6 steps to successfully

promote your business online

Presented by

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Launching a product, starting a business, or offering a new service can be overwhelming.

But if you implement even part of the ideas in this guide, you'll be on the right path to winning more customers through online marketing.

There are many components in the internet marketing ecosystem, but this guide will help you lay the foundation for your launch.

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Understand the big picture

Now that you're off to the right start, there are six key components to building an online marketing initiative.

Step 1 of 6: Foundation checklist

Define your brand and your business objectives.

Why it matters

Start off with a clear vision, and make sure all of your efforts remain focused and on-message.

Step 2 of 6: Create your landing page

Set up your Kickofflabs landing page.

Why it matters

Having a landing page allows you to capture leads as you're building buzz for your product or business.

Step 3 of 6: Writing content that converts

Be it on TV, the Web, through infomercials, or in person, we've all seen sales pitches that are too compelling to ignore.

Why it matters

Getting people to buy what you're selling is referred to as a 'conversion.' But it doesn't only apply to selling products online; it could also be getting customers to sign up for a free trial, subscribe to your newsletter, 'Like' your page, or share an article.

Step 4 of 6: Incite viral growth using the built-in Kickofflabs tools

Tap into the built-in functionalities to communicate with your leads.

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Introduction to the 6 key steps to online marketing success

Why it matters
The built-in messages within your Kickofflabs subscription can help make a lasting brand impression, inspire product sharing, and become an engine to generate leads.

Step 5 of 6: Blog to increase traffic to your landing page
Blogging is one of the best ways to begin promoting your product or service, and drive people to your landing page.

Why it matters
Blogging can spark attention, pique interest, and build connections, which helps turn leads into customers.

Step 6 of 6: Build your community through social media
Promoting your brand on social platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, or other online communities.

Why it matters
Social media is a strategic way to build a community, connect with customers, and help the world learn more about your brand.

It's important to realize that online marketing is an ecosystem – it's not a one-and-done task. But we're here to help… let's get started!

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✓ Step 1 of 6: Foundation Checklist

Tasks

30 minutes Answer the strategy and brand questions

15 minutes Distill the information into one sentence

15 minutes Answer the questions about how your site can incite user action

1 hour   Choose your preferred tool for building a customer list
(We recommend Kickofflabs)

30 minutes Come up with 5 ways you can inspire people to want to connect with you (things you'll give away, create, publish, etc.)

30 minutes Create your brand messaging
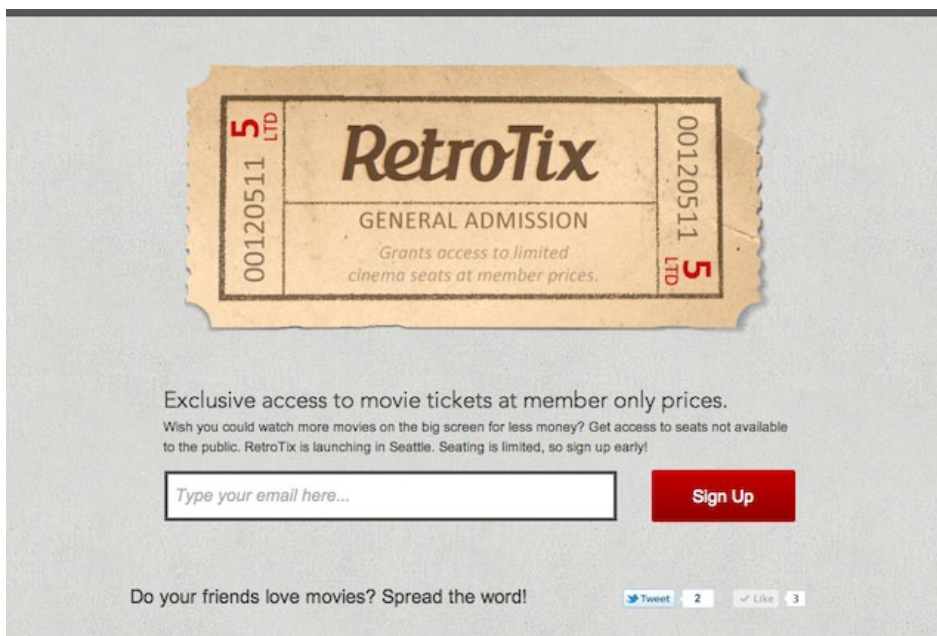
RetroTix created a stunning landing page, incorporating their own company branding

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Step 1 of 6: Foundation Checklist

Starting a business takes a lot of effort, stamina, and resilience, and it's crucial to commit the resources that bring the maximum results. These next few steps will help you get organized as you move forward.

Start at the beginning

Although we'll cover the materials you need to begin marketing your business, there are some key components you need to prepare. Behind every successful launch lies a smart strategy, so take the time to complete this groundwork.

Item 1: The sharpest strategy in town. Your business delivers goods or services to customers, and so does the next guy. It's competitive out there: You need to be smarter and more nimble than your competitors.

How can you find customers where your competitors aren't looking?

How can you offer a more compelling price point?

How can you make your business explode through viral marketing?

How can you beat your competitors' search traffic?

Item 2: Distinct brand message. When learning about your business, customers need to 'get it' quickly. And if they don't, they're on to the next thing. First and foremost, you need to be clear about what you sell:

What do you do, and how are you better?

Why it is beneficial?

How does it help your customers?

Why is it the best solution for your customers?

Now - Distill this information down to ONE sentence. Difficult, I know.

There will be a million opportunities to explain—on paper, on the web,

Behind every successful launch lies a smart strategy, so take the time to complete this groundwork.

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Step 1 of 6: Foundation Checklist

or in elevators—what your business does. Working from your brand sentence, build out a few options.

How can you describe your brand in a three-sentence overview?

How can you describe and illustrate the benefits of your brand on a one-pager?

Can you list out the product/service benefits in a bullet-point list?

What information would you provide for a customer, and what would you provide for a partner?

Look across successful businesses and you'll find a common trait: they are always selling. Get your value proposition burned into the brains of each employee, and make sure they are positioned to communicate the value proposition and close the next sale.

Look across successful businesses and you'll find a common trait: they are always selling.

Marketing strategy – Employ tools essential for viral growth

Think about your business and your potential customers.

What interaction opportunities can you offer your visitors?

Can you give visitors an incentive for taking action?

Can you sell products on your site?

How will you collect their contact information?

How can you help encourage visitors to share your site with others?

Each of these needs fit well with the next item on the list.

Item 3: Tool to build a customer list. Starting a business requires a lot of work, effort, research, and development. But before you even start,

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Step 1 of 6: Foundation Checklist

you need to build buzz and begin connecting with customers. I know, I know—you want every last detail to be perfect, right? Wrong. *Totally wrong.* You need to do two things:

1) You need to start talking about your business and connecting with potential customers NOW.

2) You need these potential customers to start talking about your brand, so you need to make it easy for them to do so.

These are the most important steps you can do for your business, and fortunately for you, Kickofflabs provides the exact tool you need to accomplish these goals.

Even if you don't have a domain, a live site, or a prototype, start building a customer list for free with **www.kickofflabs.com**.
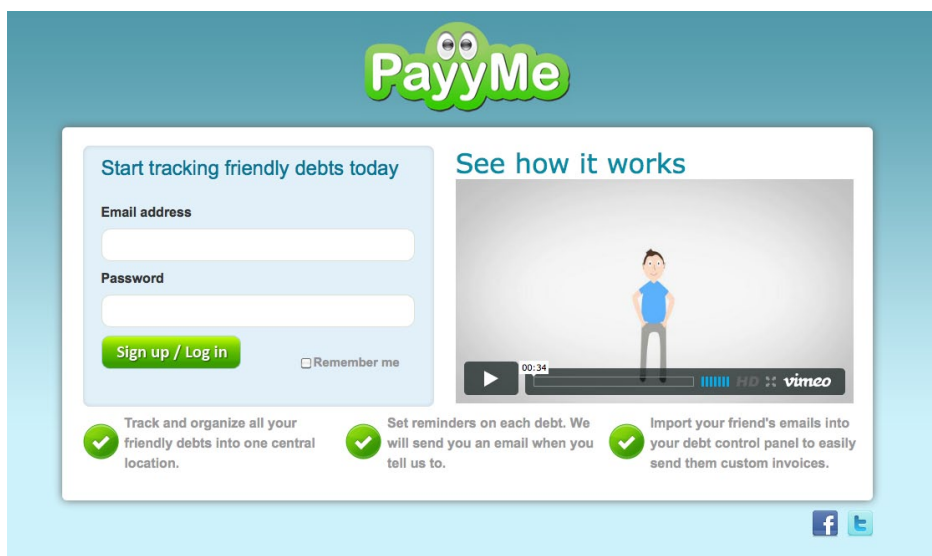
As a smart way to entice users to sign up, PayyMe includes a video on their landing page

Step 1 of 6: Foundation Checklist

Item 4: Means to keep your customers engaged. You're not the only one to learn that the power of the Internet will make your business money, so you need to have something that people want from your online presence.

Does your business serve consumers, or businesses?

Is your business related to a topic that is frequently discussed, debated, researched?

What type of information would your customers need to make a purchase decision?

What can you give your customers for free? Get creative here.

Think about other businesses that consistently communicated to you – what worked (or didn't)?

Each type of business or industry has its nuances, but a great place to start could be a blog, a Facebook page, or some type of giveaway. Once you have developed your plan to keep customers engaged, remember that an underlying goal is to generate a discussion. Create content that is share-worthy and inspires comments, tweets, or posts.

And how do you do that, precisely? Keep reading to find out.

Create content that is share-worthy and inspires comments, tweets, or posts.

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⚙ Step 2 of 6: Create your landing page

Tasks

45 minutes Write some copy that clarifies the benefit your visitors will receive

60 seconds Create your landing page
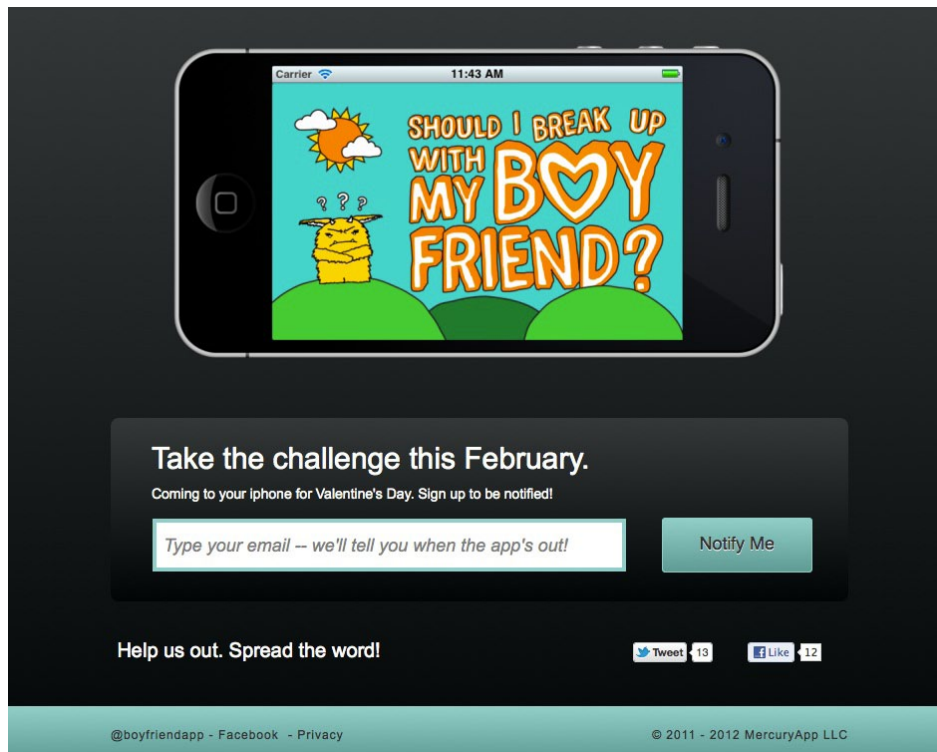
You get design choices with your landing page, letting you create something unique and memorable like what Boyfriend App did

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Step 2 of 6: Create your landing page

1) Design your landing page.
How will you entice your visitors to sign up or subscribe? Write some copy that clarifies the benefit they're about to receive. Need some more information? The next section is all about how to write copy that converts.

You don't need a developer to design your page - choose colors, pick a background, or add your own CSS

2) Market and promote your page in social networks.
Kickofflabs includes little tokens to insert in your pages and email messages. One of them is called [site_name_with_link] - this is the link users should use to share your page because it allows you to track the influence of each share.

Step 2 of 6: Create your landing page

3) Review your analytics to learn more about your customers and work to improve conversion rates.
The backend is what really makes Kickofflabs shine. The goal is to spread the word about your new product, and you will want to know who is sharing your page the most—and thus, who your biggest influencers are. The analytics show who has helped influence all the sign-ups you're seeing.
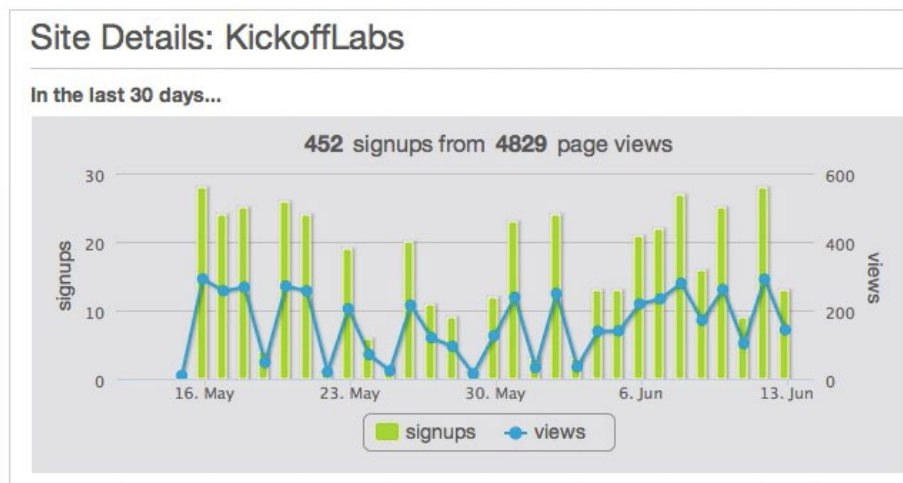
Watch your traffic to see how many signups and views you are receiving to your landing page.

Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

Tasks

30 minutes Brainstorm incentives you can provide customers prior to your official launch

10 minutes   Get out a piece of paper and answer the questions about your product or service

5 minutes   If you currently have a website, look at your site and imagine it was translated: do you have a logical visual hierarchy? Can you tell where you need to click?

15 minutes Use the conversion formula to write your landing page content

Vertioso created a bright and bold signup page with social share buttons to help their business with viral growth

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Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

Be it on TV, the Web, through infomercials, or in person, we've all seen sales pitches that are too compelling to ignore. From Ab Rollers® to Quick Chops, there is a commonality with all successful products: their pitch copy was written to convert you into a customer.

Getting people to buy what you're selling is referred to as a 'conversion.' But it doesn't only apply to selling products online; it could also be getting customers to sign up for a free trial, subscribe to your newsletter, 'Like' your page, or share an article.

Many business owners feel apprehensive about generating customer connections long before the product is complete. That's understandable—but it's also wrong. Connecting with customers and building buzz is crucial for a new business, even if you haven't launched yet.

Conversion begins with the right message
Now that you have your landing page, how can you convert the customers that show up? These guidelines are applicable to both your Kickofflabs landing page and for use once you launch your company website.

As a website or business owner, you know what you want your customers to do. But before you type anything, I invite you to clear out a few moments and answer the following questions in written format. Don't cheat (like I do) and answer them in your head before sprinting on to the next paragraph. New doc or blank piece of paper—whatever you choose—be sure to write these down. As an example, I'll include responses for one of my current client projects.

Connecting with customers and building buzz is crucial for a new business, even if you haven't launched yet.

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Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

What are you selling or promoting? *Personal training and outdoor group fitness classes.*

What problem does your product or service solve? *An experienced trainer will help you reach your goals faster – far more effective than your gym membership.*

What do you want users to do on your site / email / page, etc.? *Purchase a package of training.*

Why would it benefit your users to click on / do / complete the call-to-action? *They will be one step closer to achieving their goals.*

Why is it a good idea to click on / do / complete the call-to-action NOW vs. later? *Pricing will go up, so they should move quickly for the best rates.*

How can you prove to your users that what you're asking them to do is the right thing? *Other happy customers have experienced great results.*

What types of incentives can you offer for their action? *The trainer is currently offering promotions, such as buy-one, get-one-free, etc.*

Answering these questions gives you a solid set of messages from which to work.

Get more customers with good design
Before we begin putting these messages together, it's important we discuss the role of layout and design. Luckily, Kickofflabs does a great job of this for you. But if you have your own site, let's discuss a few things to consider.

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Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

Think about the way your visitors are going to be consuming your messages. The design MATTERS.

Make it obvious. Imagine your entire site or email was translated into Greek—or some language that you are unable to decipher. All you would be able to see would be the design elements and the size and placement of text. Could you figure out where you're supposed to click?

Think about the way your visitors are going to be consuming your messages. The design MATTERS.

siftSocial

Your teams priority inbox for social media

We make it easy to get social!

1. Pick a topic
2. Listen to the important stuff
3. Reply based on priority

Sign up now to get 20% off when we launch.

| Type your email here... | | Sign Up |

Check out SiftSocial for a great solution to help streamline your social media endeavors, but also for an example of great landing page design

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Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

Intuitive layout is a hallmark of good design. It should be clear what a user should do. And if it's not, work on making the call-to-action link or button more obvious.

Visual hierarchy. I like to say that content needs to 'pay the rent': If it's going to be there, there better be a damn good reason. Of the information you're trying to convey, some things are critical, others important, and others are helpful. Look over the messages you want on the page and determine the most critical, what provides additional support, and what might be great to include if there were space. Play with text sizes, weights, and colors. The design should reflect this visual hierarchy.

Above the fold. You'll hear this term a lot, and it refers to the amount of pixels site visitors see without scrolling. Part and parcel to making it obvious, is putting the call-to-action above the fold. Don't bury the button way at the bottom of your site – make it easy. Oh, what? You need to include a War-and-Peace length of sales copy to convince people to click on the button? No, you don't.

Writing copy that converts visitors into customers

Once you have thought out the design and the way the copy is going to be displayed and consumed, it's important to write your messages.

I like to use the following formula:

Problem-solved statement. Articulate what your business can do for customers.

Why now statement. Inspire your visitors to act now because even warm leads likely won't return.

Intuitive layout is a hallmark of good design. It should be clear what a user should do.

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Step 3 of 6: How to write content that converts

Do statement. Describe what you want them to do – this is often the text with the link or on the button. Try to be brief!

Proof + benefit statement. We're all over-exposed to advertising, naturally leaving us pretty skeptical. Provide some proof or testimonials, and reiterate the benefit of the product or service.

How to put this in action? Let's go back to our example for the personal trainer.

Problem-solved statement: Reach your goal weight in record speed by working with a personal trainer

Why now statement: Only a few spots left for this month

Do statement: Schedule your free consultation now

Proof + benefit statement: In only 30 days, over 500 pounds and counting – hear the results from past clients about how they dropped weight, increased energy, and felt better than they've ever felt before all by working with (SeattlePersonalTrainer)

We're all over-exposed to advertising, naturally leaving us pretty skeptical. Provide some proof or testimonials, and reiterate the benefit of the product or service.

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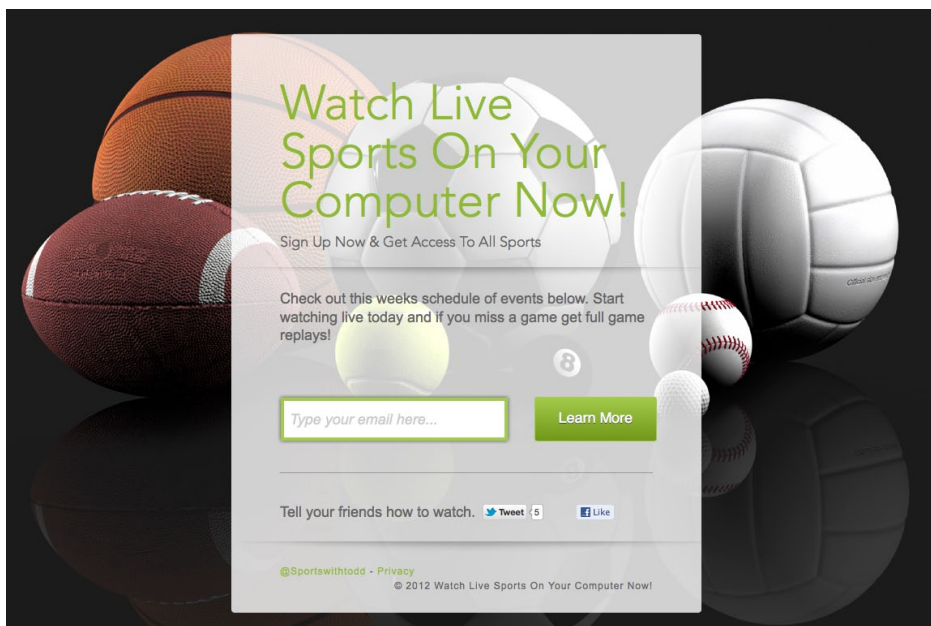## Step 4 of 6: Incite viral growth using the built-in Kickofflabs tools

Tasks

30 minutes Draft your thank you message

2 hours Plan your referral and incentive program

30 minutes Draft your influencer message

2 hours Review your editorial calendar and determine how you can incorporate your content into newsletters

Clean, simple, straightforward messaging - a great landing page example by Sports with Todd

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How an autoresponder can create a lasting impression and a lifelong customer

Bland, lifeless, automated emails are a dime a dozen and we all have them cluttering up our inboxes. Kickofflabs gives you the opportunity to create your own customized, automated emails. My advice? Send your customers a clear, concise message that feels anything but automated. Here are some tips and ideas on how to punch up your messages so your customers will actually remember them (and hopefully, if you're really good, maybe even look forward to them).

Punch up your messages so your customers will actually remember them (and hopefully, if you're really good, maybe even look forward to them).

The Thank-You Message
Let's start with some tangible examples. Here is my first draft of a basic thank-you email for my very own Kickofflabs page.

> Dear valued customer,
>
> Thank you so much for your interest in Kinetic Pencil. We appreciate your subscription and have added you to our list – you'll receive all our latest updates as soon as they are published.
>
> Thank you again for your contribution and we look forward to staying in touch.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Kinetic Pencil

Why does this suck? Let's analyze:
1. It doesn't invite them to participate in anything. It just feels generic, which doesn't make your hot lead (potential new customer) feel special.

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2. It's not personal. It feels like it was created by a machine, and no one wants to connect with a machine.

3. It provides obvious (non-useful) information. Messages like "you're now added to our list" actually tells your lead they are one of many. (Which also doesn't feel special).

4. There are no rewards and honestly, it just wasn't a useful message. The company I subscribed to is thankful? Woo-hoo. The subscribers get nothing for reading the email.

Luckily for you, the default message is created with a lot more punch, and if you plan to write your own unique message (which we recommend), here are some tips to help…

Finally, it's here. Something different. Something right. Something for you. You REFUSE to fit in.

Thank you for signing up for What If Conference! We'll be in touch when we have more exciting news to share with you.

When you tell your friends about us, please use this link, http://finally.whatifconference.com/?s=6Y6. This is your personal link and will credit signups back to you! We'll even let you know when people you refer to us sign up.

While you are waiting, please check us out on Twitter.

Thanks,
The WHAT IF Team

A great use of memorable graphics and branding by the What If Conference Team's thank-you message

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1. Give them something. The goal here is to jump on the opportunity to enrich their lives, even in this little interaction. You don't necessarily have to create something yourself; perhaps you send them access to something, perhaps you give them a link to see something new, or you give all subscribers a special offer. These people deserve to feel special!

2. Make them understand they're now part of something special (there's that word again). Are they able to access products or features before everyone else? Do they get to offer feedback, or send you questions or blog ideas? While number 1 was all about *giving* them something, number 2 is all about making sure they *feel* something.

3. Include some action. Don't forget to use this moment for a subtle reminder to recommend your product or service to their friends, family members, or co-workers. Sharing is more likely to happen when you grab them the moment they're excited about your brand (and they're sitting in front of their computers).

4. Be unique and use the voice of your brand. How horrible would it be if your first interaction with super hot leads made you sound like a machine? What is your brand voice? How do you talk about your company, how do you connect with your customers? Don't lose that flavor in your thank you email.

Let's take a look at my next revision:

Sharing is more likely to happen when you grab them the moment they're excited about your brand (and they're sitting in front of their computers).

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[site_logo]
Welcome to the Kinetic Pencil family!

With everything you need to think about for your business, now you have to learn everything about the web and create your plan of attack. Sound overwhelming? Breathe easy—you've just taken the first step.

Here are your free tools to help you get started:

1. **Web University eCourse** – Start by learning the key components you'll need to know
2. **Web Copy Wizard** – With your new basis of knowledge, you're ready to begin planning what your site will tell your customers
3. **Link to the Studio Calendar** – Once your site content is ready, schedule your launch date
4. **Link to your exclusive discount coupon!** – Make your site even more affordable with this exclusive discount

If it feels like creating your web presence is complex, you're not alone. Kinetic Pencil is here to help—I'm ecstatic to be your partner, advisor, and friend as you get ready to win on the web.

With websites as low as $365, I hope you'll tell others to sign up as well – here's a link to share (you could win free services for encouraging others to sign up!) [site_name_with_link] We'll check in after a couple weeks to see how everything is going—but start spreading the word that your new website is on the way!

Hillary
[social_networks]

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One of the many amazing features in Kickofflabs is its ability to position you for viral marketing success.

As you'll see, this is a bit of an improvement. In the case of my own business, my customers need this set of resources – the 'thank you' email was the perfect opportunity to provide this information. Think about the information you might want to offer to your customers, and get creative.

The Influencer Message
One of the many amazing features in Kickofflabs is its ability to position you for viral marketing success. Every single person who signs up on your landing page is given a unique referral code. So when an individual shares your page using the referral code, any signups they influenced are tracked in your Kickofflabs analytics.

Let's say you send your page to your sister Siri, and she signs up. She then shares the page with her Facebook friends. Imagine 35 of Siri's Facebook friends sign up, and perhaps half of them also promote the page, resulting in more signups. Kickofflabs will indicate the signups that Siri directly influenced, as well as those she indirectly influenced—the friends of her friends, and so on. With this powerful tool at your fingertips, the goal of the influencer message is to encourage people to continue sharing the love.

Here's a first draft of my influencer message.

Dear [customer],

Our records show that you have been an active participant and are a strong influencer for our services. We want you to know we greatly thank you for your contribution to our business. Please continue to share our service and help others achieve the same great benefits you do.

Thank you again,

[company name]

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Why does this suck? Let's analyze:

1. It feels like a machine.

2. The gratitude doesn't seem genuine.

3. Sending a message that feels automated is off brand—I want my customers to feel like they're working with a person.

4. After they read this, they don't really get anything for what they're doing.

So how can we fix this? Here are some tips for your influencer messages.

1. Let them know you recognize what they're doing, and that you value it. These people are giving you the best favor they could ever do for you – spreading the word + vouching for your product or service. And frankly, that's often more powerful than any marketing campaign you could have done yourself. Clearly you're going to say 'thank you', but push that a little—make it feel like you mean it.

2. Prove you recognize what they do by offering a gift (and be generous!). Nothing says "thank you" like free stuff, so try to make a statement here. Think about it: would you rather spend $50 on Google AdWords or give your customers $50 worth of value? Make them happy and they'll talk, share, spread, like, post, and shout you out all over town… which will likely be more valuable than that $50 spent on ads.

Clearly you're going to say 'thank you', but push that a little— make it feel like you mean it.

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You've got influence! Thanks for telling people about Bia Sport with your personal link: http://launch.bia-sport.com/?s=2C6J.

Through your connections Bia Sport has received 1 new people who are passionate about their athletic goals.

To date, you have helped us signup 1 people. Keep it up.

Five signups gets you schwag and we are working with Betty Designs on some amazing stuff right now. We can't wait to show you.

Keep spreading the word and singing on the downhills!

Cheryl + Sylvia

Bia's influence message informs customers of their impact, encourages them to keep going, and is written in the tone and voice of their brand.

Every good business has a great referral program (and you should too).

3. Promote your referral program. Every good business has a great referral program (and you should too). The unique referral code will identify who influenced each new signup—so build a system to reward

those who are driving all these potential new customers. Here are a few ideas from other Kickofflabs customers:

> Give out discounts… sign up 3 get 50% off.

> Run a contest… The person that signs up the most people wins free tickets.

> Run a contest… Every person you sign up buys you a lottery ticket for our drawing.

> Prioritize beta access… Sign up 1 person to get access to our beta.

Here's the next draft of my influencer message for my own customers:

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[site_logo]
Hi [customer name],

Imagine the biggest thank-you ever… And then double it. That's the amount of gratitude all of us at Kinetic Pencil feel for your contribution. My team and I know you've been spreading the word about our company and we all want you to know we see what you're doing, and we value every single share.

I saw that you just referred someone else, so you are now at a total of 5! Yeah! Remember that once you get to 10, I would like to show you my thanks by offering you an exclusive gift. You'll be able to select from the following free services:

- Keyword analysis for your business and niche
- Copy edit for keywords on up to 6 pages
- Design of a free email template to match your website design

As a reminder, here is the link to send your friends: [site_name_with_link]

Also, for every customer you refer that books a site at $500 or more, you'll receive a $25 gift card for projects between $500 and $1000, and a $50 gift card for projects completed over $1000. *Learn more about our referral program here.*

Thank you again for all that you do – customers like you are the very reason I love my job!

Hillary
[social_networks]

Notice a little bit of a difference there?

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Don't Forget Newsletters

Kickofflabs now includes newsletter support, so let's take a moment to make sure you're maximizing that angle as well. Newsletters offer your customers valuable information about your company and your respective industry/niche, but more poignantly offer you a reason to build a relationship and establish yourself as a trusted advisor.

The What If Conference created a unique and memorable
newsletter message, including a contest to increase engagement

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The actual content you create for your newsletter will be unique to your business, but don't forget to include all the details of your referral program. Make sure your readers know there's a juicy incentive waiting for them just for doing so!

For a great example of an exceptional relationship-building newsletter that won a tremendous amount of click-through, visit the Kickofflabs site to view the post on what Rompr did—and how they started solving customer problems before they even launched.

When working on your messages, here are a few structure tips:

Don't forget about the goodies Kickofflabs has included to help you create a message that pops – editable text size and color, editable HTML, and use of tokens!

- Messages should be easy to scan. Develop a structure that is easy to glance through and find important information.
- Messages should be clear. Try to be as succinct and direct as possible.
- Messages should have a visible call to action (if you have one). If you do want readers to do something, make that obvious.

Don't forget about the goodies Kickofflabs has included to help you create a message that pops – editable text size and color, editable HTML, and use of tokens! Tokens are replaced with text and links, most notably the unique customer referral codes, which you want to ensure is part of each message.

Remember these messages are a reflection of your brand to your hottest leads. Don't be afraid to write a few options and pitch them to a few friends or colleagues for feedback, and also don't be afraid to edit the messages as your business moves forward.

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Step 5 of 6: Blog to increase traffic to your landing page

Tasks

4 hours Generate a list of content you plan to build and distribute

4+ hours per week Complete ongoing research for link opportunities

4 hours Create an editorial calendar, listing out different types of content you can create and share with your audience

30 minutes Submit your content to Delicious

4+ hours per week Complete ongoing search to find opportunities to promote your blog on communities where users ask questions, such as LinkedIn Answers or Quora

3 hours a week Ongoing effort to promote your blog posts on social media platforms
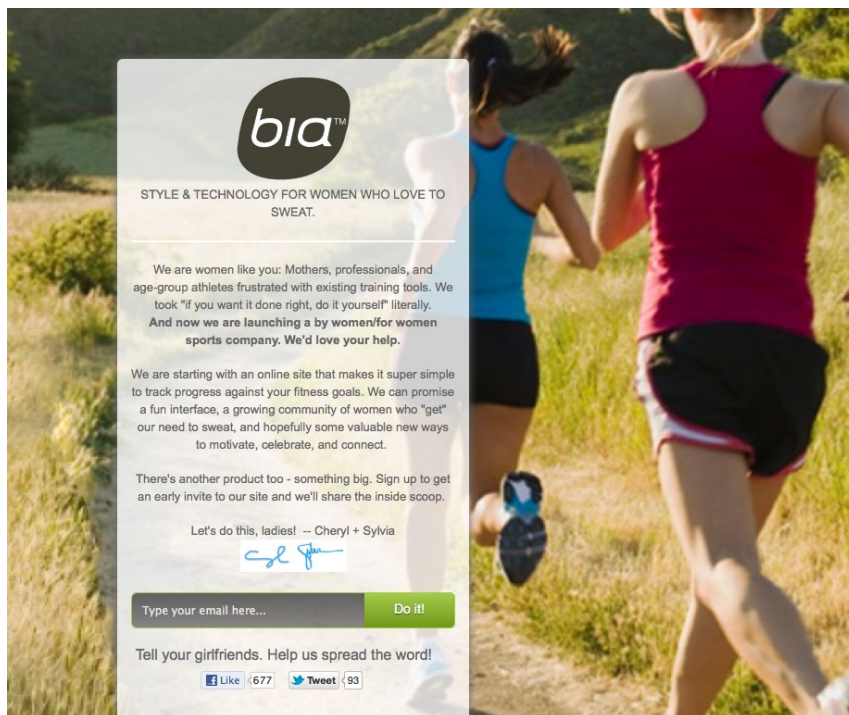
A great example of storytelling, persuasive copy, and unique branding on Bia's landing page

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Step 5 of 6: Blog to increase traffic to your landing page

Get-more-traffic Phase 1: Create your blogging plan

Blogging is one of the best ways to begin promoting your product or service, and driving people to your landing page. It goes without saying that you need to create quality content. But there are a few stealth and strategic steps you can take to make your blogging investment go a lot farther.

1. Figure out the top keywords around your subject matter
2. Align your efforts to a rock solid content strategy

Step 1: Find the keywords for your subject matter

When building a site, you want to select a key phrase to target your site around. You can figure out which phrase to target by looking at the monthly search statistics in Google's keyword tool.

This handy resource will help you find keywords and keyphrases with the largest search volume related to your product or service.

There are a few stealth and strategic steps you can take to make your blogging investment go a lot farther.

Spend some time with the Google Adwords tool to uncover keyword and key phrase ideas to use throughout your online marketing efforts

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Step 5 of 6: Blog to increase traffic to your landing page

To find it, search for 'Google keyword tool', and click on the first result, "Keyword Tool - Google Adwords."

Enter your prospective keyword and be sure to select 'exact' (instead of broad). This will display monthly search volume locally, or in your country, and internationally. This tool will be your best friend when beginning to create your blogging plan.

How should you choose them? Your goal is to make your online presence the go-to resource for whatever keyword or keyphrase you choose. Think about what your customers need from you, and list out different phrases and terms that they may be using to find businesses like yours.

One caveat to note is that keywords and keyphrases are competitive. When you have selected a few viable options, go ahead and enter them into your search engines and review the results. Take a look at the site quality of the top results: if you see a lot of major authoritative sites for example, like Wikipedia or Mayo Clinic, it will be difficult to catch up, so you better pick a different phrase. If most of the results are sites belonging to smaller companies, you might have a winning keyphrase.

Your goal is to make your online presence the go-to resource for whatever keyword or keyphrase you choose.

Enter your prospective keywords and key phrases to review the results (the competition you'll be trying to beat)

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Once you have selected the keywords or phrases you would like to target, you'll infuse them into your editorial plan. Generate topics around your keywords, and mention the keyword in the title of the post (H1 tag), and about three times in the body of the text.

Now, this is a VERY simplified version of how to prepare your business and online initiatives for search engine optimization. We'll cover this in full detail in a separate ebook.

Step 2: Align your keywords to a rock solid content strategy

As I mentioned before, it goes without saying you should create quality content. You need to give people a reason to want and need your information – make it useful, interesting, and worth sharing, saving, and linking to. Write about your product or industry (with your keywords sprinkled in), but also mix it up with some interesting formats. These ideas can help you provide a little variety:

How-to articles
Reading about your perspective is interesting, but how-to articles help readers do something, which can often lead to sharing.

Free giveaway, such as a white paper or eBook
'Free' has such a nice ring to it, and it's great to provide your readers with a thorough resource—and it can be much more pleasant than reading small pieces online.

Infographics
I think everyone is having an infographic phase right now… it's a pleasant respite from all the text we consume.

You need to give people a reason to want and need your information – make it useful, interesting, and worth sharing, saving, and linking to.

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Interviews
People are interesting, stories are interesting. And stories about people—and their particular pain points and how your product can address them—are far more interesting than reading over-polished marketing copy.

Contests
Don't forget that contests and giveaways are very 'sticky' when it comes to buzz-building.

Aim to post a minimum of one post each week, but work on increasing that if your schedule allows time to produce and promote more than one post.

And once your blog is up and running, use a service like Ping-o-Matic, which alerts the search engines that new content is posted and needs to be indexed.

Get-more-traffic Phase 2: Promote your content!

Launching a business, planning and developing a site. Blogging when you can. It's a busy time for you. But simply blogging is not enough! Here are some top ways to promote your site… because site promotion leads to increased traffic.

Social bookmarking submission
Delicious is a social bookmarking site that allows users to keep their bookmarks in one location. Countless people use Delicious to uncover great content. Submit your articles and content, and tag it up with your relevant keywords.

People are interesting, stories are interesting. And stories about people—and their particular pain points and how your product can address them—are far more interesting than reading over-polished marketing copy.

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Step 5 of 6: Blog to increase traffic to your landing page

A note on submissions: In years past, it was common practice for a site owner to blast their articles to any taker on the Internet and see their traffic soar. These days, with the notion of maintaining a reputable link neighborhood, it's wise to be choosy.

Connect with communities
LinkedIn and Quora allow you to answer questions from users, which doubles as a way to engage with potential customers…and get them flooding over to your site. Quora allows you to connect your Twitter and Facebook accounts, which can speed up your following.

Leverage social media
Social signals are impacting search like never before, so you can't afford not to be active in social media. Interact, share, discuss, post, discuss some more. It's worth your time.

> **Twitter**
>
> **Facebook**
>
> **Google+**
>
> **LinkedIn**

Get listed in relevant directories
Do some research about the directories that are relevant to your industry or product and create a profile. Remember to aim for trusted, relevant directories.

Social signals are impacting search like never before, so you can't afford not to be active in social media. Interact, share, discuss, post, discuss some more. It's worth your time.

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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

Tasks

2 hours Take some time to review where your competitors are interacting online. What social networks? How many followers/fans? Are they getting a lot of engagement or interaction?

4 hours   Review social platforms and select those that are right for you and your business (don't try and be active on all of them)

2 hours   Review the brand messages you wrote; make a list of how you can weave those attributes or themes into your social presence

1 hour   Have a brainstorm and think of all the different types of posts you could do. Goal: aim for ideas that really inspire people to respond/act.

2 hours   Make a list of the different metrics you would like to track – build out a spreadsheet to track each of these things on a monthly basis

Sharsy created a simple, professional-looking landing page

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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

Social media has exploded in the past few years, and not surprisingly, has become a core component of a lot of online marketing. Social media includes platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, online forums, online communities or other platforms and tools on the web that allow you to meet and engage with others.

It's naive for online marketers to brazenly prescribe, "just get a Facebook fan page" as the fix for a business in need of a boost. There is so much more to it than that (and so many platforms than just Facebook). As you begin to move forward and launch your business and online presence, here are some key tips to consider as you start to define your plan of attack:

1. Social media activities should initiate two-way communication with your prospective and current customers.

Don't forget that Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn do have a common trait: users and viewers can comment and respond. And you should respond back. It's called social media for a reason – build your posts and interactions around the idea of beginning conversations with your audience. And remember that it's not only your own social profiles and pages where the conversations are happening. Be active out there and provoke the two-way conversation on other pages and platforms.

How can this make you more effective? Nearly all purchase decisions begin with a conversation.

2. Social media activities should leverage the opportunities each medium provides.

Maximize the opportunities within each medium. For example, a personal trainer may want to build out a YouTube presence to post his

It's naive for online marketers to brazenly prescribe, "just get a Facebook fan page" as the fix for a business in need of a boost. There is so much more to it than that.
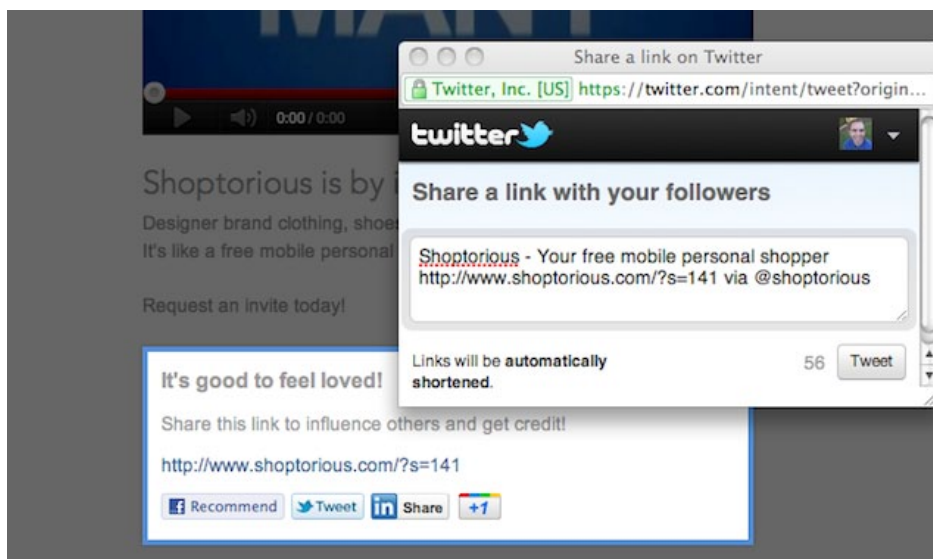
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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

weekly strength training sequence. Facebook is a wise idea for an artist – she could post pictures of her paintings and generate conversations with fans. If you're a brick-and-mortar business, such as a beauty salon, you could run promotions on Foursquare.

Think about what your business does and compare it with the different capabilities of each social media platform… Facebook allows you to post photos, polls, articles, videos. Vimeo lets you create specific groups to share your video content. Twitter lets you share information, links (which can go to anything), and photos. Be smart and use each capability to your benefit.

How can this make you more effective? Deepening the engagement can increase customer loyalty.

Deepening the engagement can increase customer loyalty.

Kickofflabs is built for viral sharing - it's easy for visitors to tweet or share your page on Facebook

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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

3. Social media activities should bolster your brand image.

Every interaction you have—ever, anywhere—is part of your brand. And the same is true throughout social media. When planning your messages, posts, and tweets, take some time to consider:

Brand elements. What do you want your business to be known for? Weave in those attributes into your online presence portfolio. For example, if you want your customers to trust your advice for their upcoming home improvement projects, provide articles and resources to help them find the right service provider.

Customer experience. Be responsive and attentive to customer comments, and use social media to post testimonials or customer stories.

Voice. Even though the social platforms are meant to be personal, be mindful of the tone you choose. Authenticity is important, so be careful to not be too snarky or too over-the-top syrup-y sweet.

How can this make you more effective? All purchase decisions are made with a brand connection, so use social media as a way to reinforce your brand message and prove how different (and better) you are.

4. Social media activities should provide an easy means to continue the conversation.

The inherently viral aspect is surely one of social media's most compelling components. Remember this part: When you're creating content and posting it to the respective platforms, be sure you've

Every interaction you have—ever, anywhere—is part of your brand. And the same is true throughout social media.

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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

thought about your ideal response (comment, share, retweet, post, etc.). You don't need to phrase every single post as a question, but incorporating a few items that prompt a response is a good way to encourage interaction.

How can this make you more effective? Active participation not only provides social proof (and can influence others), it generates a familiarity between your customers and your brand.

5. Social media activities should be chosen as a reflection of your industry and your resources.

It's true that Facebook and Twitter are the most common, but don't forget that there are countless other platforms out there. Do some research and find out what is the most critical for you and your business.

For example, I create affordable websites for new businesses. Imagine I decided I have a maximum of 3 hours a week to devote to socially engaging online. If the strategy for each were equally clever, which do you suggest I prioritize?

> **a. Become an active member of the www.youngentrepreneur. com community forum**

> **b. Create a Facebook fan page for my business**

I would probably get more exposure to my ideal audience participating in the Young Entrepreneur forum. In an ideal world, I'd do both (and probably more). But it's not an ideal world. Do some research and choose to focus on areas that will help you get traction and exposure amongst your audience.

When you're creating content and posting it to the respective platforms, be sure you've thought about your ideal response (comment, share, retweet, post, etc.).

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Step 6 of 6: Build a community using social media

And as for another tip on managing social media to fit your resources, use something like Buffer App or Ping.fm to schedule when all your content goes live throughout the day.

An example of what you can learn about how visitors are engaging with your Facebook fan page

6. Social media activities should include measurable benchmarks.

More and more, it is possible to gather sophisticated metrics across the social media platforms. And like everything else you're doing, you should track your progress as much as possible.

Metrics can include number of visits, number of impressions, number of views, number of retweets, number of mentions, etc. Seems like a lot? Then pick just one. What do I suggest? When starting out, your goal should be reach, as in, 'get the word out there.' For this, a good metric would be number of shares. Why didn't I choose number of views?

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Not all page views are treated equal, but a 'share' is a specific action that someone did to spread the word to promote you and your business.

Once you get the hang of analytics, start paying attention to other metrics and generate some benchmarks. Maybe you give yourself a goal of increasing number of followers by 5% each week. Maybe you create a list of engagement goals for the content you will produce – number of comments, increased number of followers, number of impressions, etc.

How can this make you more effective? Knowing your metrics and setting benchmarks will help you actively understand your weak points and strive for improvement.

Social media has the power to influence your prospects and turn them into repeat customers—but know your product and know your audience as you prioritize your plan of attack. Simply posting information here and there isn't going to bring revenue in the door. Be thoughtful about your approach and wise in your execution, and do what the medium does best: start conversations.

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Conclusion

While we hope that this collection of tips and insights leaves you inspired to take on the world (or at least, your industry), remember that everything happens step-by-step. The entrepreneurial spirit can often be piggy-backed by the feeling that you're not getting things done fast enough. And if that's a sentiment you know all too well, we're here to remind you that Rome wasn't built in a day. These strategic ideas will help you identify, focus, and conquer. So pour yourself a cup of coffee and get to it with the confidence that you're already well on your way!

About Kickofflabs

KickoffLabs exists to make signup pages simply awesome. Within 60 seconds you can start collecting customer email addresses on your own web site, which are new leads that help you grow your business over time.

The KickoffLabs tools are perfect for launching a new product or business, adding subscribers to your newsletter, or simply providing a placeholder for a larger website that's "coming soon". With our tools you can easily encourage these customers to share your product or service in popular social networks… which helps you grow more via word of mouth!

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About Kinetic Pencil

This guide was developed and written by Hillary Bassett Ross from Kinetic Pencil. Hillary helps small and medium-sized businesses win on the web. Get in touch - she'd love to hear from you.

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