
Over 100 Marketing Ideas for a Tiny Budget

An Exclusive Mini e-Book
by Sunni Patterson
Founder of EXOTIC elegance



Introduction

What? Market my product or service on a tiny budget? You bet – IF you do it effectively and commit to consistency with action. This includes but is not limited to:

- Solving the problems of your target audience by taking the time to listen and relating your message to their concerns
- Using several different ideas at once to touch your market (i.e. mail, e-mail, telephone, etc.).
- Focusing in on a niche market and dominate that market with repetitive marketing
- Nurturing the 20% percent of your customer base typically generating 80% of your revenue, with extra attentiveness and care
- Developing a plan and consistently committing to it
- Making it a rule to contact every customer and almost customer in your database a minimum of once per month using different channels
- Following through on your promises and follow the golden rule

No matter what type of business you're in, you'll find powerful low cost to no cost ideas in the following pages to attract new and retain existing customers.

Do you need marketing expertise or experience? Nope. You can easily and quickly apply these practical ideas to increase your visibility, customer relations, and bottom line. Or you can hire cost effective reinforcements.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sunni Patterson is Founder of EXOTIC elegance (www.ExoticEleganceHandbags.com), a specialty e-boutique featuring exotic leather handbags, totes and accessories. The mission of EXOTIC elegance is to celebrate and enhance the distinctive light within each individual through one of a kind, highly valued, fashionable and functional items.

As an entrepreneur, small business owner and mother, time is precious so she has compiled a list of marketing ideas and recommended resources to share with you. She continues to use many of these concepts—building trust, belief, and reassurance to forge lasting relationships—to connect with clients.

Marketing is an ongoing and evolving process but it doesn't have to be complex. Keep it simple, use your imagination, and be sure to ask questions of yourself and your clients. They often have the best answers!

Sunni would love to hear from you! Share your marketing success stories, tips and tricks. Or, contact her for information on distribution/information resell rights, helping you attract more clients while creating additional revenue. Drop her a note at virtualmarketingassistance@gmail.com. She looks forward to sharing your successes!

EXOTIC Nugget of Truth

Allow your authentic light to shine brightly as it will allow others to do the same. There is much about you that deserves celebrating so do not fear your greatness, embrace it. For to be great, you must act and feel great!

"We are each gifted in a unique and important way. It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light." -- Mary Dunbar

1. Join and be a regular contributor in a Meet-Up group (www.meetup.com) or The Big Ooga (www.bigoooga.com). They provide excellent networking opportunities to showcase your expertise, and cross promote or collaborate with a non-compete company – one you may never have thought of!
2. Join www.liveperson.com and showcase your expertise.
3. Develop existing editorial content into story ideas and pitches for magazines and websites that reach your target market. Take care of media relationships that you build. They are priceless.
4. Add a simple “newsroom” page to your website. This would house news releases, contact information and appropriate multimedia to meet the basic needs of media individuals.
5. Join www.helpareporterout.com to receive daily emails from services used by journalists to find sources for their stories – you! Pitch (not sell) based on the media contact’s requirements.
6. Become a regular contributor to blogs in your area of expertise. Two of my favorites are www.toiletpaperentrepreneur.com and www.entrepreneurettegazette.com. Why? Regular blog opportunities; plus the addition of your logo or picture; plus a web link.
7. Engage in social media. Launch a Facebook business page; establish a LinkedIn individual and company page; tweet on Twitter, etc. Provide value added content and regularly engage on the LinkedIn “Questions and Answers” or Yahoo Answers. Web 2.0 (aka “social media”) is here to stay with over 270+ sites. A primary benefit is that it allows you to control the information and message you want your target audience to see while giving you an inside peek to what others are saying.
8. Author a blog and grow an audience on sites such as www.wordpress.com along with a corporate blog on your website. Keep the content value added or educational in nature. Audiences will be turned off and tuned out to sales or advertising pitches. A great way to engage is to pose a question or blog about a controversial issue in your industry.
9. Regularly leave comments on other blogs and participate in forums. Include your signature and website link with every comment (if allowed) but do not advertise or sell your services/products or you will be kicked out. While you are at it, seek out guest bloggers from other sites to post comments on your blog—this draws new traffic and visitors to your blog.
10. Create a proprietary report for your clients based on trends and analysis from your industry as reported by your clients. This could be in the form of client case studies, market segment comparisons, surveys, service development, etc. Aggregate data or information you collect from clients to create compelling content.
11. Obtain client testimonials. This is a commonly overlooked simple strategy to implement. It adds third party credibility - instantly.
12. Referrals. If your clients are not referring you – why?
13. Regular e-mail newsletters using a service like www.constantcontact.com or other. Constant Contact is very user friendly, helps reinforce your brand (i.e. philosophy/message, colors, logo, etc.) and creates an easy way to stay in touch with clients and potential clients alike. Include a call to action such as free trial, discount, consultation, etc. with time expiration. This is much more cost effective than direct mail. Plus, most e-mail services provide metrics so you can

monitor the effectiveness of your campaign. Warning: over communication will turn your audience off.

14. After joining an e-mail newsletter service, be sure to add a “Join my E-mail List” to every page of your website and social media pages with a persuasive offer. This will assist in growing your subscriber list.
 15. Hold a contest for your team members to incentivize them to ask for newsletter sign ups.
 16. Use an auto responder service to familiarize your almost customer with who you are and to build trust. An auto responder is a set of emails sent via automation. Several e-mail services have this feature including Constant Contact.
 17. Author or contract a copywriter to write articles on your behalf for your area of expertise or industry. Then, submit to article distribution sites. If writing is not your cup of tea, see the end of this report for a cost effective copywriting contact. Incorporating your unique keywords and keyword phrases in each article will also increase SEO efforts. Include information about your company and link to your website at the end of every article.
 18. Set up your company profile in the local business center of major search engines (i.e. www.google.com/local/add) and other sites such as www.merchantcircle.com. Search “free business listings” for more.
 19. Register your product based business with Google Merchant Center at www.google.com/merchants/
 20. The content on your website is your primary selling tool and an excellent location to place keywords and keyword phrases (aka SEO) - see www.googlekeywordstool.com. Be sure you have compelling copy that sizzles as well as an attractive site that is easy for the user to navigate. The first impression an almost client may have of you is your website presence – do you have a website OR a website presence? There are many experts in this field at all pricing tiers so buyers beware –do your research. See the end of this report for a company that produces results cost effectively.
 21. Create website link exchanges with non-compete companies that are beneficial to your customers. For example, if you offer a medical service, exchange a link with a company that provides medical space.
 22. Create a space on your website for customers to share their experiences, stories, and testimonials. This can be done via a message board or comments application.
 23. Hold a contest targeted at your core audience to create buzz, awareness, and interest. Be sure to promote through your other strategies (i.e. news releases, e-mails, social media, etc.). Join forces with another company to further your efforts and offset expenses as a sponsor. This creates a win-win because the sponsoring company will also receive your exposure. The contest could be as simple as asking contestants to describe interesting ways they use your product. Post the entries to your site and create a special memorable experience for the runners up and winner.
 24. Implement the www.hotmail.com approach and use a marketing message, free tip, or other tidbit in your e-mail signature. Be sure to include your website and or social media links too.
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25. Write letters to the editor and op-ed columns about subjects that may interest your almost clients or that establish you as an expert. Be sure to include your website or professional e-mail address in the author bio blurb. Start with your local paper and build up. Most papers are continually seeking fresh perspectives/new writers. Once you are published, leverage this by including it in your promo or marketing collateral as a “Featured Expert” or “As Seen In”.
26. Submit news releases to distribution sites such as www.PRWeb.com or www.bignews.biz or www.pitchengine.com to get your name out there and keep your business in front of your audience. Newsworthy stories include new product or service releases, a big order or expansion plans that might result in new jobs, etc. Media cover is self-perpetuating. An interesting item covered in a popular blog may be picked up by many others. See the end of this report for a company that excels in public relations strategies especially in the healthcare industry.
27. Locate local radio station producer contacts off and online – they are always searching for interesting people to interview. Let them know your story and availability. Check out www.radioquestlist.com and www.mondotimes.com.
28. Compile a media list with help from www.bulldogreporter.com and www.contactsontap.com. Visit the websites of local media outlets to read bios of reporters. Then search for them on Facebook and Twitter to develop relationships with them. Overtime, you may be surprised how effective this will be for your business.
29. Post a well-crafted service ad under the “services” section of www.craigslist.org and www.ebayclassifieds.com. Focus on benefits rather than features of your services/products and tell a story to create an emotional connection. For example, what problem does your product or service solve? Include a link to your website. Use your real e-mail address rather than remaining anonymous.
30. Acknowledge people who reach out to you whether it’s online or in person. Recognize your audience and make them feel important or special.
31. Regularly check-in with yourself to keep on track: What does your audience want? How can you give it to them and obtain what you want also?
32. Prepare and present on a topic relevant to your target audience. This builds trust while demonstrating your expertise. Contact your local school district or community college where adult education courses are offered and teach a course. Every event or meeting is a marketing opportunity but it’s NOT about selling your ideas, services or products. It IS about finding an idea that meets your needs and the wants of your audience. Incorporating data on a real life story or a real person/experience your audience can identify with creates an emotional connection. Libraries, community centers, colleges, churches, complimentary business partners, restaurant event rooms, etc. often have meeting rooms free of charge. Promote through a news release, invitation, social media sites, etc.
33. People like to do business with people they like, trust and believe in. Is that you? Ensure that YOU are your business rather than an unknown face. Be personable and approachable whether in person or online.

34. How do YOU stand out from your competition? Incorporate these strategies: Align all your actions with your long-term goals, what will you do to make the world a better place and how does that fit with your business, who are you/what do you stand for, do not be afraid to create strong reactions for or against you vs. mediocre to everyone, find others who balance you and whose skills compliment yours, let destructive criticism or doubters go, and ignore people who say you won't succeed – prove people wrong.
35. Have an online shop? Add photographs, your personality, option to collect emails from visitors, and SEO maintenance to assist you to attract more visitors and increase sales.
36. Create and maintain a profile of your customers. Regularly check in with them. By cataloging this information, you'll discover their buying habits and what's important to them. Perhaps you'll spark an idea or two for other products and services, boost sales or create upgrades.
37. Build relationships with your clients. For example, if you read about your client in the paper or heard their child received an award, call or send a note of congratulations. Efforts like these leave lasting impressions.
38. Send a gift to your client just because... get to know your client's interests or activities so you can personalize the experience.
39. Try something new and absolutely ridiculous! Remember, the only box that exists is in your head!
40. Consider AdWord campaigns with Google, Facebook, and LinkedIn. While there is an associated cost, you control it. See www.adwords.google.com/support/aw/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=examstudy.cs for tutorials. (NOTE: Facebook ads have the advantage of allowing you to target your competitor's Facebook Fans!)
41. Offer an exclusive incentive to your loyal customers as a gesture of appreciation, thereby helping to retain them while winning new ones. Some examples: no sales tax days, discount on future orders, upgraded delivery at no additional charge, product preview before general public with special offer, rewards for customer referrals, etc.
42. It may cost as much as five times more to win a new customer than to retain an old one. So, create and actively promote a loyalty program that provides graduated incentives to your best customers. Keep customers coming back with rewards from your company rather than from other vendors. Personalize each experience.
43. If you pay bills by snail mail, include your business card with a personal message with your payment. To build on this, leave your business card anywhere you happen to be. The other day I took a package to my local Pack Mail type shop and discovered the owner fit my target demographic. I simply gave her my card, let her know what problem I could solve for her, and thanked her. It was very simple to execute.
44. Create and promote a value added handout or download. Be sure to include a short bio about you, your company, and contact information. For example, if you are in the real estate industry, would your customers or potential customers find value in a checklist for home sellers?

45. Forge joint promotions or ventures with complementary businesses. This can provide you with new leads and expand your network all the while creating a win-win relationship. Ask yourself who you could partner with.
46. Integrate your marketing strategies so they work together and present a consistent message to your audience. Be sure to cross promote your efforts so your audience is surrounded with your brand and can choose how to interact with you.
47. Set up a Google news alert at www.google.com/alerts to notify you about what's happening in your industry, update you on competitors, and mentions of you and your brand.
48. Do something special for your client's child, parent, pet or other meaningful part of their life.
49. Use both sides of your business card and create a memorable card consistent with your message and brand identity. Look at www.quicksprout.com/2008/09/20/creative-business-cards-that-make-you-look-twice/ for inspiration.
50. If you contract ad space, order a supply of reprints of your ad to distribute to customers and almost customers. Distribute your ads to other areas of your business to keep them up to date on your marketing and promotional efforts. The same goes for articles.
51. When a strategy works, stick with it! Just because you're bored with your campaign or promotion, why reinvent the wheel? As long as your campaigns and promotions are accurate and effective in engaging customers or almost customers, leave it alone except for updating copy that is outdated.
52. The look, tone and image of your marketing messages should be a reflection of your product or service and market – not the latest glitz, glamour or gimmick.
53. Create a template of commonly used literature or technical pieces that you can customize for different target audiences. To use the real estate industry again, categorize an audience of home buyers and home sellers into subgroups. By forming a general template, you can then incorporate specific solutions and benefits for each group and print on an as needed basis. Plus, your literature will have a cohesive uniform look and feel, keeping your brand readily identifiable.
54. For projects you can't do yourself, look to freelancers whose credentials and fees fit your budget. For example, www.fiverr.com!
55. Photos, page layouts, and copy can be retooled for multiple purposes. For instance, the article you created for the e-newsletter can be reused in your blog.
56. Join a bartering association, group or exchange. If one is not in your area – be the leader you are and start one with the added benefit of members joining knowing first hand who you are.
57. Never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth: people talking about products, services, and brands; people seeking advice for products or services like yours; engaging and listening to customers and almost customers; valuing opinions be it positive, negative, or neutral; providing something worth talking about; finding the right people and connecting them to each other; creating customer enthusiasm with your brand experience, etc. Remember, one negative experience gets ten times more word-of-mouth than one positive one. With the power of your social media strategies, you can immediately respond to negative feedback creating a positive

spin all the while minimizing damage and protecting your image. For more information, visit www.womma.org.

58. Support social causes and tie it to your brand or personal story. Provide a point of differentiation between you and your competitor by how you sell, who you are and what you do. Anytime you do anything for a charity such as paying for a sponsorship or donating free materials, make sure the press knows about it ahead of time. That way you may receive a story and/or a photo.
59. Ask your VIP or most influential customers for feedback on campaigns. Allow them private priority access to evaluate information and content prior to releasing to general public. What better group to undertake this task than your target audience? If they like what they see, they'll pass the word along. In turn, you'll create a feeling of importance and goodwill because you are taking the time to listen and respond.
60. Look around. If your competitors have cut back on marketing (and marketing is usually the first budget area to be slashed!) or not marketing at all, you have an unprecedented chance to overtake them. Make every marketing move strategic and calculated.
61. Truly identify what's in your client's best interest by discovering what they really need instead of what they think they want. Care enough to develop a solution tailored to their unique business; be a collaborator rather than an order taker; take the risk of displeasing a client at the outset because you don't agree with them and state why and how you can improve results.
62. Consistently ask yourself "What if..." and "How can I..."
63. Create several great letters that can be customized to follow up with each interpersonal contact. Include a post script (ps) with a different spin on your offer, call to action, solution or benefit, expiration date, etc.
64. Send personalized handwritten thank you notes.
65. If your product or service is family-child related, contact your local PTA and offer a special shopping night where a percentage of total sales will be donated to the school.
66. Be consistent with your marketing plan. Schedule an hour or two or more per week to focus on growing your business. You'll be glad you did!
67. Host your own radio show. Check out www.blogtalkradio.com.
68. Host your own web television show. Check out www.ustream.tv or www.livestream.com.
69. Piggyback and ride the wave of an existing big news headline. For example, host a food or clothing drive at your business for an organization that's in trouble. Did a sports team win an important championship? Hold a celebration with a tie in to your business. Let the media know what you are doing.
70. Create a series of "how to" videos and distribute on popular video sites. Be sure to use your product (For example, if you are giving "how to" lessons on sewing, use your sewing machine). Include your contact information in the credits. For multiple video distributions at one place, visit www.tubemogul.com.

71. Create your marketing message and copy based on your target audience's demographics. For example, storytelling is one of the most powerful techniques for creating an emotional connection with women.
72. Give your campaigns both a head and heart with personal experiences and examples rather than production specifications – lead with the emotional and close with the rational. If your core target is women, make them the heroes, not the products. Generally, male audiences prefer the nuts and bolts approach. If your audience is a mix of male and female, however, ensure that both parties feel important, understood, and are included in the sales process. Regardless, everyone connects to a human experience.
73. Nurture your vendor/supplier relationships and pay on time. Your vendor or supplier may be just the one to refer you your next client.
74. Friendly, available help or timely responses matter. Follow the golden rule and instill this in your team.
75. Go a step above in your customer service. For instance, I returned a ring to an online retailer and requested a replacement. While the replacement couldn't be expedited, without my asking, the retailer reimbursed me the original shipping charge.
76. The more you assist others to get what they want, the more you will receive what you want. There's something about spreading good karma!
77. Under promise and over deliver. Think about it, how many actually do this?
78. Keep an open line of dialogue or communication with your customers and almost customers.
79. Be authentic – whether online or offline: Listen and respond to your customers, be true to who you really are and who your customer believes you to be; find your real, useful differentiation and have the courage to stick with it; spend your tiny marketing budget dollars to show your differentiation and the true you, and begin great marketing with great internal processes. It really starts at the top—with you!
80. Offer incentives, exclusive discounts or other special offers to various businesses and their employees found right in your backyard. Find out from each company what would be a good fit first. To forge a collaborative partnership, do the same for each company that is of the same mind as you. Who knows, you may end up sharing customers as well!
81. Include an unexpected surprise with each item you sell. Candy, small book, CD, etc... just because.
82. Add an element of fun, mystery or excitement in your product, service, or message.
83. If you drive a lot, create a moving advertisement on your vehicle.
84. Focus on a very small market and practice high personalization. Typically 20% of your customers make up 80% of your revenue.
85. It will take time to cultivate results. Have patience and courage to consistently follow through.
86. Answer your phone live. In the event you can't, be sure your outgoing voice mail message states that you will return calls within XYZ time frame. Then do it.
87. Become active on boards and get to know public officials in your community. In turn, they will get to know you.

88. Provide advice or a solution even if it's a wrong number calling. I recently had someone call seeking advice on how to open his briefcase lock because my number came up in the search results. I provided him with a couple of ideas and go-to resources. Even though it didn't result in further dialogue, it's an example of going above and beyond with customer service.
 89. Make it easy to do business with you. One facet of my business model is an all inclusive price excluding sales tax with a no questions asked return policy.
 90. Take on a project at no cost for a client and or add value added service. Partners I regularly utilize consistently offer suggestions, feedback, and other tidbits sparking inspiration while building my knowledge base in areas that are not my expertise. I greatly appreciate this!
 91. Volunteer for an organization that has personal significance for you, enhancing personal fulfillment. Be sure to offer your expertise for free.
 92. Share your knowledge freely.
 93. Make the most of every opportunity—before, during and after the sale.
 94. Provide a guarantee so that purchasing from you is a no-risk proposition. Make almost customers feel reassured that they will be happy and if they are not, they have recourse. Ensure the guarantee is prominent on all your off and online materials.
 95. Be disciplined and committed in any marketing approach!
 96. Host a webinar and invite a guest speaker or two to present. Use free hosting sites such as www.yugma.com or www.dimdim.com.
 97. Advertise your webinar or other event on sites like www.webinarlistings.com and www.eventbrite.com
 98. Look professional with documents prepared through www.openoffice.com.
 99. Arrange conference calls with up to 96 people at www.freeconferencecall.com.
 100. Take care of your team. Every member of your organization is your personal ambassador and marketer. Consider empowering them to make decisions that result in a great customer experience.
 101. Say “thank you” and “I appreciate you” more often. Make sure your team and your customers know how important they are.
 102. Embrace new customers with arms wide open. Ask new clients how they discovered you; what they thought of the sales process; how you can help them further, and what you could do better.
 103. Create an e-book in PDF format of great, relevant information with all the content you've developed. Your e-book should impart education, how-to's, case studies, etc. Place it on your site and upload it to www.scribd.com, a document sharing site.
 104. Create a custom widget and install it on your website and social media pages. Widgets are simple, fun, and useful applications that can be embedded (i.e. a countdown to an event, a playlist, a quiz, a game, etc.) Even non-techies like us can easily do this with sites like www.widgetbox.com.
 105. Get on TV. Look up your local stations, contact producers, and ask what they are looking for. Then tailor your pitch to their needs.
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106. Do a Google search (or Google Blog search, Twitter search, Digg, Technorati, etc.) on yourself and your company to find out the buzz. Once you locate yourself, make contact with the posters and respond to comments, address complaints, set the record straight, and say “thank you, I appreciate your comment”.
107. Measure, measure, measure your effectiveness and success. Refine. An easy way to measure your website traffic is www.google.com/analytics or www.getclicky.com . Both are free.
108. Lost a customer or have an inactive customer? Give them a call and ask what it will take to win them back while inquiring what drove them away in the first place. If they are not receptive to your call, that’s okay. Keep them in your database and follow up with them again in six months to a year unless they emphatically state not to call again.
109. Use photos to better tell your story and capture your message.
110. Become a certified expert or approved service provider to increase your credibility and gain a perceived higher value.
111. Utilize associations to solidify or enhance your image. For example, if you stock high-end products in your salon, it may reflect your reputation by association. Just make sure that the overall impression also translates the same message.
112. Offer a loss leader to attract buyers. A common example is offering a low cost item but high value with purchase of a higher cost item.
113. Be a featured company on promotional sites like www.groupon.com and www.livingsocial.com. Go to “Businesses” link for details.
114. Be open to new ideas and opportunities. Always create a win/win relationship.
115. Be yourself, follow the golden rule, commit to a plan, ask your customers, and take action!

** DISCLAIMER: Any of the sites mentioned in this report may have changed its focus or its business model by the time you read this.

Recommended Resources and Referrals

In addition to the resources sprinkled throughout this report, I also personally recommend the following companies for their expertise, value added service, and overall great customer experience:

Steve Wyrostek's <http://www.noclichecopy.com> – Internet writing for websites, SEO, articles, resumes, blogs, newsletters, emails, and much much more.

Neil Johnson's <http://www.cadent.com> – Building web presences that perform while lowering the cost of these solutions, improving your return on investment.

Chris Martin's <http://www.cmpr.com> – A solo public relations consultancy assisting health care organizations, associations, and hospitals reach their corporate and communication goals by integrating traditional PR strategies with new social media platforms and technologies.

Pete and Sandy Bolsoni's <http://www.proforma.com/portal/default.asp?fralD=2729> – Custom promotional products company showcasing your brand identity to capture the essence of your business to build strong relationship with your audience.

Quality printing, quick turnaround, great prices <http://www.gotprint.com>

EXOTIC elegance uses Constant Contact and would love to refer you – we both receive a \$30 credit when you become a paid user of Constant Contact. Simply send an email to virtualmarketingassistance@gmail.com with “Yes, please refer me – Constant Contact”

As of this report, recommended reading filled with tips, strategies and practical information:

Why She Buys, the New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumer by Bridget Brennan

E-Riches 2.0 : Next-Generation Marketing Strategies for Making Millions Online by Scott Fox

Celebrity Leverage by Jordan McAuley.

Queen of Your Own Life : A Grown-up Woman's Guide to Claiming Happiness and Getting the Life You Deserve by Cindy Ratzlaff and Kathy Kinney

The Ultimate Sales Machine : Turbocharge Your Business with Relentless Focus on 12 Key Strategies by Chet Holmes