand Better Brand Positioning Workbook and run through exercises to help you tell your story.

#### **What are the different content types that can be produced?**

- Blog
- Guide
- Ebook
- Webinar
- Online course
- Template
- Kit
- Quiz
- Podcast
- Video
- Infographic
- Newsletter

What types of content does your audience already engage with?

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#### **Creating a compelling website**

After analyzing your audience, you should have a better understanding of who you are marketing to and what type of content they might want to see. Having a strong website is the foundation for housing all your content in one place.

##### **Website Building Platforms**

- [Squarespace](#)

- [Wix](#)
- [Shopify](#)
- [WordPress](#)
- [WooCommerce](#)

There are many ways to build and maintain a website. Once you have found a platform, here are a few steps to keep in mind to create a positive experience for your customers and supporters:

1. **Invest in a good domain name.** When thinking of your business name, to stand apart from the rest you should consider what names and similar names already exist and if your intended name might be confusing. Consider which domains are [available](#) and what makes the most sense for usability. Your website and your social media handles should also be the same to create more ease of use for your customers to always find you.
2. **Create a visually appealing and easy-to-navigate website.** Showcase what your brand stands for in a visually appealing website platform. This might often be the first impression a potential customer gets of your business, and it should represent your brand and be simple and easy to navigate. Your website is an experience of your brand, and just as you would want to create a positive impression in person, you want to create an online presence that is welcoming as well.
3. **Link together your social media channels on your website.** Streamlining access to all of your social channels will ensure that you are easy to find. If you offer different materials and resources via your social channels, you want them to be easy to access all together so individuals visiting your website can get all relevant information in one place.
4. **Make connecting and purchasing easy to do.** If you have creating a community in mind, individuals visiting your website should be able to easily find where to go to connect and find necessary forms to fill out quickly or find social channels to join. If you are a for-profit business selling products, you should have a system in place to account for those purchases and you should create easy-to-use commerce systems and calls to action via buttons or images.
5. **Communicate your mission and the values that represent your brand.** It is recommended to build a few different areas on your website that communicate your brand. Here are the recommended areas to build on your website: Home; About Us (Mission and Values); Products/Services; Blog; and Contact Us.
6. **Use high-quality images that reflect your brand.** Particularly when you have products for sale on your website, the images and photographs should be high-quality.
7. **Create content that is relevant, engaging, and consistent.** There are many different ways you can convey information and resources to your potential customers and supporters. Be consistent and generate new, relevant, and engaging ideas. Outsource the content stream via a new role in your business or freelancers,

or via loyal customers who want to share their experiences or expertise. See what your customers are engaging with, what social media channels they engage with, and what type of content is resonating with them and produce original content that will engage them.

What are your goals for your website? What do you want your website to convey to your customers or supporters?

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#### What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving a website or webpage so it increases organic traffic quality and quantity from search engines. Successful SEO means a webpage will be more likely to appear higher on a search engine results page.

Good SEO means having:

- Fast loading speed
- Unique titles and descriptions for content
- Spam-free coding
- Keyword research and implementation
- Mobile-friendly content
- Backlinks and internal links
- A secure platform
- Social media links
- Positive reviews and feedback
- Tracking analytics to continually reassess any structures

#### LEARN MORE

There are many tools available online to help you better understand SEO and how you can build a target- and results-oriented website. [Yoast](#) offers extensive online training courses about SEO. [Hubspot](#) is also a great resource for online courses, kits, certifications, and guides to walk you through all things digital marketing.

Do you have the ability to develop strong content or outsource content to individuals who can create compelling content for your business? What is your plan to create a strong editorial calendar of new content?

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What are some attention-grabbing keywords you should focus on for your business websites and social channels that represent your products or services?


## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR YOUR BUSINESS

*Define your goals. Define your audience. Define your content.*

Once you have identified your brand story, your target audience, and what type of content your target audience wants to see and you have established a website, you can create a social media strategy that accomplishes your goals for your business and creates a loyal customer base.

### Which social media platforms exist?

Now that you've thought a bit more about your target audience, it's time to think about ways to reach them. There are a lot of online platforms out there. What are some benefits and shortcomings that come with each of them? Hootsuite provides a great understanding of the various [types of social media](#).

Social	Media sharing	Bookmarking	Blogging	Social shopping	Consumer review	'Shared economy'
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-Facebook -Twitter -LinkedIn -WhatsApp -Snapchat -Reddit	-Instagram -TikTok -YouTube	-Pinterest -Dribbble -Delicious	-WordPress -Medium -Tumblr	-Etsy -Polyvore -Wanelo	-Yelp -TripAdvisor -Zomato	-AirBnb -Uber -DoorDash -Poshmark
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There are many pros and cons to each platform. For example, Facebook is widely used with business account features and offers paid ads, but it may be difficult to stand out and create a memorable experience on Facebook. YouTube allows you to create and share videos to educate your audience, and with the right keywords you can be easily found, but you might not have the capacity or time to produce and edit video content. It is up to you to determine what social media platforms work best for you and your organization.

**What social media platforms do you personally use?**

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**What social media platforms stand out to you right away that might help you reach your goals and reach your audience?**

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**Exercise: What social media platform should you try?**

Social media is the new word of mouth; people can find you more easily on platforms they are already on and that their friends or other influencers are accessing. It can help you to build brand awareness, develop a community and customer relationships, and, in certain platforms, help you make sales directly via the channel.

Knowing that there are a variety of platforms, all for different uses and with different audiences, what platforms work well for you?

- **Does my audience use social media?** First, ask yourself: Does my audience use social media? The odds are that they do, but if your target demographic prefers TV, newspapers, radio, or other sources of media, it might be better to focus on that rather than social media.
  - **No -> Consider alternate forms of media.** If you are certain that none of your potential customers use social media, it might be best to use other forms of media.
  - **Yes -> How often would I like to post?** Frequency of activity is important. Post too much and you will overwhelm your audience with information. Too little, and you'll have a harder time standing out.
    - **Multiple times a day -> What type of content am I looking to post?** When posting multiple times a day, it's best to keep your content fun, lighthearted, and focused more on giving an intimate perspective of your organization than on pushing out information.
      - **Videos -> Instagram Stories/Reels or TikTok.** Taking casual videos of what your organization is doing can be a fun way to let your audience know what you're doing on a day-to-day basis. That way you can interact with your customers and show them what your business/nonprofit is about, rather than just what you do!
      - **Text/Photos -> Twitter, Reddit, or social sharing forums.** These platforms are great for interacting directly with your audience, rather than just making announcements. Finding places where people are having conversations, and then joining them, can be a great way to promote your organization.
    - **Daily/Multiple times a week -> How much information do I want to include?** When posting several times a week, you should always make sure to use a mix of text, pictures, videos, opinion polls, or other forms of posts on all your social media platforms. Some platforms, however, are better suited to containing certain amounts of information than others.
      - **One to two sentences -> Twitter or Instagram.** Using a mix of photos, videos, or just plain text, these platforms are best for short updates or announcements for your audience.
      - **Around a paragraph -> Facebook.** Using a mix of photos, videos, or just plain text, this platform is best for longer updates or detailed announcements for your audience.
      - **Many paragraphs or more -> Rethink your strategy!** Posting multiple paragraphs of information on your social media several times a week is likely too much. Your audience will likely not have the time to read long updates on a

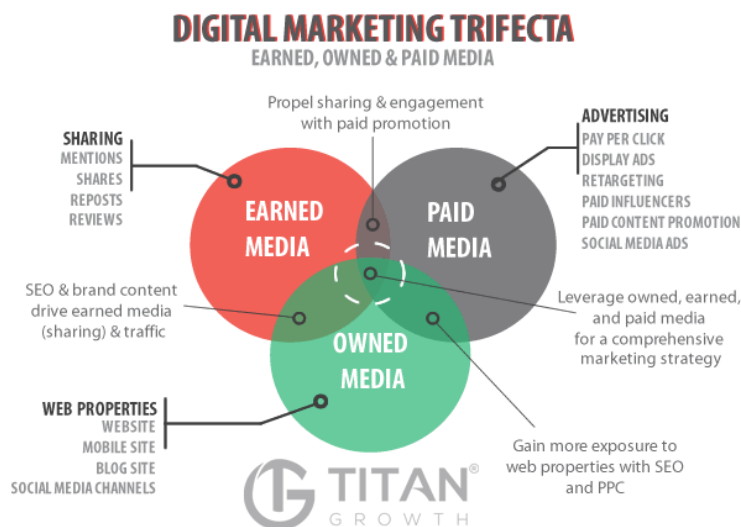
frequent basis, but they might be interested in a blog on your website that you can share a link to via most channels.

- **Weekly/Monthly** -> **What type of content am I looking to post?** Sending out information only every once in a while means you can take your time and develop high-effort content. Which form this content takes depends on your skills/interests.
  - **Video** -> **YouTube or other video platforms**. Videos give you the opportunity to educate your audience about an issue or the story of your organization. They can also be posted on your other social media platforms!
  - **Podcasts**-> **Spotify or other audio/podcast platforms**. Podcasts give you the opportunity to educate your audience about an issue or the story of your organization. They can also be posted on your other social media platforms!
  - **Text/Pictures** -> **Emails, newsletters, blogs, websites**. Writing multi-paragraph updates with pictures or videos included for your audience can give them updates on your organization and inform them about opportunities they can get involved with.

### Earned media vs. owned media vs. paid media

*When should you put money behind your marketing strategy and content creation?*

Creating content is important to your digital marketing strategy, and there are a few different ways you can do that depending on your needs, free or not.



Here is an explanation of the difference between various media types, via [Titan Growth](#).

Paid media is used to promote content in order to drive earned media and direct traffic to owned media properties. If you are having trouble breaking out via your website and social channels, consider investing in advertising and paid media as a boost to your portfolio. Having consistency across all media streams could get you farthest along in your goals.

Consider [Google Ads](#) and social media ads, such as [Facebook Ads](#) to introduce paid media into your strategy.

*Note: PPC = pay per click.*

What type of information are you going to share on your social channels?

What goals do you hope to achieve with your social media strategy?

**Congratulations!** You've just completed the second of the YALI Brand Better Workbooks! You are well on your way to creating — or strengthening — a business built for success! Visit [yali.state.gov/entrepreneurs](http://yali.state.gov/entrepreneurs) to learn more about marketing strategies and how to use social media to your advantage.