



THE SMALL BUSINESS FOUNDER'S
GUIDE TO MARKETING

PART 1: FEED YOUR BUSINESS

BY TRAVIS ISAACSON



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Every founder eventually runs into the same problem: there's only one of you.

You've built a business the way many founders do. You find the prospects, make the calls, write the proposals, close the deals, and then turn around and do the work you just promised to deliver. You answer customer questions, solve problems, send invoices, follow up on payments, update the website, post on social media—and somehow still find time to figure out where the next customer is coming from.

In other words, you do just about everything yourself.

For some businesses, that model works—and keeps working. Some founders intentionally build lifestyle businesses that provide a good living without the need for dramatic growth. They keep the business small, maintain control, and eventually retire comfortably. There's absolutely nothing wrong with that.

But maybe you're like many other founders who have bigger growth goals. You want to build something that reaches more people, makes a substantial impact, creates a lasting legacy, or ultimately provides an exit large enough to fund the next chapter of your life. In short, you want to leave a “big dent in the universe.”

And that's where the do-it-all-yourself model begins to break down.

A business can only grow so far when every aspect of sales and marketing depends primarily on you. At some point, reaching those larger goals will require something more: a reliable, repeatable, and scalable sales and marketing system. You simply can't find, sell to, and serve enough customers on your own to sustain the kind of growth you're hoping for.

Generating new opportunities will need to become a business function, not just



a founder function.

Maybe you've already tried to make that happen. You've invested in ads, posted on social media, worked on SEO, sent emails, perhaps even put up a billboard or two. You may have generated a little traction. A campaign might have looked promising for a while. You may even have thought, *Finally. Something is working.*

But without a real plan to connect and track those efforts, the results begin to fail, and eventually disappoint. You're frustrated by all that money spent on a campaign that promised the moon and instead delivered a stale Moon Pie—already opened, with a bite taken out.

Still clinging to hope, many founders decide to try again, switch tactics, and chase the next promising marketing trend. Perhaps you've hired several different marketing companies, each with a unique approach and a fresh set of promises.

But no matter what you do, you still find yourself staring at the same heap of disappointing numbers. And now, you're not just frustrated. You're skeptical.

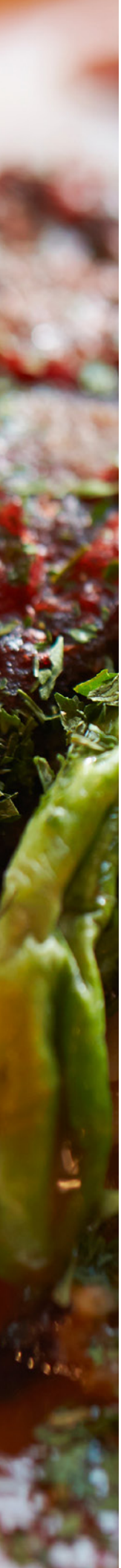
A friend of mine calls this the cycle of "marketing scars." After spending money on multiple strategies that fail to deliver, business owners become understandably wary of investing in marketing—even though they know they need it.

This is where many growing companies get stuck.

You've had enough success to know there's more within reach, but you've also outgrown the founder-led approach that got you this far. Going backward isn't an option. Moving forward by randomly trying one marketing tactic after another won't work either.

You're hungry for the growth that seems just beyond your grasp. It's so close you can taste it.

You understand that you need a marketing strategy: a customized, professional plan built around your business. A plan that considers the industry and your unique position within it, the customers you want to reach, your goals as a founder, your company's resources, and the budget available to make it happen.



But building that kind of strategy starts with asking the right question.

You've been asking, "What marketing tactic should we try next?"

It's time to reframe the question as, "What combination of marketing strategies will actually get us where we want to go?"

And answering that question requires more than choosing a list of tactics. A strong marketing strategy connects **what** you're doing to **where** you're trying to go—and provides a plan for getting there.

Let's take a look at the big questions your marketing plan should answer:

Where are we going? What is our big, hairy, audacious goal?

Who are we trying to reach? Who are our ideal customers, and what matters most to them?

What needs to happen to get us there? What marketing objectives will move the business toward that larger goal?

Which marketing activities should we do—and why? Which marketing channels best suit those objectives and customers?

How will we use them? What campaigns, messages, offers, and activities will we execute within each channel?

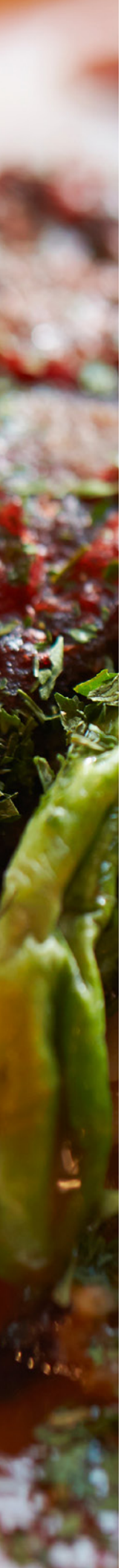
What do we expect from each one? What role should each channel play, and on what timeline?

Who will do the work? What people, expertise, time, and resources will be required?

How will we measure success? Which results and metrics will tell us whether our strategy is working?

When will we adjust? How often will we evaluate our results, and what will determine whether we stay the course, make changes, or try something new?

These questions change the conversation. Instead of asking, "Should we try Facebook ads?" or "Do we need to be on TikTok?" you start by asking what the



business is trying to accomplish, who it needs to reach, and which tools best fit the job.

The answers to these questions—and others like them—form the foundation of a strong marketing strategy. They connect the company's broader goals with the customer's needs and perspective, giving every marketing effort a purpose.

That's the difference between **doing marketing** and **marketing with a plan**.

PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE

With so many ways to market a business, how do you make sense of all the options? And, more importantly, how do you decide which ones your company actually needs?

The answer may be easier to understand if we step away from marketing for a minute and ask a much older question:

How are we going to put food on the table?

For as long as humans have needed to eat, we've developed different strategies for getting food. We **hunt**. We **fish**. We **farm**. And **we set a table** so when the food arrives, we're ready to eat. Each approach requires different tools, skills, and levels of investment of time and effort. And each serves a different purpose.

Marketing works much the same way.

There's more than one way to bring customers to your business, and no single approach can—or should—do everything.

This idea of bringing food to the table forms the framework I use with my clients and my own team to make sense of the many marketing options and ensure we're utilizing them strategically. We separate marketing activities into four categories: **Setting the Table, Hunting, Fishing, and Farming**.

Each has a different job. The key is knowing **which one you need, what you should expect from it, and how they work together**.

A QUICK LOOK

APPROACH	DESCRIPTION	FOCUS	MEASURABLE IMPACT
Setting the Table	A Strong Foundation Building the foundation that prepares your business to attract, impress, and convert customers.	Marketing Readiness & Customer Experience	Difficult to measure directly, but critical to overall marketing performance.
Hunting	Quick Wins and Targeted Strategies Targeting specific prospects to generate immediate opportunities and results.	Immediate Results	Typically the easiest to measure and tie directly to results.
Fishing	Wide Nets for Big Opportunities Reaching broader audiences, testing different approaches, and learning what gets customers to bite.	Reach & Discovery	Often easy to measure engagement and response, but harder to connect directly to revenue.
Farming	Cultivating Long-Term Relationships Nurturing relationships and building visibility over time to create sustainable, long-term growth.	Long-Term Growth	Difficult to measure, especially in the short term. Typically much less expensive overall.



SETTING THE TABLE

**BUILDING A STRONG
FOUNDATION**



Imagine arriving for dinner at a highly regarded restaurant you've been looking forward to trying.

You're shown to a beautifully set table. The plates are in place, the glasses catch the candlelight, the napkins are neatly folded, and the silverware is arranged just right. Everything feels intentional and inviting. The food hasn't even arrived, but something is already happening: you're anticipating a great meal.

Now imagine arriving at that same restaurant and finding your meal slapped onto a flimsy paper plate.

Same food. But suddenly, the experience doesn't live up to the promise.

There's a reason presentation matters. We experience a meal with more than our taste buds. What we see, smell, hear, and expect all contribute to our perception of what comes next. A thoughtfully prepared setting builds anticipation, communicates care, and makes the experience more enjoyable before anyone even takes a bite.

Before you go Hunting, Fishing, or Farming for new customers, you need somewhere prepared to bring them. You need to **Set the Table**.

In marketing, Setting the Table means putting the foundational pieces in place so that when potential customers encounter your business, they understand who you are, what you offer, and why they should choose you.

Think about what happens if you skip this step. You can spend enormous amounts of time and money Hunting for leads, Fishing for attention, or Farming long-term relationships—but if those customers arrive at a table that isn't ready for them, even great marketing can go to waste.

Maybe your messaging is confusing. Your website doesn't build confidence. Your brand doesn't match the quality of what you deliver. Your sales process creates friction. Or perhaps you haven't clearly defined who you're inviting to the table in the first place.

The meal might be fantastic. But the setting doesn't live up to the hype.

So before you start bringing new customers to the table, let's make sure it's enticing.

IS YOUR TABLE READY?

A well-set table doesn't happen by accident. Before you start investing heavily in bringing more customers to your business, make sure these foundational settings are in place.

Product-Market Fit

Are you selling something a defined group of people actually want, at a price that works for both of you? No amount of marketing can fix a product the market doesn't want or doesn't want to afford.

Clear Messaging

Can your customers explain what you do in their own words, not yours? Confused people don't buy. They keep looking.

Brand Identity

If someone saw your website, your invoice, your company truck, and your LinkedIn page all in the same week, would they know it was the same company? Inconsistency doesn't just look sloppy—it's confusing and it makes people quietly wonder whether you'll be around next year.

Website

When someone lands on your homepage, can they tell in ten seconds what you do, whether you serve people like them, and what to do next? Almost every other marketing activity points people here, so whatever is broken on your website is broken everywhere.

Offer & Conversion Path

How many steps stand between "I'm interested" and "I'm in"? A strong offer buried behind five steps and a phone tree still loses.

Customer Experience

What is it actually like to be your customer, from first click to final invoice? Every customer leaves with a story. You don't get to choose whether they tell it, but you can shape whether it has a happy ending.



Word-of-Mouth

Most founders will say that word of mouth is their best marketing channel. But it's the one channel you can't operate directly. You can't schedule it, scale it, or buy more of it this quarter. It's the result of everything that came before it.

When word-of-mouth is strong, it's evidence the table is set. But when customers can't explain what you do, or they describe your company in a way you don't recognize, something upstream is broken. The first step to success in this channel must be to create a company or product worth talking about and easy to explain.

From the Field: A Client Story

In my work as a fractional CMO, I saw the real benefit of Setting the Table with a resort hotel client. The property sits on the edge of a natural bird sanctuary with amazing views. Each morning, guests are treated to a variety of bird calls, and in the evenings, the sky over the preserve fills with stars.

The resort already had a great experience to offer. But as we reviewed its marketing, we discovered their Table wasn't showcasing one of its best features.

Guests who left reviews repeatedly raved about one amenity in particular: private balconies with hot tubs overlooking the bird sanctuary.

But this huge perk was nowhere to be found on the homepage or in the resort's other marketing. It was buried deep on the website, where it did little to help potential guests understand what made the property special.

We didn't need to create a new amenity or come up with a clever new promise. **We needed to do a better job of presenting what the resort already had.**

We brought the private hot tubs front and center on the website, highlighted them on social media, and incorporated them into search campaigns. Now, wherever potential guests encountered the resort, they were more likely to see the same clear, compelling reason to stay.

CLEAR BENEFITS

Improved ROI

When Hunting, Fishing, and Farming are built on a strong foundation, every marketing dollar is more likely to deliver results.

Stronger First Impressions

A clear, credible website and consistent brand help potential customers understand your value and feel confident choosing you.

Consistency Across Channels

Clear messaging and a consistent brand ensure customers get the same story wherever they encounter your business.

HONEST CHALLENGES

Hard-to-Measure ROI

Developing a good brand, compelling messaging, and an effective website can require significant time and resources.

Upfront Investment

Building a strong foundation requires an investment of time, attention, and resources before the payoff may be visible.

Ongoing Maintenance

Your foundational elements need to be reviewed and refined over time as your business, customers, and market evolve.

TAKEAWAY

You can serve an incredible meal, but if the table isn't ready—or your guests don't know what's being served—you may lose them before they ever discover how good it is. And if you promise fine china but deliver paper plates, you may lose more than the meal. You may lose their trust.

Before you spend more money, chase the next marketing trend, or go looking for new customers, make sure the foundation is in place. Know who you're



inviting to the table. Understand what matters to them. Identify what makes your business worth choosing, and then make sure that value is clear everywhere your customers encounter you.

Sometimes, as with private hot tubs overlooking a bird sanctuary, what your customers value most is already there. You simply haven't put it on the table.

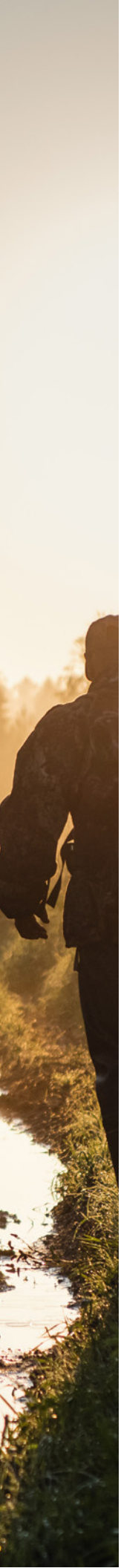
When the table is properly set, everything that follows—Hunting, Fishing, and Farming—becomes more focused, cohesive, and effective. Your marketing channels begin reinforcing one another, and each effort supports the same larger strategy.

Set the Table first. Then invite people to dinner.



HUNTING

**QUICK WINS AND
TARGETED STRATEGIES**



If you need to put food on the table today, you probably don't plant a field and wait for the harvest.

You go hunting.

For our ancestors, hunting offered the chance to bring home a substantial amount of food relatively quickly. But successful hunters didn't simply wander into the wilderness and hope something crossed their path. They went out knowing what they were looking for.

Deer. Elk. Moose.

They knew where to look, recognized signs that told them they were in the right place, and understood that preparation and timing mattered.

When your company needs faster results, marketing activities in the Hunting category help you actively seek out specific prospects. You identify the people or businesses most likely to need what you offer, determine where and how to reach them, and put a relevant message or offer directly in front of them.

It's a proactive approach designed to generate opportunities quickly. Instead of marketing broadly and hoping someone responds, you begin with a clearly defined audience and intentionally reach out to the people most likely to be a good fit.

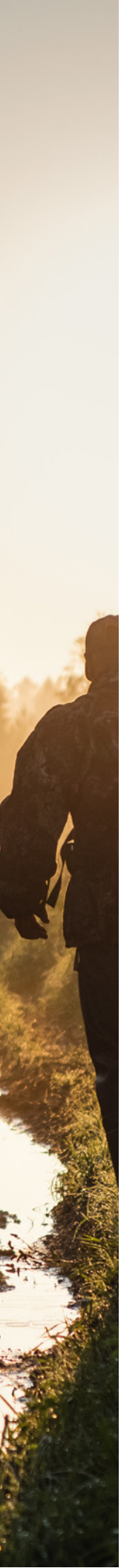
Hunting is especially useful when you need to fill the sales pipeline, enter a new market, launch a new offer, or reach a specific group of potential customers.

But just like hunting in the wild, success depends on more than simply heading into the woods.

You have to know what you're looking for—and where to find it.

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

Any experienced hunter will tell you that success starts long before you head into the woods. You need to know who you're looking for, where you're most likely to find them, and which approach makes the most sense for the situation.



The same is true when choosing a Hunting activity. No single strategy works for every business—or every customer. The key is to choose an approach based on who you're trying to reach and what you want to accomplish, rather than simply reaching for whatever sales and marketing tactic is popular at the moment.

As a CMO, I've learned that you don't need to tackle every available strategy to get results. In fact, for most businesses, focusing on a handful of well-chosen strategies is far more effective than trying to do too much at once.

Here are five Hunting activities businesses use most often:

Prospecting

Sales teams actively reach out to specific potential customers with personalized messages or pitches through phone calls, email, social media messages, direct mail, or door-to-door outreach.

Networking & Business Development

Founders and sales teams actively build relationships with potential clients, strategic partners, and referral sources through events, industry groups, introductions, and direct outreach. It's a focused, relationship-driven way to open doors to new business.

Upselling or Reselling to Current Customers

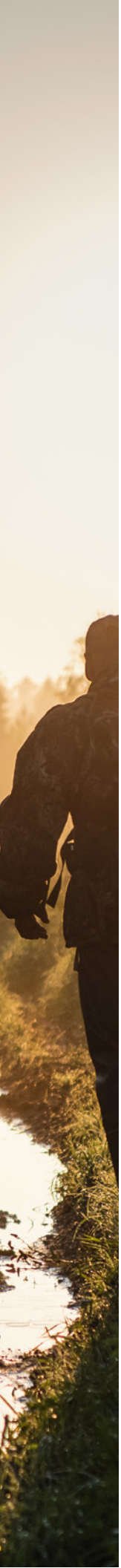
Sales teams look for additional opportunities within their existing customer base by offering complementary products, expanded services, upgrades, or repeat purchases. Because relationships and trust are already established, current customers can be among the best avenues for additional business.

Improving Sales Tools

Strong sales material can make every Hunting effort more effective. Presentations, case studies, proposals, sales collateral, and other tools help sales teams communicate value more clearly and move prospects toward a decision.

Account-Based Marketing:

Sales and marketing teams work together to identify a specific list of high-value prospects. Rather than marketing broadly, they coordinate personalized messages and outreach for accounts that may be especially valuable or difficult to connect with.



From the Field: A Client Story

I worked with a wholesale jewelry company that was trying to get its products into jewelry stores nationwide.

The problem? Key prospects weren't answering calls or responding to emails.

To help the sales team break through, we launched a targeted campaign and sent custom gift boxes to a carefully selected group of high-priority prospects.

And it worked.

Suddenly, calls started getting answered and conversations opened up at trade shows.

Marketing and sales worked together to **identify the right prospects, find a creative way to get their attention, and open the door to conversations that ultimately helped the company land important new deals.**

CLEAR BENEFITS

More Immediate Results

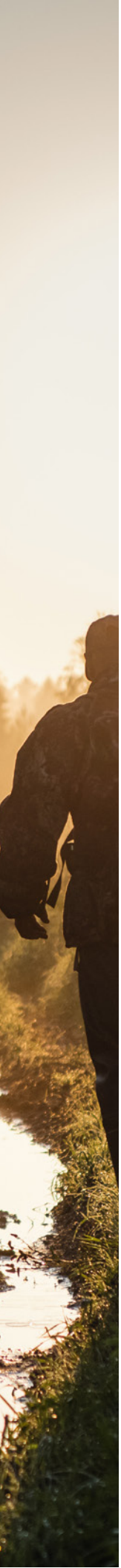
Hunting can generate opportunities relatively quickly when you reach the right prospects at the right time with the right solution.

Measurable Metrics

Hunting efforts are often easier to track and connect directly to outcomes, including leads, conversions, sales, and ROI.

Focused Effort

Your time, budget, and resources are concentrated on clearly defined prospects and opportunities rather than spread across a broader audience.



HONEST CHALLENGES

Resource-Intensive

Consistent, personalized outreach takes time and often requires significant sales and marketing resources.

Risk of Intrusiveness

Direct outreach can feel unwelcome when the message, timing, or approach isn't relevant to the prospect.

Variable Results

Success often depends on the salesperson's skill, the strength of the process, and consistent follow-through, making results less predictable.

TAKEAWAY

Hunting can put food on the table quickly. When you know who you're trying to reach, where to find them, and how to connect with them, Hunting activities can generate immediate, measurable results.

That makes them especially valuable when speed matters—launching a new product, entering a new market, filling the sales pipeline, or working toward a quarterly goal.

But there is one catch to remember about Hunting activities: tomorrow you'll have to go hunting all over again.

Many Hunting strategies stop producing results when you stop actively reaching out to prospects. That ongoing effort can make Hunting effective in the short term but difficult to rely on as your only source of growth.

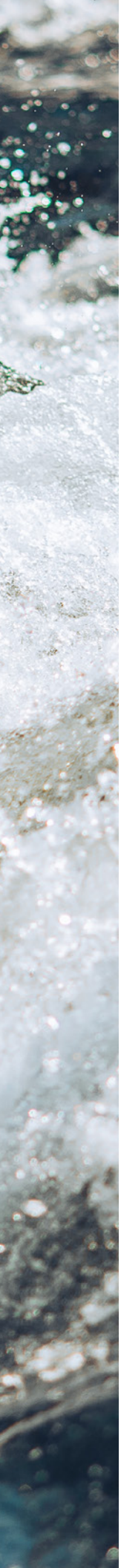
The strongest marketing strategies use Hunting to help bring home results now, but they don't stop there. Good marketing balances the proactive focus of Hunting with Fishing and Farming strategies designed to broaden your reach, build relationships, and generate growth over time.

Hunt when you need to bring something home. But don't build your entire food supply around the next hunt.



FISHING

**BROAD REACH, TESTING,
AND DISCOVERY**



Not every marketing opportunity begins with a clearly defined prospect. Sometimes, the best way to find what works is to put something out there and see who responds.

You Fish.

Instead of heading into the woods knowing exactly what you're looking for, you head to the water, choose a promising spot, select your bait, cast your line, and see what bites.

The trick with fishing is that you might catch something right away, or you might come home empty-handed. What worked yesterday may not work today. Show up with the wrong bait, at the wrong spot, or at the wrong time, and you'll have nothing to show for your efforts.

But experienced anglers know an empty line doesn't mean it's time to throw away the pole. It means it's time to adjust.

Try another lure. Cast somewhere else. Change your timing. Pay attention to what's working, learn from what isn't, and keep at it. Every cast gives you information you can use to make the next one better.

While Hunting focuses your efforts on specific prospects, Fishing puts your message in front of a broader audience and allows potential customers to respond. You cast broadly, watch to see what attracts attention, and then test and refine your approach based on what you learn.

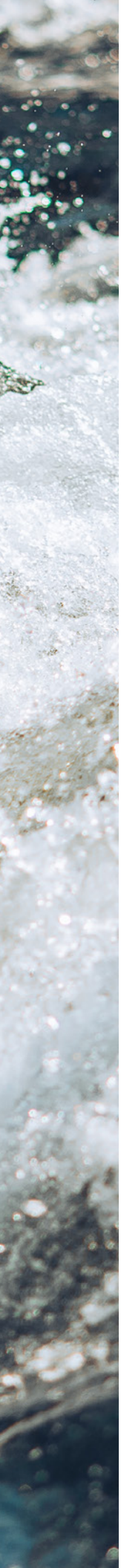
That makes Fishing especially valuable when you want to reach new audiences, create more opportunities, or learn which messages and channels generate the strongest response.

The goal isn't simply to cast the widest net possible. It's to discover **where the fish are, what they're biting, and how to keep them coming in.**

WHERE WILL YOU CAST YOUR LINE?

Here's where Fishing can become overwhelming.

Fishing has more marketing channels and activities than the other three approaches combined. That gives you an enormous number of ways to reach potential customers. It also makes it easy to think you should try far more strategies than you actually need.



But experienced anglers don't cast lines into every random body of water simply because fish might be there. They carefully choose where to spend their time based on what they're trying to catch and where they're most likely to find it.

Your Fishing strategy should be just as selective.

To make those choices easier to understand, most Fishing channels fall into four broad categories:

Digital Advertising

Platforms such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn allow businesses to reach larger audiences while testing specific messages, offers, and audience segments.

Traditional Media

Billboards, direct mail, radio, and TV can put your message in front of broader audiences and build awareness beyond the customers you already reach.

Tradeshows & Industry Events

Exhibiting at conferences, tradeshows, and other industry events allows businesses to showcase their products or services and connect with a concentrated audience of potential customers.

Hosted Events & Webinars

Hosting virtual or in-person events, or participating in them, can attract potential customers who are interested in your topic, expertise, or industry.

From the Field: A Client Story

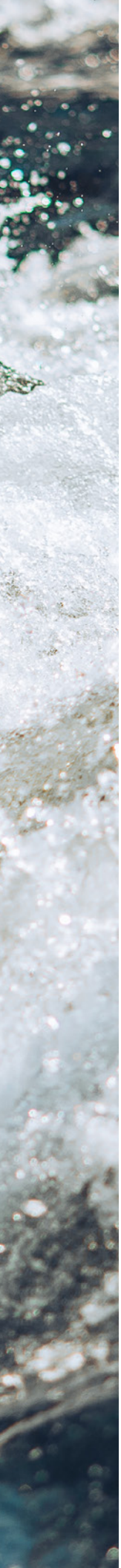
One home remodeling company client wanted a more reliable way to bring in new customers and grow sales.

The company had been Fishing through channels like home shows. The events weren't exactly failures—but they weren't successes either. They generated enough business to roughly break even, but not enough to justify continuing to Fish in the same waters.

So we started experimenting.

We tried **Google Local Services Ads**—but it wasn't the right fit.

We tried **Facebook Ads**—still not the right fit.



Then we tested **Google Search Ads**—and found what worked.

The difference wasn't that the company suddenly had a better service to offer. We had simply found a better place to fish and a more effective way to reach customers who were ready to respond.

That's the nature of Fishing. You try a spot. Pay attention to what happens. Adjust your approach. Then cast again.

Eventually, you begin to learn where the fish are—and what gets them to bite.

Once we found the right combination, the results followed.

CLEAR BENEFITS

Broader Reach

Fishing puts your message in front of a wider audience, helping you connect with potential customers you may not have identified through Hunting.

Cost-Efficient Reach

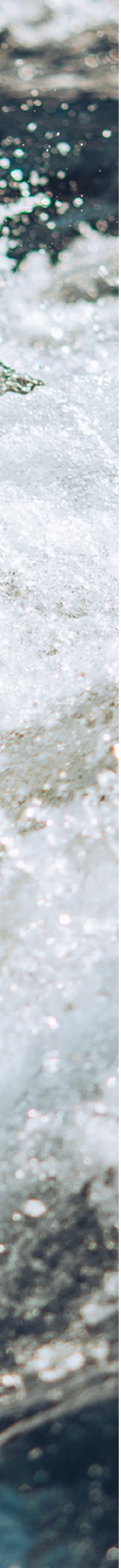
Digital channels and automation can help you reach larger audiences without the one-to-one effort required by many Hunting strategies. Fishing efforts tend to cost less per lead than Hunting.

Testing & Learning

Fishing gives you opportunities to test different messages, offers, audiences, and channels—and use what you learn to strengthen your entire marketing mix.

Greater Brand Awareness

Repeated exposure helps potential customers become more familiar with your business, even if they aren't ready to buy right away.



New Opportunities

By reaching beyond the prospects you already know, Fishing can uncover potential customers and market opportunities you may not have discovered otherwise.

HONEST CHALLENGES

Variable Results

Not every campaign, message, or channel will work. Fishing requires a willingness to experiment, learn from the results, and try again.

Ongoing Adjustment

What works today may not work tomorrow. Successful Fishing requires regularly testing and refining your message, audience, timing, and approach.

Less Direct

Because you're reaching a broader audience rather than pursuing specific prospects, it can take longer to identify and convert the people most likely to become customers.

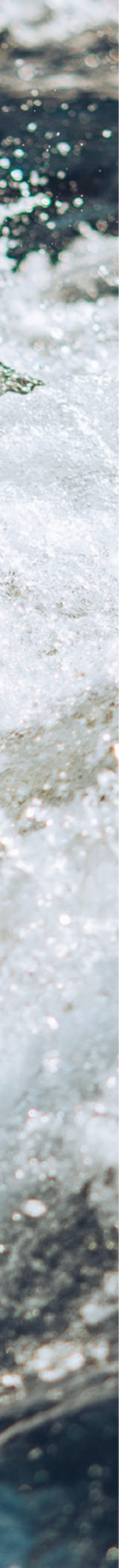
Choosing the Right Channel

Nearly every advertising salesperson can argue that your target audience is on their platform. That doesn't necessarily mean it's the right place to reach them—or that you can reach them there cost-effectively. Choosing the wrong channel, or using the right channel in the wrong way, can quickly waste both time and money.

THE TAKEAWAY

Fishing channels can uncover opportunities you might never reach through direct sales. Instead of pursuing one prospect at a time, you put your message in front of a broader audience and discover who responds.

That makes Fishing especially valuable for testing ideas, reaching new audiences, building awareness, and creating new opportunities. But unlike Hunting, where you generally know who you're trying to reach from the start, Fishing requires a



willingness to experiment—and the patience to keep casting when the fish aren't biting.

But even an empty line teaches you something.

It doesn't necessarily mean Fishing doesn't work. You might be in the right spot, but using the wrong bait or casting at the wrong time. That's valuable information. Pay attention to what the results are telling you, adjust, and cast again.

The best fishermen don't just keep fishing. They keep learning.



FARMING

**CULTIVATING LONG-TERM
RELATIONSHIPS**



Some of the most valuable things you build in business take time to grow.

Hunting can put food on the table today. Fishing can help you discover new places to find it. But if you want to build a food source you can return to season after season, you need to plant something.

You need to farm.

Farming requires a different mindset than Hunting or Fishing.

A farmer doesn't plant a seed in the morning and expect to harvest a crop by afternoon. First, you prepare the soil. Then you plant. You water, weed, fertilize, and protect what's growing. For a long time, you may put in considerable effort with very little visible return.

But beneath the surface, something is happening.

Roots are taking hold. Growth is beginning. The work you're doing today is preparing for a harvest that won't come until later. But when it finally comes, you'll see what all that patience and care were building toward.

Instead of focusing primarily on an immediate sale, you invest in relationships with customers, prospects, and online algorithms over time. You provide value, stay connected, build trust, and continue nurturing those relationships so that when someone is ready to buy—or buy again—your business is already top of mind and top of the search results.

Farming requires time, consistency, and care. You may nurture a relationship for weeks, months, or even years before it produces measurable results. That can make Farming harder to evaluate in the short term, especially when Hunting and Fishing offer more immediate feedback.

But Farming is about playing the long game.

It's especially valuable when you want to build customer loyalty, generate referrals, stay connected with prospects, or build the kind of long-term visibility that helps potential customers find you when they search.

Done well, it can create something Hunting and Fishing alone cannot: a steady, sustainable pipeline of customers who already know you, trust you, and understand the value you provide.

You plant today because you're thinking about the harvest to come.



WHAT WILL YOU PLANT?

A farmer has plenty of choices about what to plant—but choosing the right crops is only the beginning. Whatever goes into the ground needs time, attention, and consistent care to grow.

The same is true when cultivating lasting customer relationships.

Each of the many Farming channels and activities offer a way to plant seeds, nurture connections, and stay relevant to customers and prospects over time. But successful farmers know they can't plant every crop imaginable and expect to tend each one well.

The goal isn't to plant every single type of seed in one field, or every Farming activity in one company. Choose the ones that make sense for the future goals of your business and your customers—and then tend them consistently. **A neglected field won't produce much of a harvest, no matter how promising the seeds were when you planted them.**

Here are four Farming strategies I've found especially valuable:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Build your website's visibility over time by creating and optimizing useful content that helps potential customers find you through traditional and AI-powered search.

Community Engagement: Participate consistently in local events, industry groups, forums, or online communities to build relationships and establish your business as a trusted resource.

Organic Social Media: Share useful, relevant content consistently to stay connected and keep your business top of mind with customers, partners, and prospects.

Partnerships: Build mutually beneficial relationships with other businesses or organizations that can create opportunities for collaboration, referrals, shared audiences, and long-term growth.



From the Field: A Client Story

I worked with a custom software development company that had a significant gap in its marketing: no inbound leads. Every new opportunity came through outbound sales.

To diversify their marketing efforts, we began planting seeds by implementing a **content marketing and SEO strategy**. We optimized their website and consistently published useful educational content. These farming strategies were designed to build visibility, credibility, and trust over time.

At first, there wasn't much to harvest.

But we kept tending what we'd planted.

Gradually, the inbound leads began to grow. First, to around 10 per month. Then 20. Eventually, more than 30 inbound leads were coming in every month—all attributable to the long-term Farming efforts we had put in place.

That growth didn't happen overnight. **It came from planting strategically, tending consistently, and giving those efforts time to take root.**

BENEFITS

Sustainable, Cost-Effective Growth

Farming builds relationships, visibility, and trust over time, creating a stronger foundation for repeat business, referrals, and future opportunities.

Greater Customer Value

Stronger relationships can lead to repeat purchases, longer customer relationships, referrals, and greater value over the customer lifecycle.

Harder to Replicate

Competitors can copy an offer or marketing tactic. It's much harder to replicate the trust, reputation, relationships, and brand loyalty you've cultivated over time.



CHALLENGES

Long-Term Investment

Farming requires consistent time, attention, and resources over an extended period—and the work doesn't stop once you begin seeing results.

Harder to Measure

Because Farming often builds relationships, trust, and visibility over time, it can be difficult to connect individual efforts directly to revenue or calculate ROI in the short term.

Requires Patience

You may invest weeks, months, or even years before seeing a measurable return, which can make it difficult to know when to keep tending—and when it's time to plant something different.

THE TAKEAWAY

Farming activities and channels are designed to build **sustainable, long-term growth**.

They may not deliver the immediate results of a successful hunt or give you the quick feedback of a fishing expedition. But with time and consistent care, they can produce something incredibly valuable: relationships, visibility, and trust that continue creating opportunities over time.

The key is to keep tending what you've planted.

Continue providing value. Nurture relationships. Build trust. Stay connected even when there isn't an immediate sale on the horizon. Keep creating useful content that builds your visibility and helps search engines and AI-powered tools recognize your business as a relevant resource.

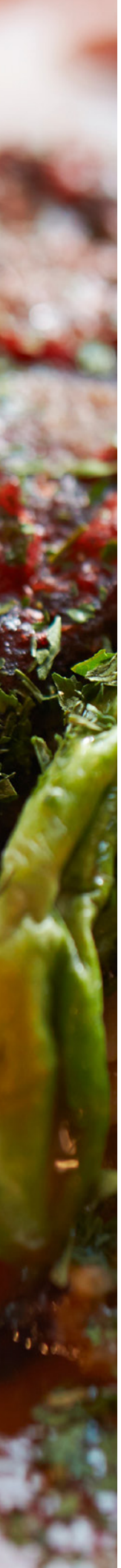
Not every seed will grow, and not every effort will produce results right away. But over time, a well-tended Farming strategy can produce loyal customers, repeat business, referrals, greater visibility, and a more predictable pipeline of future opportunities.

And unlike a hunt that ends when you bring home the catch, Farming efforts continue to grow. The relationships, reputation, and trust you cultivate today can continue creating opportunities far into the future.

**Plant strategically. Tend consistently. Give it time to grow.
Then enjoy the harvest.**



ONE CHANNEL, MANY JOBS



By now, you've seen how **Setting the Table, Hunting, Fishing, and Farming** give us a practical way to organize dozens of marketing channels based on the job each one is most commonly designed to do.

But there's an important distinction: these categories describe the channels. They don't have to limit how you use them.

A single marketing channel can sometimes do more than one job.

Let's use a trade show as an example.

Usually we classify trade shows as a Fishing channel. You set up a booth, put your message in front of a larger audience, and see who stops to talk. You might test different displays, offers, or demonstrations and learn what attracts the most interest.

But that doesn't mean Fishing is the only job a trade show can do. With some intentional planning, the same event can incorporate Hunting and Farming. And Setting the Table can make all three more effective.

Before the event, your sales team might research attendees, identify high-value prospects, reach out directly, and schedule meetings at the booth. Instead of simply waiting to see who stops by, you're intentionally creating Hunting opportunities with specific prospects.

While you're there, some of your most valuable conversations may have nothing to do with making an immediate sale. You might reconnect with existing customers, strengthen relationships with referral partners, meet industry influencers, or take an important client to dinner. Those Farming conversations can cultivate relationships that create opportunities long after the show ends.

And all of it works better when the Table is properly Set. Your booth design, messaging, sales materials, demonstrations, staff preparation, offer, and follow-up process shape what happens when someone encounters your business. Bringing the right people to your booth won't accomplish much if your team can't clearly explain what you do—or if no one follows up afterward.

One trade show—four different jobs.

The **Feed Your Business framework** isn't meant to put every marketing channel and activity into a neat little box and leave it there. **It's to help you understand what each can do—and then use it more intentionally and creatively.**

FEED YOUR BUSINESS

If there's one thing I hope you take away from this book, it's this:

Stop asking, "What marketing tactic should we try next?"

That question is what sends founders chasing the latest platform, copying what competitors are doing, or investing in a new campaign simply because someone promised it would work.

There will always be another tactic to try. Another platform gaining attention. Another expert telling you where you need to be. Another marketing opportunity that sounds too good to pass up.

You don't need more options. You need a better way to think about the options you already have.

That's what this framework gives you.

Now, when someone suggests a new marketing idea, you can look beyond the tactic itself. You can ask what role it would play in feeding your business. What is it supposed to accomplish? How quickly should you expect it to work? What kind of effort will it require? And are you correctly measuring its success based on the job it was actually designed to do?

Those questions change the conversation.

They can keep you from abandoning a Farming effort because it hasn't produced fast results. From pouring more money into Fishing before you've gathered data from the last cast. From endless Hunting because you haven't planted anything for the future. Or from spending money bringing more people to a table that isn't ready for them.

Most importantly, understanding how to feed your business can help you stop reacting to marketing and start thinking strategically about how your company can best bring food to the table.

You don't have to chase every tactic. You don't have to market everywhere. And you certainly don't have to do what everyone else is doing.

Your business has its own customers, goals, challenges, resources, and opportunities. The marketing that feeds it should reflect that.

So the next time someone asks what your marketing strategy is, don't start with a list of tactics.

Start with what your business needs.

Then decide the best way to feed it.

Ready to cook up your full-course strategy?

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