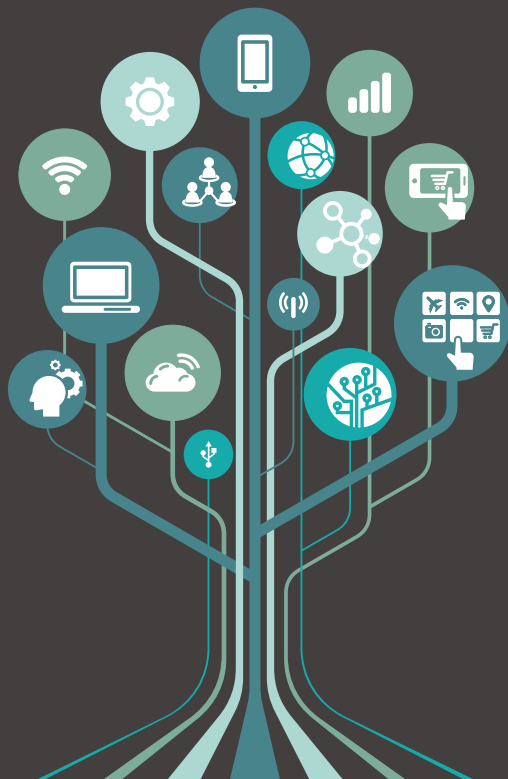


J O A N A I N C H

GO TO MARKET

The marketing and scaling blueprint for startups



Startup founders are forward-thinking innovators but often fail when it's time to go to market. Their biggest challenge is to identify the right consumer, communicate the benefits of their offering and implement consistent, growth-driven campaigns that fill a predictable recurring pipeline.

Joana Inch's proven strategies help startups find the right niche, construct a message that resonates, and implement digital campaigns that generate consistent revenue. She provides a practical step-by-step framework for building a solid foundation of proven digital marketing and content marketing campaigns, as well as all the necessary touchpoints and platforms for breaking into the market and scaling. Discover how to:

- Nail your niche and write copy that cuts through
- Construct your buyer journey from awareness to customer
- Discover the best digital marketing channels to use for your business
- Create a predictable recurring pipeline
- Scale and go global



Joana Inch has dedicated fifteen years to implementing digital growth strategies in the Tech and SaaS space, with ten years as founder of her own digital marketing agency, Hat Media. She is passionate about helping enterprise clients and startups alike cut through, scale and grow through new and innovative digital strategies. Find Joana at hatmedia.com.au

Rethink



www.rethinkpress.com

AUS \$21.99

J O A N A I N C H

GO TO MARKET

The marketing and scaling
blueprint for startups

R^ethink

First published in Great Britain in 2020
by Rethink Press (www.rethinkpress.com)

© Copyright Joana Inch

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher.

The right of Joana Inch to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Cover image © Shutterstock | Hilch

*To all my best teachers in life:
Romi, George, Vlady, Nigel and Dave*

Contents

Introduction	1
SECTION ONE Build Your Foundation	7
1 Nailing Your Niche	11
Defining your niche	12
Evolving your niche	17
2 Clarify Your Message	21
Writing customer-centric copy	21
Capturing conversions	25
3 Mapping Your Buyer Journey	31
The buyer journey map	31
Eight tips for effective mapping	40
Measure, test, optimise	43

SECTION TWO Go To Market 45

4 Lead Generation 47

Pay-per-click marketing 48

Testing and optimisation 51

Testing – what not to test 53

Automate to accumulate 55

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) 56

5 Social Marketing 63

Utilising Facebook marketing 63

Six best practices on Facebook 66

Utilising LinkedIn marketing 72

Be a power profiler 75

6 Content Marketing 87

Lead generation via content marketing 87

Webinar marketing 91

Lead qualification via content marketing 94

Lead nurturing via content marketing 95

SECTION THREE Dominate the Market 99

7 Marketing Automation 101

Why use marketing automation? 102

Marketing automation best practice 104

Marketing automation strategies 106

8 Account-based Marketing	109
What is account-based marketing?	109
Hyper-personalised content and ABM	118
Strategy breeds success	125
9 Customer Retention	127
Improving customer retention via customer service	128
Improving customer retention via automation	131
SECTION FOUR Beyond the Market	135
10 Keeping Up With Innovations	137
The importance of innovation	138
What happens when businesses fail to innovate?	142
What innovations should digital businesses embrace in 2021 and beyond?	144
Choose your innovation	146
11 Going Global	149
Risk factors	150
Factors affecting success or failure	151
Five steps for going global	153

Summary	157
What's next?	159
Acknowledgements	161
References	163
The Author	171

Introduction

Born and raised in 1950s Bulgaria during a communist era that imposed many limitations, my parents looked for a way out. With one suitcase packed and two small children, they took their engineering degrees and fled.

The first stop was Baghdad, Iraq, where construction was booming under Saddam Hussein's rule. They struggled with the heat, the language and the culture shock but were not deterred by their two-year stay. My dad settled in fine. My mum was an engineer going to work in a man's world, where as a woman she was expected to wear particular attire and definitely no pants were allowed. Despite the paradigm shift, she was treated well and they made good money and good friends, and learned new skills, which gave

them the opportunity to apply for a visa to their real country of choice – Australia.

An engineer's dream? My dad, a civil engineer, has told me how his school classrooms were covered in posters of the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge and how he dreamt to see such unique constructions in real life. But what to do while waiting for this visa to be approved? He couldn't stay in Bulgaria, didn't want to stay in Iraq.

Next stop – Rome, Italy, and at last their youngest child (me) was finally of school age so they could catch a bit of a break. The air was sweet and smelled of gaming arcades and margarita pizza or *Pizza Rossa*. At least, that's how I remember it as a six-year-old. I'm sure it was different for them. This destination was short-lived and lasted only six months as word came that they had finally received their visas for Australia.

Excitedly, we packed what little we had in one car and sped towards the border to say *dovishdane* to our family in Bulgaria. But first, another hurdle. The car was stopped at the border in Italy. No, we were told, we cannot keep driving, not today and not for another few months – they have to keep the car as it's unregistered and must be inspected. *What do we do?* we thought. *Australia is calling.*

We abandoned the car and took the train. I couldn't take any of my luggage – there was no car to carry it.

I remember having to leave behind my favourite toy (a little plastic washing machine that I pretended to wash my doll's clothes in) but I don't remember the train trip that took us through the civil war that Serbia and Croatia were engaged in at the time. Our journey saw us pull over at what wouldn't be considered the safest of stops, considering all the soldiers and weapons around us at the time. Amazing how the brain works at forgetting certain information and protecting oneself. That toy, though...

We finally got on the longest flight of my life. Thirty-six hours later we landed in Sydney, Australia, and my dad exclaimed, 'Oops, wrong country.'

I'm sure you remember the recession of the early 1990s. When jobs were lost, unemployment rates reached 17% and so did interest rates. It was 1992. Nobody was funding construction at that time, and nobody was hiring new immigrant engineers either. Although their visa had been approved due to their engineering qualifications and experience, that now seemed completely irrelevant.

Wanting to give it a chance for at least a year, they made a home and opted for whatever work they could find. Pizza delivery driver, salesperson, drafter – nothing was beneath them. They just wanted to make it work. Twenty-eight years later, here they still are, now officially retired and living their best life.

What's the learning of this story? It shows how many hurdles my parents had to overcome to achieve their dream and get to where they are. Their perseverance is what helped them succeed.

As a startup, you're going to come up against many hurdles yourself, and how you deal with them will determine your success. I've seen this with many of my clients and I'll share their stories in later chapters. If you can persevere and get past all the obstacles that come your way, I'm sure you'll reach your destination. I'm just here to help make your journey easier.

This book is not about making you more resilient – there are lots of other books on that topic, my personal favourite being *The Obstacle is the Way* by Ryan Holiday. This book is about best practices for taking your product to market. The fun part.

Once you've gone through the creative process and you have your minimal viable product (MVP), what do you do next? How do you take the leap and start making money from it? Fifteen years in the world of digital marketing and fifteen years of helping small businesses and startups scale up has taught me many lessons, which I'm sharing with you in this book.

I founded my own startup, Hat Media, a digital marketing agency, to focus specifically on helping technology and software companies scale and grow. Now a mature adult at ten years of age, it has allowed

me to work on many inspiring projects and achieve so much. I was nominated for a Women in Media award by B&T when I was thirty years old. It set me on the path towards helping women in tech. The company saw some nominations too, for Best Content & Best Collaboration by Mumbrella Asia. We also have the following results to our name:

- We helped tech giant Lenovo earn US\$66 million in twelve months from content marketing.
- We helped Dell EMC bring their annual forum to an online platform.
- We helped Navman Wireless increase their lead generation results by 975%.
- My team played a crucial role in this success and if there's one thing I've always known and said in life, it's that you need to surround yourself with great, positive minds. People who you can learn from.

We worked with many enterprise clients, not just in Australia but globally. As we did more projects for these conglomerates, I realised that my true passion and calling lies with helping the startup community instead, because this is where I can make a real difference. This is where we can innovate and introduce a new and exciting idea. It's where we can do our best work that can truly change the world and make it a better place.

I have helped many startups scale and grow, but my favourite so far has been QSN Health, a small, Australia-based company that helps people quit smoking. Here were two founders with one amazing product that truly works. It was tear-jerking watching the stories of their customers as they won their battle against cigarettes. Calling these people ‘overjoyed’ would be an understatement. Theirs are by far the most rewarding customer success stories we have ever filmed.

QSN Health has come a long way. They are now five years old, have helped over 21,000 people quit smoking and have expanded to include a holistic wellness package. Our next mission and journey for them? Go global and help one million people quit smoking. How exciting!

I love helping startups because this is where the best ideas are born and it’s so exciting bringing them to the world and making it a better place. Just look at some of the most successful startups that were born during a recession, like Uber and Airbnb. The ways they have changed the world we live in is phenomenal.

I believe you can make a difference also. This book is here to give you the blueprint to do just that.

SECTION 1

BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION

Building your foundation is crucial to any successful marketing campaign. Fail at this initial phase and you will have a hard time scaling your business. Think of it like building a house. Adding the rooms and interior is the fun part, where you get the most recognition. But if you hadn't laid that slab of concrete deep in the ground to support the structure and the rooms then your house would not have survived long enough to be decorated.

Not only that but you wouldn't be able to build any rooms on top. There would be no opportunities for expansion (or scaling in your business). Because everything on top relies on the stability and success of that below it. That's why you need an engineer to help build the foundations of your house, well before you

give the work to a builder to complete the finishings and make it look good. In case you haven't guessed, the builder in my analogy would be your marketing campaigns that you create to scale your business, and the engineer is you. You're the person responsible for the foundation because nobody knows your business better than you. Sure, marketing experts can help get you there, but you need to be significantly involved in this step. If you don't have your building blocks nailed, then you will have the whole structure topple on top of you with thousands of dollars down the drain.

That's where most founders and marketers fail. They believe they can skip this step. Founders either assume they know their target audience well because they've walked in their shoes and so do little research on them; or they believe they need as many customers as possible and cast too wide a net to fish with. But being many things to many people is not effective. Casting a wide net may get you fish but it will also get you some junk and then you'll have to waste time sorting through it. In this time, your fish could swim away. You'll end up losing a good client because your focus was not on point and you didn't spend your time wisely.

It's not about quantity when you need to scale. You need to catch the right customers who will form the right success stories and help set more foundations for you to scale from. Many times over, companies

get bogged down in servicing the wrong customers – those who are never happy and always want more for less. By finding and securing the right customers, you avoid all that time-wasting and instead focus your energy on growing your company and providing the right services.

For marketers, they've likely been asked to come in after a few years of the startup growing. Their challenge is to keep that growth-rate going. It's typical of startups to grow fast at the beginning, especially if they have formed good networks or partnerships with the right people and if they have created something great, but they always reach that revenue plateau. That's usually when they hire the marketing expert to come in and help them scale.

The biggest mistake I've seen marketers make at this stage is to attempt to launch big-budget advertising campaigns without looking at the foundations. You need to refresh and revise your foundations at every growth phase your business is experiencing if you want to move past the plateau.

It's likely your niche will have changed and so your message will need to also. You'll need to examine the entire structure, starting with the roof and walls (your messages) and then observe your stormwater drainage (content strategy) to ensure the structure is getting the right results. If not, and if inbound marketing efforts have been disappointing, then more

than likely the house (the foundation) has not been maintained properly. In this case, you'll need to start from scratch.

Do a 'buyer persona' workshop with the entire team. Get as many team members on board as possible for this one. Especially those who speak to customers on a regular basis, like the sales team and customer support team. Spend half a day in a room together asking all the right questions (provided for you in Chapter 1 – 'Nailing Your Niche'). The objective is to fully understand who your market is, what their pain points are, what keeps them up at night and how you can help them solve this. Once you have this nailed, the rest is easy. You'll understand how to speak to them and create the right content for them with the right tools, as you'll know exactly who they are.

You may find me using construction analogies in this book quite a bit. It comes from a good place. I grew up in a family of engineers and I even ended up marrying one. It seemed to be my destiny. I call myself a 'marketing engineer'. I like to break down marketing plans to identify the blueprint as well as the strategies designed not only to hold the structure up safely and securely but to allow the business to expand and scale.

The sky's the limit. I will show you some of these blueprints and strategies in the following chapters.

1

Nailing Your Niche

Over my fifteen-year career in digital marketing, I have worked with many well-known enterprise clients in the tech and SaaS space. My true passion, though, comes from helping startups. They are not limited by legal teams going over every bit of content and slowing things down and there is so much opportunity to be creative and scale. If you're reading this and working in a startup right now, I know you have a wonderful career ahead of you, full of so many exciting opportunities.

But among all of these clients, whether they be enterprise or startup, I see many of them struggling to define their niche. Startups tend to try and target everybody and acquire as many customers as they

can, with many not being the right type of customer, which actually hurts their scaling process. Enterprises have often evolved so much over the years that their niche has changed and they haven't adapted yet. They are still sending the same messages targeting the same people when in actual fact, that audience is different.

Keep in mind that you're not thinking small by having a niche, you're actually becoming laser-focused on a specific customer with a specific need. This focus will significantly help you scale.

Defining your niche

Why is it so crucial that you nail your niche? Well, if you don't completely understand your niche, then you can't run your most effective marketing campaign. Why? Because you're trying to be many things to many people and are likely sending out conflicting messages that don't appeal to any specific audience. Your message needs clarification and doesn't resonate with your primary buyer persona, let alone your secondary one.

Before you can clarify your message (which I talk you through in the next chapter), you really need to have nailed your niche. This means you need to learn more about your customers. Don't fret – I have a list of questions for you to answer to help you do just that, inspired by the book *From Impossible to Inevitable: How*

SaaS and other hyper-growth companies create predictable revenue by Aaron Ross and Jason Lemkin, the VC and founder of SaaStr.

How do you nail your niche?

The first step is to answer the following questions:

- What pain points are you trying to solve?
- How are you making your customers' lives better?
- What are your proven results?
- Where have you achieved your best results?
- What common problem have you built a reputation for solving?

Let's look more in-depth at this to help you determine your exact niche. Answer the following questions:

- What are your top four projects that you've worked on? List your best projects, both in terms of the ones you found most enjoyable as well as where you achieved an impressive result. Considering you are a startup and may not have customers on board just yet, the idea here is to reflect back on your previous career, if relevant, or your dream projects if not.

- Now describe the product or service you are selling. What is your 'elevator pitch'? Is it related to the projects you listed above? Does it have the same target audience?
- What is the problem that your product fixes? Here, you want to be able to demonstrate to your niche that you understand what their typical problems and issues are. If you know this well, then you know your niche and you can then describe the solution for them.
- What impressive results did you achieve from these projects?
- What was your ROI for each project?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very difficult and 10 being very easy, how easy would it be for you to scale if you only worked on projects like the ones you have listed?
- Detail the special features and benefits your product has over your competition.
- If people purchased your product for just one thing, what would it be? Can you productise this benefit to a specific niche?

Are you starting to see a pattern emerge? These questions should give you a good indication not just of where your passion lies and what problems you love to solve but also of which ones make you more money and give you the opportunity to scale. We can't work

for love forever. You'll have to productise that love at some point or the business will be unsustainable.

Indications you haven't nailed your niche

If you're going to sales meetings and getting asked, 'What do I get, and what have you done for my industry?' and you're coming up short on those answers, then you know you haven't nailed your niche. It's cases like these that prevent you from scaling as quickly as you would like. You have an asset deficiency, which you need to rectify to prove to this potential client that you can do a good job.

But let's say you spend time creating that and you spend time in countless more meetings, only to be told that they've gone with a competitor that specialises in their particular industry. If you had focused on one niche, you would have had proven results and an abundance of assets and content to share with your client in that same niche. It would have been quick and easy to send them the data they were seeking, and the deal would likely have gone in your favour as a result.

Here are some more subtle signs that you haven't nailed your niche:

- **You've grown mostly through your existing network and their friends** – As luck would have it, you know some pretty cool people who happen

to want to use your software and you have a great network that you can tap into. Your software also happens to be quite good so those people have told their network of friends.

Well done! You've got your first batch of Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR) that can now sustain you. But you can't rely on this method for further growth and hyper-growth. This will reach a plateau at some point, so you need to expand your reach. This can only be done via partnerships and marketing.

If you haven't done any marketing to date and have just relied on referrals then it's likely you don't know too much about your niche. Before you start any marketing activities, be sure to talk to your existing customers and answer the questions under 'How to nail your niche' so that you can determine who your optimum customer is.

- **Your lead generation efforts have been discouraging** – Usually this is the case if you haven't nailed your niche. Why? You're not targeting the right people and therefore you're not using the right messages. It's likely you're trying to be too many things to too many people, with generic, non-customer-centric messages, which is why you're getting few sales and conversions.

- **Even when you do get quality leads, they don't turn into customers** – The reason for this is the asset deficiency I spoke about earlier. It is likely that you don't have proven results for that industry or for that customer persona because they are not in your niche. Your competitors may have those assets because they have been around longer and have focused on that niche – that's why you're missing out on that sale.

Evolving your niche

It is crucial that you keep revisiting the questions about your niche and evolving it as you grow. Why? Because you'll also keep growing and changing. You can – and should – develop more niches as you develop more products and services.

You may add new products and features. Your customers may change themselves and be instrumental in changing your software by motivating you to add more features specifically for them. You may be smart enough to keep up with innovation and add new tools and technologies yourself. Your marketing efforts and company culture may earn you a certain reputation, which would also change your niche.

It is likely you have more than one niche. If this is true for your business, you need to determine which product belongs to which niche, nail all your niches and divide your marketing messaging to focus on each relevant niche.

There are some great examples of this among some of the best-known tech companies:

- Facebook began with Ivy League schools and then opened to everyone. It continues to be the most used platform across the globe to date.
- PayPal took off with eBay users and now it's accepted across most online shopping websites across the globe.
- Amazon started out with books and now look at them. You simply have to view a YouTube video of how their supply chain works and go, 'Wow, when did we enter the future!'

So you see, having a niche does not limit you. It allows you to be laser-focused and cater specifically to one particular audience. This in turn allows you to build success and a reputation, to scale more easily and quickly. Once you scale, you'll recruit more assets, people and technology to help you cater to your new clientele, allowing you to further expand and discover new products or niches you can work with.

In his studies of the natural world, Darwin observed that it wasn't the strongest members of the species, nor the cleverest, who were more likely to survive – it was those who were most adaptable to change. The same goes in the world of business. Keep evolving, because life is supposed to evolve.

2

Clarify Your Message

Once you've nailed your niche and you know exactly who your customer is, the next step is to determine how are you going to speak to them at each step of the journey, from the top to the bottom of the funnel.

Writing customer-centric copy

Your message needs to answer three important questions at first glance:

1. What do you offer?
2. How can it help me?
3. How do I buy it?

All three need to be answered in your customer's language. Not yours. Avoid using jargon and talking about your product's features and benefits. Focus instead on your customer's biggest concerns, pain points and desires.

The best way to do this is by engaging in a little exercise I like to call 'Inner versus Outer'. As you know, your message needs to solve your customer's pain points so that they feel like you actually understand them and can help them.

Inner versus outer

What's the difference between inner and outer problems?

- Outer problems are problems that you'd *like* to solve.
- Inner problems are problems that you *need* to solve.
- Outer problems challenge you to think.
- Inner problems keep you up at night, stressed.
- Outer problems are easy to solve as you can think through them logically.
- Inner problems are hard to solve as you're too emotional or close to the problem to be able to think clearly about the solution.

If you can solve your customers' outer problems, so can a handful of your competitors and it's likely they are using messaging on their website that is targeted towards them.

If you can solve your customers' inner problems, you win the game. They will go with you because they can breathe a sigh of relief. Let's look at an example.

If you were a standard car company called Car Company XYZ and you were selling based on your customers' outer problems, you would say something like this: 'View the entire XYZ range, access latest offers, find service information and locate your nearest dealer.'

There is no emotion. As a customer, I'm thinking, 'Just a car that gets me from A to B.' As you can see, it's focused on the company, their range, their latest offers, their service information and their location. It's all about them solving your outer problem of needing a car.

What if they were to focus on your inner problem? On your right and desire for freedom and mobility, comfort for your family or your need for the security and safety of your family. Wouldn't that be a much better sell? You bet it would.

Take a look at Tesla in comparison. What's their message? 'Lay rubber where your carbon footprint used to be.'

Their mission statement: ‘To accelerate the advent of sustainable transport.’

By touching on environmental problems, they trigger an inner concern and fear that we have about the world. This message focuses on a desire that most people have: to be better, to do better.

If I were to look at your company’s current messaging, your website copy and other content assets that you use to describe what you do, what would I find? Are you talking about yourself or are you talking with the customer in mind? Are you solving their outer problems or inner problems?

I challenge you to step into your customers’ shoes. Identify what their inner problems are. Then think about how your product can improve their lives. You’ll need to think outside the box here, so the last thing you should do is visit competitor websites and try to be like them. Instead, really think about how *your* message can help them feel at ease and breathe that sigh of relief that they have finally found a solution to their problem. Touch on your customers’ pain points and desires in your message and you’ll have a clear winner.

Compassion and influence

There are two more factors that you need to consider when clarifying your company message. The first is

compassion. This means you should write in a way that makes your customer believe you understand their problem. When your messaging is compassionate, it has a customer-centric philosophy. And when you make it all about them instead of you, guess what? You'll come out on top.

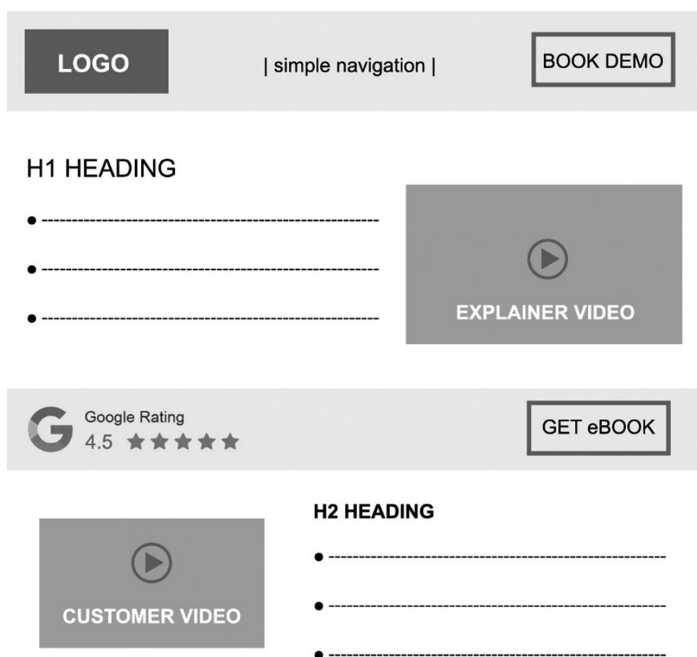
The second thing is influence. It's great if you understand your customers and you know how to solve their problems, but they won't buy from you unless you're able to show your influence in the space and industry you work in. How do you do this? By including testimonials, reviews, customer success stories and statistics in your messaging.

Capturing conversions

We've looked at how your message answers 'what do you offer?' and 'how can it help me?'. Now we want to answer: 'How do I buy it?'

You'd be surprised how many websites I've seen where I've wanted to buy but the journey has been so difficult. I knew what they were selling. I knew it would make my life easier. I wanted to buy it. But the call to action just wasn't there. One made me click three or four times before I could find what I wanted, which left me with such a bad customer experience, I didn't buy from them.

It's really important to make your call to action prominent, and for it to appear at the top of your website. Let's take a look at this website wireframe to show you what I mean.



Example of a website wireframe

If you look closely, you'll notice there are two crucial calls to action on the website. The first is the direct one: 'Book demo'. On your site, this should be the main call to action you want people to click on – 'book a demo', 'book a quick chat' or 'schedule a meeting', for example. It is prominent on the top right side of the website where people expect it to be. Make sure you make it a

different colour from the rest of the navigation menu, and if you can also have that navigation menu follow website visitors down as they're scrolling, then you're already winning.

Not all website visitors are ready to make that commitment on first visit, though, so what you also need to provide is an intermediate call to action. Here, it's 'Get eBook', but for you it might be 'register for our webinar', 'take our quiz', 'sign up for our newsletter' – whatever secondary action you would like your customers to take. This can be placed at the bottom of the section 'above the fold' on your website, ie the portion of the webpage that is visible without scrolling.

This acts as a value offer and enables you to capture their contact details and continue to nurture them further down the marketing funnel. We'll look more at lead nurturing and marketing automation in later chapters.

The importance of position

You'll see that all the important elements are included 'above the fold', so on first look the customer already knows what you're about and how you serve to benefit them. They've also scanned your reviews and customer success stories without having to scroll much, so they quickly feel like you have the authority to help them and keep reading.

I've also positioned the 'influence' element of the website not just above the fold but also strategically near the calls to action. It includes a customer success story video and a Google rating, which create authority. In my experience, having these elements near the call-to-action buttons creates more conversions.

Keep navigation simple

You'll notice I've included a simple navigation menu. My recommendation here is to keep this as minimal as possible and add all your other pages in the footer.

I can't tell you how many video recordings of people browsing websites I've watched in my life (more than a thousand for sure) and I always see the same pattern on websites that have too much going on in the navigation menu. Visitors get extremely overwhelmed with the choices and either go on a clicking frenzy, leading down a rabbit hole, or they scroll down to get away from it and then jump off the site. Try to keep your customer's journey on your website simple and give them an easy path to follow.

Make your copy work for your customer

The copy that I've included in the wireframe is labelled H1, then body copy, H2, then more body copy. Not only is this a structure that improves Search Engine Optimisation factors but it's also visually appealing.

It also encompasses a video and summarised text in bullet points because in this day and age, let's face it, people want to know what you do and how it serves them quickly. Pronto, snap, now. *Don't waste my time.* Don't expect them to read a ton of text to discover what you do. They'll get overwhelmed at the sight of it and quickly leave your site. Keep it simple and offer both a visual explanation as well as one they can read.

Your website doesn't have to look exactly like this one to be effective, but if you can follow the majority of these simple best practices, it will serve you well.

EXERCISE: WRITING CUSTOMER-CENTRIC COPY

This exercise will significantly help you write customer-centric copy on your website and other content assets. Get your pen and paper out and really spend some time considering the following questions.

- Can you identify the main problem that your customer faces?
- What is a problem your customers deal with relating to your product or service?
- What challenges are you helping your customers overcome?
- Next, consider the answers to the above questions in light of the four categories below.
- **Emotion** – How is this problem making your customers feel? What keeps them up at night? What consumes them emotionally, that you can solve?

- **Compassion** – What messages can you write about your product that expresses empathy with your customer's problems? Have you walked in their shoes and developed this product to help others like you?
- **Influence** – How can you demonstrate your competency for solving your customer's problem? What influence do you have in the industry? Think about customer success stories, partnerships, results, your professional experience.
- **Action** – What is your direct call to action and where does it appear on your customer's buying journey? What is your intermediate call to action and where does that appear on their journey?

If you struggle with completing this exercise, you may want to speak to existing customers to understand more about their problems and customer buying experience, as understanding this will help you immensely.

Remember, the clearer you are about what you want, the more likely you are to achieve it.

Mapping Your Buyer Journey

OK, you've nailed your niche, you know who you're going to target and you know what you're going to say to them. The next step is mapping out your buyer journey.

The buyer journey map

A buyer journey map is a visual representation of every stage where your customer engages with your company or product, from their first interaction with your brand to after they have purchased from you.

First of all, don't feel like you need to create a visually stunning chart. It doesn't have to be beautiful. It just needs to be functional and has to make sense to you

(and your marketing team). If you're anything like me, you'll prefer to work in a spreadsheet.

Here's an example of a spreadsheet you can get started with.

The Journey	Awareness	Consideration	Decision	Customer
Pain point				
Touchpoint				
Call to action				
Content type				
Emotion				
Data gathering				
Goal				
Key metric				

The journey sample spreadsheet

Let's look at what you can do at each part of the buyer journey, as the buyer moves from awareness of your product to consideration of it, decision to buy, and, finally, purchasing the product – becoming a customer.

Pain points

The journey that your customer takes starts with their awareness of your brand or product. In this phase, you need to make them aware of how your product can solve a pain point that they are experiencing. Remember the rules from Chapter 2 when filling this out. Don't focus on their outer problems and how your product or features work. Focus on their inner problems and how you can solve them and help them. Name the main pain points that your customers are experiencing at the awareness phase of their journey.

As they make their way further down the funnel, be sure to showcase ways in which you can solve these pain points and continue to reinforce your authority and influence so that they choose to work with you instead of a competitor. This is best done through the use of case studies, customer success stories and explainer videos or webinars.

I also recommend connecting with them on LinkedIn and reaching out with a message as well as a phone call so that you can start to build a relationship and they can put a face towards the brand. In the end, people prefer to buy from people, not from brands.

Touchpoint

Next, consider what touchpoint you will use for them to see your message. If your product is for consum-

ers, you may use Google Search or Facebook ads. If your product is for businesses, you may consider LinkedIn Ads. If you're a startup, you'll likely have to advertise, so consider which channel will get you the best outcome for driving customer awareness.

As the customer makes their way across to the consideration and decision phase of the buyer journey, your touchpoints should change to remarketing ads and email marketing.

Call to action

You'll need to determine a suitable call to action for each of your platforms and touchpoints. Assume that your visitor is totally confused and does not know what actions you want them to take. Make it easy for them by telling them exactly what you want them to do. Communication is key.

Also consider what stage of their customer journey they are on as this will ensure they don't get scared away by being asked to take an action that they are not yet ready for. For example, not everyone is ready to book a demo now. Nor are they ready to book a 15-min consult with you. For those that are early on in their customer journey, you may just want them to learn more about your expertise first. Therefore, a more suitable call to action could be to download your guide or watch your webinar on a topic that would help to add value to their day.

Content type

Next, consider what content you will use to capture your audience's attention and, more importantly, their contact details, so you can continue to nurture the customer relationship. Will you write a blog or an eBook? Will you host a webinar? Or will you run sponsored ads with your key message? I recommend a combination of all of those – and remember to keep testing and measuring to find your sweet spot.

As your buyer moves from awareness of your product to consideration and decision making, your content type should change to case studies and customer success stories to encourage them to buy. And when they do, they'll reach the customer phase of the buyer journey and your content will change again – to information about the product or service, such as training videos.

Emotion

The emotion in the table above is what you want them to feel once they've read your content. In the awareness phase, do you want them to feel curious, overwhelmed or aware they are in need of help? Whatever emotion you pick, it needs to help get them to the next step – consideration of your product. The same goes for each subsequent stage of the journey.

Data gathering

Data gathering is crucial to any marketing campaign, at every stage. If you're putting out content to acquire new customers and keep them interested, you need to have a basic understanding of how this content is performing and resonating with them. What is the engagement score on your social channels? More importantly, what percentage of viewers are signing up for your content and providing you with contact details? And what is their satisfaction rating with your product?

You may like to use marketing automation software to capture all this information and run an automated report on it. For any busy founder that's head deep in all the requirements needed to go to market, I recommend an easy-to-use platform like HubSpot, which provides all the tools you need to get started for a monthly fee. (As an approved HubSpot for Startups Partner, Hat Media offers insights and education on this marketing automation platform for its startup community.) You can easily create forms that gather data such as name, email, phone number and (if you're in the b2b space) job title and company name.

I recommend asking for no more than four fields initially from your readers, otherwise they will get overwhelmed and simply log off. Adding a form like this on your website or landing page is a simple copy and paste job, and off you go!

Goal

You should also consider your main goal/s for gathering the data, and the key metrics you'll use to track these goals.

According to John Doerr, ex-Intel and Google visionary and bestselling author of *Measure What Matters*, the simple idea of implementing OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) can result in 10x growth for a company. Hence, it's crucial to set a goal or an objective. This can be something that you hope to achieve within the next three months. Some examples include:

- 100 webinar sign-ups
- \$50k in Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR)
- 5 new Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs)

Ensure that your goal is a short-term goal. If you set yourself a goal that is three months away, you're more likely to stay focused on it and be able to quickly shift gears if needed in order to reach it.

If it's longer than three months, you'll likely lose track of it and you won't implement the necessary changes to your marketing campaigns quickly enough to ensure you're on track to reach it.

I always say to my clients that three months is a key measurement metric as any less means not enough data and any more means you're missing opportunities.

Once you've determined your main goal, you should then create a set of key metrics that you will use to measure if you're on track to reach it.

Key metrics

Key metrics help you stay focused on your goal. I recommend revisiting and updating the data on these every two weeks to ensure you're on track to meet your goal. Let's explore some common key metrics you can use.

If our goal was to close five Sales Qualified Leads (SQL) in three months, then we would work backwards and set the following key metrics:

- Number of Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs) – may need 25 in 3 months in order to create 5 SQLs
- Number of leads – may need 100 leads in order to create 25 MQLs
- Number of contacts – may need 500 contacts in order to create 100 leads

- Number of website/landing page visits – may need 2,000 visits in order to create 500 contacts

Any marketing automation platform will allow you to create qualification criteria around these metrics and help you produce real-time dashboards to help you keep track of the numbers.

Over time, when you analyse the data, you will discover the exact percentages and numbers you need for each metric and hence be able to set more realistic goals based on solid data.

Measuring each metric will also allow you to determine where exactly you are struggling. Are you not generating enough contacts for example? If so, then we'll either need to adjust our expectations of this number or amend our marketing campaigns or content offers to help meet them.

Because we're viewing this data on a regular basis (every two weeks), we can quickly act to ensure we meet our main goal.

Here is an example of a completed buyer journey map (at its briefest). In this example, my target audience is startups looking to go to market:

GO TO MARKET

The Journey	Awareness	Consideration	Decision	Customer
Pain point	How do I launch my product and gain customers?	I know what to do but how do I do it right?	Let's do this! But who should I contact for a strategy to help me get started?	Is this really going to work?
Touchpoint	LinkedIn, Zoom	Remarketing, email, LinkedIn	Remarketing, email, LinkedIn	Weekly calls, live dashboards and reports
Call to action	Sign up for webinar	Book a strategy consultation	Book a strategy consultation	• Attend weekly Zoom calls • View reports
Content type	Webinar on go-to-market strategies	Blogs, email copy to further educate on go-to-market strategies	Case studies, email copy to sell strategy consultation	Personalised content strategy and monthly reports
Emotion	Overwhelmed	Curious	Optimistic	Happy with choice
Data gathering	Name, email, phone	Engagement data	Engagement data	Customer satisfaction data
Goal	Webinar sign-ups	Email engagement	Close customer	• Keep customer • Obtain referral
Key metric	• Impressions • Clicks • Sign-ups • Social engagement	• Email open rate • Email click rate	• Call details • Presentation details • Meeting obtained	• Call attendance • Happiness metric • Referral opportunities • Upsell opportunities

Sample completed buyer journey map

Eight tips for effective mapping

You can go to <https://blog.hatmedia.com.au/buyer-journey-map> to download a copy of your own map and get started. But before you do, I have eight crucial reminders that will help you complete this effectively, some of which we have touched on already.

Remember to:

1. Define your niche
2. Map out your key messages
3. Map out your direct and intermediate calls to action
4. Define channels and touchpoints
5. Explore your customers' pain points
6. Explore your customers' emotions
7. Use customer language
8. Add flexibility jumps

Using customer language is something I cannot emphasise enough. In my fifteen years in marketing and working with all types of clients, not using customer language is the one error I see time and time again. I see so much jargon on websites, especially software and tech websites, where they tend to focus on their features. You need to speak your customer's language if you want them to notice you and commit to you. You need to clarify what your product does for *them* in the most basic of ways so they are not burning brain cells trying to figure it out.

Flexibility jumps

Something we haven't yet touched upon is to add flexibility jumps. Understand that the buyer journey is not always linear. A person may not just go from A to B or from Awareness to Customer. They might have to go back a step or two due to all sorts of internal issues. Perhaps they have a contract with a competitor that needs to end first. Perhaps they've just been made redundant. Perhaps they've just had their budgets cut. Perhaps there's a pandemic that's forced everyone into lockdown. You just never know what could happen, but you should always prepare for something, which is where flexibility jumps come in.

What can potential flexibility jumps look like?

- You may have to move the person out of the existing email workflow and add them to a monthly newsletter list instead so that your brand is top of mind for when they are finally ready.
- You may consider offering a discount to people if you know their reasons for not converting are budget restrictions. For the same reason, you may want to add flexibility with the terms and contracts. Rather than twelve months, offer three months as a commitment option.

- You may have to re-engage with a new person in the same role and move them to the top of the funnel or to the start of the buyer journey once again.

Measure, test, optimise

Most importantly, ensure you are measuring everything. Use advertising platforms such as Google, Facebook and LinkedIn to measure conversion data. Use these same platforms to A/B test everything (more on this in Chapter 4) and ensure you're always optimising things like your ad copy, your targeting parameters, your placements and your touchpoints, as well as your content.

Determine how long the sales cycle is (you can use a marketing automation platform to do this) and what you can do to optimise it. The sales cycle refers to the length of time between first contact with an account/person to them becoming a customer. This is an important metric to know and measure if you want to build a stable business. A stable business should have a pipeline with contacts at all stages of their buyer journey and by understanding how long it takes for each one to complete the cycle you can then better prepare your business resources to service them. This enables you to minimise churn as

well as manage cash flow. To analyse the effectiveness of your website and landing pages, obtain heatmaps and visitor recordings which are tools that enable you to see how visitors are interacting with the site and pages. This will equip you with data on where the holes lie and how you can improve the customer experience.

You need to be always working at it, and be prepared to adjust what you're doing based on your evaluations. Always test, always measure and always optimise.