

Stout's

# 7 Steps to Simple Success



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Get started marketing your small business.

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# 1. Assessment



“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.”

- Mark Twain

Most good things start at the beginning. Marketing your business is no different. Before you build a website or a business card – heck, even before you decide on a company name – take a look at who you are and what your shop has to offer.

Be positive! Be honest.

This is “soft work.” We say “soft work” because it’s abstract. Unlike building an ad for the business or analyzing its financial status this impalpable process has no clear resolution. It’s an evolving journey of growth and may be **the most difficult step of all.**

Some people call this a “**SWOT Analysis.**” Many marketers call it “defining your brand.” It’s an opportunity to find purpose, fuel your passion and realize core standards for your business.

## Ways to get started: Assessment

### 3

#### Answer the Ws

##### WHO

... are we as a business?

... is my consumer? ([download this free worksheet](#))

... is my competition?

A competitive analysis takes a look at what others are doing and how they’re are doing it. Don’t follow the pack but know how they run

##### What

... does my shop want to accomplish?

... the mission, the purpose? Think business but also community.

... are the benefits of using our product?

How do we solve customer problems?

## Where

... will we be doing business?

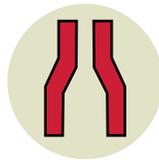
Will it be as a local presence or will we use the Internet to expand sales across a wider footprint?

...are we?

A friend of mine was a city boy from Manhattan. When he moved to Texas for business there was a huge, cultural learning curve. Know your space.

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# 2. Get Narrow



“In trying to please all,  
he had pleased none.”

- Aesop's Fables

The inclination to please is understandable. Business ventures are all about finding customers. That undeniable fact often has us scurrying to be the best at every aspect of our individual marketplace. Often times, “best” is not the ideal choice though. You can't be all things to all people. It's impossible and it's weak marketing.

Instead, pull away from the pack by narrowing your focus. Delve into the single most important business feature your shop has to offer. Let others be the “best.” You be,

Dependable (“When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight.”)

Clearest (“Can you hear me now?”)

Childlike (“Silly Rabbit, Trix are for Kids”)

Lots of marketers refer to this as a “unique selling proposition.” Others call it “differentiation.”

It takes courage not to get swayed by competitor's claims that they're “the best” but consumers define quality in a variety of ways. Make it easy for them – and for your brand – by specializing in one important service to your marketplace and sticking to it. Own that space.

## Ways to get started: Get Narrow

# 3

What does your team do best? Hopefully there's a long list but what's that one special quality?

What do customers say is the finest thing about working with your little business? Better yet, get a testimonial or two.

Is there a hole in your marketplace? If you're a carpenter and customers complain about sawdust it's time to be "the tidy team."

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# 3.Voice



**"It only takes one voice, at the right pitch, to start an avalanche."**

- Dianna Hardy

Moms are famous for declaring, "It's not what you say, It's how you say it." They're right you know. (Of course they are, they're Moms).

So it is with marketing. After following steps 1 and 2, who you are as a business should be taking shape. Your goals and target audience are pretty clear and you've narrowed down the focus to know what you want to say. Voice is how you say it.

Voice is the emotional palette of your firm's messaging. It's style. The options are limitless. Is the approach serious or humorous? Will people think of your little corner of the world as peaceful or party-like?

Authors focus on voice abundantly. Earnest Hemingway and Mark Twain are two masters of American literature yet their vocabulary and viewpoints differ greatly. Walmart and Target are both in the same space but one sounds like "God Bless America" while the other comes across as "stylish for less."

Enjoy this. It's your chance to rediscover the way the world sees and hears your shop.

## Ways to get started: Voice

# 3

Listen to yourself and your customers.

Do your clients respond better to “good afternoon” or “hey there”

Contrast the sound of your competitors.

Don't make assumptions. Insurance, at first glance is a serious topic but that didn't stop Progressive and State Farm from having some fun and they've done very well.

Develop a vocabulary book for your business.

Words are powerful. If you're a cleaning company think about the difference between “sterile,” “tidy,” “spotless” and “clean.”

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# 4. Identity



“Design is the silent ambassador of your brand.”

- Paul Rand

If voice is how you say things identity is what it looks like. Confidence and self-respect often flow from our appearance. Your business, no matter how small, is no different. The fonts and colors used should amplify your voice.

Vivid red may be a poor choice for a funeral home. Somber shades will prove less than enthusiastic for a kid's learning center. It's more subtle than that though. There are millions of colors in the design rainbow. You may recognize the one for you when you see it but getting there can be more challenging than it seems. Also, matching colors for the ideal affect is another ball of wax. Get a designer involved. They have training and experience. Brand choices are a one time effort so it's important to get it right.

And don't forget the fonts. Who cares? Who's looking? If Google changed their famous letters the Earth would stop revolving. Should IBM use Times New Roman in their logo the stock would take a hit.

Colors and fonts lay the bedrock for branding – your logo. That’s your most critical marketing tool. Business cards, Instagram pages and even websites can change. This piece is at the center of your company image and it’s best to nail it before going public.

Put that logo everywhere. Don’t segregate it to business cards and the top of your website. Place it on invoices, memos, notes, social media posts and right on the door of your shop. Using your logo often and with pride will stimulate brand awareness which is a big part of step 5.

## Ways to get started: Identity

# 3

Is there a color every competitor in your space is using? Consider other hues for contrast.

Pick the name, colors and fonts for your venture first. Then move them around or have your designer move them about to stimulate logo ideas.

Visit your “muse location.”

For some people that’s the shower, others prefer a more exotic location like the ocean. Go there, scribble ideas.

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# 5. Consistency



“Long-term consistency  
trumps short-term intensity.”

- Bruce Lee

The most frequent oversight we see from small businesses is a lack of brand continuity. Once you find your voice and develop an identity use them. Enjoy them! Branding requires consistency.

Coordinating the look, feel and message of your business in your web address and on email, postcards, business cards and awnings are critical. It’s free to make them all match and consumers are more likely to remember the consistent reinforcement. That’s “brand recognition.”

Small firms often spend money on business cards and websites based on what they think looks attractive. These decisions rarely include a brand through-line. Typically, the print shop knows nothing about the sign maker's mission. This classic case of "the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing" wastes valuable marketing opportunities. A business' need to reinforce who they are and what they do is central to success. Small budgets increase the importance of making every single web page and social media post clear, concise and consistent.

Branding is your shop's persona so make it dependable. When consumers know your image they'll trust it, remember it and be more likely to walk in the door.

## Ways to get started: Consistency

# 3

Do an audit. Examine every element of your business. Make sure they promote your brand from the mountain tops.

How is your team answering the phone? Is your web address the same as your company name? Make sure your email matches them.

Hire, or appoint a "brand ambassador." Someone who's central to the marketing process can coordinate those business cards with your web design.

Start thinking with a "whole enchilada" perspective. Time taken on the first 4 steps should pay off big-time.

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# 6. Brand Advocacy



**"A man without a smiling face must not open a shop."**

- Chinese proverb

Before we move to step 7, advertising, it's good to remember that public confidence in your brand begins with you. As head of your shop it's vital to be your own advocate. Positivity is contagious.

Passing on your confidence to employees, clients and the surrounding community lets people know you care and sends signals that their business will be handled by someone who enjoys doing it.

Planting those seeds of support can set off a chain reaction that works to fuel your business. W.O.M.M., or “Word of mouth marketing” may be buzz words in some circles but business owners have always known the best customers come from referrals.

Here’s the catch. Lots of those referrals – good and bad – come faster and wider than ever before. Marketers call it “reputation marketing.” It’s essentially what people are saying about your business on Yelp, Trip Advisor, Google Reviews and everywhere else. It hasn’t replaced people talking to people but it has altered the landscape.

So get out there and talk up your brand. We recommend a combination of old and new world approaches. Join the Chamber of Commerce. Be the expert at seminars for your local library or teach continuing education at a nearby college. Conversely, ask good customers to talk up your brand on Yelp or Facebook because often times “ya don’t ask, ya don’t get.” Evangelism begins with you.

## Ways to get started: **Brand Advocacy**

# 3

Put together an elevator pitch for your firm. Grow that into an outline. Expand the outline into an overview of what you do. These will clarify your approach and produce a wealth of positioning you can spread around your neighborhood.

Have cards made that spell out the simple process of leaving a review online. Pass them out to every happy customer.

Take a communication class at the local school. Writing, public speaking, even the debate team will get you more comfortable expressing your ideas and conveying them to past, present and future customers.

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# 7. Advertising



“Make it simple. Make it memorable.  
Make it inviting to look at.  
Make it fun to read.”

- Leo Burnett

With a hundred-thousand dollars a television media buy is entirely possible. Unfortunately, that doesn't help those of us focused on small business. What to do, what to do? Here it is.

Go back and read step #5. For next-to-nothing, consistency can stretch the few coins you're already laying out on basics.

Next, if you're lucky enough to have a modest advertising budget use it. It helps. Be creative though. Lots of marketers act like digital is the only option. We agree it's a good one but not the only opportunity for small businesses. We have a client who sponsors a little league team. They give back to the community while their logo faces consumers for 7 innings.

This topic is vast but begin by considering your target audience and “fish where the fish are.”

## Ways to get started: Advertising

### 3

Social Media comes in various sizes.

Start with posts to friendly faces for free. Graduate to boosting them for cash. Finally, you can purchase actual ads targeted at your consumer for short, trial periods.

Own a website. Work on optimizing that sight for search engines.

The Internet has many articles on this topic if you fancy yourself a DIY shop. Sometimes, a better choice is hiring someone to do it. Ask for referrals. It's a big world out there.

Explore giveaways.

For some services a refrigerator magnet or old fashioned calendar posted in a kitchen still works great. Feel free to update by branding cellphone covers or another digital support system.