



**Jelf**

# A Tradesman's guide to marketing

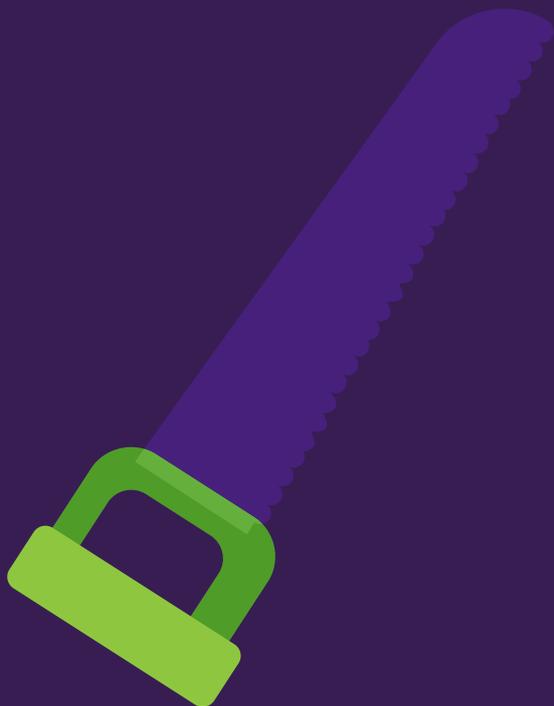
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It's common knowledge that tradespeople win the majority of their business opportunities through word-of-mouth recommendations, but just because this method is tried and tested, doesn't mean that you shouldn't explore other ways of marketing yourself – especially in such a competitive industry.



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There are plenty of opportunities now to market your business online, as well as many other more traditional marketing methods. Even if you've been working as a tradesperson for a long time, you'll still find new ways to expand the reach of your business and grow your customer base. If you don't already have a website, then set one up!

The following tips are specially tailored for those working in the trades. Whether you're working alone or you're running a small business, these five key pointers will help you to market your business to its best advantage.



## Step one: Hand out business cards

Sometimes the simplest marketing tactics are the best, and it's certainly true that **handing out business cards** can be a very easy yet effective way of keeping yourself in the minds of potential customers. A business card should be kept simple, while featuring all the essential information that a customer would need, such as your contact information and the services you offer. Be sure to give your customers a couple of cards so they can pass your details onto friends and family looking for a good tradesman.

Another option is to **invest in promotional materials**, like branded pens or sticky notes featuring your contact details. Giving out something useful like this

means that the recipient is far more likely to have your name to hand if they need it, or inadvertently pass it on to someone else when, say, letting them borrow a pen. Be careful, however, and avoid spending too much money on promotional materials, as the return on investment is not high, nor is it something you're likely to see straight away.

**Don't forget print advertisements** either. While posters and advertisements in local newspapers might not be as fashionable as online marketing, they're still very useful if you're targeting an older audience and want to get your name known locally; you may want to consider traditional print advertising in the local press too.



## Step two: Buddy up with other local businesses

**Buddying up** with another local business can be a great way to attract more customers to your own business. This works by agreeing with another company, formally or informally, that if anyone is looking for a service that you can offer, they will recommend you. In return, you recommend their business whenever a relevant opportunity comes up.

This strategy works best when you work alongside a company that offers similar, but not the same,

services as you do. For example, if you're a painter and decorator, it would be wise to buddy up with a joiner or plumber, as you can easily capture the same market. Ensure that you choose wisely, though; working with someone who has a questionable reputation would only reflect on you, too.



## Step three: Joining list services both on and offline

Posting about your services on listing sites is a great way to get business, but be wary of large directories as the outlay can be high without any guaranteed return on investment. The best idea is to focus your attention on local, smaller-scale listing sites like **My Workman** and **Top Tradesmen UK**.



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## Step four: Managing your online presence through your website

Even if most of your business comes in through word-of-mouth recommendations, it would be foolish to ignore the chance to market your business online as the majority of people conduct research on the internet if they're looking for a service. There are plenty of beginners' website-building guides available, with [the Guardian's](#) and [How Stuff Works' guides](#) being especially helpful.

**If you do have a website, it's time to tidy it up** and ensure that it's as useful as possible to potential customers visiting the site. Try to put yourself in the mind of someone visiting your site for the first time and consider what they'd be expecting to see and how easy it would be for them to find what they're looking for. Information such as your contact details, the areas you work in and the services you provide are absolutely essential and should be easily accessible on your website. You should also consider how online customers can get a quote from you; should they call you or will you have a form on your site that they can fill out?

**Publicise customer feedback;** the positive reports you get from clients will be essential to the growth of your business. You can maximise the value of the positive feedback you get from customers by featuring it on your website, as new customers will be more likely to hire you if they feel that you have a good reputation and are trusted by others.

Get back in touch with happy customers, or politely ask them once a job is complete if they would be willing to offer some feedback. You could feature positive quotes on the homepage of your site, or you could even have a dedicated feedback and comments section. If you don't have your own website, trawl through review sites to find any positive comments that a satisfied customer may've posted online.

Don't shy away from negative feedback if you do receive it, or try to hide it from your site. Respond promptly and in a professional manner, and try to remedy the problem as soon as possible. If prospective customers do see you responding to negative comments on your site, they will at least know that you're presenting a relatively unbiased image of yourself and are therefore more trustworthy.

**Don't forget to showcase your work.** Don't underestimate the importance of having clear, high-quality images on your site, as these provide first-time customers with an indication of the quality of your work. Publishing before-and-after shots of completed work – taken with the permission of the client – is a particularly good way of showing off your skills. Again, if you don't have a website, you can include this material in your sales packs or portfolio to show to potential clients.

**Finally, ensure that you keep your website fresh.** Just having a website isn't enough; to give potential customers the best possible impression of your business, it's important that you update your website regularly. This means making sure that all the information on your site is fully up-to-date - for example, if you have a new qualification, an award, or a new phone number.

You could also link a blog to your site, discussing news in your industry or giving free tips and advice to readers. Offering something useful to visitors will make them more likely to return. An up-to-date website is also more likely to rank well in search engines, and the higher you rank, the more likely you are to be seen by potential customers.

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## Step five: Use social media to your advantage

Social media sites provide you with a great opportunity to engage with your customers in real time for free, so if you're not already using social media to market your business, it's definitely something you should consider doing. There are now so many social media platforms available that it can be difficult to know which ones are right for you.

Our advice would be to **stick with the most popular ones, such as Facebook and Twitter.** Twitter is a micro-blogging site that allows you to

send messages of 140 characters or less, and is particularly useful if you want to engage with customers in real time. Facebook is the most popular social networking site, so if you want to hit a mass market, it's the place you should be. Focus on gathering a following on a couple of sites, rather than trying to establish a presence on all the major platforms. Remember, it isn't just about followers, the most important thing is how they interact with your brand.

