

DIY Online Marketing & PR

*10 free or nearly free
things you can do today*

*Brought to you by
DevonInspiration Ltd.*

Marketing and PR for free?

As someone who's been a professional marketer for fifteen years, I certainly don't want to devalue the profession. If you have the budget to do so, working with an agency or consultant can greatly improve your marketing and bring a return on the investment of your marketing spend.

However, the reality is that many start-up companies, entrepreneurs, solo-preneurs and other small businesses simply don't have a marketing budget that allows them to bring in outside help.

This free Do-It-Yourself guide will give you ten things you can do for free, or nearly free, to market your business. But there is no silver bullet... they all take time and effort to implement.



How to use this guide

Each tactic has been graded as to how easily it can be implemented as follows:

Time commitment:

- 1 (an hour or less) –
- 5 (requires ongoing time commitment)

Technical difficulty:

- 1 (no tech skills required) –
- 5 (moderate tech skills required)



1. Write a press release

Time Commitment: 2

Technical Difficulty: 2

PR is evolving. Traditional PR agencies are fantastic at building relationships with journalists and getting your news in front of the right people.

But if you don't have the budget to retain a PR agency, you can write a press release and distribute it for free, or nearly free, online.

This will help your news get picked up by the search engines so that journalists and freelance writers looking for news about your industry will find you. It can also improve your natural search engine rankings.

You should also be able to find contact information online for local publications which may be looking for content with a local angle.



1. Write a press release

Time Commitment: 2

Technical Difficulty: 2

We've tried out various free PR services for clients and I have posted the outcome on my [blog](#). (I will update the information periodically.) If you have the budget to do so, then you should try a service like [PRWeb.com](#) which includes options for social media visibility.

To learn more about using online press releases, read the *New York Times* best-selling book “The New Rules of Marketing and PR” by David Meerman Scott. It is available from:

[Amazon.com](#)

[Amazon.co.uk](#)



2. Get quoted

Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 1

This one is so simple, it's a no-brainer for any business. Subscribe to Peter Shankman's free e-mail list [Help a Reporter Out](#)TM (HARO). You will receive three e-mails per day with various requests from reporters, bloggers and other freelancers with requests for information and expertise.

There are over 100,000 people who also receive the requests, so be sure that your response is clear, concise, original and makes it easy for the reporter to quote you. Importantly, do not send off-topic pitches or you will be banned from the list.



2. Get quoted

Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 1

There are also paid services which provide targeted requests from journalists. The advantage of these is that you do not have to troll through so many requests that aren't relevant to your business. But, like most things in the online world, the trend is towards providing these services for free and many major media outlets use the HARO service.



3. Set up a Google Profile

Time Commitment: 1

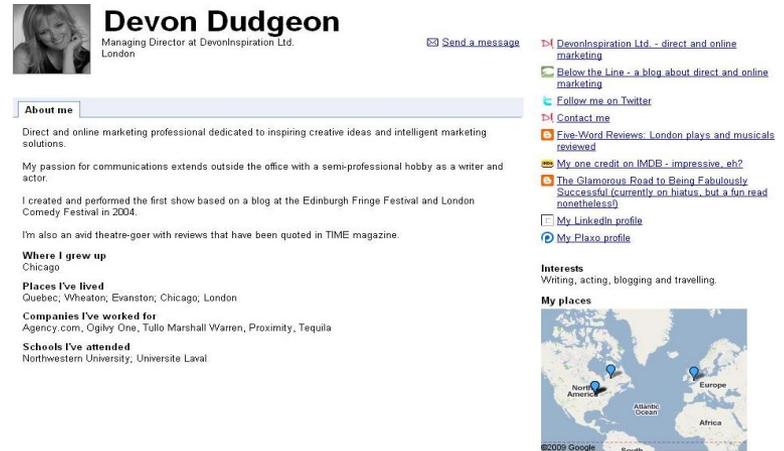
Technical Difficulty: 3

Google Profiles have been around for awhile, but they've only recently made it possible to get a "vanity URL" with your name, as in my [example](#).

You can summarize what you do and include links to your business web site and your web presence on social networks, etc.

A Google Profile is a must for solo-preneurs, but can also be used by the key people in any business to help drive traffic to your site because, as you might guess, your profile is indexed by Google.

Creating another inbound link to your web site can improve your natural search results and, given that creating a Google Profile is completely free and takes less than 10 minutes, this should definitely go on your to-do list today.



The screenshot shows a Google Profile for Devon Dudgeon. The profile includes a profile picture, a name, and a title: "Managing Director at DevonInspiration Ltd. London". There is a "Send a message" button. The "About me" section contains text about being a direct and online marketing professional, a writer and actor, and mentions a show performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and London Comedy Festival in 2004. It also mentions being quoted in TIME magazine. The "Where I grew up" section lists Chicago. The "Places I've lived" section lists Quebec, Wheaton, Evanston, Chicago, and London. The "Companies I've worked for" section lists Agency.com, Ogilvy One, Tullio Marshall Warren, Proximity, and Tequila. The "Schools I've attended" section lists Northwestern University and Universite Laval. On the right side, there are links to "Send a message", "DevonInspiration Ltd. - direct and online marketing", "Below the Line - a blog about direct and online marketing", "Follow me on Twitter", "Contact me", "Five-Word Reviews: London plays and musicals reviewed", "My one credit on IMDb - impressive eh?", "The Glamorous Road to Being Fabulously Successful (currently on hiatus...but a fun read nonetheless)", "My LinkedIn profile", and "My Plaxo profile". Below these links, there is a section for "Interests" (Writing, acting, blogging and travelling) and a "My places" section with a map showing locations in North America and Europe.

4. Tweet on Twitter

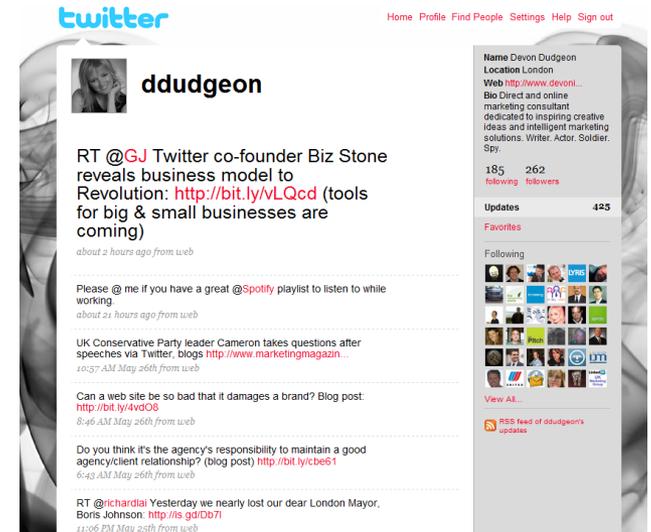
Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 3

By now, you've mostly likely heard of [Twitter](#), the micro-blogging service that allows you to post a messages of 140 characters or less.

In 2007, I asked "[does anyone give a twit](#)" in my blog and suggested it was too early to include Twitter in your marketing mix. However, Twitter has seen exponential growth over the past six months. Now is the right time to dive in.

Twitter is much more than a place to update your status as its tagline "what are you doing right now?" suggests. You can interact with people who are interested in your brand, and can communicate about your brand to people who choose to "follow" your updates. Twitter is about community, so make sure you engage in dialogue with others rather than just creating a series of mini monologues that you hope people will read.



5. Start a blog

Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 3-5

You can start a blog for free on services like [Blogger](#) or you can use open source software from [WordPress](#). There are other services that charge a small fee such as [TypePad](#). I use Blogger for personal blogs and TypePad for my professional blog.

A blog will help you establish your brand voice, become an industry thought leader and it will greatly improve your search engine rankings. (BLOG = Better Listing on Google!)

For a full report on blogging, please read my e-book “Re-entering the Blogosphere”. Get in touch if you would like to [request a free copy](#).

Below The Line
A blog about online and direct marketing from DevonInspiration Ltd.

ABOUT
DevonInspiration Ltd. is about inspiring creative ideas and intelligent marketing solutions through understanding how traditional direct marketing, new media and web 2.0 can benefit your business.
More about Devon Dudgeon. DevonInspiration.com

CONTACT
E-mail us to find out more.
Subscribe to this blog's feed

TWITTER UPDATES
RT @GJ Twitter co-founder Biz Stone reveals business model to Revolution: <http://bit.ly/vLQod> (tools for big & small businesses are coming) about 2 hours ago
Please @ me if you have a great @Spotify playlist to listen to while working. about 21 hours ago
UK Conservative Party leader Cameron takes questions after speeches via Twitter, blogs <http://www.marketingmagazine.co.uk/News/908104/> 1 day ago

25 May 2009
Can your web site damage your brand?
Is it possible for a web site to be so bad, it damages the brand? I asked around for some examples of brand-damaging web sites...
Nobody home: Don't start publicizing your web site if you don't even have a holding page up. One woman told me she went to a bridal show and received a promotional pen from one of the exhibitors. Although the pen featured their web site, it was still not up six months later!
No content hierarchy: Judy Pokras, the founder of [Raw Foods News Magazine](#) offered her own web site as an example of a brand-damaging site. There is no organization to the content, so the user doesn't even know where to start. In fact, I don't even know where to start to help this one! My best advice would be to employ an information architect and start from scratch.
User unfriendly: Another person said she was frustrated by a volunteer web site "people go there to find volunteer opportunities yet trying to find where to find them isn't that obvious and then when you look, there aren't many searchable parameters and those that they do have don't seem to work well so in the end, you really don't find what you are looking for and are too frustrated to bother."
Outsourcing gone wrong: [Hari Karam](#) Singh said Carry On Clothing's web site

RECENT POSTS
Can your web site damage your brand?
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Ondina Chiru, Vodafone Romania
Crunch hunches about digital marketing agencies in London
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Sean Cheyney, AcooQuote
Your brand abroad
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Tricia Ryan, The Marketing Chets
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Ian Anderson, greenlight brand agents
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Adam Kleinberg, Traktion
Is this the end of free love?
Agency/Client Relationships: an interview with Gary Walker, Diretto Ltd.

CATEGORIES
Account Management Basics
Advertising
Agency/Client Relationship Interviews
Agency/Client Relationships
Blogs
Branding
Current Affairs

6. Become a fan of blogs

Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 1

Do a search on Google and Technorati and find the 10 blogs that are most likely to reach your target audience. Start reading these blogs regularly, or better yet, subscribe to their RSS feeds. Not only will they help you stay in touch with your industry, but bloggers are generally very open to interacting with their readers which could net you some publicity.

Regularly leave comments on these blogs to begin interacting, but of course take the time to write a thoughtful, intelligent response. Do not just promote your business or your comment will most likely be removed as spam.

You could also offer exclusive content to select bloggers which may encourage them to post information about your company. (Contact the blogger to set this up – don't post about it in their comments.)

Interacting with blogs works best if you have your own blog, but if you don't, you may have an opportunity to link back to your web site, LinkedIn profile, Twitter page, etc., which will in turn help improve your natural search results.

7. Get Facebook fans

Time Commitment: 2

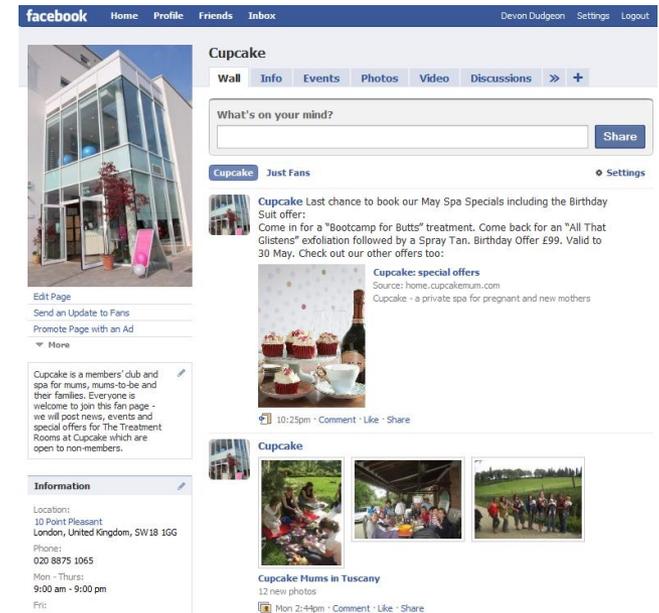
Technical Difficulty: 2-5

A Fan Page on the social networking site [Facebook](#) will allow users to become a “fan” of your brand with just one click.

You can update your fan page with offers, news and information which will appear in the live stream on your fans’ home page, or you can send them an “update” message.

You can set up a fan page very simply, but with a bit of tech savvy, you can take advantage of other features such as synching the RSS feed from your blog to automatically update your Facebook page.

Facebook fan pages are viewable to everyone – not just Facebook users – and thus they are indexed by Google, creating another way for your brand to be found.



8. Send an e-mail

Time Commitment: 3

Technical Difficulty: 3

It seems almost old-fashioned now, but e-mail is an essential channel to keep in contact with prospects and customers.

We don't recommend sending mass e-mail from your own server, unless you have some technical expertise. There are several low-cost service providers. They can ensure that your e-mail appears correctly in various environments (Outlook, Lotus Notes, Hotmail, Gmail, etc.).

You can also use their built-in unsubscribe functionality to manage your database and ensure that your ISP isn't flagged as spam from any of the major e-mail providers.

Create a strategy of how often and when to contact people. Once per month is ample for most businesses and reduces the risk of your customers unsubscribing from the list.



Company news

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

Offers

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

Refer-a-friend

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

[Unsubscribe](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

8. Send an e-mail

Time Commitment: 3

Technical Difficulty: 3

There are risks to creating an e-mail campaign on your own. For instance, if you are not a skilled writer, your e-mail could come off as unprofessional or unpolished. Equally, unless you have design and programming skills, you will be limited in terms of what you can send.

However, most of the e-mail service providers have templates you can use. Although they aren't ideal in terms of creating your own brand identity, if you can't afford a designer they offer a good alternative.

Our best advice if you decide to do it on your own is to keep it simple.

[Subscribe](#) to our e-mail newsletter for more tips and marketing insights.



Company news

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

Offers

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

Refer-a-friend

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu.

[Unsubscribe](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

9. Help others help you

Time Commitment: 5

Technical Difficulty: 3-5

Improve your natural search engine results and help other people easily share your content through social bookmarking.

Social bookmarking is a method for internet users to store, organize, search and manage bookmarks of web pages. Through the use of tagging, reviews, etc., social bookmarking helps others find content on your site.

Most blogging platforms have “widgets” that you can add to allow easy sharing of your content through sites like [Digg](#), [StumbleUpon](#), etc. You can also add this functionality to key pages on your web site.

You should start using these services to bookmark not only your content, but other content that you find interesting and relevant to your brand.



10. Reward your network

Time Commitment: 3

Technical Difficulty: 2

Create a special offer exclusively for your followers on Twitter, readers of your blog and/or Facebook fans.

Ideally, set up a different offer code for each network so that you will be able to measure the effectiveness. You could even stagger the offers so that you can see how well they spread across platforms.



10 things you can do today

In summary, if you are looking for some do-it-yourself online marketing and PR tactics, here are the 10 free or nearly free things you can do today:

1. Write a press release
2. Get quoted
3. Set up a Google Profile
4. Tweet on Twitter
5. Start a blog
6. Become a fan of blogs
7. Get Facebook fans
8. Send an e-mail
9. Help others help you
10. Reward your network

About DevonInspiration Ltd.

DevonInspiration is a direct and digital marketing agency, offering big agency thinking at boutique agency prices.

We are passionate about inspiring creative ideas and intelligent marketing solutions through understanding how traditional direct marketing, online marketing and new media can benefit your business.

Need more?

Contact us to find out how to take your marketing to the next level. In addition to working with global corporations, we have created special packages for small and medium size businesses.

Web: www.devoninspiration.com

Phone: UK +44 (0) 7092 892 880

US (630) 219-1593

Skype DevonInspiration

E-mail addresses:

Devon Dudgeon, Managing Director: devon@devoninspiration.com

Kate Stendahl, Marketing Consultant - Key Clients: kate@devoninspiration.com

Louisa Day, Account Manager: louisa@devoninspiration.com

[Subscribe](#) to our e-mail newsletter for more tips and marketing insights.

CREATIVE COMMONS COPYRIGHT

Please feel free to copy, share and reference this guide. All we ask is that you acknowledge DevonInspiration as the source and link to the below address when citing the publication:

<http://www.devoninspiration.com>

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 UK: England & Wales license, 2009.

To view a copy of this license, visit

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/uk/>