

A SIMPLE MARKETING BUDGET GUIDE

for simple budgets



A SIMPLE BUDGET



Cathy Miller

Business Writer/Consultant

Business site:

SimplyStatedBusiness.com

How do you put a price tag on dreams? Today's digital world makes launching your dream business easier than ever. At least the mechanics of that launch.

Success is another story.

A SIMPLE MARKETING BUDGET GUIDE tackles a subject many small business owners avoid – establishing a marketing budget.

Even if your company employs you – and only you – you need to protect your business with a budget. And marketing is at the heart of your success or failure as a business.

This guide offers a simple plan for establishing your marketing budget.

If you have additional marketing budget tips, please share your ideas.

Let's connect or you can tweet your favorite #marketingbudgettips.



BUSTING BUDGET MYTHS

Budget myths are the product of wishful thinking or denial. Who actually enjoys paying bills? As a small business owner, don't fall prey to the following three marketing budget myths.

1. You're so small, you don't need a budget
2. You have no money for a budget
3. Your form of marketing doesn't cost anything

Let's take a closer look at each myth.

1. You don't need a budget

Perhaps you own a new business or you're a sole proprietor. Since you're so small, you don't need a budget, right? After all, you are trying to get your business off the ground.

If you don't market, how will you sell your products or services? How do you plan to pay your bills? Make a profit?



Even minimal marketing activity has an associated cost.

- The cost of a domain name for your website
- An ad in the yellow pages or newspaper
- Printing costs for business cards

Not having a marketing budget is like not opening your bills.

You may not see the total spent, but the expense exists.

Wouldn't you rather control your expenditures than have them control you?



A SMALL BUDGET IS STILL A BUDGET

2. You don't have the money

We dispelled this myth with the prior examples. If you did not have the money for at least minimal marketing, you would not be in business. What this guide hopes to share is that shoestring budgets have options.

Social media is the godsend for shoestring budgets. The 2013 Social Media Marketing Industry Report indicated 97% of marketers use social media.



86%

FELT SOCIAL MEDIA WAS IMPORTANT TO THEIR
BUSINESS

53%

WERE SMALL BUSINESSES (2-10 EMPLOYEES)
OR SELF-EMPLOYED



The following are a few suggestions for using social media for a tight marketing budget.

Start with free versions. One of the best features of social media is most platforms have a free version. The free versions offer networking opportunities and a vehicle for creating your profile. **TIP: LIMIT THE NUMBER OF PLATFORMS TO SAVE TIME & MONEY**

As your needs change (and your budget grows), you can decide which paid features are worth investing in.

For example, I have used the free version of LinkedIn since the start of my business. I have not found a reason to upgrade to a premium account. But with SlideShare, I felt the Analytics feature was worth the extra fee.

Create a business blog. One downside of social media platforms is your lack of control.

If you have an account with Facebook, you understand the pain of multiple changes.

With a business blog, you have control. Make the blog the focal point for your marketing. Send posted links back to your business blog.



Use video. Do you own a video camera or a smartphone with video recording? Pair that with free or low-cost screencasting software and – voilà – you have the tools for one of the most popular forms of marketing.

Platforms like [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#), and [Veoh](#) offer professional support to showcase your business.



A SIMPLE MARKETING BUDGET GUIDE

Share services. There are many skilled professionals in the same boat with you. Their lean budgets hinder their marketing plans. Consider sharing services. Need a few examples?

- You're a writer who hates the technical side of websites – exchange your writing skills with the web designer who struggles with writing
- You sell jewelry, but you hate the management of posts, comments, and tweets – hook up with a social media manager who would love to swap her services for your jewelry

You get the idea. **IMPORTANT:** The arrangement has to be mutually beneficial.



SHARING DELIVERS VALUE TO BOTH PARTIES

Write for industry publications. Online and print magazines are always in search of content from industry experts.

That expert is you. Check out the writing guidelines to magazines, newsletters or blogs in your niche market.

YOUR CUSTOMERS READ THOSE MAGAZINES

Picture the benefits of submitting an article with your byline.

- Establishes you as an expert
- Increases the visibility of your business
- Generates leads

Outsource. I know, I know. You're shouting –

“How can I outsource on my tight budget?”

Try this exercise.

- List time-consuming tasks you hate to do
- Put an asterisk next to those you don't do well
- Estimate the time spent doing those tasks

You may discover it is less expensive (from a time management perspective) to outsource those tasks to someone else.



IMPROVE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY BY OUTSOURCING

3. Your marketing is free.

You followed the advice from #2 and use nothing but free social media platforms.

That's all you use for marketing so it doesn't cost you anything, right?

What about your time? Anyone who uses social media knows how easy it is to get sucked into time-consuming surfing.

- **Do you use email?** Each time you connect with a customer or potential customer, you are marketing. Besides your time, there's often a cost associated with email service.
- **How much time do you spend on social media?** Do you know? Many of us fail to track or limit our time.

YOUR TIME IS A PRECIOUS COMMODITY



Setting Your Budget

If you never set a budget before, keep it simple.

Look at last year's tax return. What did you deduct on marketing and advertising?

- How satisfied were you with last year's results?
- Were there other expenses you can cut back on?

Calculate your hourly fee. If you have not done this already, you should determine what your bare bones hourly fee is to pay your bills and make a profit.

One of my favorite tools for calculating my rate is the tool, [Freelance Hourly Rate Calculator](#) at AllIndieWriters.com.

You don't have to be a writer to benefit from the rate calculator.



List your marketing mediums. Jot down all the platforms you plan for your marketing.

- **Social media** – list each platform – e.g., email, business blog, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, SlideShare, etc.
- **Online/print** – white papers, case studies, ebooks, ads, etc.
- **Promotional** – business cards, brochures, give-away items, etc.



Your Simple Budget

Let's pull it all together.

1. List the marketing task
2. Record the annual fee (if applicable)
3. Calculate your total time spent
4. Total the fee + your hourly rate X time spent
5. Check annual budget

DON'T FORGET TASKS WITHOUT FEES (LIKE SHARED SERVICES)

The budget below shows only a few line items. Surprised at the social media time? And that's just two platforms.

Sample Budget

Task	Annual Fee	Time (\$50/Hr)	Total
SlideShare	\$228		
12 presentations	n/a	12 hours (\$600)	\$828
Twitter, LinkedIn	n/a	30 minutes/day X 250 days = 125 hours (\$6,250)	\$6,250
ANNUAL BUDGET			\$7,078

Congratulations!

You have a budget. The following are a few tips to make it work.

1. Track your time – try online tools (e.g., [Toggl](#))
2. Review your budget at least quarterly
3. Adjust your plan to stay on track

For additional business communication tips

Visit my blog at SimplyStatedBusiness.com

Check out the [Free Stuff](#) downloads

=====

ABOUT CATHY MILLER

Cathy Miller is a freelance business writer with over 30 years of experience in writing for small businesses to Fortune 500 customers. In 2008, Cathy started her own business writing company. The business provides online and print business writing services, with specialties in white papers, case studies and ghostwriting.

As a licensed broker and former healthcare provider, Cathy has an added specialty in health care, employee benefits, and corporate wellness programs.

Since 2003, Cathy has participated as a walker in the 3-Day, 60-mile Walk for the Cure. She is also an avid reader and enjoys sports.

[Contact Cathy](#) for help with your business communication. Together, we'll keep it simple, clear, and uniquely yours.

Image/Photo credits: BigStockPhoto.com