

**WOW! Sales and marketing help**

**Sales suck...**

**...NOW WHAT?**

*by Lynda D. Kavanagh*

A "down & dirty" guide to sales and marketing  
for MICRO, MINI, and SMALL businesses!

**Chapter 1 from Sales suck...now what!  
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# Sales suck ... now what?

A down-and-dirty guide for micro, mini and small businesses that find sales and marketing frustrating.

by



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## **Dedicated to:**

**To all micro, mini and small businesses and entrepreneurs who stimulate the economy and take risks every day in doing what they do.**

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## Lighthouses and marketing



Let's start with a bit of trivia.

The first lighthouse in the world was built in - get ready for it – Egypt. Who'd have thought? It was constructed way back in 280 BC and went by the name of the Pharos of Alexandria.

It was over 383 feet tall and was considered the tallest man-made structure for many centuries. When it was built, its only purpose was to aid sailors so they could sail safely through the fog into the harbor of Alexandria. Identified by classical writers as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Pharos of Alexandria lighthouse stood solid for more than 1,500 years.

As for the lighthouse photo on the previous page, it is of Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia, Canada. One legend has it the area was named after the sole survivor of a shipwreck, a young girl who couldn't remember her name so her adoptive family called her Peggy. With its rocky landscape, frequent fog and cloud, Peggy's Cove is mystical and eerie, yet strangely soothing. Its lighthouse is easily the most famous in Canada.

So, what's with all this talk about lighthouses in a book about sales and marketing?

Well, first, I'm a nautical gal so I love the look of these structures. More importantly, I love the secure feeling that lighthouses offer to sailors.

Wouldn't it be nice if there was such a thing as a lighthouse for your business? Your lighthouse would be a bright light that would catch your attention when you start to veer off the course you've planned for your business. Your lighthouse would flash when you unknowingly head for a business disaster and your lighthouse would always be there to provide you with a soothing feeling of security.

To me, sales and marketing should be like a lighthouse for a business. They would show you the way and provide security that you are on the right course as you navigate through the often turbulent waters of running a business.

But, in keeping with the nautical theme, your sales and marketing can also be like an engine in a boat. It constantly keeps the boat moving forward in a predetermined course. If you turn off the engine the boat will coast along for a while and eventually stop. The same happens if you stop or reduce your sales and marketing. You may not notice much of a change - for a while. Then one day you'll realize you've drifted off course and your business has slowed down. If that happens, you may find that you may have been sporadic with your marketing or lazy with your sales.

You may also notice that you have been spending a lot of money with no way to evaluate a rate of return. The result? Your sales suck and you have no idea which way to go or how to get there.

However, when you set a course for your sales and marketing by developing a plan, you are focused with a clear and consistent message.

The purpose of this book is to help you find that focus.

This isn't a big, fat book involving theories and statistics. It was written because, just like thousands of other micro, mini or small business owners or managers, you may be experiencing a degree of frustration about how to market your business with a miniscule marketing budget. I'm offering a down-and-dirty understanding of sales and marketing in the fewest number of pages, and in a way that can be read quickly. As a small business myself, I know how hard it is to drag myself away from running my business to read a book.

I've found from the thousands of businesses that I have consulted for that many people lie to themselves about their business. They lie about what their products/services can do for others and about the reasons why someone would buy those products/services. Business people lie to themselves because it is almost impossible to be objective about the good or bad aspects of their products/services. But a business that lies to itself is a business doomed to hit turbulent waters.

So, be honest and implement tips learned in this book into your business. If you do, you'll find your sales and marketing activities allow for smooth sailing.

So, let's get building your lighthouse.

### ***What really is marketing?***

Many small businesses are confused about what sales and marketing really are. Some think that sales is marketing, while others believe marketing is advertising, but then others feel marketing is sales while even others are convinced advertising is public relations. Gosh, that statement itself is confusing!

I'll make it very simple for you with my definition:

***“Marketing is the overall strategy of creating a message that will capture the interest of a specific group of people (potential customers). Once that specific group of people is aware of your products/services, then sales represent all the activities that help those potential customers make the decision to buy your products/services.”***

In short, marketing is the overall plan and strategy while sales is the action.

Unfortunately, how fast you move forward and grow usually depends on how much money you have and whether you implement assertive sales and marketing methods or rely on passive sales and marketing methods.

The dilemma facing many small businesses is they want to grow and grow quickly, but they don't like personal sales and they don't have any money to spend on advertising. (By the way, personal sales and advertising are called assertive marketing methods.)

I'm not implying that if you lack assertiveness with your marketing then your business will fail; your business can still succeed and even grow, it just may happen slower than you would like. I do want to emphasize that we must be extremely alert about **expectations versus realistic outcomes**.

I recently met a gal who had just been through extensive training to start her business. She was excited about being an entrepreneur. She had her product line ready, she had her distribution in place, she had great packaging and she was committed to customer service.

Then I asked her how much money she had allocated to getting her message out. She told me she did not have any money left to do any marketing.

Now what?

Marketing is all about inviting people to do business with you. If potential customers don't know you are out there, how can they do business with you? It is unrealistic to think you can market your business without spending any money unless you have low expectations about how fast your business will grow.

In business, we have to match our expectations with the realism of how much money we have allocated to marketing. Success and growth can still occur even if you're not spending much on marketing, but they may just happen slower because you will be relying on passive marketing methods such as referrals and "old school" word of mouth. (More about "old school" word of mouth later.)

I'm not saying you have to spend millions on your marketing. I'm not even saying you have to spend thousands, but you have to spend **something** to let potential customers know you are there. And depending on what you spend, you may have to adjust your expectations and your business plan based on that amount.

Expectations in life are interesting. Expectations in business are also interesting but can be hazardous – if they are unrealistic.

We'll talk a lot more about this in upcoming chapters, but first you must understand what constitutes sales and marketing, and what are realistic expectations and outcomes based on your budget.

### ***A wheel but no rudder?***

By now you can tell I love nautical things. If you go to my website, [wowcommunications.ca](http://wowcommunications.ca), you'll see a nautical theme; the photos are of oceans, lakes, streams and other waterways. My house, in the middle of the Alberta prairies, is designed with nets, lobster traps and seashells. I even have a sailor's uniform that my husband really likes, but that's another story. Yup, I like nautical stuff.

I love to sit and gaze at water. It is interesting to watch the activity that happens in and on a waterway, and then relate that activity to things that can happen in a business. It is amazing how alike sailing the ocean is to running a business.

You see, there are different types of oceans and there are different types of boats, just like there are different types of businesses. On the ocean there are big boats and there are small boats. Sometimes the water is smooth and sometimes the water is turbulent. In business, just because you are a big ocean liner type of business doesn't mean that it is easier to manoeuvre. In fact, sometimes small crafts have an advantage over ocean liners because they can zig and zag around the ocean liners, and turn quickly away from hazardous reefs.

Small business is like that. Small businesses can often manoeuvre ahead of big businesses because it can react quicker to customer demands and needs.

However, a large business usually has a huge budget whereas a smaller operation has a limited budget. Still, a small business can be successful if it is smart in using its sales and marketing.

I'd like to explain sales and marketing using Canada's historic Bluenose schooner from Nova Scotia as an example. To make the Bluenose sail effectively, many components of the schooner needed to be working together - the sails, the rudder and the ship's wheel just to name three.

If the sails were the only part of the schooner that worked, the Bluenose still wouldn't have sailed effectively. The Bluenose would have moved, but, without a steering wheel or a rudder, it would have had no direction. If only the sails worked on the Bluenose, it would have moved but only where the wind took it, without any way to steer away from rough waters. For the crew, that would have been a scary and uncertain fate.

To make a business run effectively, you must ensure all aspects of your sales and marketing work together. If one component is ignored, you could begin heading for dangerous waters.

I've talked to thousands of businesses and they almost always say the same thing:  
***"Marketing is frustrating."***

When they say this, I know they don't understand what marketing is. Moreover, they have unrealistic expectations of business growth based on the type of marketing they are doing.

One of the most important parts of creating a marketing strategy is ensuring that all your marketing is working together, not just one or two components. That takes planning.

### ***Good advertising gone bad!***

Let me give you an example of how easily a business can be affected if all its sales and marketing are not working together.

I worked once with a company that sold health care products. We did an advertising campaign for a product that was new on the market and would enhance many seniors' lives. The advertising campaign was good. I decided most of the marketing budget would go toward a print campaign because that was the target customers' medium of choice for getting their news and information.

The advertisements were nice and clean, and they clearly spoke to the target customers' needs, outlining the benefits and providing a great call to action.

The owners actually saw people walking in with a copy of the advertising. In marketing, that is like getting an Olympic silver medal. (A gold medal is when they walk in with the advertisement and walk out with the product.) That didn't happen in this case. After a decent timeframe of running the ads, we evaluated the campaign. Sales sucked.

Yikes!

I couldn't figure it out. We had the right medium and we were saying the right things to the right people, but something was still not working. So, I hired a secret shopper. After talking to the secret shopper, I knew immediately what was wrong. He told me that when he walked in and asked about the product, the first clerk he talked to directed him to another clerk who was an expert in that product. He walked over to the second clerk and asked about the product and she said, "*You can get that cheaper across the street.*" Whoa!

The owners went ballistic. Their immediate reaction was to fire the clerk, until I asked them if the product could be purchased cheaper across the street. They said yes, but it wasn't anywhere near the same quality.

I then asked them to explain why they had told me their staff was trained in all aspects of the product lines and customer service when this clearly indicated they were not. The owners told me they had "assumed" all staff would take the initiative to know the quality of the various products they were selling.

I went across the street and bought the similar product, and then I sat down with the entire staff and compared the two. My client's product was indeed superior and only a few dollars more in price than the competitors. It really was a good buy.

Once the staff was fully aware of the product and the competitor's product, we ran the exact same advertising campaign and in the exact same medium. This time sales actually increased - a lot! You can have the best ad in the world but if the potential customer walks in the door and the rest of your marketing doesn't kick in, then your sales will suck. Thank you, secret shopper. (It was my husband.)

For a business, when your sales and marketing are not working together, you don't have any direction. When there is no direction in a business, there's a good chance that business is wasting a lot of money on sales and marketing activity that is not working. That's when frustration rears its ugly head. Sound familiar?

The problem is people often think they just need to do a bunch of advertising to move their business forward. But advertising only gets people to your front door. Once they open that door and enter, the rest of your strategy should kick in; we're talking packaging, store design, trained sales people, customer service, product distribution, pricing and all the other sales and marketing components.

However, a lot can go wrong if you haven't carefully planned your sales and marketing. For example, you can have the best advertisement in the world, but if someone walks into your

location and is greeted with indifference or doesn't feel comfortable with the wording on your product's packaging or encounters rude salespeople, then your marketing strategy has broken down.

When this happens, and it does far too often, sales suck and the advertising is considered a flop. The business owner becomes extremely frustrated about spending money on something that doesn't seem to work. The thought of advertising becomes negative and so the business owner decides to never advertise again.

This happens because many business people don't realize that the reason why advertising doesn't generate sales is because advertising is not marketing. It is only one component of marketing and only a part of sales.

If an advertising campaign doesn't work, a business should look at the other components of its sales and marketing plan to see if they were working with, or against, the advertisement.

The same philosophy should be used if a sales campaign doesn't work or a promotion flops. What else was happening within that organization that may have had a negative impact? What sales and marketing methods were used - or not used?

If you are reading this book, I expect you either have found the sales and marketing parts of running a business confusing and frustrating, or you just want to get a better handle on how sales and marketing work.

So, let's get started in helping you understand sales and marketing but, first I'd like to introduce someone very important to your business – your “Pink Suede Boot Customer.”

**Back Cover**



Don't let the pink suede boots fool you; this is not a book about women's obsession with shoes. The story of pink suede boots will outline the best sales and marketing tip you will ever receive and put a halt on sales that suck!

This is also **NOT** a book that will use case studies of huge companies with million-dollar budgets! If you are a huge company with a huge marketing budget, put this book back and look for one written in New York.

This book is written for micro, mini and small businesses with minuscule marketing budgets. If sales suck and you are unsure what to do next, this book is perfect for you.

Lynda Kavanagh has been an entrepreneur since 1994, operating a sales and marketing consulting firm in Canada. She'll tell you that if your business' sales suck then that means there are hiccups happening in your overall marketing plan. This book will walk you through all aspects of sales and marketing to help you eliminate those hiccups.

The information in this book is provided in a straightforward, easy-to-implement manner and it uses case studies of micro, mini and small businesses that you can relate to. Nowhere in this book will it talk about million dollar budgets.

Lynda D. Kavanagh  
WOW Communications Corp.

Website: [www.wowcommunications.ca](http://www.wowcommunications.ca) | Online learning website: [wowpreneur.tv](http://wowpreneur.tv)

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