

## Introduction

**The hardest thing about starting a new business is to find clients. This booklet suggests many ways you can do that.**

Some activities are suited for selling to businesses, while others are aimed at selling to the consumer. So if you come across a project that doesn't meet your need, go straight on to the next one.

Not every activity will be suitable for your needs. You should adapt it to meet your own needs.

We also welcome feedback as to what worked for you, and what didn't. We also welcome suggestion for other techniques. Please email [kits@inst.org](mailto:kits@inst.org) with your comments.

**You must take action:** Take a pen or yellow marker to this booklet. Highlight the activities that seem most suitable to you. Shortlist the activities you'll undertake, using the Action Planner at the back of the booklet. Then get to it!

Good luck



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PS This booklet could be the most important part of your learning. It could make the difference between your success and failure. Make good use of it.

## Positioning

### 1. Position your business right

Too many businesses offer the same service. To succeed you have to offer a visibly different service. You can be more upmarket, or more accessible. You can be more of an expert. Or you can do work mainly in certain niches. You can claim expertise in certain areas. Or you can have a pricing structure that is different from the rest. Whatever you do, make it distinctive.

### 2. Do a survey

Send a survey form to your potential clients. Ask them about their interests, needs and problems. Seek to understand your market better. This will give you clues as to what niches you could supply, and how to pitch your service.

## Create promotional material

### 3. Get business cards printed

Hand out your business card at every possible opportunity. Put up the card (where permitted) in take-away restaurants, local supermarkets, and other local places. Take sticky tape or blue-tack with you.

### 4. Get a leaflet printed

Your leaflet can be simple – just a single sheet of A4 (8x11 inch) paper, folded in three. Give out this leaflet wherever you can. Leave it lying around in places where people go.

### 5. Print a postcard

Put a colourful picture and message on one side, and your text message on the other. Put this postcard through the letter-boxes of people's homes, local businesses, and other places. These postcards can work well because people hang on to them for longer than for ordinary leaflets.

## THE CORE ADVICE

Here's a summary of the most important advice from this booklet.

**1. Offer free work.** It's the best way to gain experience and build a client base. If you don't have any paid work, keep offering free work until the paid work starts to come in. Do this in conjunction with the next piece of advice.

**2. Keep your day job until you have to abandon it.** Don't give it up until you have six months' living money in the bank. You can do that by following the next crucial piece of advice.

**3. Keep your costs low.** Very low. Don't buy anything you don't have to. Be a miser. Stop buying things. Think like a business owner. Stop being a consumer.

**4. Promote your services:** Without publicity, you won't get any work. Online classifieds like Gumtree and Craigslist are mostly free – so use them.

## Networking

### 6. Contact your friends, colleagues and acquaintances

Write out a list of all the people you know, or have known recently. Tell them about your practice. Ask them if they can refer any possible clients who might need your service. If any work transpires, make sure you thank them. Saying 'Thank you' in person or on the phone is the best way.

### 7. Find ways of meeting people

Join a small business club if one exists in your area. Seize the opportunity to speak at a breakfast meeting if you can.

Are there any other organisations where you might find potential clients? Make a list, and join these organisations. Attend the meetings assiduously.

Work out where your target market goes – and go there too.

### 8. Do a referral leaflet

Offer a gift to anyone who sends you a client. This could be a store voucher or some other relevant gift.

## **9. Ask your suppliers for advice**

Ask your suppliers and dealers for advice. Ask them how you might improve. Ask them what your successful competitors do.

## **Internet activity**

### **10. Create a website**

Create a website with informative content. It should have a 'Contact Us' page. Providing priced packages is also helpful.

### **11. Get listed in Google My Business.**

This will let you be seen in local Google searches.

### **12. Promote your site to the search engines**

Google and other search engines have an 'Add your site' form.

### **13. Write an ebook**

Write a book about a relevant subject, and make it freely available on the net. Mention your service in the book, and a proportion of people who read it will take up your offer.

### **14. Write a newsletter**

If you can write well, produce a free monthly electronic newsletter, and encourage people to sign up for it on your website. In each issue, include a small advertisement for your services. For a newsletter, you'll need to use an autoresponder. To find one, type 'free autoresponder' into a search engine.

### **15. Buy pay-per-click advertising**

You can buy advertising space on Google on a pay-per-click basis. Set a fixed limit so that the advertising doesn't drain your finances. Evaluate the effectiveness of your advertising as well. It's no good just attracting visitors, - you have to convert a proportion to make the advertising profitable.

## **16. Create a Facebook page for your business**

Add at least one piece of content a month. Offer a free report for people who Like your page.

## **17. Set up a Twitter account.**

Tweet relevant information to attract people who might become clients. Encourage potential clients to tweet you with questions.

## **Events**

### **18. Give a free talk**

Book a local hall. Advertise your talk. Give the talk on an interesting topic, and make sure that all attenders take away a leaflet that gives them free advice plus details of your service.

### **19. Offer your services as a speaker to local organisations**

Send a letter to local organisations, offering your services as a speaker. Many local organisations are short of speakers. Tailor your talk to their needs. Ensure that all attendees take away a leaflet giving free tips, plus a list of your services.

### **20. Contact your small business advisor**

Many places have government-funded small business advisors. Book a meeting with them.. Ask them how they can help you get more clients.

### **21. Hold a party**

Invite lots of people. Use it to advertise your service. Have a theme that reflects what you do. Have regular parties or events. Advertise them. Tell the media what you are doing. Note: it need not be a party, but it needs to be some kind of fun event or joyful activity.

## Advertising in the media

### **22. Advertise locally**

The best places to advertise are often small parish or community type magazines. Glossy magazines and general local newspapers are sometimes less successful in attracting clients.

## Other kinds of advertising

### **23. Postcard in local shop windows**

Print details of your service on postcards. Put them into the windows of local shops.

### **24. Radio advertising**

Ask your local radio station about the cost of advertising. It may be cheaper than you think. The station will produce the commercial for you.

### **25. Place free ads in online classifieds, such as Gumtree and Craigslist.**

These ads are free, so what are you waiting for? Try different headlines and copy, and see which ones bring better results. Online classifieds bring their share of time-wasting prospects and flaky clients, but you only need a few leads to get your new business started.

### **26. Advertise consistently**

It is better to advertise regularly – over months, not one week. Seek out advertising opportunities such as Yellow Pages where you are seen for a long time. But avoid paying for entries in directories that no one ever opens.

## Public relations

### **27. Get a launch story in your local newspapers**

Write a press release about your service. Give it a newsworthy angle. Send the story to the editors of local newspapers. Include a photo if possible. This may get you a free article in the local press.

**28. After the launch, continue to issue news stories**

You can mention new aspects to your service, clients won, or accreditation gained.

**29. Offer to write a regular feature**

You could offer to write a regular feature for the newspaper, free of charge. Or you could offer to answer readers' questions on your subject.

**30. Offer a competition to readers**

As a prize, you could offer a free advice session, or a free quantity of your service or product.

**31. Be charitable**

Do something that will benefit a charity. Make it dramatic and newsworthy. Tell the media about it with a press release.

**32. Write a feature article for a magazine**

Write an article about some interesting aspect of the business. Submit it to a trade magazine or regional glossy. It will make you seem an expert, and you can hand out reprints to potential clients.

**33. Offer your services as an expert to your local radio station.**

You could be a guest interviewee. Or you could field a question and answer session.

**34. Create a survey**

Unlike the survey mentioned in Positioning, this kind of survey is designed to get you press coverage. You should ask questions that will allow you to write a headline such as '35% of people hate...' Or 65% of people are desperate for...' Then send the results to the relevant media. Make sure you include in the release a modest plug for your business.

**35. Link your service to a big event, such as a major sporting occasion**

How you do this is up to you. You could pay for sponsorship, or produce a special version of your service.

### **36. Do a forecast**

Forecast what next year will bring in your market. It could be a fashion-type statement, advice on trends, or recommendations to businesses on how they can adapt to changing circumstances

### **37. Issue a warning**

Warn people about some danger in your area of work. How are people likely to be affected? What can they do to protect themselves? What legislation should be introduced?

## **Leaflet distribution**

### **38. House delivery**

Deliver a leaflet or postcard to all the houses in your area. Do this regularly.

### **39. Newsagent delivery**

Does your local newsagent deliver newspapers? See if they will insert a leaflet advertising your services in the paper round. But first, establish how many papers they deliver.

### **40. Newspaper delivery**

Another solution is to get the newspaper to put a leaflet in the paper. This is rather wasteful and expensive, however.

## **Direct mail**

### **41. Direct mail to potential clients**

Find a mailing list of potential clients. Write a letter outlining your services, and mail it to them. You can find lists in the Yellow Pages under 'Direct mail'.

## **Exhibitions**

### **42. Take a stand**

Take a stand at a trade show, and tell visitors about your service.



#### **43. Visit an exhibition**

Visit a trade exhibition that relates to your service, and leave business cards, postcards or leaflets where people can find them. Or stand outside the gates and hand out leaflets to people as they exit the exhibition.

### **Special offers**

#### **44. Create a special offer**

Offer a half price or free service for a limited period of time, or for first time clients. Offer a free hour or half hour's advice. Or offer a free gift or a free piece of work with every client visit.

Alter your service so that the free service is prominent. The paid-for service is what people have to buy if they want the complete service.

#### **45. Help people buy**

Make it easy for people to buy into your service. Make it no risk, with a money-back guarantee. Or give them a free trial period.

#### **46. Time limited offer**

Limit your offer. This helps people to focus their mind. Say 'Offer available for only 30 days from [today's date]'.

### **Give-aways**

#### **47. Print some gifts**

Have some inexpensive gifts printed with your company name, email and phone number or web address. Give them out widely.

#### **48. Prepare a report on some aspect of your work.**

Offer the report as a free report. It will help you become seen as an expert in your field.

## Personal sales visits

### 49. Face-to-face selling

There's nothing like face-to-face selling, even though many of us dread it. Ring for an interview. Or pay a friend or a temporary employee to set up the interviews. You can pay by number of decision makers reached.

## Find a complementary partner

### 50. Find a partner

Work with other organisations that don't directly compete with you. They could be in a related industry, in a different part of the market, or in a different geographical area. Work out how a partnership could benefit both parties. Make sure the other side benefits as much as you do.

## Listings

### 51. Directory listings

Ensure you are listed in all relevant directories. These include local business directories, internet directories and trade magazine listings.

## Money

### 52. Make it easy for people to buy from you

Offer credit terms, or payment by instalments. And make sure you accept credit cards. You can find suppliers on the web (such as Paypal) that will accept credit card payments on your behalf.

## **BONUS SECTION**

### **How to win and keep clients**

#### **1. Be enthusiastic**

Sound motivated. Tell the client you'd love to work for them. Remember, you aren't doing them a favour. You need to sound like you really want their business.

#### **2. Tell them how you'll help them succeed**

Be positive. Explain to the client how your services will help them. Sell them the benefits of your service.

#### **3. Don't rely on the post or email**

Email and mail tells you much less about the client than voice contact. So give the client a call. Ask them if they're ready to use your services. If they aren't ready to buy, ask them if there's anything you can do to help in the meantime.

## Your shortlist of actions

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