

QUICKSPROUT

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# 21 BIG MARKETING IDEAS FOR SMALL MARKETING BUDGETS

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Are you trying to market your company online?

Well, who isn't? But do you know how to market your company online without spending too much money?

If you don't have a lot of cash and you are trying to market your company online, don't worry, as companies have been able to succeed without spending much money on marketing. To prove it, not only will I share 21 big marketing ideas that don't cost too much money, but also I'll also give you examples of companies who have succeeded using each tactic.

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## BIG MARKETING IDEA #1:

# COMMENT ON BLOGS

A great way to get your website popular is to comment on other blogs. For this to work you have to leave comments on blogs that are related to your website and the comments you leave have to be insightful.

If people feel that your comments are detailed and insightful not only will they keep on reading your comments, typically they'll also head over to your website (when you leave a comment on a blog, they typically ask for your website URL).

Although this tactic seems simple, it is very effective. Just look at [Mashable](#), Pete Cashmore made that blog popular by commenting on competing blogs like [TechCrunch](#) when he first launched it. He literally left hundreds of comments and now he has one of the most popular websites on the Internet.

## LEVERAGE MESSAGE BOARDS

Message boards may sound boring and dull because they've been around for years, but they are still effective. There are millions of message boards on the Internet and there is one for almost every topic.

If you can leave messages on popular boards like [Yahoo Message Boards](#) and give people good advice, it can drive a lot of traffic to your website.

[Timothy Sykes](#) is notoriously known for this and that's how he made his website popular. Through message boards he is able to drive over 5000 visitors to his site each month and this has lead him to create an online business that generates over \$150,000 a month in revenue.

# OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE FOR SEARCH ENGINES

Google is the most popular website on the Internet, *so why wouldn't you leverage it?* Through search engine optimization you can rank higher on Google so you can get more visitors to your website.

One way of doing this is to pay a marketing firm, but as you know that can be costly. Another way of doing SEO is to learn it yourself. By reading the [Beginner's Guide to SEO](#) and by [following these link building tactics](#) you should be able to rank higher on the search engines.

A few companies that have leveraged SEO fairly well are About.com, Wikipedia, Craigslist, Amazon, and Zappos. And an example of a smaller company that has done this is Bargaineering, which was [acquired by Bankrate for 2.8 million](#).

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #4: START A BLOG

It doesn't matter what kind of business you are running, you can still have a blog. With my startup [KISSmetrics](#), our [Blog](#) accounts for over 70% of our monthly traffic. That traffic is then converting into leads for our sales department to follow up on and then close into customers.

If you are going to create a blog for your company, you should do the following:

- ▶ Host the blog on your domain name (blog.domain.com or domain.com/blog)
- ▶ [Write good content](#), and don't constantly pitch your company in your posts.
- ▶ Create a community by responding to each blog comment.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #5: GOOGLE LOCAL

Search is becoming more and more personalized. When you perform a search on Google, you'll start noticing that the results are becoming tailored to your location. Because of this I decided to claim the Hyatt Hotel in Seattle (I live there) as my business location.

So when you search for the [Hyatt Hotel in Seattle](#), my business comes up. And although this may sound foolish, it's actually lead to one enterprise customer for my company. \$120,000 isn't too shabby for claiming a location.

Now by no means am I saying that you should claim random locations on localized search, but you should claim at least your office or wherever you operate your business from.



## LEVERAGE SOCIAL NETWORKS

From [Facebook](#), to [Twitter](#), to [Google](#) Plus, they are all popular sites that you should be leveraging. Create profiles on each of those sites as they are a good source of traffic and they'll create new opportunities for you to find customers.

We've built up our profiles on all of the major social sites for [KISSmetrics](#) and now social sites account for over 30% of our monthly traffic. The best part about this is that it didn't cost us a dime... other than the time we've spent.

By sharing good content that you find while surfing the web and participating on the social web, you'll quickly be able to build up your profiles. The key is to be patient as it can take 6 months to a year before your social profiles really become popular.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #7:

# BECOME A GUEST AUTHOR

An easy way to get your company out there is to write guest blog posts on other blogs. From TechCrunch to Huffington Post, there are thousands of popular blogs on the Internet. And the one thing all of these blogs want is more content.

If you write guest blog posts on other blogs not only will you get traffic and more branding, but you'll also get links which will help your [SEO efforts](#).

If you are looking to find places to guest blog you can check out [My Blog Guest](#) or you can manually hit up popular blogs in your field.

One company that leverages this tactic is [GRP](#), which is a venture capital firm out of LA. [Mark Suster](#), one of the partners at the firm, is known for [guest blogging](#) on sites like TechCrunch on a regular basis. By doing this GRP is getting their name out there and it is helping them get more deal flow.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #8: CASE STUDIES

If you already have happy customers, why not get a case study from them? Get them to talk about your product or service, how they used it, and the results they got.

Case studies can help build credibility for your company, and get you new customers. One company that is notoriously known for creating case studies is [Conversion Rate Experts](#), and through them they have been able to lock in a handful of customers.

Off the top of my head I can list a handful of companies that have signed up with them because of their [case studies](#). And these companies are spending a high 5 figures, if not 6 figures a year with Conversion Rate Experts.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #9:

# WRITE BEGINNER'S GUIDES

Do you remember when companies used to write White Papers? Although they are still effective, the new version of them are “beginner's guides”. These guides vary in length, but the one thing they have in common is that they are thorough.

By writing good content and giving it away for free, not only will you get a ton of traffic, but you'll also get a lot of links.

A good example of this is [SEOMoz](#). They wrote the [Beginner's Guide to SEO](#), which has lead to a lot of business for them. That guide ranks high for “search engine optimization” on Google and then from their they upsell visitors into their software service which starts at \$99 a month.

## SPEAK AT CONFERENCES

With my first company, ACS, we got over 80% of our new customers from conferences. We constantly spoke at Internet marketing events and convinced companies to pay us thousands of dollars per year.

I spoke at so many conferences in a given year that during my peak, the company spent \$108,402 in one year on flights and hotels for me because of all the conferences I was attending. And although that may sound like a lot of money, some of the companies I was able to bring in from these speaking engagements were paying us up to 1.2 million dollars a year.

Now granted, you don't have to spend much money to speak because there should be enough events to speak at in your local region. All you have to do is find these events and apply to speak.

## START AN AFFILIATE PROGRAM

If you don't have the money to spend on marketing, you can always get people to market for you for free. The only thing you have to do is pay people for each sale they bring to you. Think of it as performance based marketing.

Through companies like Hasoffers, you can easily setup affiliate programs and start getting people to market your products or services without spending much money.

Remember how [Timothy Sykes](#) leverages messages boards? Well he also leverages affiliate programs. [He's let marketers create mini websites](#) that both praise and bash him, which leads to around \$13,000 worth of monthly sales for him.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #12:

# ANSWER QUESTIONS

From forums to question and answer sites, people need help. If you can answer questions related to the products and services your company provides, you can get new customers. You can find these potential customers on forums on question and answer sites like [Yahoo Answers](#).

One company that uses this tactic on a daily basis is [Single Grain](#). Every day they go through marketing forums and help out 10 companies with free marketing advice. What they've found out is that 3% of the companies they help for free offer them money for consulting services.

## GO TO NETWORKING EVENTS

If you can't be a speaker at a conference, it doesn't you shouldn't attend them. Everyday there is a new event going on, you just have to find relevant ones to attend. Sooner or later you'll realize that people go to these events to meet other people.

Some of the people you will meet will be useless, but a small percentage of the people you meet will turn into business relationships and friendships.

A few years ago I was attending a BarCamp in Santa Monica and I met a guy by the name of Francisco Dao. After a few encountering's with him we both thought it would be a good idea if he ran a conference series that I co-own. If you fast-forward to today, he has now made me hundreds of thousands of dollars and he is doing so well that he now owns his own conference company.

You'll be shocked on what you can get out of an event, so make sure you start networking on a regular basis.



## TALK SHIT

The good part about having a blog is that it gives you an audience that you can communicate with. And when you tell them something, it will start spreading virally on the web.

With my first company ACS, we provided marketing services. And when I saw companies that could use our help, I wouldn't just reach out to them, but I would write a blog post on how they are messing up.

In 2006, [I wrote a blog post on Like.com](#) and how they were messing up with their marketing efforts. Quickly after writing the blog post I got a call from the CEO who then hired me for a consulting engagement. After I realized how effective this strategy was, I also did it with Yahoo and a few other big companies.

Every time I did it, I've had over a 50% close ratio.

## GIVE AWAY THE FARM

Talking shit about a company on a blog is one way to get new customers, but another way is to give away the farm. Similar to the strategy above, I used to also email companies and tell them in a step by step format of everything they need to change on their website to get more traffic.

Many of the companies I emailed didn't respond back or hire me, but none-the-less the strategy was effective. Through it I was able to lock in companies like TechCrunch and do all of their online marketing.

And by helping popular brands like TechCrunch, I was able to leverage their name to get more customers.

Don't be afraid to email companies and potential customers that you think you can help. What's the worst thing that they can do... ignore your email?

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #16:

# ASK FOR REFERRALS

Do you already have customers? If so, have you asked them for referrals? It's a pretty effective approach as long as your current customers are happy with you.

Look up your current customers on social sites like [LinkedIn](#) and see who they're connected with. If you think someone they know can benefit from your product or service, ask for an introduction.

You'll be shocked, only a very small percentage of your customers will not be willing to make an introduction. If a large portion tell you no, it means that you could be doing a better job making them happy.

One company that has gotten 5 or 6 referrals from me is [Digital Telepathy](#). They provided one of my companies, Crazy Egg, [with a new design](#). After they did a good job they asked if I knew of any other companies that would be interested in their web design services and I was gladly willing to make introductions for them.

## BIG MARKETING IDEA #17:

# LEVERAGE YOUTUBE

Not only do videos now appear in search results, but you also can use them to show how good your products actually are. [Blendtec](#) has done this for years and it's been effective. They don't just claim that their blenders are powerful, but they also show you by blending things like bricks, iphones, and other cool devices.

[Some of their videos have gotten over 3 million views](#) and more importantly they have been able to sell thousands of blenders because of these videos.

If you can come up with something creative like blending iPhones, you can create viral videos. Good content spreads like a wildfire over the web, and even on television. The Blendtec guys have been on the [Tonight Show with Jay Leno](#).

## OFFER STEEP DISCOUNTS

[Groupon](#) and [Living Social](#) are able to drive thousands of sales for any product or service... assuming you give a really good deal.

Earlier this year, a buddy of mine launched a concept called [Tomato Battle](#), in which thousands of people get together and throw tomatoes at each other. When he launched the event he was charging 59 dollars for a ticket and his goal was to get a bit more than 2000 attendees.

In order to fill up the event, he reached out to Groupon and Living Social and they promoted the event to their email lists at a price point that was around 50% off. Within days he sold over 1000 tickets on these group buying sites and after the deal closed the people who bought tickets told their friends and those friends went directly to the Tomato Battle site and bought more tickets at the regular price.

If you can come up with a price point that benefits you as well as the group buying companies, you can make a lot of money and gain access to a whole new set of customers.

# HAVE EXCEPTIONALLY GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE

One of the easiest ways to increase the lifetime value of your customers is to offer exceptionally great customer service. For example, Zappos will automatically upgrade your shipping to next day air every once in a while. And they also offer a 1 year return policy with little to no questions asked.

By providing exceptionally great customer service, customers will not only be happy with you, but they'll continue to come back. In the short run this may end up costing your company a bit more money, but in the long run you'll see the benefit because each customer will not only spend more money with you, but they'll tell their friends about the great experience they had with your company.

## GET PRESS

The more people that talk about your company in a positive way, the more people will come to your website and check out what you are offering. The hard part about press is that it's not easy to get the attention of the major news outlets.

But it is easy to get the attention of blogs. One way that I like to get press is to email bloggers asking if they would like to interview me. Although that sounds silly, a small percentage of the bloggers you email will say yes.

For example, Search Engine Journal interviewed me, and they did so because I emailed them asking if they would be interested. They said yes, they sent over some questions, I answered them, and emailed them back. Within days the interview was published and it drove a handful of customers to KISSmetrics.

Don't be shy; ask bloggers if they would be interested in interviewing you. What's the worse thing that can happen... they'll say no?

## PAY WITH A TWEET

If you want more customers, then entice people to promote your company. [Simply Measured](#) does a great job of this by letting you signup for free if you tweet about their product. And as more people tweet, more people come to their website and signup. And once you are in their system, they get you hooked onto their software and they upsell you into paid plans.

Start thinking outside of the box. Free users can market your company for you with a tweet, a plug on Facebook or any other social site. You just have to be willing to ask them for a plug on these social sites or else you won't receive them.

My business partner and I did something similar on [Crazy Egg](#) recently and it worked out well. Instead of asking people to pay with a tweet, we asked customers to tweet right after they signed up.



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