

*“This is a breakthrough marketing book for small businesses”*

**Mark Mason**  
CEO, Mubaloo



# WATERTIGHT MARKETING

**DELIVERING LONG-TERM SALES RESULTS**

**BRYONY THOMAS**



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## **Watertight Marketing**

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For Eleni, whose arrival gave pause, perspective and purpose.

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## What other entrepreneurs have said...

**"This is a breakthrough marketing book for small businesses. It ditches all the fluff and nonsense and gives a business owner exactly what they need to get their marketing in gear. You'll want to read it with a pen in hand because you will have ideas to put into action on every single page."**

**Mark Mason, CEO, Mubaloo**

**"Watertight Marketing is brilliant. Bryony has delivered a book that is free of jargon and a compelling read that makes you sit up and quickly realise where the holes are in your plans, the potential cost of these holes to your business and ultimately how to fill them and ensure your business is robust and successful."**

**Nick Dean, Managing Director, Ad Lib Recruitment**

**"Any business who is serious about growing needs to read this book. No clap-trap. No padding. It is chockers-block full of great ways to fix your business development processes, systems, copy, plans and activities so you stop leaking profit and see your business grow – the watertight way. As a result of reading this book, I was able to clearly identify why our own business growth has plateaued, and because of the common sense contained in the book will be working to fix that."**

**Heather Townsend, author of 'The FT Guide To Business Networking' and co-author of 'How to make partner and still have a life'**

**"If you're running a small business and think your marketing activity is as good as it can be, read the book. If you think your marketing could be better, read it twice. I've read many books on marketing and got a lot of value from each of them, but this is the one we will be buying to give to each of our clients. No-nonsense wisdom, perfectly pitched to resonate with all small business owners."**

**Stephen King, Managing Director, F-works**

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# **WHO ARE YOU?**

If you're the owner of a small business, this book is for you. If you're a highly ambitious owner of a small business heading towards being a big business, or your goal is to build a business that sells for millions, this book is a must.

## **More step up than start up**

There are lots of books about starting a business. There aren't so many about staying in business. And even fewer that really show you how to step things up.

To get the most from this book, you'll already be up and running, and making money. You'll be pretty clear about what you're selling and to whom. Now, you want to scale it. You want to get better rewards for the effort you put in. You're at that stage where you need to start 'doing things properly' in order to grow.

With marketing, this means you've tried a few things. Some will have worked, some will have failed. Often more by luck than judgement. Watertight Marketing will turn that on its head. It will give you the marketing judgement to make sure that you're always lucky on the sales front.

## **A totally missable marketing opportunity**

This book is your shield against the never-ending onslaught of 'unmissable' marketing opportunities designed to protect you against fruitlessly spending vast sums on activities that won't net a bean in revenue. It equips you to put a powerful marketing operation in place that really delivers for your business. That is, marketing that delivers real sales results. In the long term.

It is often in the marketing or sales guru's interest to convince you that they are the practitioner of some sort of dark art, and that you need to spend a fortune (with them) to do it. Indeed, a quick Internet search on "lead generation" will return a list of potential suppliers suggesting that a business should invest in: telesales 'guaranteed to secure appointments'; direct mail so targeted that people are practically waiting to give you their money; 'one time only' advertising deals; search engine optimisation to secure your position at the top of Google's listings; social media that can seemingly replace your whole marketing team; online word of mouth that does your selling for you... the list goes on, and on.

Given the flood of advice, it's no surprise that many businesses, large and small, suffer from Tactic Burn; that is, jumping from one 'essential' sales and marketing activity to another, never getting the consistent results that the business so badly needs. Watertight Marketing is what's missing from this picture. Without it, many businesses are stuck on the yo-yo diet of the marketing world, pursued in the hope that one day they will uncover that magic silver bullet.

~~What you need to know is that there isn't one.~~

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There are three!

Your Bucket, your Funnels and your Taps.

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# Acknowledgments

Writing this bit has been the image I've held in mind when putting words on a page was the last thing I wanted to do. Because, putting these words on this page is truly wonderful. Whilst at times writing this book has felt a lonely journey, in reality I have so many people to thank...

Let me start by thanking my wonderful husband, Tom, without whom so many of my dreams would not have been fulfilled. His curiosity of mind and quiet determination has been just what's needed to keep the show on the road. Thank you.

With more direct impact on the book itself, I'd like to thank Heather Townsend for making me believe it was possible and showing me how it's done! Sonja Jefferson was my guide for the first few iterations of the book proposal and helped me to put down its roots. Liz Gooster helped me more than she knows in sticking to my guns and writing the book I wanted to write. Richard Cunningham was kind enough to sanity check my maths and understanding of management accounting. Mindy Gibbins Klein was instrumental in transforming this book from an idea to an actual document. Where Mindy helped me to start getting words on the page, my phenomenal editor Robert Watson helped me to stop and be happy with the ones that were there! But, of course, it's not just a book of words. Neil Coe has been a pleasure to work with on the cover and layout design. Simon Ellinas is the creator of the fabulous cartoons that kick off each chapter, and working with Lizzie Everard on the diagrams and editorial illustrations really clarified my thinking. Thank you all.

Then, a word for my clients and other people who've shaped the thinking that has become Watertight Marketing. Firstly, Mark Mason for believing in me at age 22 and trusting me to grow into a role that became the platform for the career I love. Chris Archer-Brown – for whom appointing a 28-year-old director of marketing must have been a gamble – I cannot thank you enough for giving me this game changing opportunity. Richard Tremellen, for challenging me to put together an irrefutable defence of marketing spending in a report that was the kernel of this book. A massive thanks also goes to all the clients of Clear Thought Consulting, especially those who were good enough to let me case study their companies: Peter Gradwell, Richard and Sarah Morfoot, Vince Wilton, Patrick Nash and Dave James. And, to those people who said yes when I asked to feature their businesses: Sonja Jefferson, Duane Jackson, John Watton, Chris Budd, Nick Ellis and David Gilroy. Professionally, and indeed personally, I couldn't possibly leave out Cheryl Crichton – a friend and colleague who has never let me down.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank one more person. My father. Dad – you will probably never know how grateful I am for the values, love and confidence you gave me. Perhaps it is fitting that you're at the bottom on this list, because you are the foundation on which all my successes have been built.

Thank you.

**Academic Theories:** Having worked in marketing for nearly two decades and undertaken various professional qualifications, I have encountered hundreds of marketing and management theories, concepts and models. I have made every attempt to highlight these throughout the text with the brain icon. More detail is provided on these at the end of the book with references to text books in which these theories are more deeply explored. The key six-step model on which the Watertight Marketing framework is based is an adapted version of Dr Philip Kotler's model of rational decisionmaking and it is duly acknowledged as such.

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# Introduction

You work hard. So, let's make sure that you're getting the very best from every ounce of effort that you, and every member of your team, put into making your business a success. The best way to do this is to make sure that your business isn't leaking profit. However tight you think you have it, I've yet to encounter a business that couldn't step it up – by simply plugging the profit leaks.

Part One doesn't make for easy reading. It maps out leaks in your sales and marketing set-up that squander your precious funds and time. Taking a look at how real people really buy things, I expose the Thirteen Touchpoint Leaks, and turn the usual way of tackling them on its head for faster payback. Then you'll be introduced to the Four Foundation Leaks. These relate to marketing attitude and a company's internal workings. By the end of this section you'll have identified your major profit leaks from amongst these seventeen.

Part Two gets you to look at a purchasing decision from the buyer's perspective, mapping the way that real people really buy things onto the Watertight Marketing framework. It's an operational model that's easy to follow and means your marketing *will* deliver long-term sales results. You'll know what you need to say, how to say it, when, and to whom.

Part Three takes the concepts above and shows you how to apply them in practice. It works through fixing the Touchpoint Leaks with case studies and a fully worked example. It will equip any small business with what they need to plug the gaps they find. It challenges the picture that a classic sales funnel visual paints in your mind. Just because you can draw a neat funnel, does not mean that there is one. In reality, the buying decision, and the marketing and sales process a business has in place to support it, is much more irregular.

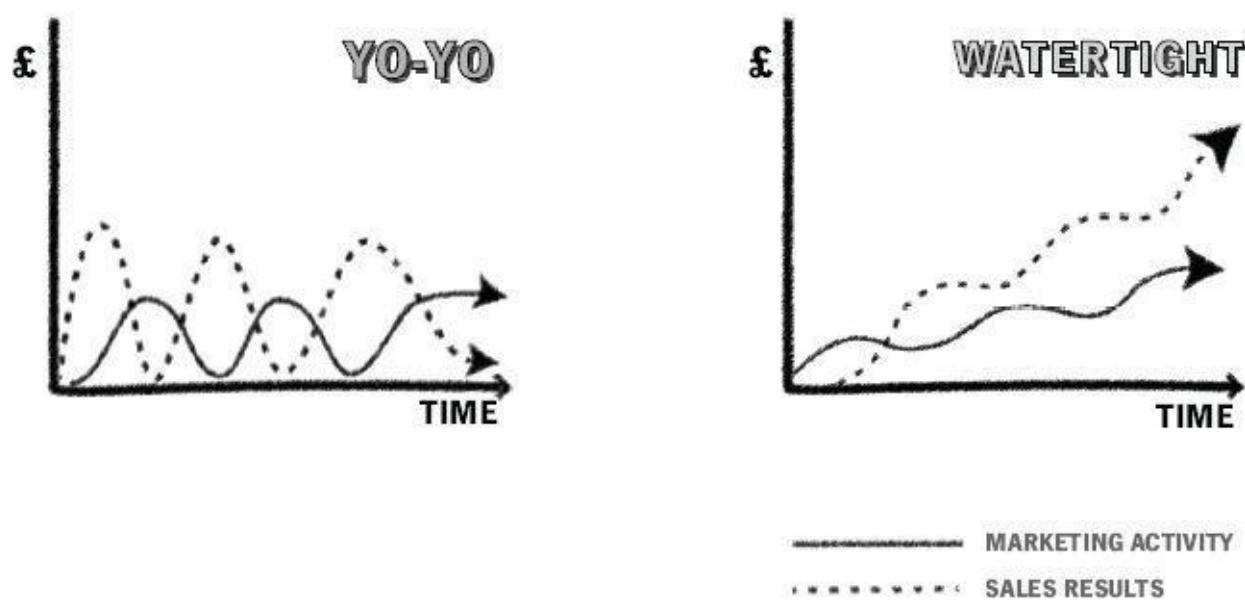
Every time you see, or refer to, a sales funnel or sales pipeline, I want you to re-imagine it as:

- **Your Taps:** Ways of generating interest in your offer.
- **Your Funnels:** The tools and techniques you use to channel that interest and move people through to trying you out.
- **Your Bucket:** Those things that come together to keep your customers your customers.

And, although it can seem tempting to put your energy into running those Taps as hard as you can, to really improve your profits, you'll be asked to start at the bottom and work up. If you keep this picture in mind, you'll quickly see why this is so critical. After all, there's no point running Taps if you can't Funnel the water. And, there's no point Funneling water to a Bucket that has a hole in it.

Part Four is about making this happen in your business. It closes off those Foundation Leaks, by showing you how to plan and pay for a Watertight Marketing operation, and then measure your

success. What's more, your plan will be built to respond to ever-changing market conditions. You'll then be challenged to make marketing a good habit for the rest of your business life.



Getting Watertight Marketing in place means that you can step off the exhausting roller coaster of being up one minute and down the next: selling then delivering, then selling then delivering, then selling then delivering – never quite reaching those sustainable, predictable and growing sales results that your small business needs to become a bigger business.

And, when that happens... who knows, someone might just come knocking with a big fat cheque with your name on it.

## Your Watertight Marketing Workbook

Build your own plan as you go through the book by downloading your free Watertight Marketing Workbook. To get the most from this, have it printed out with pen in hand as you go through the book.

Whenever you see this symbol you'll find the accompanying exercise in your workbook to complete.



Get your copy from [watertightmarketing.com](http://watertightmarketing.com)

And, then some lovely extras. You'll also see the following throughout:



*A practical tip that you can get on with immediately.*



An academic theory is being used and there's further reading detailed in the Brain Food section that you might find useful.



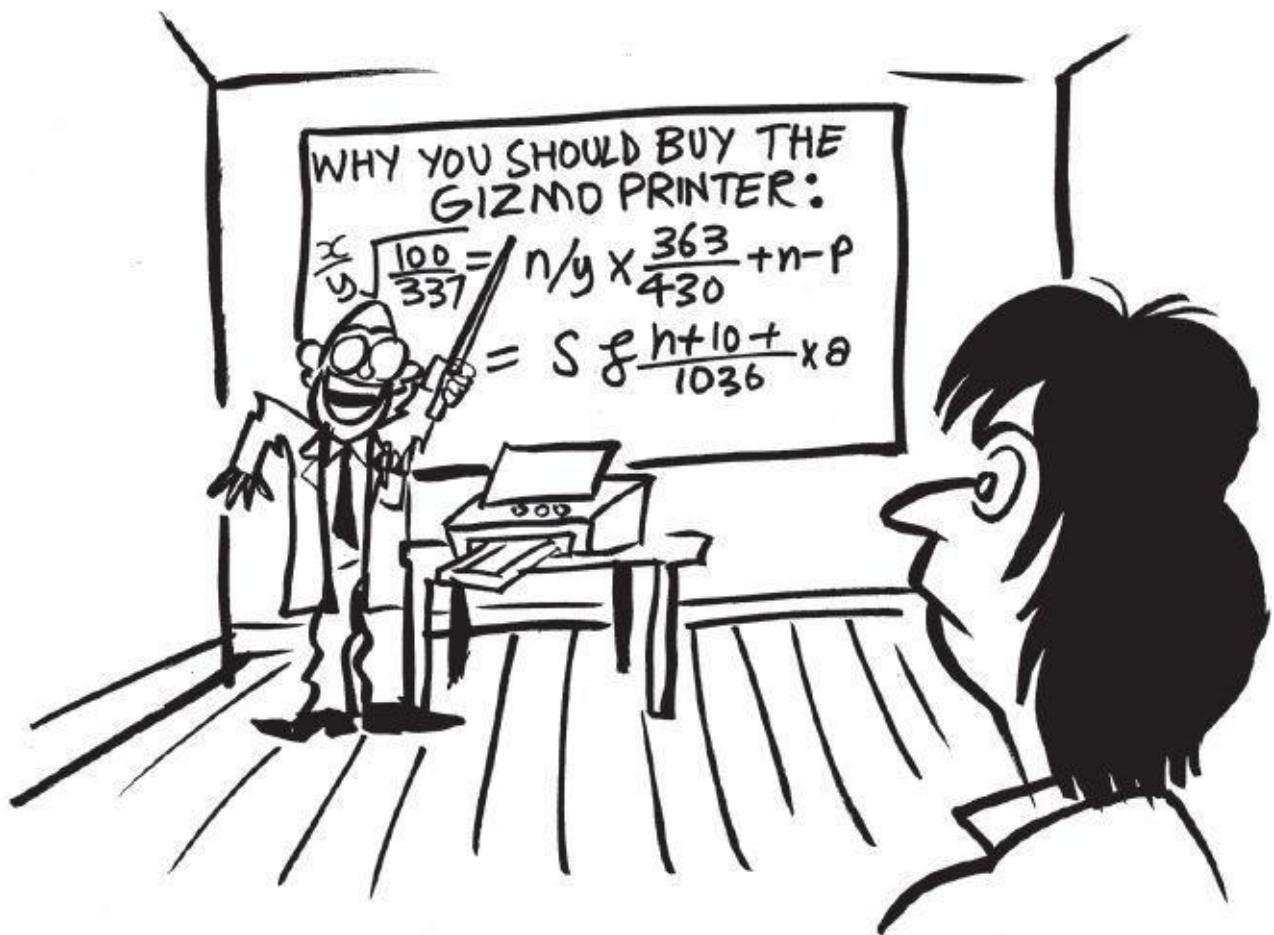


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A buying decision is made in steps. How many steps is largely related to its importance. The less important the purchase, the fewer thought processes involved. Something like grabbing a coffee at a train station, or buying paperclips for the office, is pretty simple. The more important the decision, the more elongated it becomes. Like an annual family holiday, or a new software system for your company. It's a 'considered purchase'. And the more considered the purchase your buyers are making, the more relevant Watertight Marketing becomes.

The thought processes that a buyer goes through are the key to how you structure your marketing. You're not going to change human psychology. You can't shortcut their thinking. And, you shouldn't try. You absolutely should understand what these thought processes are, and why someone might count your business out when moving from one step to the next, which is addressed in Part Two. But before that, let's see where your business is currently leaking profit. By the end of this section you'll know which of the Thirteen Touchpoint Leaks affects your business. You'll also be able to identify whether your own attitude to marketing is leaving you victim to one or more of the Four Foundation Leaks.

## Their thinking = your marketing



When people are buying something that's important, expensive, or risky, they don't generally do it on a whim. They go through a few stages weighing up options and looking at alternatives. You will never find a magic formula that shortcuts the psychology. Every step on this journey is one where they could lose interest. By plugging gaps between stages, you will generate and retain more profitable customers.

## A considered purchase

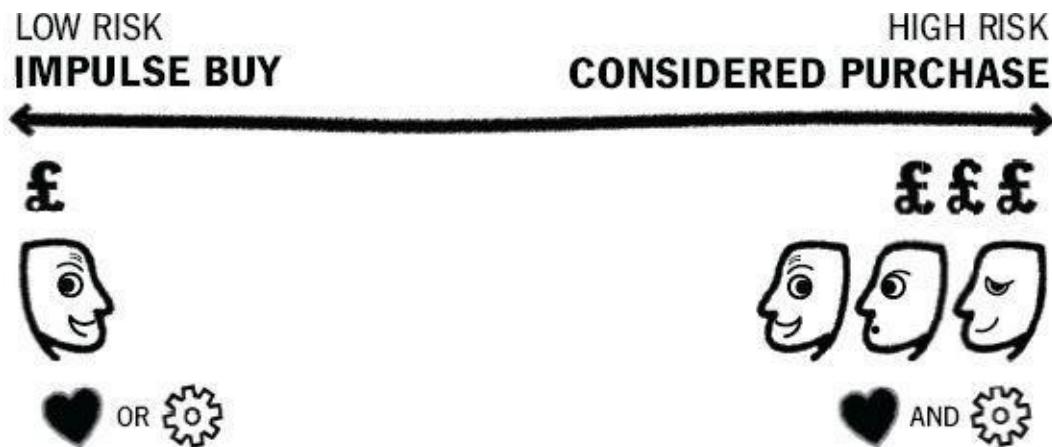
You'll see this process mapped out in various different ways in sales and marketing books going back decades. No one model fits every business, nor indeed every product, but the core principle remains that people don't go from blissful ignorance to paying customer in one great leap. They go through a series of thought processes along the way.

The more important or risky that decision, the more this seems to apply. At one end of the spectrum there are buying decisions made in a heartbeat. These are either impulse buys driven entirely by emotion or by logic, but rarely both. Those 'I just had to have it' moments, like a bunch of flowers or a chocolate bar. Or, something totally functional, like a pack of envelopes for the stationery cupboard. These kinds of decisions are made quickly and without reference to other people. If you were to ask buyers how they chose their goods in these cases, they probably couldn't break it down. There's a great deal of science and marketing expertise that goes into triggering an impulse purchase, but this book looks at the other end of the spectrum: the considered purchase.

In a considered purchase both emotional *and* rational appeals need to be met. This is because the buying decision tends to be more important, for one of the following reasons:

- **Expense:** there is a high financial outlay involved or an ongoing commitment.
- **Other people:** the purchase affects more than one person.
- **Status:** a person's sense of identity or reputation is affected by the purchase.

When these elements come together, the buyer has a lot to lose if they get their decision wrong. They are taking a risk. The job of your marketing is to reduce that risk.



The further to the right a buyer would place their decision to buy what you're selling on this continuum, the more complex their thought processes are going to be.

*Run some research with your potential buyers or existing customers that asks them to place their buying decision on this continuum.*



In your workbook

- How considered is your purchase?

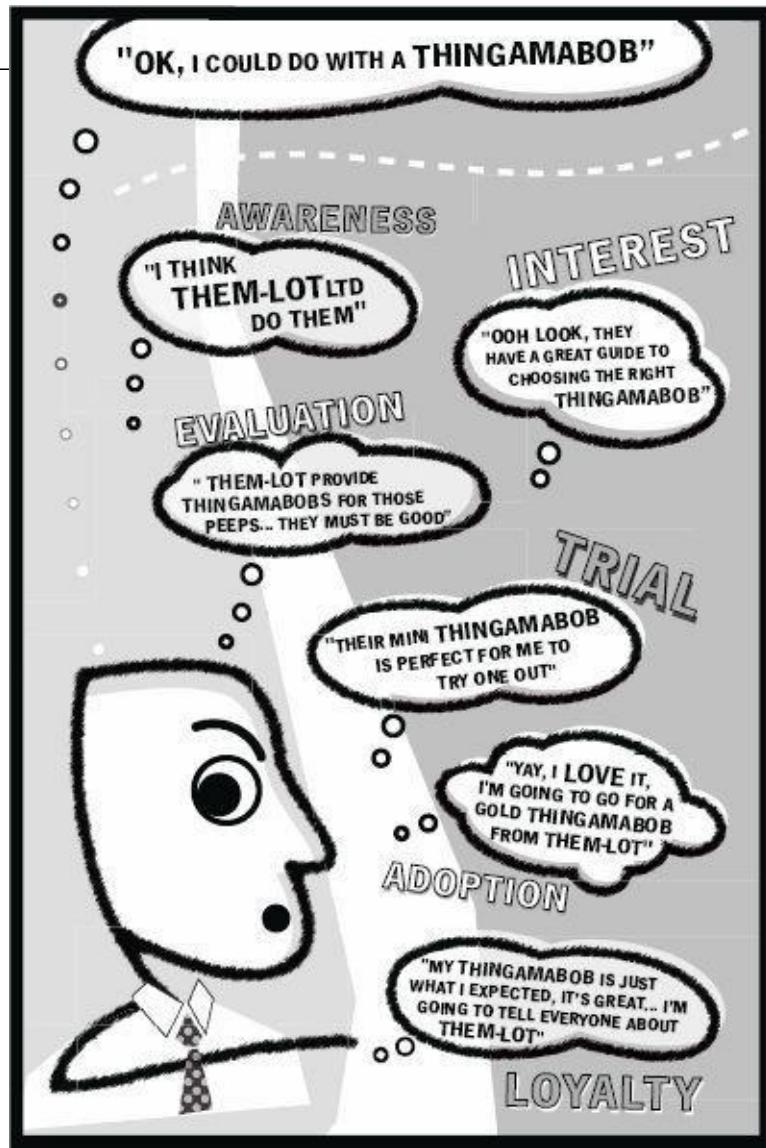
Most often you'll see this process depicted as a sales funnel. This is to represent a decreasing number of people moving from one step to the next, because people can cross you off their list at any of these stages. A sales funnel is usually labelled with internally-driven criteria, for example: Audience, Respondents, Leads, Qualified Leads, Proposals, Sales, and Renewals. Whilst this might serve a useful internal purpose, it doesn't help you to plan your marketing. It's a matter of cause and effect. The labels above are the effect, the thoughts of your buyers are the cause. And, if you understand the cause, you will have more control over the effect. This means that you need to map *their* thinking, not *your* reporting systems.

The model that I've found most useful for getting a deeper understanding of the thought processes involved is a six-step one adapted from one originated by Dr Philip Kotler. It's useful for both business-to-business and personal buying decisions, and it goes like this:

A person has some sort of need...

1. **Awareness:** They notice that you offer something that could help.
2. **Interest:** They decide to find out a little bit more.
3. **Evaluation:** They see if you look credible.
4. **Trial:** They find out what it would be like to buy from you.
5. **Adoption:** They become a customer.
6. **Loyalty:** They keep buying, buy more, and/or tell others about you.

The reporting metrics mentioned earlier are the result of a person moving from one thought to the next. You should substitute these internally-driven labels with ones that indicate the stage of the purchasing decision in terms of *their* thinking. This will enable you to understand your buyers better.



You might report the effect	Their thought processes are the cause
Audience	Awareness
Respondents	Interest
Leads or Qualified Leads	Evaluation
Proposals	Trial
Sales	Adoption
Renewals	Loyalty

It can be helpful to overlay their thinking on your sales funnel. Then ask yourself: have I laid a clear path to my door? Different marketing tools and techniques are more effective at different stages. But, for each step there is a core purpose or task for your marketing to address. If you put together an integrated set of tools and materials that meet these tasks, more people will make it all the way through to Loyalty. And, you'll make more money.



# A marketing task for each step

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Many businesses see the task of marketing as generating leads for salespeople to follow-up. It's a short-sighted view that is costing small businesses millions. Marketing is the *whole process* of taking your goods or services to market. It's made up of many different disciplines, each with their own skills and expertise. But, at its core, marketing has six tasks. One for each step in a buyer's thought process.

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## Step 1: generating **AWARENESS**

This is what most people think marketing is all about. It's getting your name known. For this you need to **be there**. Find out where your buyers hang out, in person or online, and make sure your business is represented.

## Step 2: stimulating **INTEREST**

Let's imagine that someone knows of your company, and they've started to think about buying something along the lines of what you sell. You need to draw them in with something of Interest. For this you need to **be relevant**. Find out the questions they're asking themselves at this moment. Answer them.

## Step 3: surviving **EVALUATION**

Once you've gained their Interest, people will start weighing up whether you meet their buying criteria. They'll be looking for evidence that you can deliver what you say you can. Here, you need to **be proven**. For every promise you make, you need to provide proof.

## Step 4: enabling **TRIAL**

If you've survived scrutiny to the extent that your potential buyer believes that your company is a real contender for their business, the next step is for them to establish a sense of what it would be like if they bought from you. For this, you need to **be helpful**. Facilitate some way of your buyer experiencing being your customer before they become one. Don't tell them; *show* them just how much you'd resolve their problem or satisfy their need.

## Step 5: securing **ADOPTION**

It's essential to recognise that people will often go with their gut at this critical hurdle. As such, you need to **be friendly** to ensure that they feel comfortable working with you. This can often be by virtue of your company being known by someone else in their circle. This means that you need to be friendly to everyone who could have their ear. This works like Commercial Karma.

## Step 6: encouraging **LOYALTY**

Here you need to ensure that a customer is in fact a customer in their own mind, rather than just on your books. And, you need to make sure that they remember why they chose you in the first place. To do this you need to **be consistent**. This is a big one. You'll need to be consistent to the expectations you set through the sales process. You'll need to be consistent with the style of interaction that's been established. And, you'll need to remain consistent in talking to, and valueing, your customers. Effectively, you need to be consistently doing all of the above. All of the time.

Their step...	The marketing task...
AWARENESS	Be There
INTEREST	Be Relevant
EVALUATION	Be Proven
TRIAL	Be Helpful
ADOPTION	Be Friendly
LOYALTY	Be Consistent

Across the six steps you'd imagine that there are five potential leaks, as people don't make the leap from one to the other. That's certainly a good place to start. But, digging a little deeper exposes Thirteen Touchpoint Leaks. Each one is a gap through which you could lose potential paying customers for your business. And, assuming you have a sound business model – more customers means more profit.

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