

PLANTING THE SEEDS

**Build An Online Business
That Pays Off In The Long Run**



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Introduction

There's probably no one who hasn't heard the phrase "planting the seed" in some form or another. The phrase, "You'll reap what you sew" is common too, but how does it apply to business?

Think of it in terms of gardening. You plant a seed, you nurture it, it grows, and you get the rewards of the finished product. In business, hard work is the seed. You put in your dedication, time, and hard work and grow a quality business you can reap the rewards of.

Likewise, a business without the planting and nurturing of seeds can't grow. Without putting in the hard work necessary to grow your business, you can't expect to have a reward. Sometimes, even the smallest action can allow you to reap great rewards. Being idle, however, will not yield rewards. In other words, do nothing, get nothing.

You can spend half your life building a business. It may be your most significant asset. Success of this business may result on the economic future of your family. Planning your business and planting the necessary seeds lays the groundwork for the success of your business. Nurture it, and it can grow into the type of business that will yield you great rewards.

What Seeds Should You Plant for Success?

In order to help make sure your business is successful it is not only important to plant seeds, but to plant the right seeds. Any farmer will tell you that certain seeds won't grow in certain areas of the world. What thrives in one area will wither away in another. Here are a few of the right seeds you should plant to help your business thrive:

- **Post valuable, keyword-targeted content to your blog**

It is obvious that anything you post to your blog should be valuable. Readers simply won't want to read it otherwise. Here the phrase, "Think before you speak" applies. In other words, "Think before you blog." Think of important, valuable information you can pass on to your reader, and provide it in a way that will entice them and make them want to return to read what you have to say next.

The second part of this seed is a bit more complicated. You can have the most valuable content on the internet, but if no one ever sees it, it isn't doing you any good. In order to make sure that they do, you want to use keyword-targeted content in your blog postings.

Businesses have been using keyword-targeted ads for a long time, but many fail to realize how important it can be for blog content. Since search engines pick up on these words and

make your blog pop up in searches, they can be a valuable tool to increase traffic to your site. You don't, however, just litter your content with a few words and hope they get picked up by search engines. There are a few steps you can take to be sure you get the right keywords.

1. Keyword Research—Research to see how many people are searching for your site. There are tools available from Google and other software developers that can help make the process easier for you.
2. Target low competition, niche keywords—Google Adwords can be very helpful to see how competitive a keyword is before you decide to use it.
3. Don't focus only on your main keywords—Try to think outside the box. Targeting keywords isn't just about the most popular keywords. For example, if you're a realtor, just targeting your blog for real estate will get too many hits for you to even be noticed. Target for specific real estate instead, and you'll get visitors to your site others targeting just real estate won't get.
4. Think about what your target market is looking for and put it on your site. Always think of your market first. They want quality content, not keywords. Once you have the

quality content, you should write between 200-300 content words for each keyword used. That's around three to five keyword phrases on each page. Don't force it. Keywords have to be used naturally, so they flow within the content

5. Customize titles and descriptions for each page—Search engines can't figure out what your subject is or the relevance of each page if you use the same tags for all the pages
6. Prepare a site map telling where everything is on your site—Search engines like site maps. Although you'll get around 1% click through rate, a site map will really help those who know what to do with them.
7. Build popularity—Just doing the above steps won't get you on the first few pages of the search pages. To do that, you need to build popularity. One way is having sites that link to yours. You can offer important information so others will want to link to your site. If you don't spam, and are a well-linked site, you'll do better in search engines

Once you've written your valuable content and placed in the targeted keywords, there are other places you can use the keywords as well:

1. URL—Using keywords count more in the root domain than sub domains, but good root domains are often difficult to get. Try to put in at least one keyword in the root domain if you can't use the entire phrase. If not, putting it in the sub domain will still help you rank higher.
2. Titles of Pages—Page titles are excellent for search engine rankings. Using a keyword in the title of each page, especially at the beginning of the page title, will help in the rankings.
3. Inbound Links using Anchor text—This is the part of the text of a link that is clickable. If your anchor text is the targeted keyword, it will improve rankings for the keyword.
4. Header—Header texts, like page titles, count more in keyword rankings than content does. Having one part of your header with a keyword will be an advantage for you.
5. Bolded Text—Bold text stands out on the page, but it also stands out as a keyword in search rankings.
6. Image ALT Text—Search engines don't read images, but you can put keyword-driven ALT text on images. This will help the page rankings. For some websites, being found in an image search can be valuable.

These are only a few suggestions, but they are valuable ones. Using the right keywords in your blog is an imperative seed to its growth.

Now that you understand the relevance of keyword optimization, maybe it is time to re-evaluate some of your old content. Maybe you'll find some valuable content that needs to be altered using keywords and used again. Many of those old blogs that you posted that are like seeds planted on rocky ground, can be replanted with the right keywords and can thrive.

Doing this is simpler than it may seem. Here's all you need to do:

1. Look at the analytics and find your most popular posts.
2. Read them and think how you could summarize them using only three to four words.
3. Once you've got a blog topic figured out, look for what people are searching on Google—You can use Google's Keyword Tool, put in your description, and Google will do the rest. It will give you the results for your phrases and for similar phrases.

4. Look for keywords that have low/medium competition. This will help you to rank easier for those words.
5. Check the phrases to be sure they're targeting the audience you want to target.
6. Optimize your blog post—Take the keywords you've developed and put them in your blog post. Make sure to keep the content in readable format.
7. Work the best keyword or phrase into your title.

- **Systemize—Record and document your processes**

No two organizations are exactly the same. Your method of working is what makes you different from your competitors and makes you stand out as unique. Often times, business methods are brought into the business by people they hire. Whatever has worked for them in the past is what's done. That's all well and good when it works, but it can be difficult at times to explain your secret formula to a new employee.

Trying to figure out how something was supposed to work after it has gone wrong isn't the way it should work. If you have a well thought out plan and document your strategies, it will be easy for employees to diagnose the problem and help prevent

the problems from reoccurring. It helps avoid making the same critical mistakes.

When you first begin your business, you may experiment with various methods of doing things. If you document each process, you'll be able to see what works best. It will allow you to improve the process and make the business work more efficiently. A well-documented process can also help when someone important leaves the company suddenly. It can be used to bring a new hire up to speed on all the aspects of their new job.

Very few people really love documentation. Documenting your business processes won't really add revenue to your top line. If you focus on being efficient with the money you have, you can add value to your business and help it to grow.

Once you create proper documentation for every task in your business, you can delegate those tasks to your staff or people you outsource.

- **Create valuable eBooks to sell or giveaway**

Creating your own information products is a great way to get passive income and traffic. You create it once and get paid over and over for the one time effort you put into it.

Selling informational products really comes down to marketing. From the topic, to how you plan to sell it depends on what people want to buy willing to pay for.

The great thing about ebooks is that they don't have to be as long as regular books. People will often buy ebooks that are anywhere from 10-50 pages if they solve a problem that people want the solution to.

You're probably thinking, "Why will people pay for something they can get free if they search for it online?" A lot of people don't like to or don't have time to do in-depth research. They may also be a bit skeptical about free sources. If you prove to them you're credible, or perhaps partner with someone who is, and if you solve a problem, then people will want to buy your book. Writing about what you love, isn't necessarily what will sell. Write what the customer wants to buy, and you will.

Here are a few tips that can help you generate even more profits from the sale of your ebooks:

- Sell monthly updates of the ebook, or sell chapters that have never been released for extra profit.
- Give away free ebook(s) with paid ebooks. Often times it is good to let others give away your free ebook as well.

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- Separate your ebook into several reports, and let people purchase only the information they want.
- Buy reprint rights to other ebooks. Add them with yours into a package deal.
- Give links in your ad copy. That way, when people click on it, it will take them to the order page.
- Sell half your book for a cheap price and give them the option to buy the entire book at the full price if they like it.
- Offer free, related material to the books you're selling.
- Give a sample page with important info blacked out. It may make your prospective customers curious enough to buy it.
- Give both low and high-priced copies of your books. Show people the contents of each so they can compare them, and usually, they'll pay for the extra information.
- Make the reprint rights available to buy for your ebook. You can sell them with a higher rate than the regular purchase price.

- Have a form of your ebook available for offline individuals. It can be an audio book, video, or printed copy.
- Look at specific niches and redesign your books to fit those niches.
- Make discount coupons available to those who purchase your ebook for other products. It can be your product, or someone you've made a deal with.
- Charge recurring monthly subscriptions by dividing your ebook into online newsletter issues.

As you can see, ebooks can be quite profitable for your business in many different ways, and are definitely worth taking the time to write.

- **Network and build relationships with other experts in your field from the start**

Relationships are crucial to any business. Many people feel that getting to know people in their field should only be done for competitive reasons. Networking with other experts in your field can be extremely beneficial to you for other reasons as well. You never know, one day you might do a joint venture, create a product together, or even share ideas that are worth millions.

Humans thrive on social interaction with one another. That's why networking in one form or another has been a necessary tool for the survival of businesses for hundreds of years. It can be positive for you and bring about successful results for many reasons:

1. **Opportunity**—You have the chance to meet new people every time you leave your house. You never know what people you might meet, or what that person may have to offer. Prospects are everywhere if you just take the chance. Take a positive look around you, see what's out there, and begin networking with others. You haven't lost anything by trying.
2. **Exposure**—Getting yourself, your talents, or your business "out there" requires exposure. You may be a new musician, have just created an awesome new product, or struggling to get your business running. In any case, the more people you know, the better off you'll be. Your customers or fans will talk among themselves. They may also talk with people outside the circle you're in. You may already have some fans or customers, but remember that more is better.
3. **Contacts/Relationships**—I'm sure you've heard the old adage, "It's not what you know...it's who you know." That's what makes networking SO important. The more contacts you make and the more relationships you build, the more people you'll know, and the better your chance of knowing the right person.

You never know what “right” person you may need in the future. In the beginning, just make as many connections as you can. Stay in contact with them, and it will give you a good group of people to draw from for future needs.

4. **Sharing things in Common**—Like-minded people enjoy each other’s company. When you have something in common with someone, conversation will be easier, and they’ll want to build a relationship with you. Commonalities draw people together, and can bind them together.

5. **Learning from each other**—Networking with others will definitely mean that information and ideas will be shared. There is a good chance that you will meet someone who has a new idea or vision that you feel will benefit your company. Knowing who to go to for help when you need it is important. When it comes to knowing the right person...knowledge is power!

Networking goes hand in hand with operating a successful business. Many of us, however, seriously dread walking into a crowded room of strangers and introducing ourselves. These types of events are important though and if you know you have to do them, work better if you approach them with a positive attitude. Here are a few tips to help you:

1. Don't be late—I know it's tempting to show up at the very last minute and sneak in the back of the room, but that won't get the job done. Showing up early, on the other hand, will give you a good start. You'll find when you do, that the people are quieter and calmer than once the event is in full swing. People haven't broken off into groups yet, so it's much easier to find people to talk to. If you're a bit of an introvert, it's easy to become a wall flower at these events if you're not careful. Showing up early reduces the stress, and helps you make a few valuable connections.

2. Ask simple questions—If you just wait around the edge of the room for people to come talk to you, they may not. You'll look unapproachable or like you don't want to talk to others. Instead, get conversations started with simple questions. Go up to an individual or group of people and simply ask, "May I join you?" They're there to meet new people too, so they'll be happy to make you a part of their group. Ask things like, "What brings you to this event?" These are simple questions that break the ice and get conversation started. You'll find that once you do this, conversation will be easy. You're in the same business, so you already have things in common.

Remember the second part of conversation, however...listening. If you are more of an introvert, you're probably a good listener. Listen closely to their replies. Listening is a very good way to get to know new people, and

pick up on some key ideas you may want to use in your business.

3. Check the sales pitch at the door—Networking isn't about sales, it's about building relationships. That's why you should leave your sales pitch at home or check it with your coat at the door. Nothing will turn people off more than trying to hard sell within the first few minutes of meeting someone. When you begin your conversation, keep it light, fun, and informal. The purpose is to just get conversations started in a friendly manner. If people enjoy your company, they're more apt to want to do business or partner with you, so be enjoyable, not overbearing.

Eventually, the conversation may come around to business. If a potential customer or business associate asks you about one of your products or a service you provide, just have an easy description prepared of your company. To do this, create a mental list of recent achievements. This might be a new client you've obtained or an awesome new project you've just finished. If you have them ready, you can easily pull them out during conversation if asked to.

4. Be enthusiastic—It's easy to be enthusiastic if you share your passion. People can't help but get excited when they hear how excited you are about your products or services. There's bound to be a good story about why you felt passionate about creating your company. Share it with

people. You'll find the excitement you feel can often be contagious. You share your passion, and others want to share theirs. This gives everyone involved excellent, memorable conversations and helps you to have a really great time.

5. Keep a smile on your face—People want to talk to friendly people, and a smile gives you others the impression that you're that kind of person. Smiling is so simple, but people usually overlook its importance. Even if you seriously DON'T want to be there, you'll find smiling will put you in a better frame of mind. Can the negative attitude, and replace it with a simple smile, and you'll begin to feel the difference right away. Begin smiling before you enter the room, and you'll make immediate impressions that can go a long way.

6. Don't dominate the conversation—Often, especially when we're nervous, we tend to talk too much. If you don't want to be there, you're introverted, and conversations are difficult for you, it's easy to overcompensate by dominating conversations. Remember, being a good networker is about relationships. One sure way to be successful at networking is to make others feel special. To do this, you want to do things like, maintain eye contact, use the person's name in conversation, genuinely listen to what they have to say, and bring up easy topics of discussion. Conversation is more than talking, so be a good conversationalist...not just a big

talker. Chances are, that person doesn't want to be there either. Putting them at ease will help put you at ease.

7. Don't forget follow-ups—Remember that networking is where the conversation begins. It isn't where it ends. Sometimes you meet someone, have a great conversation with them, and never hear from them again. If you meet someone and you really hit it off, be sure to ask them how to stay in touch with them. Don't leave without getting their phone, email address, or social networks you can contact them through. Don't wait until you need that person. Get in touch with them within 48 hours. Make reference to something you discussed at the event so they will remember you, and let them know you're interested

Networking can be one of the most important aspects of your business. Building relationships plays a crucial part in the success of any business. Approach networking with a positive attitude, a smile, and the desire to build those relationships, and they will happen. You'll get more out of the experience than you imagined.

- **Join and participate in forums around your field**

Your forum responses will be seen by other members and who knows, one day someone might ask to interview you or strike a deal.

You may not know what a forum is, but you could be participating in them already. Sometimes they're simply called message or bulletin boards, threaded discussions, discussion boards or discussion groups. If you're participating in one of these, it's a forum.

The simple definition of a forum is a place where people can start communication by using threads, and then can reply to other people's threads. When one member of the forum posts a message, everyone in that community can view it. If you want to reply to someone's comment, people can also read your reply. The discussion can build over time and all of the members of the community do not have to be online at the same time to participate. You can decide if participating in one forum is enough, or if you need to participate in multiple forums. They are a great way to get wisdom from others, as well as give your business a voice.

You can look for a forum on the navigation bars on sites you favor. You can also simply do a search for forums in your particular niche. There are some websites that list many forums all in one place. These might help you find the ones that are best for you. You can join as many business forums as you feel you want, depending on the time and energy you have to put into them. Don't forget, they are social arenas, but conversations don't usually flow in real time. You just tap into a wealth of knowledge, and allow others to tap into yours.

Putting a forum on your site can also be advantageous. There are many reasons why forums are a good idea for your site:

1. They give a place for your audience to be heard. They can voice their opinions about your site. You'd be surprised what good ideas you can get for ways to improve your site. You will, of course, get a lot of ideas that aren't great and even some complaints, but the benefits can outweigh the negatives.
2. Forums can draw in new people to your site. People love to talk and voice opinions. If you give them the chance, they will do it. This will draw others into the site who want to take part in the conversation.
3. They can increase your content levels—If you get a lot of people taking part in the conversation, your audience can increase your site content for you. Forum posts are contents. An active forum can add a lot of content, and since search engines like blogs that are updated regularly, you can increase your chances of being seen in searches.
4. By nature, humans are social. We seek out friends who think the way we do and like talking to them. If you make your site the type of place where people can do this and

meet new people, then they will keep returning to your site. Each time someone comes on your site, it's the chance to sell them something, so keeping them coming back is a good idea.

5. There's no reason not to have one. Forums are easy to set up, and people enjoy them, so there's really no negative side to them.

The basic structure of a forum is simple. Each forum has four parts. They are: The actual forum, the categories, the topics, and the messages. Each forum you participate in or have on your site can have an unlimited number of categories and/or sub categories. The categories are used to manage the topics. When you go to the home page of the forum, you can see a list of categories and the number of topics in each category.

Forums have three key people involved:

1. Forum Owners—These are people who manage the forum. They can change any forum level, create the discussion categories used for the forum, create moderators, and manage sets of users.
2. Moderators—These are people who moderate categories in the forum. They have the ability to delete messages

and/or topics or even ban people from being part of the forum.

3. Users—These are people or members who have access to the forum and registered for it. While they don't have any special privileges, the forum owner can designate a user as a forum moderator.

One of the best ways to keep your audience interested in your site is to provide them with access to an online discussion forum. Forums are an excellent way to stay in touch with your customers, and to stay current in your field. They can be like having a support network that you can have access to 24/7.

You can also get the word out to your customers and/or business associates 24/7. You can inform them of any news, activities or upcoming events on the forum. They can access any links you send them right away, and they won't have to wait around for email notifications.

You always want to stay in touch with your target audience. Forums are an excellent way to do this. A forum gives them a place to make inquiries and a place for you to answer. Often, many people will the same question, and you only have to answer once. Interaction is important. Making your customers feel like they are important to you can be a big asset to your business. They also cover a large geographical territory that

wouldn't have been possible before.

Forums can be both fun and informative. Becoming a member of a forum is usually as easy as registering for it. Taking part in a forum can give you insight of years of experience from those in your field. It can be invaluable to a new business.

- **Use social media to your advantage**

Posting consistently to the many social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and LinkedIn are all great ways to increase content. If you post good tips and news and updates regularly, it will all serve as content in the end.

If you aren't that familiar with social media, you need to spend some time on a few of these sites. This will help you understand what the sites are about. Then, you can begin getting your business in line with the sites. This can be invaluable to your company.

Here are a few tips that will help you as you venture into the world of social media:

1. Responding to all the comments made on your Facebook page is important—I know in your busy day, it may seem like yet another thing you have to do, but it is worth it. Visit your page at least once a day, because responding to comments in a timely manner can really make a

difference. It will help people who visit your site get a good impression of your business, and they will appreciate your promptness.

2. Use a background on your Twitter account that suits your business—Don't just click on the first one you come to. It may take a little longer to find the right one, but it will be worth it. You want to give your audience a real sense of who you are. What sets apart the most successful people in life is quite often the attention to detail. Take the time to customize your account, and it could make all the difference in the world.
3. Check out the social media marketing methods of your competitors—Researching your competitors can help you get an idea of what works well for your particular niche. Likewise, it can give you an idea of what doesn't work well and help you know what you don't want to do. You don't want to imitate your competitors. Take what you like and put your own unique spin on it to make it your own. As you progress in your abilities in social media, you will find new things you like and want to use. Social media sites make it really simple to find innovative ways to say things and to express your company.
4. Make it easy for people to find you on sites like Twitter—There are many blogging sites, such as Tweepi.com, that

make it easier to be found on Twitter. Tweet regularly and automate your tweets so they won't be forgotten by those who follow you.

5. Don't just plug your product—People tend to get up and go to the restroom during commercials. If they click your page to see one giant commercial, they'll click on to another one. What you want to do instead, is provide your viewers with engaging content. You can use content that entertains them, educates them, or maybe even inspires them. The “share” button has made it even easier for your content to go viral. Even going a little viral will get your name out there. No one wants to share a page of commercials. Engaging, educational, or inspirational information, however, gets shared often. Give your viewers what they want, and they'll pass it on to others they feel will enjoy it.

6. Be original—No one wants to share something they've seen 100 times on various sites. They do want to share unique things that provoke some type of emotion or pleasant reaction for them. That's why you will be more successful if you create new and interesting content. You can find campaigns on social networks that are successful. Look to see what types of content they share with their viewers. This will help you create content that

people will want to share on many different social networks with all their friends.

7. A headline is often the first thing your audience will see. Their usually larger, bold print, and stand out on the page. Learn to create fun and enticing headlines for your social media blogs. You'll see many headlines that are old, boring, and run in the ground. A good headline, however, can lure people to your page, blog, or site. Experiment until you find what works for you.

8. Run special promotions or competitions on your Facebook page—Everyone loves to win something. It doesn't even have to be something big and expensive. It's just the idea of winning that counts. Having promotions or competitions is one sure way to get your followers involved. You may want to offer a free product, a small prize, or even a coupon for a discounted price. Whether it's big or small really won't matter that much. Don't get me wrong, you'd probably get millions who would enter for the chance to win a new car. That's a given. You won't get that many for 25% off, but you will get a lot. Not only will you get them involved, but they'll pass on the opportunity to friends they know who they may feel will want to enter. You'll get a larger audience, and at the same time build goodwill with your customers.

It's the kind of thing you really can't lose anything by trying. It also builds goodwill with your customer base.

9. Not only is the actual content important, the format of the content can also be important—You can get your follower's attention if you post it in a format that is easy to read. The visual aspect of the content can make it appeal to your readers. It will also make them be more apt to share it.
10. Use the holidays to your advantage—The holidays are a great time to post content that is related to them. Of course, it depends on what type of business you have. You may want to post recipes, shopping tips, seasonal promotions, or family relations. Mentioning the upcoming holiday will make it appealing to the reader.
11. To get more people to see your Twitter posts, use hash tags—If you want to share cooking tips, for example, you could try using #food or #cooking tags. This is a great way to get people who don't usually follow you to hear what you have to say and learn more about you. Your posts will show up in more searches, and be found by more people.
12. Learn social media before you begin using it for marketing—As with any phase of your business, just

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jumping in without looking isn't wise. Find a quality guide to purchase that will take you through the steps of social media marketing before you begin your marketing campaign. A good guide will discuss all the different sites and the advantages of each one to help you select the ones that work for you. It will also tell you the basics of how to set up pages on each one as well as important strategies that will improve the quality of your page and increase the traffic flow to it.

Having your business set up on social media sites is no longer really an option, it's an essential for all businesses to thrive. There's no better garden in which to plant your seeds than in the world of social media. As with growing flowers, social media works like pollination. Plant the seeds, and as they grow, your content will travel through the winds of technology to more people.

Know Your “Garden”

You can plant all the seeds you want in the desert, but that doesn't mean they'll grow. It's the same with the seeds of business. Knowing your niche will help you better prepare to plant seeds to grow within it.

The most important part of that “garden” is the people in it.

1. **Know the Gardener**—That means you! Know your business well. It's impossible to figure out who will like your business/products/services, if you don't know them inside out. Here are a few things you should consider:

- Is the purpose of what you have to offer to satisfy a need, or is it something that would be considered a luxury?
- Are there others that offer what you're selling? If so, what makes your product unique and gives it an advantage?
- Look to see what your customer buys, who buys the most from you, and who spends the most money. Is there anything they all have in common

- Is your product/service intended to make the lives of your customers better or solve a problem for them? What are the benefits of what you have to offer?

2. **Know those who will visit, admire, and purchase from your garden**—This is your target market. You can never please all of the people all of the time, but by knowing who your target market is, you can find the right people. Then, you will be able to please them.

The “one-size-fits-all” strategy of marketing simply doesn’t work. Any successful entrepreneur knows that you need to aim in the right direction. For example, if you’re selling cell phone accessories, you can’t just assume that they’ll be wanted by everyone who has a phone. There are many other factors that come into play. Having a target market that is so wide and unfocused makes it impossible to focus on specific needs.

A successful campaign must know who it’s targeting and why they are targeting them. This makes it a much more effective campaign. There are several things you can do to help you better know and refine your market:

- Look to see who will get the biggest benefit from what you have to offer. One way to do this is to pay attention on your social media sites. Look at what people are saying about you and what they seem most interested in.

- Everyone has some customers that are more vocal than others. Seek out these customers and ask them questions. It can be on a social site, or even from email.
- Social network surveys can give you a fountain of information, and you can make it easy and fun for your followers. It will give you a lot of quality insight into your customer base.
- Stay up to date on the news and trends in your industry and with your competitors.

As you continue to study your market, you can begin to narrow it down and refine it even further. When you do this, there are even more things you should consider.

- What's the product's reach? Will you be selling regionally, nationally, or worldwide?
- Check the demographics:
 1. Gender and Age—Will your audience be largely female or male? What age will they be? Targeting to a specific gender or a specific age group can be extremely important. For example, there's not much need to target professional men for a women's clothing

store. A radio station that is mainly rap music would want to focus on the younger group of listeners. It's usually fairly easy to determine the gender and age group for your product/service, and it can make a big difference in your advertising campaign.

2. Income—Another demographic is a person's income. If you're a discount retailer, you'll probably want to target your products to those in the middle to lower income bracket. High-end fashion stores, on the other hand, will target to those in the upper income bracket. You want to target your product to those who have the income to purchase it.
3. Lifestyle Preferences—These are generally associated with what a person likes, their hobbies, or their interests. They often cater to specific diet needs, like those of a diabetic or with food allergies. Someone who sells swimwear would want to target to those who enjoy the water. Religious books would be targeted to those with that specific religious belief. Whatever lifestyle the target market enjoys is where you focus your campaign.
4. Purchasing Cycles—The cycles in which your customers purchase your product can also be important when targeting that market. For example,

you might have a large lunchtime crowd at your restaurant that consists largely of professional business people. Your dinner crowd, however, could be mainly families who have children. Because of this, many restaurants make different menus that cater to each type of crowd. Chicken nuggets and French fries may not seem very tasty to a professional, but children can't seem to get enough of them.

- Will your products be targeted to other businesses, or individual consumers?

Now, you should have a pretty clear picture about who your specific target is. This is the type of audience that will be receptive to your marketing strategy. You should develop your social media marketing campaign to these people.

3. **Plant your seeds**—Now that your target market is narrowed down, you know exactly where to plant your seeds to get the best results. You won't be wasting your time and energy with an audience that is too large. You'll be focusing on a specific area that will reap you the most rewards.

In this way, instead of targeting anyone with a phone, you'll be targeting specific phone owners. You won't be trying to sell "hip" new phone cases to professional business men. You can gear them toward teens. You won't be trying to sell simple neutral colored cases to teens. You'll know

exactly where to focus your advertising campaign and save yourself valuable time and money.

You'll also reap much higher rewards this way. You'll be able to make wiser decisions about where to advertise and how you should talk to your customers. You'll be able to advertise where your market hangs out, and use language that speaks to them. By targeting your marketing strategy, you can satisfy "your" customers.

It works the same way if you're looking for someone to pay for your services. Who will want the services? What bothers them the most? How can I best promote a solution for them? Be sure, however, that if you make promises to your customers that you follow through with them.

You can promise things like a fast turnaround time and get a lot of customers knocking on your door. If you don't follow through with your promise, your whole campaign will be useless. Only promote things you can actually give your customers. Think of things like, "What do I do that is better than anyone else?" How can what I do help solve a problem for my customers? Then, promise them something you can give them.

You know your market, and you know your message. The problem now is where to you put the message. How do you select the right medium that will help you convey your message to your customers?

Usually, you'll want to use multiple mediums for advertising. In addition to your social media, there will be other things you might choose. They will vary according to your audience. Your target audience will determine where you advertise as well. For example, if you're advertising to the

younger generation, a text message campaign might be the way to go, because all young people are into texting.

On the other hand, if you're advertising to older business executives, they might feel that your text messages are pushy. For those who are working on the executive level, a dimensional mailer usually works well and will get your message to your targeted individuals.

Remember, sometime it takes different mediums and multiple touches to get your message through to the target market. Don't just assume that the message will get through regardless of where you deliver it. Evaluate all of the marketing channels and the response mechanisms. This will help you select the marketing media that will get the best responses from your market.

Just as a healthy garden requires good soil, adequate irrigation, and fertilization, a good marketing campaign require a solid, specific target market, a well-delivered message, and the right medium for delivering that message.

Nurturing Your “Garden”

You don't grow a garden by throwing dirt over a seed and expecting it to grow. You nurture it. Seeds you plant in your business need nurturing too. You can nurture your customers by:

1. **Networking, new client relations**—You've put in the hours at seminars, expos, workshops, etc. You've talked to many new people, traded business cards, and promised to stay in touch. Nurturing that seed requires you to actually keep that promise. Stay in contact with the people you meet and build relationships. Relationships lead to satisfied customers. If you make that contact and then don't follow through, it's like tossing seeds into the wind.
2. **Building your client base**—You've established your target market and have many new clients. One way to stay in touch with them is to have a newsletter you can send them. Make it something potential customers can sign up for, and watch your customer base begin to grow. Subscribing to blog posts is another way. You spend the hours preparing and posting excellent content. By allowing your current customers to subscribe to your posts, they will receive them regularly. They can pass it on, and you'll get more subscribers.

3. **Implement “calls to action” in your blogs**—Give your audience something to do. You may be talking about a great new product. A call to action would be “click here to view_____.” Have them “click subscribe” to get your blog regularly. Tell them to “share” it with a friend.

4. **Quality content**—That has been stated several times in this book for a reason—it’s imperative! Give your audience what they want to see, and you’ll watch your customer viewers grow.

5. **Add links to your blog content**—The links could be to another page on your site, your social media page, or even a page belonging to someone else that you feel your customers will enjoy. Either way, you gave them the content, and that will help them grow loyalty to you.

6. **Promote your social media pages on your blog**—This is a great idea that a lot of businesses overlook. Encouraging your readers to visit your social media pages and follow you on those networks is another way to promote your content. It’s a way to reach out to customers. You can put social media follow buttons on your blog for each of your social networks. This makes it easy for your readers to follow you.

Growing your garden is one thing. Getting it to bloom, however, can be another. Just like any garden, different plants bloom at different times of

the year. You can get your garden to bloom by offering your customers good service, and quality information. You can do this because you've become familiar with them. You know who they are and what they need. Just like a gardener knows his garden, and knows what it needs to grow.

You have the unique ability to give your customers a resource that will meet their needs. Once you meet those needs, they will continue to come to you over and over.

Good customer service is a strong way to nurture your garden. Every customer likes to feel special. Once you know your customers well, you may want to develop a referral and reward system for them. When a customer refers someone to you, a special "thank you" note with a discount to the referring customer could be a good incentive for them to refer even more.

Conclusion

Growing a garden doesn't take place overnight. We all wish we could grow our businesses like Jack grew the beanstalk. Just toss the seeds out the window and have this gigantic business grow overnight while we sleep. In reality, however, it doesn't work that way.

Growing your business starts with planting those seeds, in the right place, for the right people, and nurturing to thrive. You can build a good, solid business one step at a time.

Whether or not you love gardening, you know it takes a lot of work to grow a beautiful garden, but when you see it in full bloom, every second you spent was worth it.

You may not like doing all the things you need to grow your business either. If you're not really into technology, spending the time to socialize on social media sites may feel like torture in the beginning.

When you see what can happen because of this hard work, however, every second will be worth it. You've planted the seeds that have grown into a beautiful, profitable garden. Then, you can reap those rewards.