



Part 2: Communicating Effectively



Image courtesy of Ian Brodie & Somerset County Council

About this toolkit

This .pdf is the second part of a fully featured resource packed full of useful information and advice for new and existing rural tourism businesses. It is designed to help with business evaluation, market identification, development of effective communication and marketing strategies, and is intended to encourage initiatives that offer great visitor experiences whilst nurturing the environments that create them.

This toolkit has been created as part of the COOL Tourism Project by the COOL Partnership and tourism development charity Hidden Britain.

The COOL Tourism Project

The COOL Tourism Project is a European partnership of 11 local authorities and organisations, based in the east and south of England and in the north of France, who are working together to help each other compete effectively in the global tourism market.

COOL Tourism aims to address the need for market research, product development and business support in the partners' areas, and to encourage rural tourism businesses to make use of the rural areas' environmental assets and local distinctiveness to attract visitors.

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The project partners include; Norfolk County Council, Essex County Council (Visit Essex), Kent County Council (Explore Kent), Visit Kent, Somerset County Council, West Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Exmoor National Park Authority, Pas-de-Calais Tourisme, Somme Tourisme, and Pas-de-Calais Gîtes de France.





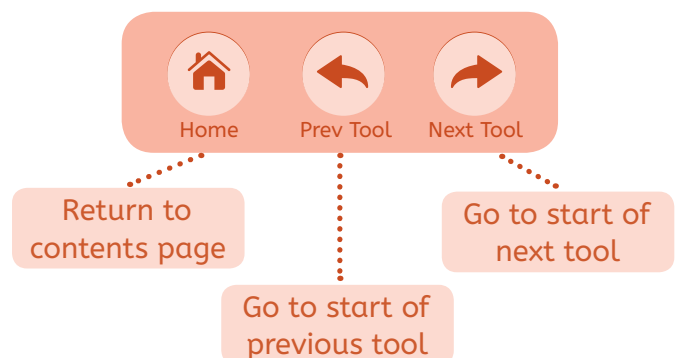
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How to use this Toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to allow you to dip in and select the tools you need.

You'll find navigation buttons on every page to help move back and forward between the tools and you can easily return here to the contents page by clicking the **"home"** button at any time.





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Why communications matter...

Communications are your way of reaching your customers and visitors, your way of interacting with them, conversing with them and engaging them.

Experts estimate that we see and hear several thousand marketing messages every single day! So perhaps the question is not why communications matter but why the right, targeted and relevant communications matter to your business.

Doing more with less...

You have lots of tools to communicate with and this section will cover the basics and then expand on several key channels offering tools and tips to make them more effective for you. Overall however, the focus is on how you can do more for less. All the ideas are very low cost or free and designed to ensure you get the maximum benefit from every communication you make.

Where you should be before you begin

Before you use any of the information and tools in this section, we would suggest you have an understanding of the following:

- Clear objectives for your business
What you need and are looking to achieve
- A clear understanding of your target audiences
Who they are, where they are and what they want
- A clear understanding of your offer
What you have to give them that will make them spend time and money with you.

Only then will your communications be focused enough to be effective. If you're unsure, check out **Part one of the Toolkit - Getting Started.**

If you need help with any aspect of communications then try the following sources of further help:

- www.marketingdonut.co.uk
- www.cim.co.uk

Disclaimer

This toolkit is an in-depth resource but it cannot address every specific need. Therefore feel free to tailor the guidance or use it as a starting point to research further for your own business.

Also remember - things change, websites disappear and new trends arrive, use this toolkit alongside your own research to ensure you are right up to date...



Building a marketing plan



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Giving your communications direction

Your marketing plan is the core of how you take your product and brand and reach your intended audience with it. The plan should involve enough detail that everyone in the business knows what needs to be done, who needs to do it and how to measure the impact.

Pulling a marketing plan together

If you have already completed **Part 1 of this toolkit** you have a clear idea of the needs of your business, the market you operate in, where you are currently, who your customers are and what they are looking for. If not you will need to source that information in order to pull together a marketing plan.

From this point a marketing plan is actually a fairly simple exercise which should comprise the following:

- 1** Specific objectives: for example, retaining existing customers, increasing order sizes. *Keep these to a few clear ones that will help deliver your overall business objectives*
- 2** Activity directly supporting sales e.g. customer service training, online booking facilities. *These are actions to ease a transaction once the customer has made the decision to buy.*
- 3** Activity to promote your products or services & raising awareness. *These are your core communications that lay the ground for sales and follow up with existing customers.*
- 4** Timetable for marketing activities. *This should be based around your customers' purchasing cycles - i.e. when do they plan and when do they commit to a purchase.*
- 5** Costs for each of the activities within the plan. *This should include setting a budget and sales forecasts.*
- 6** Allocating roles for delivering your marketing plan. *Outlining who is responsible and an assessment of any resource implications (e.g. recruiting expertise or training)*
- 7** Key indicators (e.g. new enquiries, conversion rates, customers won, average order value). *There should also be a clear system for measuring them.*

All of this information can be distilled into a simple spreadsheet as shown in the example overleaf.

Hints & Tips

- Do measure the effectiveness of all the activities in your plan
- Do learn from experience and amend future activities in line with what measuring tells you
- Don't spread your efforts too thinly or make plans you can't fulfil
- Don't make unrealistic assumptions and forecasts, if in doubt be conservative



Sample marketing plan

Objective 1 - Increase out of season visits to the business												
Activity	Who	Budget	Indicator	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	D
Seasonal Facebook campaigns	AB	£400	3% Conversion rate									
Twitter Advertising Campaigns	AB	£200	7% Conversion rate									
Newsletters to existing customers	CD	£0	Generate 10 bookings									
Refresh website for seasonality	EF	£200	20 winter bookings									
Seasonal press releases/articles	CD	£0	30 winter enquiries									
Google Adwords test	EF	£10	15 clickthru's									
Google Adwords Campaigns	EF	£100	200 clickthru's									
Journalist fam trips	CD	£600	50 enquiries									

Objective 2 -												
Activity	Who	Budget	Indicator	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	D

Key:

Activity & planning

Deadline for delivery



Building a marketing plan



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Tracking and Measuring Communications

If you are putting money and resources into undertaking marketing and communications, it makes sense to be able to see where it has worked or, equally importantly, where it hasn't.

Try to ensure that all your marketing and communications activity includes methods of monitoring and measuring its impact.

Hints & tips

How you will track and measure will often depend on the activity you are undertaking, however below are some ideas and tips to consider throughout:

- Include a unique code on any printed material next to your phone number for people to give you when they call and keep a simple tally of when the code is used
- Use unique web addresses (URLs) to send interested visitors or customers to. This allows the source of visits to be easily tracked through your website statistics
- If relevant, set up a new phone number for enquiries or bookings and then check against your bill how much it is being used
- Ask your customers and visitors for feedback – how did they find you, what made them choose to come? How was the experience?
- Only measure the things that matter to your success. Counting the number of tweets you send on Twitter just because you can makes no difference to results!
- Review results, however you track them, regularly. This could be weekly for emails and social media campaigns but only quarterly for phone directory adverts.
- Look at results holistically – a rise in phone calls about bookings should translate into more actual bookings in the future. If not, where is the interest falling away?

Remember - any marketing plan should not be set in stone. If your results show the need to change then do so! A good plan should evolve as you try and test different methods.



The Milk House

The Milk House

Case Study

Being aware of opportunities and building flexibility into your marketing is key. The Milk House in Sissinghurst gained huge exposure from a cookery demo at the Kent Show. The opportunity came out of the blue but was a great way of getting their product in front of the audience.

[Find out more](#)



Knowing what to say...

Before you dive into buying advertising space or spending hours working on social media, it's important to get your basic communication messages right. That way you make every opportunity to communicate work as hard as possible for your business.

The key ingredients of your brand (see **Developing your brand in Part 1 of the Toolkit**) are the building blocks you need when talking about your business. But how do you translate the brand into specific and persuasive marketing materials or campaigns to drive customer action?

The To Do List

This tool is key to helping you create powerful messages. The elements you need are all included below. It's just like following a recipe!

- 1** Agree key, specific objective of the communication or campaign. *What do you want it to do for you (e.g.; more customers at weekends)?*
- 2** Agree the target audience(s). *Who is this message specifically aimed at? Remember you cannot and should not try and communicate with everyone!*
- 3** Decide which of their needs you can meet and what you have to appeal directly to them. *(why they should listen or read...).*
- 4** Include the core elements of your brand. *You must convey your values and the tone of voice but use only the parts of your core messages and evidence that make sense here .*
- 5** Agree a "Call to Action". *i.e.; what you want people to do when they receive it, PLUS include a method of contacting you either by phone, email address, website contact form, etc.*
- 6** Choose your channel. *Think about what media will be most effective for your objectives – e.g.; if you have a lot of information to impart, consider Facebook rather than email.*
- 7** Check what else you have created in the past. *Don't re-invent the wheel but equally make sure the message is fresh and not a carbon copy.*
- 8** Craft the message. *Look at your responses to the above and now write the messages, select the best images, record your video where relevant as an integral part of those messages.*

Vital Hints & Tips

- Once written, walk away from your copy/materials for a while. When you come back, go through this checklist again to ensure it will result in the action you want it to with the audience you are targeting.
- Include a tracking mechanism so you can analyse whether your marketing is working or not.
- Do review your results and make any necessary changes for future activity



Assessing opportunities



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Is this opportunity right for me?

As a business it's often hard to know which marketing or promotional opportunities to dedicate money and efforts on, however it is vital you do focus your energies and resources on those that will really deliver a return. This is especially true when those limited time or special offers are thrown your way.

A simple checklist

This simple tool helps you to work out whether that great new idea or last minute special offer of advertising space is actually worth doing or not.

The questions are divided into two sections:

1. Show stoppers

If your answers are negative in this section, the opportunity is unlikely to really work for you

2. Does it fit with what you're trying to do?

You can make an informed decision based on your answers to these questions rather than go with a gut feeling or be tempted by a special offer

The Show Stoppers

Show Stoppers	Yes	No
Is the activity going to directly support your business or marketing objectives?		
Is it going to appeal/be visible to the relevant audiences/ visitors/customers you want to reach?		
Is the activity already part of your marketing plan or does it strengthen activity that is already in the plan?		
Is there budget for the activity (or can it be sensibly sourced)?		
Can you actually deliver it in the time and with the resources you have?		
Will it reinforce your brand (help strengthen how you are perceived with the people that matter)?		

If you answered "no" to any of the above, DO NOT pursue the opportunity



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Does it fit with what you're trying to do?

The opportunity itself	Yes	No	Impact
Does it conflict with other marketing activity being launched or communicated at the same time?			If yes, think carefully about re-arranging as this may impact on what you had already planned
- If yes, could either be re-arranged without impacting on success?			If no, it is NOT recommended to pursue this opportunity
Can you successfully follow it up or manage any interest generated by the activity?			If no, take care as any interest you generate may be damaged if it can't be followed up
Can you track or measure its effectiveness?			If no you can still pursue it but avoid investing significantly in such activity
Can you use existing materials or information?			If yes, this may reduce the overall cost. If no, factor any design or production costs into your assessment of likely success
Can the opportunity support other activities within your business?			If yes you will glean greater benefit overall but this is not mandatory
Can it reach multiple audiences without diluting the strength of the message(s)?			Good if yes, and you can ensure the message is not too bland or vague
Can it be recycled across other activity (e.g.; could an article written for a local newspaper be re-cycled on your website)?			If yes, the cost and benefits could be shared and should factor positively into your decision.
Are there other relationship factors to consider (e.g.; to support a partner)?			If yes ensure the other value you generate makes the time and expense worthwhile
Do we have to do it anyway? (e.g. taking out an advert to advise of an event cancellation.			If yes, try to minimise cost & negative impact on other activities and try to include a positive message as well.
Are there any hidden costs to deliver effectively? (e.g.; agency fees, royalties for images or licenses)			If yes, find out. Hidden costs can make activity ineffective if they outweigh the benefit you gain.

If you are happy with the impact of your answers in this group, pursue the opportunity



Effective websites



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Is my website effective?

Your website is THE single most important communications tool you have for your business. And it should be designed and developed as a tool, a tool to engage your customers and inspire them to action, not a vanity project. Your website may be working well for you, but could it be improved?

The Checklist

This tool provides an objective assessment of your website using some fundamental basics. It won't tell you if a piece of copy is right but it will highlight the big issues/barriers that would stop a visitor reading that copy.



Structurally effective?

Does your site load within 4 seconds? <i>Long load times are the easiest way to put off visitors. Check your load time using tools like Google Pagespeed or GTMetrix - they'll even tell you what's slowing it down!</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your site look the same across Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Internet Explorer? <i>Even if you always use Chrome, your visitors might not. To check you'll need to download and install the browsers or alternatively use tools like Browserstack and Browsershots</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your site work on tablets and Smartphones? <i>Chances are your visitors will be looking at your site on mobile. Google Pagespeed offers an audit or emulate mobile browsers using tools like Browserstack or MobileTest.me</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the homepage digestible within 5 seconds? <i>Visitors need to get the basic gist of your homepage in a quick scan. Can you grasp the meaning and point of the site by doing so?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the homepage tell people what your business does above the "fold"? <i>The "fold" is the imaginary line where the bottom of your screen cuts off a page. Anything critical to understanding who you are & what you do should be on that first screen.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Visually effective?

Is the text legible over the background? <i>It doesn't take much to make text difficult to read. Test the contrast on your site with tools like CheckmyColours</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you used a sympathetic or complementary colour scheme? <i>If in doubt follow the 60-30-10 rule which states that three colours should be used in varying degrees (60%, 30%, 10%) to create harmony. Adobe Kuler can test drive combinations for you.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does each element on the page have clear "white space" around it? <i>Cramped text and other elements make information difficult to digest. Ensure there is adequate negative spacing (it doesn't have to be white!) around all the elements so each stands out.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Is my website effective? (cont.)

<p>Do you use no more than three fonts consistently? <i>Using multiple fonts of varying sizes and colours will jar the reader. You have lots of choice on fonts using tools like Google Fonts, but use them sparingly and consistently!</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Does your site use high quality and recent images actually of your business? <i>Images help bring your website to life, poor quality or obviously out-of-date ones will show it up. Use great images that “sell” what you do and try and avoid stock images.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<h3>Navigationally effective?</h3>	
<p>Do you have obvious and consistent navigation on every page? <i>Navigation menus and buttons are the spine of a website, they need to be obvious and consistent across the site. Equally ensure the labels are clear and reflect the content they lead to.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are all your pages less than 3 clicks from the homepage? <i>Navigation should function to help the user “navigate” quickly and easily. If any pages are further than 3 clicks you should look at re-organising (unless you are offering thousands of products).</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Are your links all obvious and consistent? <i>Links indicate where you want a visitor to click, help them do that by making them obvious (underlined or a certain colour) and make that style consistent across the site.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do all your links work? <i>Make sure to check your links regularly as broken ones can and do put visitors off. Use a tool like W3C Linkchecker to speed things up.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you have a custom 404 error page? <i>If a page on your site doesn’t exist, your visitor will get a white “404 Not Found” error. You can easily lose them, so create a custom 404 page with links back to your homepage and a search function.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<h3>Usably effective?</h3>	
<p>No matter where you are on the site, is the next step obvious? <i>Clear calls to action are important on websites, even if that means providing instructions throughout (view the rooms, read the testimonials, call us to book etc).</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Do you provide options to follow, share and clear links to your social media? <i>Users expect to be able to interact via social media, that means not only following you but also quickly sharing. Equally link your social media profiles clearly from your website.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Have you written concise and web friendly content? <i>People tend to scan websites rather than read in depth, therefore use headings, bulleted lists, short and concise paragraphs (each conveying one idea) to break up text.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Can you find the contact information within 5 seconds? <i>The ability for customers to contact you is key. Make sure it’s clear, very visible and is shown consistently across all the pages of your site. Also offer multiple methods (phone, email etc).</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you fail any of these checks don’t worry, BUT do take steps to remedy it. Having the most beautiful site is no excuse for making it difficult for the user to actually “use” it.



Planning the visitor journey

We do not design and build websites so they appeal to us personally, we build them as tools to enable customers to undertake certain actions. Therefore the key point is “ what do we need to do for them to get to their end goal?”

If you make it difficult, unwieldy or confusing they won't get to that goal, no matter how nice it looks or how well it ranks on Google.

Thinking from a visitor's perspective

To think from a visitor's perspective we need to put ourselves in their shoes and examine the decision making journey through your website. This involves thinking at specific stages about the information they need to make a positive decision and achieve the end goal.

N.B. You may need to plan multiple journeys if you have differing audiences or if you have a business that does multiple things...

1

Their goals & needs

e.g. what are they looking for your website to do for them?

2

What knowledge might they arrive with?

e.g. what might they already know (or think they know) about your business?

3

Vital information they need to make a decision

e.g. price, availability, location, T's & c's etc

4

Useful information that could help

e.g. local weather, public transport information, testimonials etc

5

Resulting action you want to see

e.g. call us to book, email a booking form, book online

Remember to keep upmost in mind what you need the website to do for you. It really is just a tool to encourage certain behaviours in its users. Keep it focussed but do ensure you provide everything they need to make the all-important decision!



Les Mazures

Les Mazures

Case Study

This small eco guesthouse pride themselves on a clean and clear website. Everything is designed specifically to get the message across and assist visitors to quickly find all they need to make a booking and plan a visit.

[Find out more](#)



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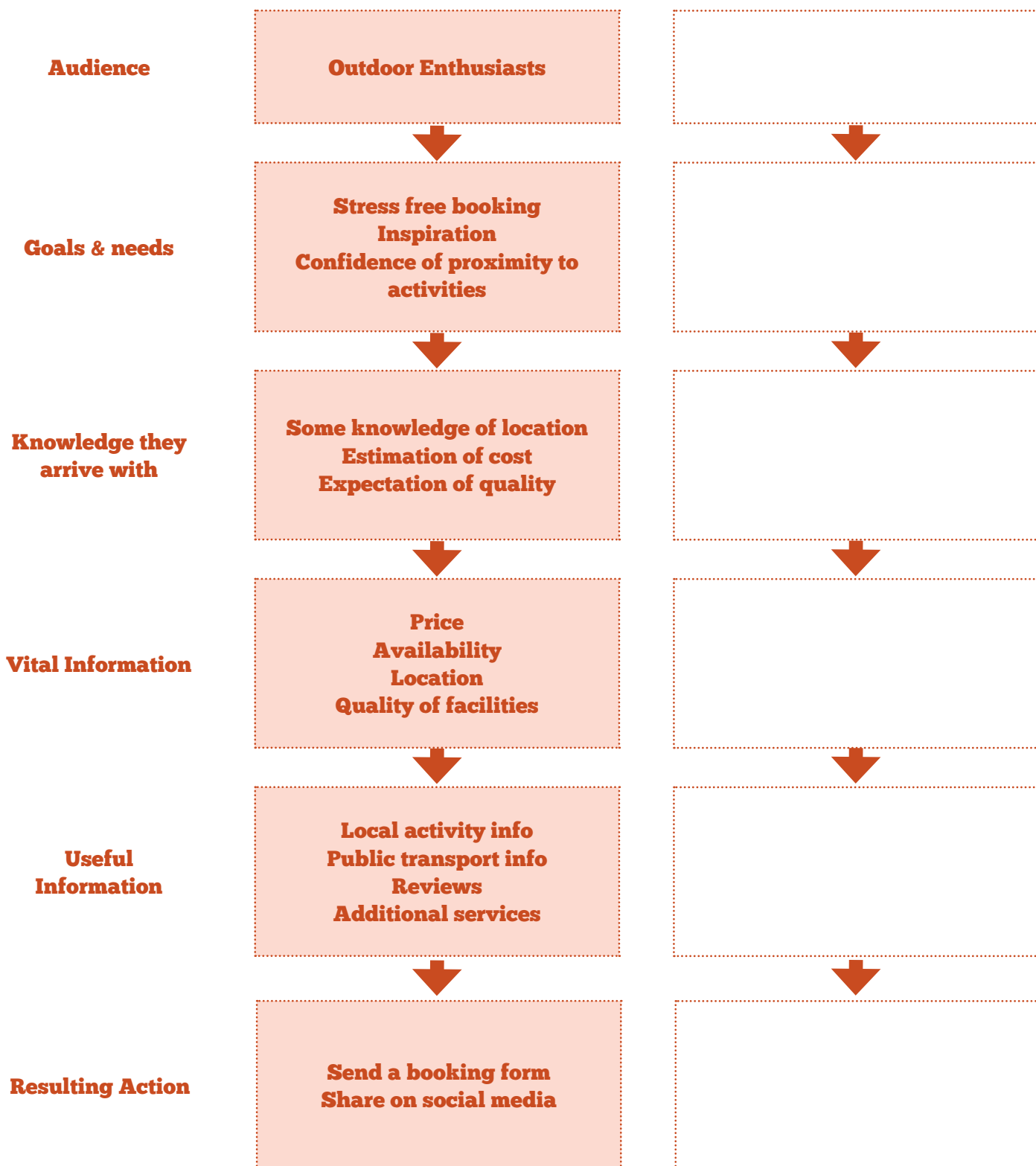
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A sample visitor journey

The example visitor journey is shown here for the website of a four star quality rural B&B. Use it as a guide to complete your own.

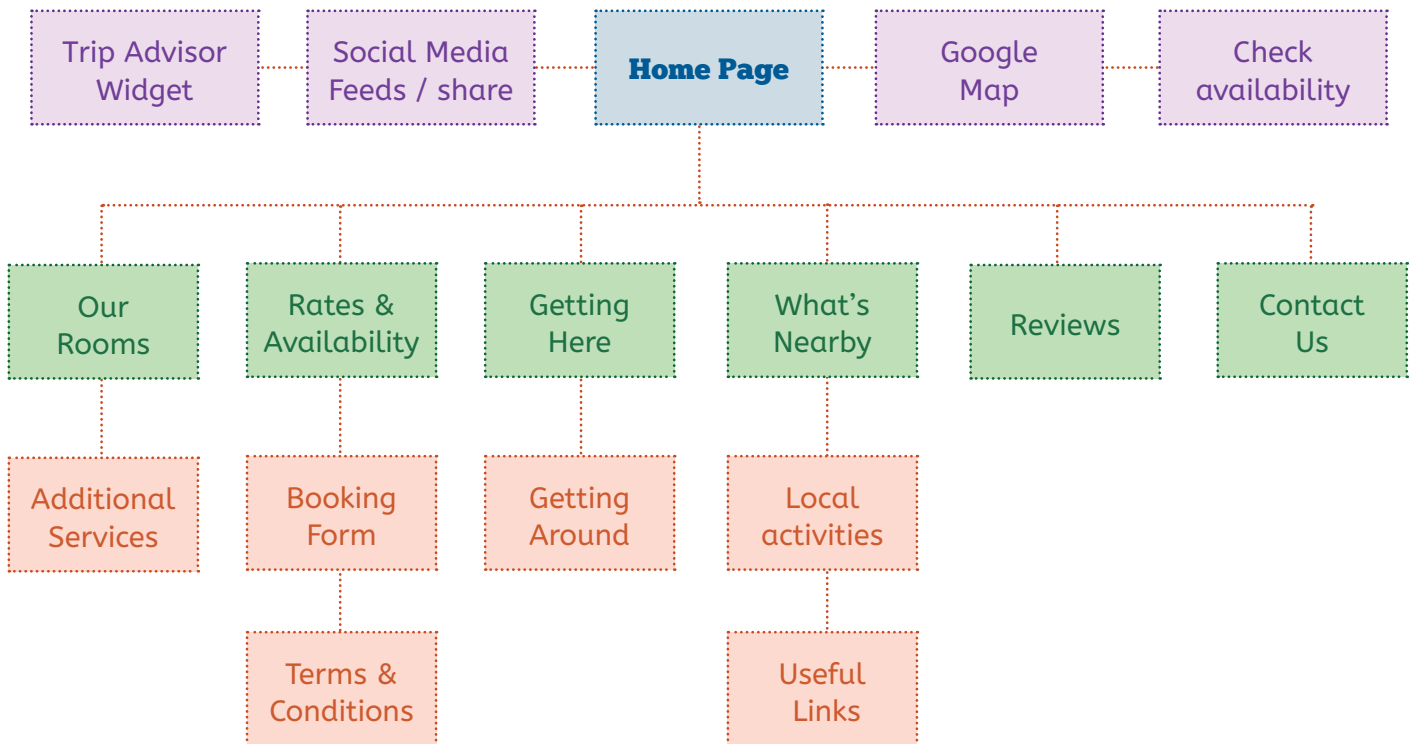




Planning the architecture

Based on your results you can begin to map out an architecture diagram for your site. This is a simple hierarchy diagram that folds in all the content you want to include, but should maintain the focus on the vital elements to get them from the homepage to the point of action.

An example, based on the sample user journey, is shown below.



Key:



Homepage



Top Level Navigation



Secondary pages



Quick Links (on each page)

Getting Started

Start by placing your homepage on the diagram, then using the user journey as a guide, map out the top level navigation (the pages that link from the top menu).

If you need further pages, place them within the top navigation sections (ensuring they make sense to be aligned that way). It's also worth considering which elements or "utilities" are vital to be quick-linked from either the homepage or standardised one each page.

This now dictates what, how and where content needs to be structured in your website. You should keep this somewhere handy as a reference as you build or redevelop the website.



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Writing for the web

Even if your website looks amazing it stills needs to be populated with something, that's where great copywriting makes the difference and keeps your website focussed, clear and enticing for your audience.

Key tips for great copy

- When people read content online they usually scan the web pages to find information, therefore large unbroken blocks of text will simply not work
 - Use headings and sub headings to break up the content and draw attention to key points.
 - Write short paragraphs of 5 to 10 lines maximum, ideally covering only one subject in each.
- Use bullet points if you have several points to make in a paragraph. It will make it easier to read by drawing attention to these points.
 - Sometimes an image says it better than a lot of written text, therefore use images to enhance your content.

Is your copy effective?

Once you have written your copy use the following checklist to make sure it's ready to go!

Have you written for your audience in terms of both style & content?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you used action verbs (e.g. discover) at the start of sentences to grab attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you written in a conversational and non-corporate manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you written clear, jargon or technical term free copy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you included keywords and search relevant terms for your business?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you provided links to other relevant parts of your site to enhance your copy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you written credible copy that accurately reflects your business?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you emphasised the benefits for your audience (what they get from it)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you included a clear call to action?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you proof read it for spelling and grammar errors?	<input type="checkbox"/>



Optimising for Search Engines

Creating an amazing website is fine, however we need to ensure potential customers will find it. To do so we need to optimise how it appears so the Search Engines like Google and Bing find it easily.

Contrary to popular belief, Search Engines don't use black magic to determine rankings, nor do they use simple metrics like number of inbound links or focus solely on metatags.

Essentially how your site ranks can be boiled down to (in order of importance):

- What words you have used on the website
- What titles you have given to your pages.
- Where the links to your website come from.
- What words those links use to describe your site.
- How quickly your site loads and performs
- Your reputation and credibility
- How frequently your site is updated



Getting Spotted...

Image courtesy of Visit Kent

Essential SEO tips

Much of SEO (search engine optimisation) is still predicated on finding and optimising your site around keywords and phrases - the things users will type into search engines. You can plan and identify your keywords by either

1 Looking at your webstats to see what people are searching for when they find you

2 Using Google's free [Keyword Planner](#) or the free version of [Traffic Travis](#)

Once you have your keywords, make sure to check the following elements to improve your SEO:

Have you completed a unique title tag for each page?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you included your keywords in the meta description tag?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have keywords in your primary (H1) headings?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you mentioned keywords in your body copy?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have ALT and TITLE tags on all your images?	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Essential SEO tips (cont.)

Have you checked your site's performance on Google PageSpeed ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made efforts to obtain inbound links from good trusted sites relevant to you?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you submitted sitemaps to Google, Bing and Yahoo?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Things to avoid

All of the above are things you can do, but here are three things you can't or shouldn't.

- 1** Don't keyword stuff - *i.e. simply repeating your keywords out of context - it looks terrible for your user and will be penalised by search engines.*
- 2** Don't attempt to cheat the system - *Search Engine Algorithms are sophisticated and designed to ensure relevance gets priority. They will and do penalise infringements severely.*
- 3** Don't buy SEO unless you know exactly what you need or hope to achieve. *With specific goals in mind paid support can pay dividends, otherwise it may not be that useful*

Other Resources

- Great SEO Checklist
www.clickminded.com/seo-checklist/
- Google Keyword Planner
<https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>
- Google Webmaster Tools
<http://www.google.com/webmasters/>
- Bing Webmaster Tools
<http://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster/>



Is social media right for me?

Social media is popular with billions of people across the world and tens of millions in the UK. People of all ages use various tools to communicate with friends and family and, most importantly for visitor businesses, to both find out about places to go and then share their experiences of visiting with others.

These are all great reasons to consider using social media but that doesn't mean you have to if it won't work for your business. This tool will help you decide if it's right for you

What do I need social media to do for me?

To help you get started use the tools below to think about what you really need social media for, how you should use it strategically and how to factor it into your everyday activities.

Answer the questions as clearly and critically as you can.

What are you trying to achieve?

Who are your target audiences?

What kind of relationship do you want with them? (transactional or deeper?)

What content do you have or can easily get that will support your objectives?

What do your competitors or wider sector do on social media that's working?

Can you generate enough interesting and relevant content for regular and ongoing conversations? If so, what?

What kind of resources do you have? (Time to commit and budget for advertising)

With your answers in mind, look at the different social media platforms in the following section and pick the ones that best suit your needs.



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Choosing the right Social media tool

Once you have evaluated the need for social media within your business, you need to consider the tools available. There are a huge number of social media tools and platforms out there but trying to use more than a few at once is a recipe for disaster. Instead it's best to choose the tools that work for you and stick with them (using activity results to help decide whether to try alternatives).

Tool Chooser

The chooser below outlines the most popular tools and platforms and the ones likely to offer you the best opportunities. Pick no more than four of the tools below that suit your needs.

Please note that this isn't an exhaustive list and tools are changing all the time; for the most up to date or more in-depth information, check out the tools individually.



Twitter

Who Uses it?

- Average age around 40
- Individuals and organisations equally

What do they use it for?

- Short conversations (140 characters only)
- Socialising, opinion-sharing, researching ideas, checking up on competitors, promoting services, answering customer questions
- Can use paid-for advertising

Pros

- Simple and free to use
- Can buy low cost promotional activity
- Can build a business and customer network
- Open and honest forum where users give genuine feedback and share content
- Can update quickly from a phone or desktop
- Great for pithy, punchy thoughts, special offers, promoting links to Youtube etc

Cons

- Not a place for deep engagement with your audience
- Have to use it frequently to gain any lasting benefit
- Limited sharing of pictures and video

Link: www.twitter.com



Exmoor Falconry

Exmoor Falconry

Case Study

The team at Exmoor Falconry have embraced Youtube, setting up their own channel. They use the channel to showcase the experiences a customer could have, giving exclusive views of the birds and educating potential visitors.

[Find out more](#)



Social media



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Facebook

Who Uses it?

- Average age just under 40 but younger adults use it far more frequently and then predominantly via mobile
- Organisations can set up pages and groups but value depends on type of organisation and what's needed

What do they use it for?

- Socialising mainly - emphasis on personal communications rather than business
- Users interact with fun brands and good causes
- Playing games and sharing stories, pictures and videos with friends

Pros

- Businesses can have secure Groups for VIP customers or other closed networks
- Business Pages are simple to set up and give you a presence that can be updated via mobile or desktop
- Can share interactive content like competitions and other apps
- It's popular - there are more than 1.2 billion users!

Cons

- Worth to businesses as a free service diminishing as opportunities to communicate with networks are reduced
- Paid for advertising not as targeted as Google
- Becoming ever more social and perhaps less useful to untrendy or 'more serious' businesses
- Changes frequently
- Needs new content daily

Link: www.facebook.com



Google+

Who Uses it?

- 23-35 most active users but 45-54 is fastest growing group
- People who like connecting their digital lives via Google and Android phones

What do they use it for?

- Socialising
- Searching for things to do and places to go
- Businesses have G+ pages to boost SEO
- Send messages directly to people in their 'circles' for marketing
- Can share photos, videos, blogs, comments, answer customer questions
- Paid for advertising using Google Adwords

Pros

- Lots of free add-on services like Google Maps, Places, online video streaming and video meetings
- Growing and has development budgets of Google behind it
- Seamlessly integrates with all Android phones
- Boosts SEO rankings for your brand and connected websites

Cons

- Not as popular as Facebook in Europe (yet)
- Not as much business presence as other tools, but growing

Link: www.plus.google.com



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Pinterest

Who Uses it?	What do they use it for?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Very female dominated and popularity growing → Typically younger and working age adults → Heavy mobile users → Some fun and lifestyle brands (including holiday companies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Posting and sharing images which tell a story or reflect an opinion → Businesses often use it to post images of their services being enjoyed → Lots of sharing of content amongst users → Lifestyle, personal promotion, business promotion (as long as the business is cool, trendy or photogenic)
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Can add content simply from a mobile phone or via a desktop → Engaging content will be shared across Pinterest users and via other social media tools (as users can simply press one button) → Good if you're a lifestyle businesses and appealing to a female audience → Can be used as an online image repository 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Can be a distraction as is more about awareness and image than driving bottom line results → Content only visible to other Pinterest users
Link: www.pinterest.com	



Instagram

Who Uses it?	What do they use it for?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Most users under 30 → VERY mobile-centric → More female users but not as significant as Pinterest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Posting and sharing images which tell a story or reflect an opinion → It's all about sharing daily life and very social for most users → Social networks built independently of other tools
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Great if your brand is young, trendy and photogenic → A young target audience will share your content as long as you recognise them and reciprocate → Easy to create and share content on mobile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Needs to be little and often in terms of use to be recognised → Instant forgetfulness so campaigns need to keep being reposted and refreshed → Content only visible to other Instagram users
Link: www.instagram.com	



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LinkedIn

Who Uses it?

- Professionals & networkers
- Organisations who want to raise their profile

What do they use it for?

- Research on competitors and potential investments
- Recruitment
- Finding partners to work with, particularly in professional services arena
- Finding like-minded contacts to share ideas with, build opportunities through
- Research on potential employees

Pros

- Lots of relevant groups to join based on industry, geography or areas of interest
- Great learning tool as full of experts and useful discussions any user can join
- Can conduct research

Cons

- Not a consumer tool
- Ability to contact volumes of people directly and connect with strangers without introductions are paid for only services

Link: www.linkedin.com



Youtube

Who Uses it?

- Almost anyone with internet access
- Usage is interest-based so anything trendy, funny, topical or related to celebrities gets the greatest viewing figures

What do they use it for?

- People use it to research topics of interest, find instructions for doing things, learn music, review holiday destinations in advance, watch TV programmes and films, listen to music and just have fun.
- If it fits the criteria on the left, it's likely to be there and being shared with others...
- Businesses use it to engage with their audiences on a more human level as well as use it as a repository for their videos

Pros

- World's second largest search engine with users proactively looking for content
- Cheap and simple to create, upload and share content
- Businesses can showcase their experiences
- Can embed anything you find on Youtube (copyright applies) into your other digital activity
- You can generate advertising revenue if your videos are popular

Cons

- Difficult to predict success as what's trendy is nearly always a surprise to the video owners (except Royal weddings, Olympics, celebrities etc)
- More technically sound tools around for higher quality or longer films (e.g.; Vimeo)
- You have to drive traffic to your content by linking marketing and other social media activity to it

Link: www.youtube.com



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Blogs

Who Uses it?	What do they use it for?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Very popular with internet users as the topics covered are so varied → Businesses successfully use them to promote their thinking, ideas or people to make them stand out from the competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → To share latest events, ideas or opinions on relevant news → Encourage comments from readers to show you are engaging with your audience → They can be embedded in or linked to your website to boost online traffic → Giving your web visitors a reason to keep coming back to your website
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Very low cost and simple to set up with lots of tools available → Leisure and travel blogs linked to video and image content are very popular → Audio and video blogs are also available but not as popular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → There are over a billion already so think about whether you can make yours different and interesting enough for people to read → It takes time to develop a following → You should blog at least once a week for maximum impact
Link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog	



TripAdvisor

Who Uses it?	What do they use it for?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Tech-aware adults, many via mobile devices, looking for things to do, places to go and experiences to enjoy → Businesses in the leisure, holiday and accommodation sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → For businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to reach the large, relevant TripAdvisor audience - to showcase what they have to offer and encourage bookings / custom directly - to encourage customers to leave a review which acts as a testimonial that others will read → Individuals to look for things to do etc PLUS what other people like them think of what's on offer
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Good reviews generate more business → The tool is simple to use → Your business may already be there and being reviewed so you might not be starting from scratch → Popular with travellers and reviews taken seriously by users who act accordingly → TA provides several tools to help you get your customers to leave reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Rarely, spurious reviews might leave a business temporarily exposed to false ratings → You need to manage the account to get the best impact: about £400 per year and at least looking at your page a few times a week to monitor activity → You need to encourage people to leave reviews (but this isn't hard)
Link: www.tripadvisor.co.uk/	



Know the ground rules

Social media can be a vast subject, with different tools and platforms having their own rules and suggested ways of approaching them. However, summarised below are some specific hints and tips that apply across every type of social media. Familiarise yourself with them before diving in...

Social media do's

- Listen first, then talk. You have to give more than you take in terms of information. This means sharing, answering questions or contributing to discussions 2-3 times more often than you promote yourself
- Post questions, provide answers, be relevant. Questions are a great way to engage as everyone has an opinion that you can then share with others if it's relevant and promotes your business
- Promote and support others (pay it forward). Businesses that use social media need to appear relatively selfless if you want to then promote an offer later on.
- Respect the audience and be professional. Think about your tone of voice and brand values at all times and use them to underpin how you communicate
- Thank people for talking with you / contributing. Recognition and public acknowledgement of help or just an idea are great ways to build loyalty and raise your own brand credibility
- Write for a U-certificate. No 'adult' language and no heavy intellectual or industry-specific in-jokes and comments (unless 100% relevant to your target audience)
- Develop a high-quality following. Don't buy followers or networks; it's better to grow a smaller following that wants to hear what you have to say
- Link the platforms together wherever possible. None of the tools work best in isolation. Coordinate your activity across the tools you use (some can be linked automatically)
- Look for content from what you're already doing - recycle! Newspapers and websites you read or e-newsletters you receive all contain relevant content you can share. Answer questions from others on social media that are relevant to your business, your activities or your place
- Keep it up! Social media is a medium-term tool. It takes time to build a network that respects you and will respond to what you have to say. If you can't devote at least 3 hours per week, concentrate on your website and email marketing instead.



Audley End

Audley End

Case Study

Social media isn't just about breaking news. The team at Audley End employ social media to give visitors an insight into all the different aspects of running the property, engaging them in the stories and roles of all those who work on its upkeep, including Robbie the horse!

[Find out more](#)



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Social media don'ts

- Discuss specific business arrangements or opportunities. Social media is not 100% secure and it's easy to mix up the public and private options, so keep negotiations and other sensitive information elsewhere
 - Assume responsibility for third-party content. Taking credit for others' work is frowned upon and may be illegal. Acknowledge others' contributions if you want to use them
 - Over-moderate. Not everyone will agree with you all the time and this is OK. Resist the temptation to delete or argue with every negative comment as doing so makes you look unreasonable
 - Ignore negative feedback or comments. Take three steps to turn negative comments to your advantage:
 - Thank the commenter for their feedback
 - Say what you're going to do about it
 - Invite them back to experience the improvements (often with an incentive like two meals for the price of one)
 - Forget why you're using social media. Social media is not an end in itself, you're using it to achieve your objectives so don't get distracted. Set out a content plan that you can stick to
- Use jargon. This often comes across as condescending and seldom engages non-expert audiences
 - Try to be everywhere all at once. Focus on the tools that are most used by your target audience and that help you meet your objectives. No more
 - Get scared by updates and changes – explore them! Social media tools change frequently but there are always lots of Youtube videos and help forums online that explain what these changes mean. Google the changes or your questions and you're bound to find some help
 - Forget to check your accounts regularly. If people ask questions, you should answer promptly (doesn't have to be instantly) especially if they are customers
 - Mix up personal and organisation accounts. You wear two hats on social media - your organisation and you personally. Remember the tone of voice and values of your organisation and stick to those when communicating as the business
 - Avoid engaging in very controversial or divisive topics as you will likely alienate a portion of your audience.



Email newsletters & updates



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Do you need an e-newsletter?

Email updates or newsletters are for directly marketing a commercial message to a bulk number of recipients from either a bought list or a current customer database. It works very effectively either as follow-up after a visit or to alert existing customers of offers, changes and new enticements to come back.

However, they might not be the right tool for your business. As ever you need to analyse what you are trying to achieve, what you want to communicate, your resources and, importantly who your recipients are.

A quick test...

Use these questions to help decide if you need to expend the time and effort to create one:

Question	Yes	No
Do you need to offer sneak previews of products or services to customers or contacts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will your contacts care if you send them an update on what's happening with your business or in your area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there seasonal or other key changes in what you offer that would be of interest to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your customers and target audiences online and does this help you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have an email contact list for your business that you could use to generate more opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a website you're proud to send traffic to in order to find out more information about your business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you set aside the time to create at least quarterly, quality updates, track results and make improvements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like the ability to test your email messages and track which works best for you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered yes to any of these questions AND the statement is important to you, consider creating a regular e-update or newsletter to share your relevant content with your audience.



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How do I send an e-newsletter?

There is nothing stopping you from sending email directly from your own account to your customers. However if you are trying to send a mass mailing you will likely hit some issues. Standard email will have a limit on the number of sends; equally you may find messages landing in spam folders rather than inboxes.

However there are dozens of dedicated free and paid for tools to choose from so you need to do a little legwork to see which suits your needs best.

Which e-newsletter tools to use?

Before making your decision, complete this checklist to help identify the key criteria and features which are going to be important to you.

Criteria	Yes	No
Do you have more than 500 email contacts already?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have permission to use them for an email update?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want to be able to add emails to your contact lists automatically?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need your contact lists managed automatically e.g. by removing duplicates or ring-fencing and protecting people who unsubscribe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want to be able to include a sign-up form on your website that links directly to your email provider?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need example email templates to get going?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want to send more than 5 updates every month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have budget to invest in your e-newsletter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you want to see detailed, automated results after every campaign?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now, with those features in mind, check out the popular tools to find the package that suits you:

- [Constant Contact](#)
- [Mailchimp](#)
- [iContact](#)
- [hubspot](#)
- or browse other options via [smallbiztrends](#).



Email newsletters & updates



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Building your e-newsletter

Having the right tool won't instantly make your e-newsletter effective: rather you'll need to focus on what goes into it to make it really hit home.

The Basics

- 1** Clarify your newsletter's goal. *Before writing a word, make sure you're clear on the newsletter's purpose. Is it to help you generate leads? Get more email contacts? Send traffic to your website? Try to pick one specifically and don't do too much with one newsletter.*
- 2** Gather your content. *If you're sending regular newsletters, plan a content calendar so you know in advance what you need to find rather than waiting for the day it's due. To make things easier, try to theme each issue to help you focus on what to look for.*
- 3** Plan your design. *Make sure you've got an idea of how your newsletter will look before writing copy. That way you'll know exactly how much space you have to work with. Your template doesn't have to be flashy, rather it just needs to be easy for your recipients to read, scan, and click the elements you want them to. These days, it has to be mobile friendly too.*
- 4** Look at the available templates. *If you're not an experienced designer, don't be afraid to use one of the in-built templates in many of the major tools; they will be ready-optimised. Pick a design that reflects your brand and is easily recognisable as yours for your readers.*

Writing your content

The crux of any e-update is the content. Here are some useful tips to ensure yours is fit for purpose:

A compelling subject line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use action language like “don't miss out on...” or “enjoy a beer on us...” → Personalise to the segment you're talking to; if you have different audiences with different interests, try targeted subject lines → Be punchy and succinct first, then worry about being catchy → Align the subject line to the main content – they have to work together
Great Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Be relevant to your audience's needs and yours: e.g. if the recipients are all customers, make that clear as the reason they're getting this special email → Talk in the second person – more “you” and “your”, less “we” or “I” to focus on your readers → Talk about the benefits your services bring, not the features, and back this up in the images you use, too → Be brief. Don't dumb down or patronise your readers but don't waste their time with pages and pages of copy → Use personalisation tokens from your email tool (like the ability to insert the recipient's name or organisation automatically) but not too much... it's creepy otherwise



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Writing your content (cont.)

Impactful images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Most email templates enable you to use images which can really bring your newsletter to life but they're not mandatory. → Use the guidelines within your template to get the right sizes → Make sure they reflect the theme and support your objectives: e.g. if you're trying to attract families, use images of families having a great time with you → Make sure you have permission to use them
Clear CTA (call to action)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Every newsletter must include numerous calls to action, even if it is the same one repeated several times. → It needs to be relevant to the topic and useful to the audience: e.g. click for more information on an event, request a call back, go straight to a VIP booking page

Preflight...

Even with the perfect email crafted there are a few final steps before you hit send and these can make or break all the work you have done so far...

- 1** Test different browsers and email providers. *Most of the email tools available enable you to test your e-updates before sending them. Send them to different email providers and browsers (including mobile) to make sure it looks like it should and that all the links work.*
- 2** Time when you send your newsletter. *Try and send your email when you know your audience will be likely to receive it, or schedule it to be sent at a specific time. If you don't know, just apply some common sense and use the analytics reports to schedule the next round.*
- 3** Use the results. *After a few days and over at least a few weeks, look at the analytics reports in your email tool to follow open rates, clicks, social media shares etc. See what's working or not and change for the next time. You can even see who has clicked or taken an action and get in touch with them directly to see what it was they liked.*



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Data Protection and building contact lists

Email marketing is dependent on having a list of people to contact. However there are some specific factors you need to consider in building those lists.

Tips on growing your contact lists

There are lots of ways to grow your newsletter contact lists but the most effective depend on you providing relevant and compelling content over time (just follow the above tips) to ensure people want to keep receiving your updates. Other tactics you can use include:

- Include an e-newsletter sign-up widget on your website which links straight to your email tool
- Include a sign-up link (to the email tool) in your general email footer
- Ask your customers or visitors to go to your website and sign up
- Include links to previous newsletters in your social media activity and ask people to sign up if they like what they see
- Include sign up widgets within your Facebook or other social media pages

Emailing & Data Protection

E-newsletters and updates are electronic communications which are delivered straight into someone's inbox. As such the contact details you use and how you use them are governed by law, depending on where you're sending those messages from and to.

In the UK - [The Privacy and Electronic Communications \(EC Directive\) Regulations](#) which are managed by the Information Commissioner's Office. Or in the EU - [Regulations on electronic communications and privacy](#) which are managed by The Contact Network of Spam Enforcement Authorities (CNSA).

If you are based in the UK or wider EU, you must make reasonable efforts to ensure the security of any contact details you keep and officially you should only contact people whose permission you have to do so.

In summary, focus on these key points:

- Do include your valid physical postal address in every email you send out.
- Do provide a clear and obvious way to opt out of every email you send out, and honour the unsubscribe within 10 days.
- Do use clear "From," "To," and "Reply to" language that accurately reflects who you are. This applies to the person or business sending the message, as well as the domain name and email address.
- Don't sell or transfer any email addresses to another list.
- Don't make it hard to unsubscribe from emails.
- Don't use deceptive subject lines in your emails that misrepresent the contents of your message.



Planning PR

Effective PR works alongside other communications. Your activity must directly support your objectives, be planned in advance to give you the best chance of getting the right messages across and be easy for the media to use.

Step-by-step Planner

- 1** Set out the objectives your PR must achieve. *These MUST BE aligned with your business objectives: e.g. are you launching a new service to attract a certain type of visitor or covering an event that has already happened? If so, your PR activities must focus solely on the associated audiences, testimonials, examples etc*
- 2** Create a timing plan. *This lets you see where, when and how PR will be coordinated with your other communications. This is crucial to giving yourself enough time to create a campaign and also to helping you coordinate so as not to bombard your audiences. Use a simple spreadsheet to keep track.*
- 3** Build case studies / testimonials continually. *That way you can always provide evidence of the great experiences you offer, linked to the PR stories you want to tell. These are most powerful when accompanied by images, quotes and even video.*
- 4** Target the right people. *Research the media titles, editors, journalists and influential bloggers who will be interested and build a contact list (spreadsheet) where you can track contact details and notes of interests, date of contact and next actions.*
www.newspapersoc.org.uk/ is a great place to start.
- 5** Create a timing plan. *This lets you see where, when and how PR will be coordinated with your other communications. This is crucial to giving yourself enough time to create a campaign and also to helping you coordinate so as not to bombard your audiences. Use a simple spreadsheet to keep track.*
- 6** Think about how you will distribute your releases. *There are several options: each has advantages, depending on your budgets, timescales and the relationships you've already built up with media contacts, e.g.:*
 - Directly via email to your contacts with another email to follow up and a phone call
 - Via newswire services like www.prnewswire.co.uk (see tips below)
 - To influential bloggers by commenting on their other articles
 - If you use social media find a number of influencers who could share your message
- 7** Brief spokespeople. *And make sure they are available for comment when needed*
- 8** Track & measure. *Use online tools like Google alerts and get physical copies of coverage to track where and how your story was covered and use this coverage in follow-up or future marketing.*



Useful PR tips

Once your plan is complete, think about these helpful tips...

Overall Approach

- Be newsworthy – your message must have a relevant interest for the media channels you're targeting and the audiences they serve. It must also have an angle for the editors and journalists, e.g. something new, a human interest, local significance
- Focus on your message. People often leave their message out of their news releases! Avoid jargon, buzzwords and phrases only you understand
- Write in a journalistic tone, not in a marketing style.

Know your reader

- Do you need to target specific editors or journalists because either their medium reaches the audiences you want or they have a particular interest in your topic? If so, a little Google research will help you
- Don't forget local and regional media – they are often understaffed and are more likely to pick up content with an interesting local angle
- Consider paying for 'newswire services' like www.prnewswire.co.uk or using free alternatives to distribute your releases automatically (more useful if you need to reach a wider audience)

Structure

- The headline is the vital first thing an editor sees so make it grab attention
- Get the headline on one line and make it as tantalising as possible. Many recipients view releases over newswires and choose them by headline alone
- Include your contact name, dateline, web site URL and phone number
- Always include standard information about your organisation in the last paragraph (often called a boilerplate). The headline for this section should be "About (insert your company's name here)."

Content & Style

- Get to the point quickly and back it up with quotes and evidence
- Use proper grammar and punctuation. Check for typos thoroughly!
- If you include subjective, sensitive or controversial content make sure it is properly credited or attributed.
- Write in the third person. Do not use pronouns such as I, we, us, our, your, etc. except in direct quotes.
- Include images or video links to make a story more powerful. Make sure you have permissions to use all materials.
- Length – be concise and aim for two pages or less. Use bullet points sparingly as journalists like to use ready-to-go text
- Check the final draft, and double-check phone numbers and website URLs



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News release template

Headline	Right at the top; tells readers what it's about and why they'll care.
Sub-head / lead paragraph	Entices the reader to carry on by expanding on the main headline
Dateline	The date of the story and the place it refers to.
Call to action	Most readers won't get to the end so insert your call to action link for the public after the first or second paragraph. Limit the use of links in your release so focus is on your call to action.
Second paragraph(s)	This is where you tell us the essence of your story. You can have more than one paragraph but try to be succinct. Use bold headings and bullets (sparingly) to add readability.
Quotes	Journalists like quotes as they make for more interesting articles and help them not need to research further. Quote someone who's relevant to the story and prepared to talk with the media.
Background information	Now you can fill in the detail of your story. You need things that make your story credible but don't bombard the reader with facts!
Boilerplate	Establish your credentials and give journalists the 'about-the-organisation' details they need for the story.
Media contact info	Relevant contact details if the journalists want to get in touch.

Feature release Template

Headlines	Write a two-line headline that tells the story. This will be all editors will have to go on to decide whether they consider it for publication or broadcast. If it reads like an advert, it won't get used.
First paragraph	Expand upon headline in around 30 words. Keep all your paragraphs short, using simple sentences and without digressing.
Second paragraph	Back up your story with supporting information; identify who is telling the story and add the call to action details if relevant, along with your web address and a hyperlink
Third paragraph	Use a 'human' or compelling quote from a spokesperson you want interviewed or who can lend authority to the story.
Fourth paragraph	Transition into details and explain how the service or experience works, or you can provide tips and advice targeted for the audience.
Fifth paragraph	Support the story with a third-party endorsement or a quote and a fact or statistic to demonstrate the importance of the story.
Last paragraph	Tell the audience how to experience or buy what you've been talking about. Repeat the call to action information.
Editors' notes	Include any other information editors might want, e.g. photos, videos, reviews etc.



Creating a press pack

A press or media pack can be useful if you need to provide editors, journalists or other influencers such as bloggers with some useful and relevant information on your business, what you do, your place and why people should be interested in you.

Packs can be sent directly to your targeted media contacts; they can be electronic or paper-based and they should ALWAYS include an obvious call to action for the recipient.

What's in the pack?

PR packs are not compulsory but if you do decide to create one, use the checklist below to make sure it's packed right:

An introduction – this can be a letter, a flyer or just a big statement that outlines why the recipient should be reading your pack now!	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some brief information on your organisation, defined in terms of the benefits you provide to your customers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hook for the story you hope they will write – this should be linked to your objectives but not too specific (e.g. only useful at Christmas time)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Add testimonials where it supports the story. Remember it is information and a story, so do not be overtly salesy or promotional	<input type="checkbox"/>
A copy of the related press release	<input type="checkbox"/>
An example or two of previous, relevant media coverage if you have any	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant photos or video links that can be used by the media	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information about your place if it adds to your story e.g. how being part of a recognised special-interest landscape might make your offer even more appealing	<input type="checkbox"/>

When you give them out, follow up diligently and several times to make sure they have everything needed to tell your story.

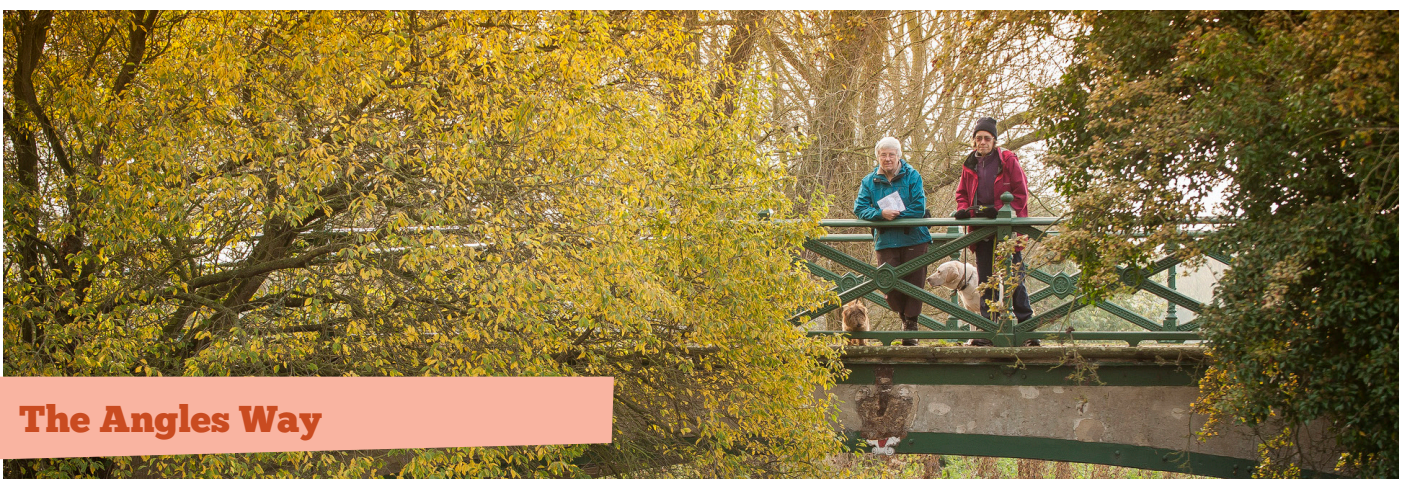


Using print effectively

Given the costly nature of printed material and the difficulty in getting it in front of your prime customers, each and every publication needs to work as hard as possible for your business.

Hints & Tips

- 1** Don't try and create a catch-all publication. *Instead ensure each and every piece of print has a specific purpose and objective. This should dictate not only the content but also the format, size of print run and distribution plan. Shorter print runs of tailored publications for specific purposes are better than one big one trying to do everything.*
- 2** Who is it for? *Try and ensure every publication is targeted to the audience specifically, considering style, content, tone of voice, imagery used, etc*
- 3** Make sure the size fits. *It's tempting to be different and clever, however if you want others to stock your publication, make it easy by conforming to standard racking sizes - A4/A5 or DL*
- 4** Every publication needs a clear call to action. *An obvious next step the reader will take once they have digested it. Whether that's to call you or visit the website, make it clear!*
- 5** Ensure any publication is designed to compete with other publications it may sit alongside. *Employing a designer for small jobs is usually not expensive and will pay dividends.*
- 6** Make certain the final files are of print quality. *That generally means 300 dpi images set to CMYK colour space, files provided as distilled .pdfs and supplied with bleed and trim marks.*
- 7** Sustainability. *When choosing print stock do consider sustainable options like FSC-approved or recycled stock and vegetable-based inks.*



The Angles Way

Image courtesy of Norfolk County Council



Pre-press checklist

Each and every publication will be different. However, there are some basic rules and criteria you should check each against before you actually go to print.

Does the design match or reinforce your overall brand? <i>Everything you produce should do this regardless of the medium; look at colour scheme, fonts and tone of voice.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the top third of the front page grab attention from a leaflet rack? <i>If it is racked alongside others this is likely the only area that will be seen.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the calls to action obvious and visible on every page/side? <i>You can't predict how someone will read the publication so make the CTAs visible everywhere.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you planned a method of tracking & measuring when people respond? <i>Given the cost, all printed publications need to be monitored for effectiveness</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you checked differing print suppliers for best price/quality? <i>Prices and quality can vary hugely, so shop around (but don't neglect a local option).</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Planning distribution

The golden rule is to plan distribution early, before content is written or design considered. Distribution companies can save you a lot of effort and access places you cannot reach alone. However, the more information you can give them, the more likely the service will be effective, so it's worth following the same planning process regardless.

Step 1 - Publication profile

Identify and note down for yourself the key fundamentals of the publication.

What is the publication designed to do? <i>e.g. raise awareness, promote a specific service</i>	
Where in the visitor journey will it be read? <i>e.g. unaware, pre-visit, in-situ, post visit</i>	
What resources do you have to distribute it? <i>e.g. budget, time/staff resources etc</i>	
What are the time constraints on distribution? <i>e.g. shelf life, offer period, seasonality etc</i>	



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Step 2 - Identifying locations

The next step is to map out the potential places that your target customers will be exposed to publications. Consider each phase and draw up a list of potential distribution venues in each.

Location	Who you will reach	Places to consider
To their doorstep	Previous visitors, targeted audiences based on postcode data or interest group.	Direct mail, door drops, inserts within other publications.
At your business	Existing visitors, local users, staff and suppliers.	Point of sale, waiting areas, in bedrooms, on tables, dedicated information boards.
Within your local area	As above + visitors to other businesses in area, specialist trip shoppers, passing trade, event goers, casual walkers/cyclists.	Local information centres, businesses with complementary offers, at local events, local information boards, public buildings e.g. library, transport hubs.
Larger attractions	As above + visitors to nearby destinations, day visitors from nearby urban centres, staying visitors in the region, group visitors, international visitors, special interest groups.	Point of sale, visitor centres, information points, on-site shops, transport hubs, events.
Further afield	As above + larger unaware population.	Target specifically to places you know your audience will be.

Step 3 - Allocating distribution

Allocation is determined by the nature of your publication and your target audiences. Look critically back at the publication profile and then compare it to your master list of venues in each phase. Decide where your audiences are most likely to be encountered and distribute your stock accordingly.

It is always worth maintaining a small amount in reserve for use at events, in response to enquiries or to do emergency top ups if required.

Step 4 - Tracking distribution

It's vital you keep track of your stock. The easiest method is with a simple spreadsheet, ensuring that all units of stock are accounted for no matter how small the quantities.

Make sure you match this information up with data collection on responses, that way you can:

- Determine the success of various points of distribution for future activity
- Gauge the size and scope for future print runs



Making WoM work for you...

Word of Mouth has always been a useful source of business. Customers always warm to personal recommendations or independent reviews and social media in particular has turbocharged these activities.

People will always talk about products and services they experience, you can't stop that but you can steer the conversation so it's useful to your business. Use the following tips to get your WoM working:

- Get the experience right. Give your customers something nice and useful to say about you. Research has shown that over 75% of people would like to say something nice about a visitor business if they could!
- Make sure your customer service is top quality. Poor response times, miserable staff and low quality food can and will sour the experience of even the most luxurious and value-for-money hotel.
- Make it easy for customers to leave and share feedback. Create profiles on review tools like TripAdvisor and promote around your venue that visitors can read reviews and leave feedback on these tools.
- It's OK to ask directly for feedback and even recommendations when your visitors have had a great experience. Why not include a request on receipts or menus? And at least ask when saying goodbye.
- Offer incentives. It's a good idea to incentivise feedback and recommendations where appropriate. e.g., if you're a restaurant, offer regular customers their meal for free when they bring several other people to eat with them.
- Use the feedback in your marketing. Every positive comment you receive is a valuable marketing tool that you should share on your website, literature, social media, blogs etc.
- Enter awards and competitions. Just another form of independent recommendation. When you win or your business is formally recognised by a relevant body, share it proactively in your communications.
- Turn negatives into positives. Thank the contributor for their comment, share what you're doing to rectify the situation, invite them back to experience the improved service. And do this publicly on the same channel the 'complaint' arrived through. Other users will see your approach and respect you for it.



Pool House

Pool House, Woolavington

Case Study

The team at Pool House really strive to gain testimonials and recommendations, placing them front and centre on their website & marketing. They recognise that personal experience is a key driver for the boutique customer they are looking for.

[Find out more](#)

Experiential Marketing



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Leveraging emotions & senses

Experiential marketing focuses on communicating the experience that your product or service offers to people in an emotional and sensory way. It is hugely powerful because triggering human senses creates strong memories that can then be leveraged for recommendations, or to drive new custom from the outset.

Capture the experience you offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Words cannot convey the concept of a customer having an awesome time at your businesses as quickly and simply as a natural photo or video of happy visitors.→ Children's laughter is hugely emotive and, if a genuine reflection of the experience, is a very attractive marketing tool for other families→ Encourage your customers to share their pictures with you and ask for permission to use them
Create structured experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Even simple walking or cycling trails can bring to life a landscape for visitors→ Guided tours and specialist versions like ghost walks, where local stories can be shared, are very powerful in terms of creating positive memories
Host experiential events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Taste events with other local businesses or simple tasting evenings run by you→ Learning sessions like taster painting classes→ Offer the means for visitors to try and create aspects of your experiences themselves e.g.; recipes
Use Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Geo-mapping tools like TagWhat can enable digital universes to be created that use smartphone technology to bring your place to life for users→ You can also geo-tag images in Flickr - useful for placing old photos of a current place or highlighting places to watch wildlife etc.



Biddenden Vineyard

Biddenden Vineyard

Case Study

Biddenden offer free tours twice a week including; small tastings, as a result, 90% of visitors buy wine or other local produce from their shop. The team focus their marketing on putting the product in the customer's hand, tasting events and shows are key to their marketing.

[Find out more](#)



1. How do I set a marketing budget?

The amount you spend on your marketing should be based on how much a customer is “worth” to you over time. To make the calculation you need to:

- Know how long an average customer stays with your business, is it a single visit, or does it generate repeat visits?
- Know the average profit they provide to your business during that period
- Take your usual margin away from this value

This essentially provides you with the amount you can afford to spend on recruiting and retaining any one customer and a useful yardstick to know when you have over-invested in marketing.

2. How do I determine marketing objectives?

Marketing objectives are short term goals that help deliver the objectives and ultimately the vision in your business plan. Start from there by reviewing the **Business Plan Tool in Part 1 of this Toolkit**. Once you are clear on your goals ask yourself; what do I say, to who, when and how in order to reach those goals. These are your marketing objectives e.g. create and send a quarterly e-newsletter to my existing customers to increase repeat business by 20% out of main season.

3. How do I manage negative comments on TripAdvisor?

Firstly, don't shy away from them, any comment means a customer has dedicated time to helping you assess your performance, good or bad they both help you. Next, thank the customer publicly on TA for doing so and state your intention to investigate. Then do so, both at your end but perhaps also reach out to the customer and ask for an offline discussion. If there is a change or improvement that needs to be made, do so, tell the customer and share the results of the changes on TripAdvisor. Use this as an opportunity to invite the original customer back or for others to come and see the improved experience you offer for themselves.

4. How can I become a host for travel journalists?

Firstly, compile a press pack with all the information a journalist would need on your business; this is your key collateral to attract them. Secondly, do your research and target relevant journalists specifically and personally. Thirdly, have a hook or a story to tell beyond just your business; something new you offer or a special event. Finally, give them the experience when they come, that means wining and dining, chauffeuring, whatever it takes to really show off your business and local area. Make sure you get copies of all coverage and share it as part of your marketing.

5. What sort of budget should I allocate to an e-newsletter?

Use the [E-newsletter tool chooser Tool](#) to identify the key criteria and features you require. Secondly, see the FAQ above on “How do I set a marketing budget?”. With those answers in mind review the most popular tools (such as [Mailchimp](#) or [Constant Contact](#)). In general you should be able to send low-volume e-newsletters for minimal (or zero) cost providing you have not purchased a list of recipients and stay within the tool's terms of use.



6. Is Facebook advertising worth it?

If you have very defined goals, are certain your target audience is on Facebook, and have a short-term objective, it might be worth testing for your business. However make sure you are monitoring it regularly and looking for bottom-line benefits (not just increased likes) to your business before you commit to anything further.

7. How do you track usage of a printed communication?

The simplest method is to include a code or redeemable offer specific to the communication, that way you will know exactly how many business referrals it generated. You can also look to track activity by using a unique webpage URL only displayed on the publication (then reviewing your webstats) or using a trackable QR code (see <http://begrious.com>). Finally you can always ask your customers “where did they find out about you?”

8. What can Google do for me as a business?

Given its dominance as a search tool, there are several services Google offers that can specifically help you. For starters having a business page on Google+ (Google’s own social media network) will help boost your SEO as Google search rates social content highly. Secondly using the tools in [Google My Business](#) will help you show up on Google Maps, Search and Google+ based on location and relevance. Google also offers additional tools to improve your website like [Analytics](#), [Webmaster Tools](#) and the [Keyword Planner](#).

9. Do I need to employ a designer?

Unless you have the skills yourself then yes, you do need a designer. You need to be able to compete effectively anywhere your communications or marketing materials are displayed, making a small investment in getting the look and feel right will pay dividends.

10. Should I pay for Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)?

Unless you have very defined goals you should not pay for SEO. If you know, specifically, what you want to achieve, can find a recommended SEO provider and have planned a time frame and results driven plan then it can make a big difference. Before leaping into paid SEO, we’d recommend working through the [Optimising for Search Engines tool](#).



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Rural Tourism Business Toolkit

About this toolkit

This .pdf is the second part of a fully featured resource packed full with useful information and advice for new and existing rural tourism businesses.

This toolkit has been created as part of the COOL Tourism Project by the COOL Partnership and tourism development charity Hidden Britain.

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