



# **BUSINESS BASICS**

**A LESSON IN BUSINESS WRITING**



**AVNU.CA**

# SERIES INTRODUCTION

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Marketing as your parents knew it has changed for good. As a matter of fact, the style of marketing that even you, yes you, once grew up with barely even exists to that level it once did. The idea that all it took was some advertising dollars to get your product promoted on TV, in print, or on the radio was often seen as an effective strategy to get people interested in what you have to offer. And most importantly pay for whatever it is that you are offering. However, present day media is changing so fast that the print media outlets, who have produced iconic newspapers and magazines for decades, have been shutting down at a rapid pace. And with the growth of video providers like Hulu, Netflix and the more recent HBO GO, TV advertisements are becoming as ineffective just as quick.

One of the unexpected effects associated with the collapse of traditional media was that now the gatekeepers of TV and print media no longer controlled the best way to communicate products to people. Therefore, breaking down the biggest barrier associated with delivering an effective traditional marketing campaign, money. Making it possible for brands like **Dollar Shave Club** to kick start its marketing strategy with a single video, filmed in their own warehouse, that led to 16 million views and 12,000 repeat customers in 48 hours. What Dollar Shave Club proved was that if planned carefully, a small team, or a single person can do the job of an entire marketing department. Putting the power back in the hands of the everyday person. Marketing is no longer left to those with deep pockets, and has been opened up to people with little to no budget at all. Now you are probably asking, how can I effectively develop and deliver a marketing strategy with little to no budget at all? The answer to that question, is exactly what this curriculum will show you how to do.

Through this Toolkit series on Marketing, you will be provided with insight from industry professionals, step by step guides that match the tools you have as well as your skill level, and links to further your learning online. With the goal in mind that you don't need to be an expert in the field, to do the job well.

## **The following Toolkit series on Marketing will cover:**

- Business Basics & Writing
- Photography & Videography
- Social Media
- Press Kits
- Pitches

**IN THIS SECTION, WE COVER THE BASICS OF YOUR BUSINESS OR PROJECT. ONE CONSTANT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS SECTION IS THE IDEA OF FINDING A PROBLEM AND PROVIDING A SOLUTION FOR IT. THIS IS THE FOUNDATION TO YOUR BUSINESS. WE WILL ALSO LOOK AT YOUR BRAND AND WORKFLOW AND BEGIN TO PIECE TOGETHER IMPORTANT PARTS OF YOUR BUSINESS. WITH THE PIECES DETERMINED, WE LOOK AT HOW TO EFFECTIVELY WRITE A COMPANY DESCRIPTION AND BUSINESS PLAN.**

# FIND A PROBLEM. SOLVE IT.

**Think of a time when you were compelled to buy or subscribe to a product or service.** What did they say? How did they say it? What made you want to buy into it? Were there specific words they used? Most importantly, did this product or service provide a solution to a problem, even if you didn't know you had the problem in the first place?

Almost always this is the question that you need to answer before tackling a new project. In identifying this, you provide yourself with the foundation to build your project on. This is because you identify your customer, client, or stakeholders expectations in your product on a personal level. These expectations allow us to understand how our solution helps. More importantly, it gives us the information necessary to exceed their expectations by building the best solution we can.

In this initial stage of starting a project or business, we often focus on operational questions like, how much is staffing or equipment going to cost. Instead, we should identify the problem and solution first as this provides a frame of reference to point back to. It allows us to ask the right questions and make necessary adjustments in the process before acting.

Selling is about solving the problems, whether those are problems that someone is currently facing, or problems that they will face as the marketplace evolves and their needs change. If you can't put your finger on your customer, client, or manager's problem, you won't be able to let them know you can solve it. Worse, you will waste time and lose credibility. You must describe the problem clearly, and do it from the customer's point of view. The problem should be one the customer sees value in solving. The solution should be one that you can deliver that *surpasses* their expectations.

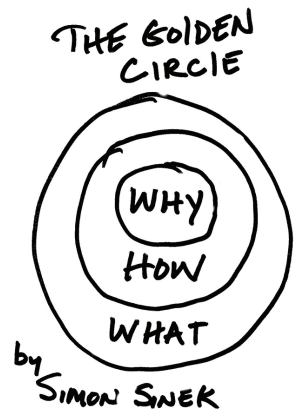
# FEATURES VS. BENEFITS

When selling your solution to the relevant party, you should consider how you approach the sell. There are two techniques that you can use in combination with each other to provide a strong enough pitch. Feature selling and benefit selling.

**Feature Selling:** A feature is what your product, service or community has or does. When you “sell a feature,” you describe some element of your offering, in the hope that the customer will be suitably impressed. **Example:** “Our tablets now have 256GB of storage!”

**Benefit Selling:** The benefit is why the feature is important to the person you are communicating with. When you “sell a benefit,” you are still essentially describing a product feature—but you tie it to some way that it improves the customer’s perspective. **Example:** “Our food is produced locally as we support local business and sustainable agriculture.”

It is here that we can focus on Simon Sinek’s Golden Circle. Sinek, popular for developing this model in both selling and leadership explains that we must start with why someone might buy into a product or idea and then move outwards into how, instead of what. This reduces the emphasis on hard features and emphasizes the personal significance tied to the product or project. He uses the example of Microsoft and Apple, as Microsoft markets their PCs highlighting the specifications while Apple shows why their products are important in everyday lives and then later explains how it is all possible.



# FEATURES VS. BENEFITS EXAMPLES

What (Features)	Why (Benefits)
In dash GPS	You never have to ask for directions again
All wheel drive	You are less likely to get stuck in the snow
Gets more miles per gallon	You save money on gas
Waterproof boots	Your feet stay dry and warm
Personalized home fitness trainer	You have better health without leaving your home
Describe range on speakers	You can enjoy a sound quality found at a Music Hall
Balanced temperature	You will be more comfortable
Batteries included	You can use it the moment you take it out of the box
24 hour support	You can contact us at anytime you want

# THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

After establishing the problem, how you are going to solve it, and determining your approach to selling that solution - you can begin to develop your brand. Your brand is what will tie everything together. A **brand** is a type of product or service produced by a particular company under a particular name. A **brand vision** is the guide that provides insight into the industry your business in. **Example: Apple's brand vision to bring the best in design to the computer and mobile industries.** A brand also has a voice, which is how it speaks to its audience. Social media has allowed for brands to really expand on this and develop whole personalities. Taco Bell for example has a twitter account where they speak to their audience in a creative and personal way.

A great starting point to begin developing the brand, voice, and vision is within a project description. In stripping down your project to a paragraph of text that accurately describes everything, you provide yourself with an elevator pitch (more on that in a later section), as well as the primary identifiers you need to establish a voice and vision. Some tips for the brainstorming process before writing a description include keeping it...

**Brief.** Keep the description to 3-7 lines of text.

**Original.** Craft a message different from your competitors.

**Real.** Be honest, people can tell when you are, and will respect it.

**Simple.** Refrain from being wordy for the sake of being wordy.

**You.** Remember, this project or business is you at the end of the day. Let it reflect that, that is what will help you be unique.

With the above in mind, answer the following questions and stitch it together for an effective description of your project.

# THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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**Who are you?** This should be the introduction to your project or business. Keep it concise as this should cover who you are, as well as what your basic function is. **Example:** “We’re (Business/Product) and we (service/product) for (target group)”.

**Who is your audience?** You need to ask yourself what you want your description to accomplish. Is it to get investors? If so, you’ll want to emphasize your financial track record and profit potential. On the other hand, if the purpose of your description is to introduce yourself as a keynote speaker at an industry conference, you may choose to put more emphasis on your status as an expert in your field. The key here is to identify who your direct audience is and speak to them. If your audience does not understand what you are trying to communicate, then your audience won’t understand what you have to offer.

**Why should they care?** For best results, waste no time establishing your credibility. Quite often, people will only read the first one or two sentences so you want to make a strong impression right away. Your second sentence can establish your credibility as someone worth listening to as you can explain why they should care that you are addressing the problem and providing a solution.

**How have you helped?** Use numbers and provide data to validate your successes. Do you have any hard numbers or percentages since you’ve taken on this project or business? If not, do you have any tangible media that shows your solution in practice or a testimonial from someone who your audience will respect? These are things you should consider when answering this question.



# THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Where can your audience go?** If you are writing an online description, include links to your company's website, relevant publications you have authored, and any social media profile you have set up for business purposes. You want to ensure that you are directing them to something you feel comfortable seeing, so ensure that no matter where you send your audience, that the content is updated and audience friendly.

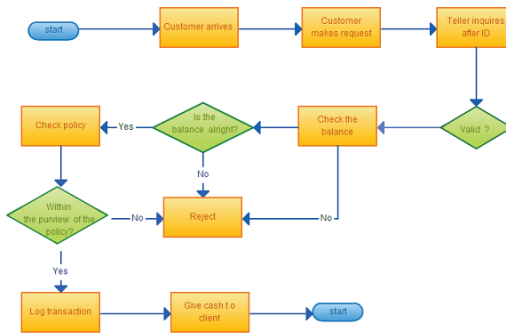
If you put the same energy and creativity into writing your project description as you do into developing your ideas, you will certainly come up with a solid result.

**One final tip:** Always ask the best writer you know to edit your final description. This final stage of editing should produce an effective final description that covers your project or business.

With this completed, you should be able to answer the following question for your project or business: **Who are you?**

# ESTABLISHING A WORKFLOW

With a lot of the top level questions answered, we can begin to look at the *how*. How is this going to operate? How are we going to get the funds necessary? How can we work at the optimal amount of time to maximize our results? To answer these questions and more, we have to look at our workflow. **Workflow** is the series of activities necessary to take a plan from its initial phase to its complete phase. If we can detail every step in this process, we can begin to figure out what we will need to complete the operation.



We recommend taking a page out to plot every step between the start of the project to the very end. With all the steps listed out, you should note how many people, how much time, what equipment, and what costs you will incur to complete that step. From there, investigate thoroughly to see how you can minimize costs and optimize results. There are multiple tools and resources out there to help carry out very specific functions so it is important that you investigate thoroughly. It is in this process that you will be able to answer the tough questions people may ask about your project or business. It should be noted that a workflow is constantly evolving due to advancements of technology or policies and as a result, your workflow will more than likely evolve with your business.

# THE BUSINESS PLAN

A **business plan** is a document that covers business goals, reasons that they are attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals. It may also contain background information about the organization attempting to reach these goals. If you've been developing your project concurrently to this text, you should have the right set of considerations in mind (ex. problem, selling points, brand, workflow) to complete it with detail. The sections to this document include:

**Executive Summary:** A snapshot of your business plan as a whole and touches on your company and its goals. The reader should get all the main ideas of your business plan from this section and it should only be one page.

**Company Description:** A summary of who your company is and what it has set out to do. Your business or project description from an earlier section can be used as the basis for this more elaborate section.

**Market Analysis:** A detailed analysis on the market your product or project is in. It should cover competitors and include a **SWOT analysis**.

**Organization & Management:** Every business has a different structure. Use this section to describe yours and include elements you've established in making your workflow.

**Service or Product Line:** Describe what you sell or are pitching in this section. It should cover every detail thoroughly including costs, benefits, and features.

# THE BUSINESS PLAN

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**Marketing:** An outline for your marketing plan including all channels and steps you intend on using to raise awareness for your service or product. How you plan on converting this to sales or other commitments should be touched on here.

**Financial Projections:** A snapshot of your financial projections for the next two fiscal years (or at least a year and the following two quarters). If your project doesn't have a sales component, it would be beneficial to replace this section with dates for certain outcomes of the project.

**Funding Request:** If you intend to use this document to fund your project or business, this section should clearly outline what you are requesting, and why they should accept your request.

**Appendix:** If you have any marketing material ready for your business plan, or any other relevant supporting documents - include it here.

Once you've completed your business plan, keep in mind that it is expected that you update it with any adjustments you plan to make. Like your workflow, your business plan is an evolving document that grows with your project or business.

# SECTION CHECKLIST

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**IDENTIFY PROBLEM AND PROVIDE SOLUTION**



**CREATE A FEATURES/BENEFITS LIST**



**CREATE A PROJECT DESCRIPTION**



**ESTABLISH A WORKFLOW**



**CREATE A BUSINESS PLAN**

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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- + [Simon Sinek: The Golden Circle](#)
- + [Susan Gregg Kogar: Being A Rookie is an Asset](#)
- + [SBA: Create Your Business Plan](#)
- + [Business Plans: A Step-by-Step Guide](#)
- + [Fundamentals for your Brand](#)

**AT THIS STAGE YOU SHOULD HAVE THE INFORMATION AND INSIGHT NECESSARY TO HAVE PUT TOGETHER A BUSINESS PLAN WITH A CLEAR GOAL AND VOICE. THIS WILL BE THE CENTRAL DOCUMENT THAT BOTH YOU AND ANY OTHER STAKEHOLDER CAN LOOK TO THAT DESCRIBES YOUR PROJECT OR BUSINESS IN FULL. IN THE NEXT SECTION WE WILL COVER THE PREPARATION OF BRAND ASSETS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO, AND DESIGN. THESE MATERIALS WILL BE USED ON YOUR PROJECT OR BUSINESSES PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL MATERIALS INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA, AND PRESS KITS.**

# OUR SOURCES

- + Branded Conference 2014
- + Brand Channel
- + Business Insider
- + Forbes
- + HootSuite
- + Internet Live Stats
- + Investopedia
- + Pink City
- + Splash Effect
- + Search Engine Land
- + TastyTuts
- + US Small Businesses



This toolkit was created in partnership with Branded, and their Youth Marketing Conference. To find out more about Branded, visit their website at [brandedto.com](http://brandedto.com)

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