

# **Before You Start: What Running an Online Business Actually Involves**

**A Step by Step Free Practical Introduction to Starting an Online Business for Beginners**

By SmallBiz

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## **How To Use This Guide**

**Read it in order.**

**Do not skip ahead.**

**Take notes if needed.**

**This is not motivational content — it is foundational.**

**If you reach the end and still want to build properly, you are ready to begin.**

## Introduction

If you are thinking about starting a digital or affiliate business, read this first.

Not the hype.

Not the viral videos.

Not the “£10k months” screenshots.

This guide explains what is actually involved.

Starting a digital business is still starting a business.

That means structure.

Responsibility.

Planning.

Organisation.

If you are not prepared for that, stop here.

If you are, keep reading.

A digital business is not:

- Posting random content
- Making something on Canva
- Hoping something sells

A business requires four things:

An offer (what you are selling)

A customer (who it is for)

A place to sell it (your shop window)

A system (how money flows and is tracked)

Without these, you do not have a business.

You have an idea.

## **2. Where Are You Selling?**

Before creating anything, decide where it will be sold.

You need a shop window.

Your options include:

### **Marketplaces (Etsy, etc.)**

Pros:

- Built-in traffic
- Easier to start

Cons:

- Fees
- Competition
- Limited control

### **Your Own Website**

Pros:

- Full control
- Build your own brand
- Keep customer data

Cons:

- You must drive traffic but that applies to every marketing site.
- You are responsible for setup

### **Platform Builders (Stanstore, etc.)**

Pros:

- All-in-one systems
- Easier setup than full website

Cons:

- Platform limitations
- Monthly fees

### **Affiliate-Only Model**

Pros:

- No product creation

Cons:

- You still need traffic
- You rely on someone else's product

There is no “right” answer.

There is only the one that suits your level of commitment.

But you must decide.

### **3. Open Your Office First**

Before you create products, before you post content, before you try to sell anything — open your office.

This means:

- Create a dedicated Bank Account and business email
- Set up a clear folder structure
- Decide how you will name and store files
- Set up a simple income tracker
- Set up a simple expense tracker

Money leaks from day one if you don't track it.

Even small things:

Domain renewals

Platform fees

Subscriptions

Transaction charges

If you mix personal and business money, you lose clarity.

And when you lose clarity, you lose control.

You do not need to be an accountant.

But you do need a simple system.

For beginners with no bookkeeping background, a clear, easy-to-use accounts structure designed specifically for small digital businesses can make a significant difference.

The goal is not complexity.

The goal is visibility.

If you can see what is coming in and what is going out, you can make proper decisions.

Without that, you are guessing.

If you skip this step, you are building chaos.

## **Before you trade, decide how you are operating.**

For many beginners, this means starting as a sole trader (or equivalent in your country).

This involves:

- Registering properly if required
- Understanding basic tax responsibilities
- Keeping records
- Separating personal and business money

This is not complicated.

But it is important.

You are now responsible for reporting your income correctly.

Ignoring this does not make it disappear.

Again, this is part of running a business — not just “selling online.”

#### **4. Decide Your Income Target**

If you want £1,000 per month:

And your product is £20,

You need 50 sales.

Now ask:

Where will 50 buyers come from?

Traffic does not appear because you posted once.

If you cannot answer where buyers will come from, you are not ready to scale.

This is business thinking.

#### **5. Understand Costs**

Even a simple digital business involves costs.

Examples:

- Domain name
- Hosting or platform fees
- Email marketing system
- Software subscriptions
- Transaction fees

Time is also a cost.

If someone tells you this costs nothing and runs itself, they are selling something.

## **6. Skills You Will Need**

You do not need to be an expert.

But you do need:

- Basic technical confidence
- Willingness to learn
- Communication skills
- Consistency
- Problem-solving ability

This is not passive income.

This is active building.

## **7. What Most Courses Skip**

Many courses jump straight to:

“Create a digital product.”

They do not explain:

- Structure
- Income tracking
- Planning
- Platform choice
- Business setup

That is why people feel lost.

This guide exists to prevent that.

## **8. If You Still Want To Build Properly**

If after reading this you still want to build a digital or affiliate business properly, your next step is structure.

SmallBizSuite was created to provide:

- Business setup guidance
- Planning tools
- Income and expense tracking
- Product organisation systems
- Beginner marketing direction

## **Basic Legal Awareness**

If you are selling digital products or running an affiliate business, you may need:

- Clear terms and conditions
- A simple privacy policy (if collecting emails)
- A basic refund policy
- Clear product descriptions

You are taking money.

That requires clarity.

You do not need to hire a solicitor on day one.

But you do need to understand that business carries obligation.

## **If You Collect Emails**

The moment you collect:

Name

Email address

You are handling personal data.

That means:

- Be transparent about what you send
- Do not spam
- Provide unsubscribe options
- Store data securely

Email lists are assets — but they come with responsibility.

### **Affiliate Transparency**

If you promote affiliate products:

Be honest.

Disclose clearly that you may earn commission.

Trust is long-term capital.

Misleading people for short-term commission destroys it.

### **Customer Communication**

Even digital downloads involve:

- Questions
- Refund requests
- Confusion
- Complaints

You need to decide:

How quickly will you respond?

Where will support emails go?

How will you handle disputes?

Ignoring customers is not an option.

### **Digital Products Are Not “Set and Forget”**

Even if automated, you are responsible for:

- Broken links
- Expired downloads
- Incorrect files
- Outdated content

Your reputation is built quietly.

One ignored issue damages trust more than ten good posts build it.

### **Keep It Proportionate**

You are not building a multinational corporation.

You are starting small.

But small businesses still require:

- Clear communication
- Basic compliance

- Simple documentation
- Honest marketing

Professionalism does not require complexity.

It requires consistency.

### **Why This Section Exists**

Many beginners are told:

“Just upload it.”

They are not told:

“You are now responsible.”

This guide exists to prepare you — not scare you.

If you approach digital business with maturity from the beginning, you avoid most beginner mistakes.

## **Your First 30 Days (If You're Serious)**

This is not about launching in 30 days.

It's about building properly in 30 days.

You are laying foundations.

### **Week 1: Set Up Properly**

Do not create products yet.

Do this first:

- Decide your business model (digital product, affiliate, or both)
- Choose where you will sell (marketplace or own site)
- Open your "office" (email, folders, tracking)
- Set up basic income and expense tracking
- Register properly if required in your country

If this week feels slow, good.

## **Week 2: Choose & Plan**

Now you plan your first offer.

- Choose one clear product idea

OR

- Choose one affiliate product to promote

Do not choose five.

Define:

- Who it is for
- What problem it solves
- Where it will be sold
- Target price

Then do basic maths.

If you want £1,000 per month and your product is £20,  
you need 50 sales.

Affiliate marketing may result in small commissions, sometimes just a £1 or £2, to make that £1000, you'll need to promote and then sell 1000 or 500. That takes planning and research to find the right products, the ones that sell regularly all year round, the 'Evergreen products'.

This keeps you grounded.

## **Week 3: Build & Organise**

Now you create.

But not randomly.

- Create the product or setup affiliate system
- Write clear description
- Prepare simple visuals
- Organise files properly
- Double-check delivery process

Before publishing, test everything.

Broken links destroy trust instantly.

## **Week 4: Publish & Observe**

Now you go live.

You do not expect miracles.

You:

- Publish

- Share consistently
- Track visits
- Track sales
- Monitor expenses

You observe what happens.

Business is adjustment Not emotion.

## **What You Should Not Do in 30 Days**

- Buy five new courses
- Switch niche mid-way
- Redesign everything three times
- Panic at low views
- Quit after two weeks

Foundations first.

Growth second.

## **At The End of 30 Days**

You should have:

- A registered business structure (if required)

- A shop window
- One live product or affiliate setup
- Income tracking system
- Expense awareness
- Real data

That is progress.

Not hype.

Not fantasy.

Progress.

If you want structured tools to manage your income, expenses, planning and product organisation from the beginning, the SmallBizSuite was designed for exactly this stage.

It provides:

- Simple accounts tracking for non-bookkeepers
- Planning tools
- Product organisation systems
- Beginner marketing direction

Build with structure. Not guesswork.

## **Common Beginner Traps & Red Flags**

If you are new to digital business, you are a target.

Not because you are foolish.

Because you are hopeful.

Hope without structure is profitable — for someone else.

### **Red Flag 1: “No Setup Required”**

If someone tells you:

“You don’t need a website.”

“You don’t need tracking.”

“You don’t need structure.”

Ask yourself:

Then how is this a business?

Convenience is not the same as ownership.

If you don’t control anything, you don’t own anything.

## **Red Flag 2: Income Screenshots Without Context**

Screenshots do not show:

Ad spend

Refunds

Email list size

Years of experience

Failed attempts

Revenue is not profit.

Turnover is not income.

Without context, numbers mean nothing.

## **Red Flag 3: “Just Make Something in Canva”**

Creating a product is not the hard part.

Selling it is.

Traffic.

Trust.

Consistency.

If someone teaches product creation without teaching:

Where to sell

How to attract buyers

How to track results

You are being sold half a process.

Half a process produces half a result.

### **Red Flag 4: Expensive Courses With No Foundations**

If a course jumps straight to:

Scaling

Automating

Passive income

Without explaining:

Business structure

Income tracking

Platform setup

Basic planning

You are building on sand.

## **Red Flag 5: Emotional Selling**

If the message is:

“Quit your job.”

“Escape the 9–5.”

“Earn while you sleep.”

But there is no explanation of:

Work required

Systems involved

Responsibility

Just Pause.

Emotion is powerful.

But business is practical.

## **The Truth**

There are legitimate ways to build a digital or affiliate business.

But they require:

Time

Structure

Learning

Adjustment

Anyone promising shortcuts is selling simplicity, not sustainability.

## **Why This Matters**

Getting discouraged after being misled can stop someone building properly for years.

The goal is not to be cynical.

The goal is to be informed.

Build slowly.

Build clearly.

Build with structure.

## Sample Beginner Business Planner

### Business Overview

**Business Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Business Model (Circle One):**

**Digital Products**

**Affiliate Marketing**

**Both**

**Where Will You Sell?**

**Marketplace (e.g. Etsy)**

**Own Website**

**Platform Builder**

**Affiliate Only**

**Primary Platform:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2** **Income Target**

**Monthly Target: £** \_\_\_\_\_

**Main Product Price: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**How Many Sales Needed?**

**(Target ÷ Price = Sales Required)**

**Example:**

**£1,000 ÷ £20 = 50 sales**

**Your Calculation:**

**3 Product or Offer Plan**

**What are you selling?**

**Who is it for?**

**What problem does it solve?**

**Why would someone choose this?**

#### **4** Traffic Plan

**How will people find you?**

**TikTok**

**Pinterest**

**Instagram**

**Email**

**Etsy search**

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How often will you post or promote?**

**Be realistic.**

#### **5** Setup Checklist

**Business Bank and email created?**

**Income tracking started?**

**Expense tracking started?**

**Platform chosen?**

**Product defined?**

**Basic legal pages prepared?**

## **6 Expense Awareness**

**Expected Monthly Costs:**

**Platform fees: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Email software: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Domain/Hosting: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Other: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Total Estimated Monthly Cost: £ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Now ask:**

**Are you comfortable with this?**

**7 First 30-Day Commitment**

**For the next 30 days I will:**

**I will not:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# **Marketing Plan**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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**Navigating the world of marketing can often feel like wandering through a maze. As an entrepreneur or small business owner, you know firsthand the challenges of cutting through the clutter and reaching your customers effectively. It's easy to get lost in the countless channels, tactics, and changing trends - leaving you feeling overwhelmed and unsure of the best path forward.**

**This isn't about working harder; it's about working smarter.**

**This book offers a refreshingly straightforward solution. Within these pages, you'll discover a clear, one-page marketing plan that distills strategy into a powerful tool to drive your efforts with precision. Unlike other marketing guides, this is your practical resource for crafting a strategy that's unique to your business.**

**Imagine starting each day with clarity, knowing exactly who your customers are and how to engage them. Your brand voice resonates across platforms, attracting loyal followers. Instead of random, costly tactics, you're making informed choices that align with clear, measurable goals. This isn't about rigid formulas; it's about creating a flexible plan that evolves with your business and the market.**

**By the last page, you'll have the tools to transform your marketing and propel your business to new heights. You'll craft a unique value proposition, map your customer journey, and identify key touchpoints to leave a lasting impact. Each chapter guides you with examples, exercises, and actionable steps, so you can confidently implement your plan with purpose.**

**Get ready to stand out. Visualize the satisfaction of seeing your inbox buzzing with new leads, engagement growing, and revenue climbing. This is the outcome when you apply these principles. The best part?**

**This isn't about working harder; it's about working smarter. Say goodbye to overwhelm and hello to a focused, efficient strategy tailored to your business.**

**Are you ready to transform your marketing and drive your business to new heights? Open this book, and take your first step towards a streamlined, successful future**

## **IDENTIFY YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMER AND STAND OUT**

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**You're about to uncover the power of precision marketing. In this chapter, you'll learn how to pinpoint your ideal customer and create a unique brand identity that sets you apart from the competition. By the end, you'll have the tools to focus your marketing efforts like a laser, reaching the right people with the right message.**

### **Understanding Your Ideal Customer**

**Imagine throwing darts blindfolded. That's what marketing without knowing your ideal customer feels like. But when you remove that blindfold, your aim improves dramatically. That's the power of customer persona research.**

**You might think you know your customers, but let's dig deeper. Start by examining your current customer base. Who are your most profitable clients? Which ones rave about your products or services? These are the people you want to clone.**

**To build a detailed customer persona, you'll need to gather information from various sources. Pay attention to customer interactions, noting the questions they ask, their pain points, and the language they use. This gives you invaluable insights into their needs and preferences. Understand who's visiting your site, what content they're engaging**

with, and how they're finding you. Analyze your sales records to identify patterns in purchasing behaviour, customer lifetime value, and product preferences.

Armed with this information, you can create a detailed customer persona. Here's an example:

**Meet Sarah, the Busy Professional:**

**Age:**

**35**

**Occupation:**

**Marketing Manager**

**Income:**

**\$85,000/year**

**Location:**

**Urban area**

**Interests:**

**Fitness, healthy eating, professional development**

**Pain Points:**

**Limited time, work-life balance, staying up-to-date with industry trends**

**Purchasing Habits:**

**Researches extensively before buying, values quality and convenience**

**Preferred Communication Channels:**

**Email, LinkedIn**

Creating this detailed persona allows you to tailor your marketing messages, product offerings, and communication strategies to resonate with Sarah and others like her. But don't stop at one persona. Most businesses have multiple ideal customer types. Create 2-3 personas to represent your core customer segments. This allows you to

**craft targeted marketing campaigns that speak directly to each group's unique needs and preferences. These personas aren't set in stone. With the growth of your business and shifts in market conditions, it's essential to revisit and refine your personas consistently. This ensures your marketing efforts remain relevant and effective.**

### **Crafting Your Unique Value Proposition (UVP)**

**Now that you know who your ideal customers are, it's time to communicate why they should choose you over your competitors. This is where your**

### **Unique Value Proposition (UVP)**

**comes into play. Your UVP is the heart of your brand's identity. It's a clear statement that describes the benefit of your offer, how you solve your customer's needs, and what distinguishes you from the competition.**

**A strong UVP is clear and concise, communicates specific results, explains how you're different, and can be read and understood in about 5 seconds.**

**Let's break down the process of crafting your UVP:**

#### **Identify Your Target Market:**

**Use the insights from your customer personas to ensure your UVP speaks directly to your ideal customers.**

#### **Explain the Problem You Solve:**

**Be specific about the challenge your customers face.**

#### **List the Key Benefits:**

**Focus on the outcomes your customers will experience.**

#### **Define What Makes You Unique:**

**This is your "secret sauce." What do you offer that your competitors don't?**

#### **Combine and Refine:**

**Bring all these elements together into a clear, compelling statement.**

**Here's a formula you can use:**

**For**

**[target market], [your company name]**

**provides**

**[key benefit]**

**by**

**[how you do it uniquely].**

## **CRAFTING A CONSISTENT AND ENGAGING BRAND VOICE**

**Your brand voice is the personality and emotion behind your company's communications. It's how you speak to your customers, and it's a critical component of your overall brand identity. In this chapter, you'll discover how to develop a brand voice that resonates with your ideal customers and sets you apart from the competition.**

### **Understanding the Importance of Brand Voice**

**Think about your favourite brands. What do they sound like when they communicate with you? Are they friendly and casual, or professional and authoritative? Do they use humour, or are they always serious? These characteristics make up their brand voice, and they play a crucial role in how you perceive and connect with these companies.**

**Your brand voice is more than just the words you use. It's the tone, style, and personality that come through in all your communications. A consistent brand voice helps you build trust with your audience, differentiate yourself from competitors, create emotional connections with customers, reinforce your brand identity, and improve customer retention. According to a 2023 study by the Content Marketing Institute,**

**81% of marketers agree that a consistent brand voice across all channels is crucial for building brand trust. This statistic underscores the importance of developing and maintaining a strong brand voice.**

### **Defining Your Brand Voice**

**To create a brand voice that resonates with your ideal customers, you need to start by defining it clearly. Begin by reviewing your brand values, as your brand voice should reflect your company's core values. Next, analyze your audience using the customer personas you developed in Chapter 1 to understand their preferences and communication styles. Conduct an audit of your current communications, looking at your existing marketing materials, social media posts, and customer service interactions to identify the tone you're already using and whether it aligns with your brand values and audience preferences. Create a brand voice chart that outlines your brand voice characteristics, including descriptions, do's, and don'ts for each characteristic. Finally, test and refine your brand voice by trying it out in various communications and gathering feedback from your team and customers.**

**Your brand voice should be flexible enough to adapt to different situations while maintaining its core characteristics. For example, your tone might be more serious when addressing a customer complaint than when sharing a fun social media post, but the underlying voice should remain consistent.**

### **Implementing Your Brand Voice Across Channels**

**Once you've defined your brand voice, it's time to implement it across all your marketing channels.**

**Consistency is key here.**

**Your brand should sound the same whether a customer is reading your website, scrolling through your social media, or chatting with your customer service team. To maintain consistency, create a comprehensive brand voice guide that outlines your brand voice, provides examples, and includes do's and don'ts. Share this with**

everyone in your organization who communicates with customers or creates content. Conduct workshops to help your team understand and implement your brand voice, especially for customer-facing roles like sales and customer service. Create templates for common communications that embody your brand voice to help maintain consistency, especially for team members who aren't natural writers. Regularly audit your communications across all channels to ensure they're aligning with your brand voice and identify areas for improvement. While your core brand voice should remain consistent, you may need to adapt it slightly for different platforms. For example, your tone on LinkedIn might be slightly more professional than on Instagram, but the underlying voice should still be recognizably your brand.

### **The Power of Storytelling in Brand Voice**

Storytelling is a powerful tool for bringing your brand voice to life. Humans are wired to respond to stories – they help us connect emotionally and remember information better. Incorporating storytelling into your brand communications makes your brand more relatable and memorable, creating stronger connections with your audience. Share your origin story, telling how your company started and what problem you were trying to solve. Use customer success stories to showcase how your products or services have helped real customers, helping potential customers see themselves benefiting from your brand. Give your audience a peek behind the curtain with behind-the-scenes content about your team, processes, or company culture. Instead of just listing features, tell the story of why you created a product and how it solves a problem for your customers.

Remember, these stories should be told in your brand voice, reinforcing your brand identity and connecting with your audience.

### **The Key to an Effective Brand Voice**

Authenticity is more important than ever in connecting with your audience. Customers can spot insincerity a mile away, and they're drawn to brands that feel genuine and transparent. Your brand voice

plays a crucial role in conveying authenticity. To maintain authenticity in your brand voice, be consistent across all touchpoints. If you're friendly and casual on social media but formal and distant in your email communications, it can create a disconnect for your customers. When things go wrong, own up to it in your brand voice. A sincere apology that sounds like it's coming from a real person, not a corporate robot, can go a long way in maintaining trust. Don't be afraid to let your brand's personality shine through. If humour is part of your brand voice, use it appropriately. If you're passionate about certain causes, express that passion. Use your brand voice to communicate openly about your processes, policies, and values. This transparency builds trust with your audience. Engage with your audience in your brand voice by responding to comments, asking for feedback, and showing that you're not just broadcasting messages but having a two-way conversation.

### **Evolving Your Brand Voice**

Your brand voice isn't set in stone. As your business grows and evolves, your brand voice may need to evolve too. Maybe you're expanding into new markets, or your customer base is changing. Perhaps you've refined your brand values or your unique value proposition. In these cases, it's important to revisit and potentially update your brand voice. Schedule regular reviews of your brand voice to ensure it's still aligned with your brand values and resonating with your audience. Gather feedback from your customers and employees on your communications to determine if your brand voice feels authentic and appealing to them. Analyze engagement metrics across your channels to identify certain types of content or communications that perform particularly well, which might give you insights into how your brand voice is resonating. If you decide to make changes to your brand voice implement them gradually to avoid jarring your audience. For significant changes, consider communicating this to your audience, explaining why you're evolving and how it will benefit them. The goal is to maintain a brand voice that authentically represents your brand and resonates with your audience.

## **Brand Voice Characteristic**

### **Description**

**Do**

**Don't**

**Friendly**

**Approachable and welcoming**

**Use casual language, address the reader directly**

**Use overly formal or stuffy language**

**Expert**

**Knowledgeable and authoritative**

**Share insights and data, use industry terms (explained simply)**

**Use jargon without explanation, make unsubstantiated claims**

**Optimistic**

**Positive and solution-oriented**

**Focus on solutions, use positive language**

**Dwell on problems, use negative or pessimistic language**

**While developing your brand voice, always keep your ideal customer personas and unique value proposition in focus. Your brand voice should be a natural extension of these elements, helping you communicate your value to your target audience in a way that feels authentic and engaging. In the next chapter, we'll explore how to set smart marketing goals and choose the most impactful channels for reaching your audience. You'll learn how to align your marketing efforts with your business objectives and make data-driven decisions about where to focus your resources. Armed with a strong brand voice and clear goals, you'll be well on your way to creating a powerful, effective marketing strategy.**

**SMART GOALS AND IMPACTFUL CHANNELS**

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**You're ready to take your marketing efforts to the next level. In this chapter, you'll learn how to set goals that drive your business forward and select the most effective channels to reach your audience. You'll finish with a clear path to success and the tools needed to make informed decisions about where to direct your marketing efforts.**

### **The Power of SMART Goals**

**Goal-setting is the compass that guides your marketing efforts. Without clear, measurable goals, you're essentially navigating without a map.**

### **Choosing the Right Marketing Channels**

**With your goals set, it's time to decide where to focus your marketing efforts. The key is to be where your customers are. Remember those customer personas you created in Chapter 1? They're going to be invaluable here. Start by listing all potential marketing channels, including social media platforms, email marketing, content marketing, pay-per-click advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), traditional advertising, public relations, events and trade shows, influencer marketing, and affiliate marketing.**

**Consider each channel through the lens of your ideal customer:**

**Where do they spend their time?**

**How do they prefer to receive information?**

**What types of content do they engage with?**

**For example, if your target audience is young professionals, LinkedIn and industry-specific podcasts might be more effective than Facebook or TikTok. If you're targeting retirees, Facebook and email marketing might be better choices. Don't forget to consider the nature of your product or service. Visual products often perform well on platforms**

like Instagram or Pinterest, while complex B2B services might require longer-form content like whitepapers or webinars. It's also important to think about your resources. Each channel requires time, effort, and often money to manage effectively. It's better to excel on a few channels than to spread yourself too thin across many.

### **Analyzing Channel Performance and Optimization**

Once you've selected your channels, it's crucial to continually analyze their performance. This allows you to double down on what's working and adjust or abandon what isn't. Key metrics to track include:

Engagement rate, follower growth, and conversions for social media  
email marketing

Page views, time on page, and conversions for content marketing

Organic traffic, keyword rankings, and domain authority for SEO

Use tools like Google Analytics, social media insights, and email marketing software to track these metrics. Set up regular reporting to monitor your progress towards your goals.

Marketing is not a set-it-and-forget-it activity. To get the best results, you need to constantly test and optimize your strategies. A/B testing (also known as split testing) is a powerful tool for improving your marketing performance. Here's how it works: Choose one element to test (e.g., email subject line, ad headline, call-to-action button colour), create two versions (A and B) with only that one element different, show each version to a similar audience, measure the results, and implement the winning version.

You can A/B test almost anything: email subject lines, ad copy, landing page designs, social media post formats, and more. The key is to test one element at a time so you can clearly attribute any difference in performance. Start with elements that have the biggest potential

impact. For example, testing different offers or value propositions will likely yield more significant results than testing button colours.

### **Data-Driven Decisions and Adaptability**

You now have access to more marketing data than ever, offering valuable insights into your audience's behaviours and preferences. The challenge is turning that data into actionable insights.

The marketing landscape is constantly evolving. New platforms emerge, consumer behaviours shift, and global events can dramatically change the business environment overnight. To succeed in the long term, you need to be adaptable. Stay informed about industry trends and changes in your target market. Follow marketing blogs, attend webinars, and network with other professionals in your field. Be open to trying new channels or strategies but always test them against your existing methods before making a full switch. Most importantly, keep your focus on your customers. As long as you're meeting their needs and providing value, you'll be able to adapt to whatever changes come your way.

When implementing your marketing plan, keep in mind that it's a living document. Regularly review your goals, assess your channel performance, and be ready to adjust your strategies as needed. With clear goals, well-chosen channels, and a data-driven approach, you're well on your way to marketing success. Keep experimenting, keep learning, and most importantly, keep focusing on providing value to your customers. That's the surest path to long-term marketing success.

### **Identifying Touchpoints and Pain Points**

Touchpoints are all the places where your customer interacts with your brand, both online and offline. These might include your website, social media profiles, email communications, advertising, customer service interactions, in-store experiences, and product packaging. For each touchpoint, consider how you can optimize the customer experience. Is your website easy to navigate? Are your social media profiles

**providing valuable content? Is your customer service team responsive and helpful?**

**Pain points are the challenges or frustrations your customers experience during their journey. These could be related to your product, your marketing, or the broader problem your product solves. Common pain points include lack of information about your product or service, complicated purchasing process, long wait times for customer service, difficulty using the product, and unexpected costs or fees. Identifying these pain points allows you to address them proactively in your marketing and product development. For example, if customers are struggling to understand how to use your product, you might create a series of tutorial videos or improve your product documentation.**

### **Crafting Strategies for Each Stage of the Journey**

**Now that you understand your customer's journey, it's time to create targeted strategies for each stage. For the awareness stage, create informative blog posts and social media content that addresses your customers' pain points, use SEO strategies to improve your visibility in search results, and run targeted advertising campaigns to reach potential customers. In the consideration stage, offer detailed product information and comparison guides, provide case studies and customer testimonials, and use retargeting ads to stay top-of-mind with interested prospects.**

**For the decision stage, offer free trials or demos, provide clear pricing information and highlight your unique value proposition, and use email marketing to nurture leads and address any final objections. In the retention stage, send onboarding emails to help new customers get started, provide excellent customer support, and regularly ask for feedback and act on it.**

### **Creating Your Implementation Plan**

**With your customer journey mapped and strategies outlined, it's time to create a concrete implementation plan. This plan should detail exactly what needs to be done, by whom, and when.**

**Even the best-laid plans can go awry. Implementing your marketing plan may come with challenges and unexpected changes along the way. Stay informed about industry trends and changes in your target market. Monitor your metrics closely and be prepared to pivot if a strategy isn't working.**

**Learn from failures and celebrate successes. Foster a culture of innovation and plan for different scenarios. Staying adaptable and resilient will better equip you to navigate the ever-changing landscape of marketing. Keep in mind that marketing is an investment in your future growth, not just a current expense.**

### **Measuring Success and Iterating**

**Implementing your marketing plan is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process of measurement, analysis, and improvement. Set up a system for regular reporting on your key metrics. Use data visualization tools to create dashboards that make it easy to understand your data at a glance. Continuously test different elements of your marketing, from email subject lines to ad copy to landing page designs. Regularly solicit feedback from your customers through surveys, interviews, or focus groups. Keep an eye on what your competitors are doing and how it's impacting your market share. While you should be making small adjustments constantly, set aside time each year for a more comprehensive review and planning session.**

**The goal is continuous improvement. Each iteration of your marketing plan should be more effective than the last. As you implement your marketing plan, keep your focus on providing value to your customers . Gaining insight into their journey, addressing their pain points, and refining your approach will set you on the path to marketing success.**

**Stay flexible, stay focused, and most importantly, keep learning and adapting. Your marketing plan is a living document that will evolve as your business grows and changes. Embrace this process, and you'll be able to navigate whatever challenges come your way.**

**Remember, the most effective marketing doesn't feel like marketing at all to the customer. It feels like a helpful resource, a solution to a problem, or a delightful discovery. Strive to create marketing that your customers will appreciate and value. As you implement your marketing plan, there will be challenges and setbacks. But don't get discouraged. Each challenge is an opportunity to learn and improve.**

**Stay focused on your goals, keep your customer at the centre of everything you do, and don't be afraid to try new things. You're now ready to take your marketing to the next level. Good luck on your marketing journey!**

## **SIMPLE INCOME & EXPENSE TRACKING**

**For Beginner Affiliate Marketers (No Accountant Required)**

**This module exists because:**

**Beginners are rarely told to track income**

**Affiliate payments feel “invisible”**

**Mess later = stress later**

**If you earn £1, you track £1.**

**That's it.**

## **WHY TRACKING MATTERS (PLAIN ENGLISH)**

**Tracking:**

**Keeps you legal**

**Shows if you're actually profitable**

**Stops panic later**

**Makes scaling possible**

**Not tracking leads to:**

**Confusion**

**Missed tax obligations**

**Guesswork**

**Avoidable stress**

**You do not need:**

**Accounting knowledge**

**Complex software**

**An accountant on day one**

**You do need:**

**✓ Consistency**

**✓ Honesty**

**✓ One simple system**

## **WHAT AFFILIATE INCOME LOOKS LIKE (BEGINNER VIEW)**

**Affiliate income can come from:**

**Monthly payouts**

**Delayed commissions**

**Multiple platforms**

**Different currencies**

**So tracking must be:**

**Clear**

**Flexible**

**Simple**

## **MINIMUM TRACKING REQUIREMENTS**

**You only need to track three things:**

**Income**

**Expenses**

**Bank**

**Nothing else at the start.**

## **INCOME TRACKING – WHAT TO RECORD**

**For every payment received, record:**

- Date received**
- Platform / programme**
- Description (what it was for)**
- Gross amount**
- Payment method (PayPal, bank, etc.)**

**Example:**

**Date Source Description Amount Method**

**12/03/26 Affiliate Network Tool commission £42.50 PayPal**

**Track when you receive the money, not when the click happened.**

## **EXPENSE TRACKING – WHAT COUNTS**

**Expenses include anything wholly and exclusively for the business.**

**Common beginner affiliate expenses:**

**Website hosting**

**Domain name**

**Design tools**

**Software subscriptions**

**Learning resources**

**Stock images**

**Small equipment (mic, tripod)**

**Example:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>What For</b>	<b>Amount Paid</b>	<b>From</b>
<b>05/03/26</b>	<b>Hosting Co</b>	<b>Website hosting</b>	<b>£9.99</b>	<b>Bank</b>

## **WHAT NOT TO OVERTHINK (IMPORTANT)**

**VAT (not relevant for most beginners)**

**Categories beyond “income” and “expense”**

**Forecasting**

**Simple now = flexible later.**

## **WHERE TO TRACK (BEGINNER OPTIONS)**

**Choose one:**

**✓ Spreadsheet**

**✓ Simple accounting tool**

✓ Notebook (temporary, not ideal)

**The best system is the one you actually use.**

## **SmallBizSuite Accounts**

**Weekly or MONTHLY HABIT (10 MINUTES)**

**Once a month:**

**Add all income received**

**Add all expenses paid**

**Keep receipts (digital is fine)**

**That's it.**

## **WHEN TO LEVEL UP**

**Consider extra support when:**

**Income becomes consistent**

**You're unsure about tax thresholds**

**You're reinvesting larger amounts**

**You feel uncertain**

**Professional help is a later step, not a starting point.**

## **GOLDEN RULE FOR BEGINNERS**

**If money moves because of your affiliate activity — record it.**

**No exceptions.**

**The SmallBizSuite Accounts can solve all these problems even when it comes to completing the 5 Assessments a year that will be required, it's just copy and paste the figures to the form.**

**Full set of Accounts and a lot of Business Info to make sure you meet all your commitments and liabilities, with all the support you'll need.**

**AND it's only £49 one off payment.**

**We hope this helps you understand the Steps involved in creating your own Online Business and allow the The Small Biz to support you on this exciting Journey.**