

# Low-Cost Marketing Ideas

Great promotional ideas on a budget



## Takeaways

- How to deliver effective marketing activity at a low cost
- The power of networking and the benefits to your business
- Leverage from your networks and industry organisations
- Offering quality customer service
- and loads more...

# LOW-COST MARKETING IDEAS

## Introduction

We figure this might be the most popular section in the guide.

Good marketing isn't necessarily expensive, but it does require effort, strategy, innovation and an investment in time. Here are just a few low cost marketing ideas:

### Get involved and contribute to your local community

Consider supporting local causes, family events and sporting clubs with prizes/giveaways to experience your product. This will help to build local customer loyalty. Send a media release to travel writers and news journalists who might be interested in giving support to the community events you sponsor. Frame letters of appreciation and display them in a high-profile public area. Include a section on your website to promote your community support and link to the websites of the groups and organisations you sponsor. Offer locals a loyalty membership card with opportunities to gain discounts and rewards.

### Messages on hold

Use the time your telephone callers are on hold to tell them about your product and services with targeted messages. You can create and manage the messages yourself or work with a company that will manage everything for you. They will write your messages, do the voice recordings and chase you up on a regular basis to refresh your content. Of course, you can change the messages at any time and it's a great way to spread the word about new or seasonal campaigns, as well as get messages across about your services and experiences.

### Destination first, product second

As we have noted in other sections of this guide, it is important to remember destination is king. While tourism product is a key element in the destination story, it is the destination itself that speaks first and foremost to the consumer. If you promote your awesome product within the context of your amazing destination, you are far more likely to capture the imagination of potential tourists than the other way around. Just as many travellers choose a destination followed by the airline on which to travel, so too do they choose a tourism product or operator.

### Be responsive

Make sure you respond to email requests instantaneously and follow up to resolve the request within 24 hours. It's amazing how impressed consumers will be when you get straight back to them. They'll know you're really on the ball when it comes to your customer service and that just might be the clincher for them. Remember to respond promptly to social media comments and questions on platforms including Facebook, Instagram.

### Join networks, industry and community organisations

If you have time, energy and commitment, get involved with your local community and industry organisations. It's a great way to meet people, contribute to the industry and network. Make the most of your relationships by turning up to meetings and functions; keep your community or local industry networks informed if you have a new product or experience, and remember to send a media release.

## Nominate for industry or professional awards

There are lots of awards held each year. Speak to your Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) about which are the most prestigious and if you meet the criteria, make sure you enter. By entering and winning you can increase your exposure to new markets and industry groups. Issue a [media release](#) if you win and display your awards where customers can see them. Awards are usually sponsored by:

- government bodies
- industry and professional groups
- special-interest groups
- private enterprise

## Participate in trade events, missions and roadshows

Check the [Tourism and Events Queensland Industry Calendar](#) and with your RTO on up-coming trade events, missions and road shows. Piggyback off other tourism promotions and leverage off their advertising. If possible, share exhibition space and displays with an operator you package with. Look for events that are planned for your region. The beauty about local events is they can save you time and money. While you may have some upfront costs, in the long run trade is coming to you in one place at one time.

## Team up with other local operators

Work and package with operators in your region who target the same type of customer as you. Share the costs to develop online and printed guides or flyers that promote your offerings e.g. a day-trip experience. Make sure these guides are readily available through each participating business. Don't forget to tell the local media, your social media audience, trade partners, and your contact database.

## Network, network, network

One of the most powerful and rewarding low-cost marketing ideas is that of networking. Work with your peers and even your rivals and you will enjoy much more business success than if you work alone. The tourism industry is gloriously notorious for its networking, in fact, it's one of the reasons which attracted many of us to the industry in the first place. Take advantage of networking events and meeting new people. Be generous with your knowledge and networks, and the benefits will be tenfold.

## Referrals and recommendations

Refer your customers to other tourism network buddies. Both parties will appreciate it and be more than happy to return the favour.





## Be professional and maintain a positive attitude

Your positive attitude and open approach are your most important business assets! Recruit the right people with the right personality who are customer focused. Ensure they have the right skills for the job and will fit into your organisational culture.

Good staff are a huge selling advantage to your business. Continue to train and reward your staff and keep them motivated by making the workplace a positive environment.

## Use branding, signage and displays

Branding is how your business differentiates itself and builds a competitive advantage. Your brand should permeate all aspects of your business from your advertising to your reception, service and culture, everything should represent your brand values and promise.

Don't miss an opportunity to put your name out there. Add your logo to your website, brochures, pens, clothing and merchandise. Pull-up banners should include images that best represent your brand and include your logo. Decals on your company vehicles are a great way to promote your business while running errands, attending events, travelling to and from work,

or even when your vehicle is sitting idle in a car park. Include your logo on signage where possible and if allowed use an A-frame sandwich board on the footpath to promote your specials or other devices that are visually appealing and easily identify with your brand.

## Think of others

Keep a birthday diary of your key business and customer contacts. Call, send them a card or email to wish them a great day and let them know you're thinking of them. They'll remember you because you remembered them. Ask new customers if they were referred and if so, by whom. Then follow with a brief but sincere email or card of thanks to the person/s who recommended you.

## Visit competitors

It's essential you know as much as possible about your competitors. Visit their product and experience it first hand; collect their brochures and pay special attention to how they operate. Also remember to visit your competitors' websites and social media channels to see how they engage with their customers. You might be surprised by what you learn.

## Vouchers

Encourage people to try your product and services by distributing vouchers or coupons through newspapers, brochures, coupon books, direct mail and email. Include an expiry date to create a sense of urgency and use a code to track the success of each campaign. Remember to value add rather than discount your product, e.g. include a late checkout or bottle of wine.

## Check your home page

As simple as it sounds, make sure your product and services are clearly identified on your website home page. Consumers should be able to see in an instant what kind of tourism product you are and what services you offer. It can be effective to advertise your special offers on your home page as well.

## Google it!

Check out Google and Google Local Business Centre for free business applications such as Google Maps, information and resources.

Google has a number of easy-to-use tools that are great for business. Create an account with Google My Business and use it to manage your Google Local Business Centre listing in order to:

- promote your business
- access tools such as Google AdWords to construct your pay-per-click (PPC)/search engine marketing (SEM) campaigns
- map your product with Google Maps
- track your site visitation with Google Analytics

Some services are free and are a great way to promote your business locally.

## Social media

Social media is free to use and easy to set up. While it does take some time to manage and nurture an engaged audience, the benefits for the outlay are enormous. A blog article, photo or quick video can be created and edited quickly and shared on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram or Pinterest for free. It just takes some creativity and a little time.

PPC (Adwords) and Facebook advertising are low-cost and highly targeted. It is free to set up an account, and you can limit your campaign budget and daily spend to suit your budget. You can get started for \$5 per day – compare this with the cost of a print or TV advertisement.

## Apply for grants and funding programs

Regularly check the [Queensland Tourism Industry Council Grants Gateway \(QGG\)](#). This website provides information on available funding programs as well as sources of information and advice on grants available.

For more information visit: [qtic.com.au](http://qtic.com.au)

The [Tourism and Events Queensland Grants Guide](#) is a useful resource to equip you with the tools to successfully navigate the grants space and point you in the right direction with regards to information sourcing, applications, grant writing and other tips and pointers.

For more information visit: [teq.queensland.com/grants](http://teq.queensland.com/grants)



## Link your product to domestic touring routes

Around 10 million visitors each year take drive holidays or short breaks in Queensland. Queensland has a number of drive routes that can be found via [queensland.com/drive](https://queensland.com/drive). Packaging for the drive markets can help keep visitors in your destination longer and spending more money. It's worth checking with your RTO if and how they are promoting these touring routes, and if you like what you hear, look for ways to become involved.

## Read industry newsletters

Industry newsletters from bodies such as [Tourism and Events Queensland](#), [Tourism Australia](#), [Australian Tourism Export Council](#), or your [RTO](#), local tourism organisation or council contain useful information to help you with your business. When you are busy it can be easy to scan and delete them quickly, however by taking the time to read through them, you'll come across some great information as well as marketing and development opportunities which are often free or low cost for your business. If you haven't already, subscribe to [TEQ's free eNewsletters](#) they include:

- TEQ Industry News – weekly email eNewsletter covering high-line state-wide tourism and events news
- Research Updates – regular eNewsletter providing updates on tourism research in Queensland
- Media releases – keep up to date with the latest Tourism and Events Queensland news
- Queensland Stories – regular eNewsletter which is distributed to our media friends, featuring new tourism products, story ideas, copyright-free features and photo galleries

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