



How to get a job in marketing

Practical advice from a real-world marketer

Paul Lindsell, Managing Director, ThoughtSpark

Why you should read this booklet

Marketing's a great career. I know, because I've done it... and you can too. I find that many sources of advice (with some notable exceptions) are pretty feeble at telling you about marketing, what it is, and how to get into it. In my opinion, most of our trade bodies (again with a couple of exceptions) aren't too good at getting you interested and started. So I've put this short guide together to tell it like it is.

I started my first company in my late twenties, though I'm much older now. But my fellow directors are in their thirties - a bunch of marvellous go-getters, all of them owners (equity holders). You can do this too, if you want, and if you're prepared to put in the graft and brainpower. But you could also have a great marketing career in an internal marketing department too. An in-house career path in marketing can lead to being the boss of a business unit or even a whole company.

By the way, I have found marketing to be a rather egalitarian world. The gender balance tends to be good – with women highly represented in many parts of the industry, including at the senior level. You also often find yourself working alongside people of all ages, beliefs and religions, orientations, nationalities, ethnicities, abilities – all being defined solely by their merit and professional capability.

You can also enter the marketing profession at any age and stage, out of school, out of university or changing from another (or no) profession. The marketing 'family' is an all embracing one, welcoming anyone who can do the job!

Logical business thinking, a love of language and a way with words, hunger for understanding of subjects and industries, and dedication to hard work are the qualities you need to get into marketing.

This short booklet is designed to give you some useful insights into the opportunities and roles available, along with actionable tips about what to do next.

I hope it works for you.

1. A few truths before we get started

When you have just finished school or university, you'll be looking for your first job. Where do you start? You don't have much of a basis to make decisions because you've not had a full-time job before. You don't know what you don't know. So how can you have any sort of the idea what it's going to be like, what you need to offer get that job and what employers are really looking for? You don't know. But that's OK. Very few people have much of an idea of what they want to do in their job until they get out there and try

something. The trick is to get started on something you're likely to be stimulated by. But that means you have to get that initial job in the first place. There's no right and wrong about which job you get. There are simply decisions.

Maybe you have been to a careers service or recruitment centre. Maybe that careers service or recruitment centre is one of the few that actually know what they're talking about (there are one or two really excellent ones). Even amongst the careers bodies that do know what they're talking about, fewer still are really connected into the business world's requirements and the outlook of today's

Very few people have much of an idea of what they want to do in their job until they get out there and try something.



Marketing is not sales, it's everything that happens before sales can get their teeth stuck in.

commercial employers.

The process of getting ready to apply for a job is actually really simple. But that doesn't mean it's easy. In fact it's a lot of hard work and you've got to be pretty bold and pretty dedicated. But the effort is worth it.

This short guide will give you a way of working - things to do. It won't guarantee that you get the job you want but it will get you a long way down the track. Follow the steps that we outline in this guide and you will radically increase the likelihood of getting a really good job in marketing.

2. What is marketing?

We should start with a definition of marketing. The Chartered Institute of Marketing offers the following: "The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably." Not bad. But what does that mean in practice? I prefer to say – marketing is not sales, it's everything that happens before sales can get their teeth stuck in.

It involves understanding the benefits your product or service offers, who is likely to be interested, and what they're prepared to pay. That's covered off by market research, finding out the who, what, when, where, why. Once an organisation knows the answers to these questions, marketing then provides methods of making the likely audience aware of the product, the issues that it solves or satisfies, the channels that can put the 'value proposition' across to its audience(s), the communications methods and content that will catch their eye, and the feedback mechanisms that allow them to indicate their interest. By

"Build something 100 people love, not something 1 million people kind of like."

— Brian Chesky, Co-Founder & CEO, **Airbnb**

the way, there is a 'value proposition' (remember this phrase) for every product or service. Examples might include: "makes me feel good"; "delicious", "cool", "saves me money", "diminishes risk", "makes us more productive", or similar. Once all that has been worked out (based on hard evidence!), a plan is formulated – and budgeted – to create 'campaigns' that bring it all to life. To execute a campaign plan, various disciplines are used – advertising, direct marketing, social media communications, public relations, trade shows, and so on.

Broadly speaking, marketing strategy and planning tends to be managed by 'in-house' people – those who work directly inside the firms that offer the product or service. In contrast, the actual delivery of campaigns tends mostly to be commissioned out to specialist agencies. Why? Because the deep skills of marketing execution tend to be concentrated in, and best delivered, by a group of specialist suppliers (marketing campaigns, PR initiatives, customer analytics, social campaigns). The in-house marketing professional's work is to engage and manage the output of those agencies, making sure that they keep to a tight brief and meet the targets that they have been set.

So you can immediately see one of the fundamental division of types

There is a 'value proposition' (remember this phrase) for every product or service.

One of the fundamental division of types of marketing job – between strategy & planning and campaign execution.

of marketing job – between strategy & planning and campaign execution. The rest of this short guide will focus on further subdivisions of roles in the industry and the types of job available. After those descriptions, we finish up with some key practical things you can do to help your chances of getting a job in marketing.

3. Why marketing?

There are lots of careers that you could aim for which have a clear educational path; to be a doctor, or a nurse, or a lawyer, or a police officer, or an accountant. If that's what you want to be, then you don't really need any extra guides because the courses you study and the exams you take are designed to train you for the job. But most

Every type of organisation in the country and across the world needs marketing people.

people don't become doctors or scientists, financial professionals or nurses.

So how about marketing? Every type of organisation in the country and across the world needs marketing people. That's true for banks, software companies, manufacturers, online businesses, local government, healthcare organizations – every single organisation in every single sector. What marketing means for each of those different types of organisation differs widely, of course. For retail businesses, advertising is very important. Healthcare marketing has to be done on the basis of hard clinical research evidence. And marketing at a charity

relies on telling people's individual stories of hardship or difficulty.

The point is that a career in marketing offers an absolutely huge range of possibilities. It's a great starting point. Don't expect to do lots of glamorous things when you first start out. On the other hand, marketing directors often become chief executives. That's not the case with many other technical or operational career choices. So if it's your ambition one day to become the boss, then marketing could be one of your very best launchpads. Now are you interested? Have we got your attention?

4. Basic choices – the marketing landscape

B2C or B2B?

These two acronyms describe the main audience for a company marketing its products or services – “business-to-consumer” (B2C) and “business-to-business” (B2B). Consumer-focused

“Nobody talks about entrepreneurship as a survival, but that's exactly what it is and what nurtures creative thinking. Running that first shop taught me business is not financial science, it's about trading: buying and selling.”

— Anita Roddick, founder of **The Body Shop**

companies might include cosmetics, cinemas, gaming, supermarkets, fashion, homewares, tourist attractions, etc. Business focused companies might include manufacturing equipment, construction equipment, corporate IT solutions, accounting programmes, financial technology, management consultancy, office property, etc. But there's often a cross-over too. Many types of business sell to consumers and to business customers – think of: mobile phones, computers, banks, insurance companies, charities (where do the funds come from?), food and catering, hotels.

The critical difference (broadly speaking) between B2C and B2B is volume. In B2C you are (usually) trying to reach thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions, of potential customers. In B2B (where the value of each sale tends to be so much greater), you'll be reaching hundreds of possible customers. If your business sells through distributors, integrators or resellers (go and look

Consumer marketing and business marketing are very different and employ very different skills.

up what these terms mean!) then you might be numbering your prospective customers (resellers) in tens. Both have their benefits as a career, so never think that marketing to millions is the better job!

The point is that you need to think first and foremost about which type of marketing you might find interesting. Because consumer marketing and business marketing are very different and employ very different skills. Once you're in consumer, it's harder to move over to B2B, and vice versa. And by the way, don't be fooled into thinking that working for a manufacturing tech firm is any less interesting, rewarding, or full

“If you need the user to tell you what you're selling, then you don't know what you're selling, and it's probably not going to be a good experience.”

— Marissa Mayer, businesswoman, investor, former CEO of **Yahoo**

I always think this choice is also very much about your mindset – are you risk-friendly or risk-averse?

of opportunity than working for a 'cool brand'! I'll talk more about this in the concluding 'practical moves' sections.

In-house or agency?

I've already covered the main contrast – in-house people strategise and plan, whereas agency people create and deliver the actual campaigns. So if you're a smart planner, then in-house

might be for you. If you like learning how to actually do stuff, then agency might suit you better. Of course, there are doing roles for in-housers too – typically roles like social media manager or field-marketing manager. But the division of labour between planning and execution is largely as I have described.

I always think this choice is also very much about your mindset – are you risk-friendly or risk-averse? If you're risk-averse, then definitely look at in-house. Corporations offer widespread security benefits – pension, security of employment, clear hierarchy, strict HR procedures. On the other hand, your career path as a marketing person within a single corporation is likely to be



limited. If you go in-house in a start-up or medium-sized business, then you might get more autonomy, and your role could be very rich (and secure) if you get in at an early growth stage and then grow with the company. But if you're risk averse, smaller growing companies will not offer the same levels of security as larger firms. Don't be afraid of admitting you don't like risk, if that's the case. I've often seen people go into agency and then spend their time agonised and desperately unhappy in the turbulent, pressurised environment. Be honest with yourself – it is a route to happiness!

On the other hand, if risk and volatility excite you, then look at the various types of marketing agency. Because of the division of labour between in-house and agency, there are many more employment opportunities in the agency world. There are also clear career paths which – unlike in-house – do not have a ceiling. Those starting as an 'account executive' (more on specific jobs later) can end up being the boss of a substantial agency! I can think of several people who started with us twenty years ago who are now running agencies.

As your career develops, experience and knowledge count for a lot in the agency world – so as you get older, you get more valuable, and valued. This can't always be said for many in-house

If risk and volatility excite you, then look at the various types of marketing agency.

roles where older professionals are often seen as expensive, and are often looking over their shoulder for the younger person after their job.

On the other hand, life in agency is uncertain and volatile. If clients are lost, then people are shed. Training is also an issue. If you join a big well-known agency as a graduate entry, you'll probably get some good skills training, just like you do in an in-house job. That can't be said for most small to medium-sized agencies (or in-house jobs at smaller companies). Mind you, no amount of training can substitute for actual knowledge, expertise and experience from learning on the job. So if you're hungry for knowledge, you can probably educate yourself wherever you are. And if you're looking for rapid career progress, the entrepreneurial atmosphere and rapid promotion you can get in a smaller agency may be for you.

Prospecting or customer development?

Business models differ depending on the company or sector you're



working in. In a sector like consumer durables (fridges, irons, exercise bikes, vacuum cleaners, furniture, etc) transactions are infrequent. You don't buy a new bed every year! So the vast majority of marketing effort is devoted to 'prospecting' or getting new customers. In contrast, food, clothes, books, hairdressing, DIY, gardening are all sectors where the customer buys regularly. So marketing effort is concentrated on developing a 'relationship' with the customer – with the view of keeping them buying what they

already buy, and if possible getting them to buy more types of product from you.

Relevant concepts in this latter area are loyalty schemes, Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM), customer experience marketing, retention marketing, renewal marketing and 'share of wallet'. Go and look them up – because if you can get some of this jargon into your head and be able to articulate what it means, you'll be that much more attractive at interview. You'll also get a better idea of how marketing works for prospecting and for customer development.

If you can get some of this jargon into your head and be able to articulate what it means, you'll be that much more attractive at interview.

3. What are the job roles?

Market research

Who? What? When? Where? Why?
Market research is all about finding out what people buy, why they buy, why they relate to your brand rather than another, and what they don't buy yet but might do in the future given the right 'value proposition'. In market research you'll get to understand different industries and sectors, how they work, how they're structured. It's the starting point for all marketing.

Anyone can get into market research, but you do have to have an analytical mind. You'll be expected to be highly numerate (there's lots of number crunching) and be able to understand basic statistical concepts, such as margin of error, significant sample, qualitative research, quantitative research. Don't be put off if you don't already know this stuff. Like most jargon, it's straightforward concepts dressed up in fancy words to make practitioners feel special. Just look them up.

"Marketing's job is never done. It's about perpetual motion. We must continue to innovate every day."

— Beth Comstock, Former CMO & Vice Chair, **GE**

Analytics & segmentation

Once market research has revealed which people (or companies) to aim for, and what their motivations are, it's down to analytics to work out how to direct marketing campaigns so that they reach those targets. Analytics is critical to this process. In the high volumes of B2C, the analytical processes are automated and mathematical – analysing which existing customers to target with particular messages, and which prospective customers to target through which channels.

B2C analytics and segmentation (identifying groups of relevant people) is a highly nerdy area, and you'd need quite a mathematical or statistical background

The best people in analytics combine maths/computing understanding with a good business brain to come up with segmentation strategies that work in practice.

to make a career of it. On the other hand, if you're interested in being a software and computing geek, this could be the area for you. In fact, the best people in analytics combine maths/computing understanding with a good business brain to come up with segmentation strategies that work in practice.

All the same mental disciplines apply in B2B, but usually dealing with audiences in the tens, hundreds or thousands. As

such, you'll need much less maths for B2B analytics, but still an acute analytical, logical brain. Targeting activities in B2B are much more about designing intelligent 'journeys' which catch the eye of the right people. They then become self-selecting as they indicate their genuine interest in your proposition by the level to which they consume the material you put in front of them.



Account managers are intelligent co-ordinators and account management is a set of hugely valuable skills in their own right.

(Account) management

Most jobs in marketing can be classed as 'account management'. In-house this will be called 'marketing manager' or 'field marketing manager', but the principle is the same as in an agency. Basically, account managers are intelligent co-ordinators. You collect and consider a 'brief' from your main stakeholders (in-house, that will be business managers, in agencies this means the client). The brief will outline what the business wants to achieve and where it expects support from marketing. It will define a budget. You then have to work out how to put the brief into practice.

Once you have taken the brief, proposed your approach to the client (internal or external) and confirmed that the budget is both economic and realistic, you're then the person who manages the campaign through, commissioning agency support to make the campaigns happen, agreeing targets and deadlines with relevant in-house colleagues, then making sure everyone does their part, to quality and on time.

"Business has only two functions — marketing and innovation."

— Milan Kundera, Writer & Playwright

If you want to develop skills in doing the various parts of the marketing process, then account management may be frustrating for you. At the same time, make no mistake that account management is a set of hugely valuable skills in their own right. If you can become known as the person who "gets things done", you'll go far and you'll be hugely valued.

Account management (or marketing management in-house) takes a judicious blend of tight organisation, persuasive people skills, clear communication, and an insistent focus on results and holding people to account.

Brand management

Brand managers work for brand portfolio companies and look after the commercial fortunes of a particular brand or set of brands. A brand portfolio

Marketing in this context really means being responsible for the total commercial results for your brand(s) each year.

“It’s not what you sell that matters as much as how you sell it!”

— Brian Halligan, CEO & Co-Founder, **HubSpot**

company is an organisation like Proctor & Gamble, or Unilever, or Kraft Foods. They have many individual product brands (a ‘portfolio’).

Marketing in this context really means being responsible for the total commercial results for your brand(s) each year. It’s like running a little (actually not so little!) business. You will range across everything, from market scoping & research, through to campaign delivery. You will be involved in distributor relationships. And you will be judged by the bottom-line results for annual product sales and profit margins.

These are great jobs which teach you business management skills. But there aren’t many on offer. In fact, very few. The companies that offer brand management graduate traineeships seek out the brightest and the best, and

they are absolutely inundated with applications every year.

Finally, you will learn how to run a product business, which is immensely valuable. At the same time, you will not really learn how to do any of the hands-on marketing skills deployed to promote the brand/product. That will all be commissioned out to agencies. I’ve seen too many brand managers looking to move into other parts of the industry, and they’re not much in demand. If they stay in the internal career hierarchy, by contrast, they often become very senior business managers – and frequently business leaders.

A digression - inbound marketing

In recent years, the art of ‘inbound marketing’ has developed. Inbound marketing (or ‘content marketing’) takes a different approach. If you want to promote your product and increase your sales, you just buy more advertising, right? Wrong. Marketers are now getting heavily into creating ‘communities of interest’. In other words, companies are trying first to interest and entertain us, before they start to offer

Marketers are now getting heavily into creating ‘communities of interest’.

their products or services to us. Here's a good example. A famous beer brand found out (through market research and analytics) that there was a huge correlation between their customers and being a rugby supporter. What did they do? They set up a streaming TV channel, with lots of in-depth material on rugby. Because they invented the channel (to which rugby fans flocked) they were then the sole advertiser. They knew that they were getting a great return on investment, because there was a very high likelihood that viewers would be likely to want to drink their beer. The cost of running the channel was several million pounds. However, it could substitute for at least three times that cost of advertising that it would have cost to reach the same audience through traditional ad channels.

In the B2B sphere, inbound is even more important. Go and have a look at how many major business-focused companies are publishing interesting research, papers, how-to guides, industry discussions, and so forth, on their websites. They're usually doing that (if they're organised) as the front end of a 'nurture' campaign. The interesting research piece – usually focused around a business issue or challenge relevant to the company's product/service – is designed to attract the initial attention of



Much of the advertising now is much more to do with creating communities of consumers.

potential customers. The company will then publish a series of materials which progressively focuses on the specific business issue which the product/service helps solve. Once someone has consumed (downloaded/watched) a sufficient number of items in the published series, it is safe to assume that they are dealing with the issue right here and now. At this point the enquirer's details are passed to sales, so they can call and see what the real state of affairs is – and whether the enquirer is interested in a product/service proposal. The potential customer's interest has therefore been 'nurtured' through a series of 'inbound' expressions of interest, downloading a series of relevant 'content' pieces that may indicate a serious interest in your company's proposition.

Get these ideas about inbound marketing into your head. It's the way

much consumer and business marketing is going.

Advertising

Many people think marketing is advertising. It isn't, as should by now be clear. Nevertheless, there are lots of good opportunities in advertising agencies. If you look at much of the advertising now – such as that being done by some of the leading online giants – it is much more to do with creating communities of consumers, as described in our inbound marketing section above. Although, ultimately, advertising has to contribute – measurably – to sales.

Most of the job opportunities focus around account management, which we've already described. There are also analytics roles, especially those in 'media planning', which tries to match the desired audience to the available advertising channels – TV, online, social, paid search, outdoor, promotional events, sponsorships, and more. This role is comparable to the segmentation experts described in our analytics section.

Lastly, there is the role of advertising

“In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different.”

— Coco Chanel (founder of **Chanel**)

'creatives'. These are the people who think up the advertising ideas. It's a fabulous job, but be warned – there are extremely few opportunities. Getting hired as a creative, and making a lifelong career in this area, is about as difficult as becoming a rock star or a screen idol! If you're committed then give it a go... but be under no illusion about the scale of the challenge.

Direct marketing (DM)

In the olden days, direct marketing basically meant direct mail. Nowadays it means a combination of direct mail, direct email, social messaging and pop-up advertising. By the way, don't make the rookie mistake of thinking that direct mail is dead. It's very much alive and is often delivering results far in excess of direct email (which has been greatly undermined by spammers).

Data protection legislation, in the form of the EU General Data Protection Regulation, has hugely restricted the use of online direct marketing (mainly direct email) to try and attract new customers. On the other hand, DM is a very powerful way of communicating

Don't make the rookie mistake of thinking that direct mail is dead.

with existing customers. When we sign up and give our permission to be contacted by a firm we buy from, we expect those communications to be personalised, and we're generally pleased when they obviously are tailored in some way to our preferences and purchasing patterns. This is where analysis and segmentation comes into its own, so if you're interested, you could have a good time as a data analyst at a DM agency.

As with advertising, most DM opportunities are available in account management roles. However, there are some very interesting developments happening in the DM world around 'partnership marketing'. This is where a strong customer overlap has been identified between two non-competing brands. Let's say, for the sake of argument, that this overlap has been identified between a mobile phone

When we sign up and give our permission to be contacted by a firm we buy from, we **expect those communications to be personalised.**

Businesses are using social media – mainly **LinkedIn** and **Facebook** – to spread the word.

company, a retailer and bank. Now – all these companies have communications that they send to their customers anyway. So why don't they get together and allow each other some space in those communications – to everyone's mutual benefit. Where this has worked already, it's much more cost-effective than buying advertising space on the TV, in the newspapers, on social media or through other online media. Not that this kind of co-operation is going to in any way generally replace traditional advertising media. But it's illustrative of the exciting way the media landscape is shifting and changing.

Social media marketing management

Interestingly, this seems to be a role

that is as common in-house as it is in agencies. Basically, businesses are using social media – mainly LinkedIn and Facebook – to spread the word about their company, their products, their ideas and their people.

Once again, there is a chasm between consumer and business-to-business social media techniques. Consumer firms will typically concentrate on Facebook, Tik-tok, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, etc to reach their audiences. B2B communications tend to favour LinkedIn and Youtube, because these are platforms where people expect to have business interactions rather than personal ones.

Consumer social is a world of influencer reviews, product guides and videos, product demos, competitions, incentives, celebrity endorsements and other lighter stuff. If that attracts you, then look at consumer brands or agencies. But be aware that the Advertising Standards Authority is coming down hard on influencer and endorser activity that does not clearly state that the promoter is being paid

“So often people are working hard at the wrong thing. Working on the right thing is probably more important than working hard.”

— Caterina Fake, Co-founder, **Flickr**



to feature a product. This may start restricting the ways consumer social can be used commercially.

B2B social is altogether more intellectual. Similar to what you have already read in this guide about content marketing, 'thought leadership' pieces or videos are created about a burning industry issue – research guidance or ideas – in order to catch the interest of prospective business customers. This is then followed up with increasingly practical pieces ('how to approach an issue', 'key steps to analyse business readiness', 'top ten typical pitfalls' or similar). As people download or 'consume' this material, their interest is 'scored' until they reach a critical point

where a sales call/contact is deemed appropriate – to see if the person is really addressing the relevant business issue and would welcome a product or service that can help them successfully do so.

Loyalty schemes

This is a really interesting area to work in. Currently, 85% of British women are members of a loyalty programme; for men, it's 70%. So the science of loyalty management is not going to go away!

Companies run loyalty schemes because clever marketing nowadays needs to be 'data-driven'. In other words, your individual preferences and buying behaviour are taken into account when companies offer you additional

Loyalty marketing – or database marketing – is **absolutely fundamental** to modern marketing.

products/services, incentives, discounts, renewal reminders, special events, and so on. Importantly, while companies are interested in retaining you as a customer, their main focus is to delight you to the extent that you want to buy more from them over time. They want to increase your average transaction value, to increase their share of wallet, and improve their share of customer (spend). Look at some of the terms I'm using here (in italics) and use them to do your homework, searching out their definition and application on the web and understanding what they mean in practice.

Loyalty marketing – or database marketing – is **absolutely fundamental** to modern marketing. It underpins any measurement of how effective a company's marketing spend is, calibrating Return on Investment for

campaign whether online or offline. Really clever marketing manages to get a completely holistic view of each customer, across both online and offline behaviour. This is critical to really intelligent marketing, but it's not easy to do.

Also – be aware that database marketing nowadays is strictly governed by the rules of the General Data Protection Regulation and its UK law version in our revised Data protection Act. The level of restriction imposed by the GDPR has been grossly exaggerated, mainly by legal 'experts' who actually don't understand how it is implemented in practice. Best to rely on the very clear guidance offered by the Information Commissioner's Office at ico.org.uk/media/1555/direct-marketing-guidance.pdf. Your homework should also reference the strictures of the Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulation (PECR) which you can read about at ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-pecr/electronic-and-telephone-marketing/. The rules are very different for postal direct mail (lighter touch) compared to electronic or telephone marketing (stricter touch).

“The customer is not a moron, she's your wife.”

— Famous quote [in nowadays unacceptable language!] from 1950s advertising guru David Ogilvy, Founder, **Ogilvy & Mather**

Public relations (the content people)

All marketing nowadays is very hungry for **content**. No longer do you simply create some great adverts and expect them to generate leads and business. In fact, even advertising specialists are all talking about 'creating communities' around their clients' brands, and 'adding value and personality' to the brand. That requires lots of interesting material – written, audio, video – which audiences can consume. Engaging content might be about lifestyle, health, sustainability, crafts, special events, personal safety, travel, literature, sports – in fact a host of things that are relevant to the brand.

How do the experts judge what subjects are relevant and interesting to their target audience? Well... they ask them! Then they analyse that research to see which subject areas a brand's customers have most in common. That then provides the 'landscape' for content creation which will appeal to current customers and attract new ones.

So who is it in the marketing

All marketing
nowadays is very
hungry for **content**.

community that has the skills for creating interesting editorial content? That's the public relations (PR) people. These are the real writers in the marketing family. And believe me, finding people who can really write well is rare! Everyone thinks they can write, few actually can.

Originally, PR was focused on getting the client into the press, not through adverts, but through genuine stories – news about what the client company was doing, or thinking, or advising, or researching. The PR people had to precis the story, approach journalists in magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, websites, and persuade them that the story was worth covering. This activity – media relations – still remains very important.

However, the PR people are now much more generators of content themselves, rather than going through journalists only. Look at how companies

"Content is king."

— Bill Gates, Co-founder, **Microsoft**

Events will have to be super-specific, shorter, and offer delegates other compelling reasons to attend online, if they are going to work in future.

attract possible customers by publishing interesting content on their websites, their social media platforms, through digital PR, or their own printed publications.

If you want to write, this may be the place for you.

Events

Finally, we come to the contentious area of events.

Designing and organising business events used to be a major job. Conferences, customer forums, trade exhibitions – all these used to be a major part of the marketing armoury and needed people to make them really tick.

Then the pandemic came along. Event organisers tried to move their face-to-face formats online and what happened? In large part, they no longer worked. Delegates were no longer a 'captive audience' who had travelled to a location where the event was taking place and had little else to do other than meet exhibitors or network with other

delegates. The word on the streets is that sponsors are not going to pay to be at these events in future because they're getting such a poor return on investment.

So that means the event industry, whether organised by companies for their customers or by third party organisations for a wider audience, is going to have to completely reinvent its business model. Early research to date indicates that events will have to be super-specific, shorter, and offer delegates other compelling reasons to attend online, if they are going to work in future. If this area attracts you, make sure you're getting involved with an organisation that recognises these market trend and is innovating new ways of making events work. There's real opportunity for those of you who embrace risk to get your career moving very quickly in this volatile and changing area.



6. How to get started

Roles

First decide which sort of role, is most likely to suit you and your capabilities. As I've said before, you don't know what you don't know... so just make a sensible self-judgement. You've got to start somewhere. There's no right and wrong – just decisions. Do you want to write? Do you want to crunch the numbers? Do you want to research? Do you want to deal with (sometimes difficult) people? Remember - even the more glamorous sounding roles turn out to be 99% perspiration + 1% inspiration!

Draw up a rationale of why you think

you might be good for your chosen role or roles. Test it out on friends, family & acquaintances. Look for them to really scrutinise your rationale, not simply rubber-stamp your thinking.

There are a host of trade associations which will help you read around the different aspects of marketing. They publish a certain amount of material free-to-air. Go and read it! Also look at the trade press to find out what's going on in the area of marketing you're interested in. Search on terms such as "direct marketing trends (YEAR)" or "digital marketing trends (YEAR)" or "market research trends (YEAR)" or similar.

Target Companies

Always get a list together of target companies or organisations to approach. Of course, you can just look out for job adverts and apply for them, or sign up with a recruitment agency, but you'll look so much more impressive if you send out an unsolicited approach to a selection

of companies each week. It gives firms the (true) impression that you are not just applying for jobs willy-nilly, but that you have a real plan and rationale for approaching their industry, even their specific organisation.

Naturally, you must tell the company why you want to work for them – perhaps referencing a recent company

Some Key Trade Associations

Chartered Institute of Marketing

www.cim.co.uk

The Marketing Society

www.marketingsociety.com

Chartered Institute of Public Relations

www.cipr.co.uk

Market Research Society

www.mrs.org.uk

Interactive Media in Retailing Group
(IMRG)

www.imrg.org

DMA – Data & Marketing Association

www.dma.org.uk

Institute of Data & Marketing

www.theidm.com

Content Marketing Association

www.the-cma.com

The Advertising Association

www.adassoc.org.uk

World Advertising Research Center

www.warc.com

The Institute of Promotional Marketing

www.theipm.org.uk

Marketing and loyalty publications

www.marketingweek.com

www.campaignlive.co.uk

www.loyaltymagazine.com

www.thewisemarketer.com

performancemarketingworld.com

announcement which you've found from your research into subject areas (see next section). You'll be able to find the key marketing people by looking through LinkedIn. If you're worried about a physical letter not getting through, send them a LinkedIn request, say why you want to connect and say you've sent them a letter in the post (careful – you only have

300 characters in your LinkedIn request message). If they are interested in you and are concerned a letter will not reach them, they will give you an alternative way of sending your details (check in with our section on Networking and LinkedIn). Also send your letter to someone in the company's or agency's HR department.

Some Key Trade Publications

Retail

www.retail-week.com

Fashion

www.drapersonline.com

DIY

www.diyweek.net

e-Commerce

www.internetretailing.net

Utilities

www.utilityweek.co.uk

Telecoms

www.telecoms.com

www.ofcom.org.uk

Insurance

www.postonline.co.uk

www.insuranceage.co.uk

Banking

www.thebanker.com

Accountancy

www.accountancydaily.co

www.accountancyage.com

Manufacturing

www.themanufacturer.com

Healthcare

www.hsj.co.uk

Sustainability

www.businessgreen.com

Charities

www.thirdsector.co.uk

Local Government

www.lgcplus.com

Chemicals

www.chemweek.com

Pharmaceuticals

www.pharmatimes.com

Learn something about the industry, what its challenges and trends are, what makes it tick

Subject Areas

Nothing... **nothing** impresses like subject area knowledge. This is not only true if you are seeking an in-house job, but also if approaching agencies (because they have to know their clients' businesses).

Most of your peers will not have bothered to learn anything much about the industries they are targeting (if, indeed, they are targeting anything much at all). So if you are interested in approaching firms in financial services, or telecoms, or IT solutions, or retail fashion, or e-commerce... then **learn** something about the industry, what its challenges and trends are, what makes it tick. If you do this, you'll be head and shoulders above your competitors.

Your best sources for learning are trade publications and trade associations. Some of these are gated to prevent

non-subscribers reading them, some are partially restricted, others are open to all. If you do a little reading among these publications, look for marketing subjects by leaders or agency experts in the field.

You need to get a little familiar with various aspects of each target industry: what are its pressure points; what are its main challenges; is regulation driving change; what are its key acronyms and what do they mean; what is a selection of jargon from the industry and can you explain it; what is helping the best operators to succeed; which players are falling behind and why?

Get reading!

Networking and LinkedIn

Hands up who's NOT on LinkedIn? If so, create your account now. In most of the Western World, LinkedIn is the professional networking platform. Everyone in business (pretty well) is on it, and you should be too.

There's plenty of advice on the LinkedIn platform about creating your profile and so on. What is less well supported is how to develop your network.

Remember, LinkedIn is a digital version of networking – who knows whom.

LinkedIn is a digital version of networking – who knows whom.

You must always respect that concept and not try to abuse or circumvent its controls and rules.

First, you need to get your network started. Think about family, friends, people you know. First try sending them a request to Link In. Is there anyone you know in the agency world, or in a business sector that you're aiming for? Rack your brains on this question. Is there someone who knows someone who knows someone? When you reach out for those first few connections, tell them you're just getting started, explain your connection to them (however distant), and ask them to accept your request (there's a little message box you can use to say this – just 300 characters). It is entirely in the spirit of LinkedIn, just like traditional networking, that more senior people in business are keen to help more junior people like you to get started. So just make an honest request and people will probably help by connecting to you. Don't worry if you don't get an immediate reaction – some of us don't look at our LinkedIn every day of the week. Then once you're started, take a programmatic approach to building your network. Reach out to a handful of people each week – you're only allowed to connect with people who are connected to the people in your network. Always add an explanatory message if possible.

Get cracking!

“Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room.”

— Jeff Bezos, Founder & CEO, **Amazon**

Work experience

You **have** to get work experience to stand much of a chance of getting that first job in marketing. All your competitors will have done so, so don't think you can wing it or pretend that you're different.

You need that work experience because employers you approach for your first full-time job don't want to hire people who have not had some sort of insight into the profession, what it involves, and even just the experience of working as part of a team in an office (maybe part remotely nowadays). At the same time, it gives you a taste of working in marketing to make sure it appeals to you.

Please note that very few work experience placements come with payment beyond expenses. It's important to understand that such placements provide you with training and expertise that will help you to enter this industry.

You **have** to get work experience to stand much of a chance of getting that first job in marketing.

For this reason, you should also be discerning when researching or taking on an internship. It's essential that you are learning new skills, being introduced to relevant software and platforms, and making meaningful connections with people – otherwise you're wasting your time. In my opinion, any work

experience that lasts less than a month is likely to be useless – unimpressive to the future employer and offering little proper learning for you. A month allows you to get your teeth into some aspect of marketing at the company where you're doing the placement.

In terms of number, you should aim to have three work placements under your belt by the time you're applying for your first full-time job. If you've left it a bit late, then don't worry... you can do three placements in a row. The experience you gain is just as good, whether they're spaced out, or in a series. You just might find it easier to arrange if you spread it



over several years. Remember that in this semi-virtual world, you could do these placements remotely or in person, or a hybrid of both (at the discretion of the company... not you!). This may open you up to a wider range of possibilities than just looking in your local area. It could also massively reduce the cost of getting to and from work during your placement.

To find a placement, you can either approach a company and ask to work for a month in their marketing department, or you can approach an agency with a similar request. If you are approaching a firm to work in-house, then I would advise you choose 'sunrise' rather than 'sunset' industries, such as: e-commerce, additive manufacturing, 'challenger' banks, innovative engineering, sustainable power generation, food brands, business software, alt-finance, cloud computing, streaming services, mobile apps, X-as-a-Service, Artificial Intelligence, robotics (industrial and medical), electric vehicles, autonomous systems, high-value nutrition, cyber security, biological drugs, cyber-physical systems, digital transformation and the Internet of

"The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come."

— Steve Jobs, Co-Founder, **Apple**

Things (IoT).

To find who is running an in-house marketing department, put the name of the firm and the word 'marketing' into LinkedIn. This will help you identify a name to approach. Send them a letter in the first instance. You'll stand out if you do, because so few people bother to write a letter nowadays.

To find an agency, you can either look through the member lists published on the websites of the key trade associations (see panel earlier in this booklet), or you can simply Google 'marketing agency Manchester' (or whichever city you're

Remember that in this semi-virtual world, you could do these placements remotely or in person, or a hybrid of both.

You don't want to end up just making the coffee!

targeting) and look through the results. Again, find the names of key people through LinkedIn.

We've already said that when you're doing your placement, you don't want to end up just making the coffee! At the same time, remember you're there to learn, not give your own (inexperienced) views on the way the place should run! Just concentrate on listening and absorbing knowledge. By all means ask questions so you gain the greatest possible understanding from these placements. And each day, write down something you have learned (however small). If you don't, you won't remember them all at the end of the placement. This is the stuff that will impress future employers.

There **are** courses from industry associations that can help you to learn the ropes and improve your CV. Not only do these show interest and initiative, you'll probably make some useful contacts as industry professionals regularly undergo training. As with work experience though, you'll need to invest both time and money to make the most of these opportunities. But never think that these courses will ever trump work experience on your CV.

Finally -you want to save the world?

Many people at your stage have an idea that they want to 'save the world'. In other words, they would like to work in a business, charity or public sector organisation that is delivering a clear societal good. That's laudable but read on.

First, all business is delivering a societal good – taxes. If businesses don't make money (profits) which are then taxed (along with their employees' salaries as income tax) then there is no way to pay for healthcare, government services, environmental improvements, social governance, and all the rest of it. So any job you do is benefiting society.

Second, if you're just starting out, you have very little to offer charitable bodies, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or special interest (lobbying) groups. If you have little to offer from the start, your progress in these organisations is likely to be limited. The same goes for your effectiveness. I strongly urge you to join a commercial organisation first, gain some of those marvellous marketing and communications skills, develop and fine-hone your craft, and then look to bring those skills to a pro bono organisation at a later date – when you will have something very valuable to bring to the party.

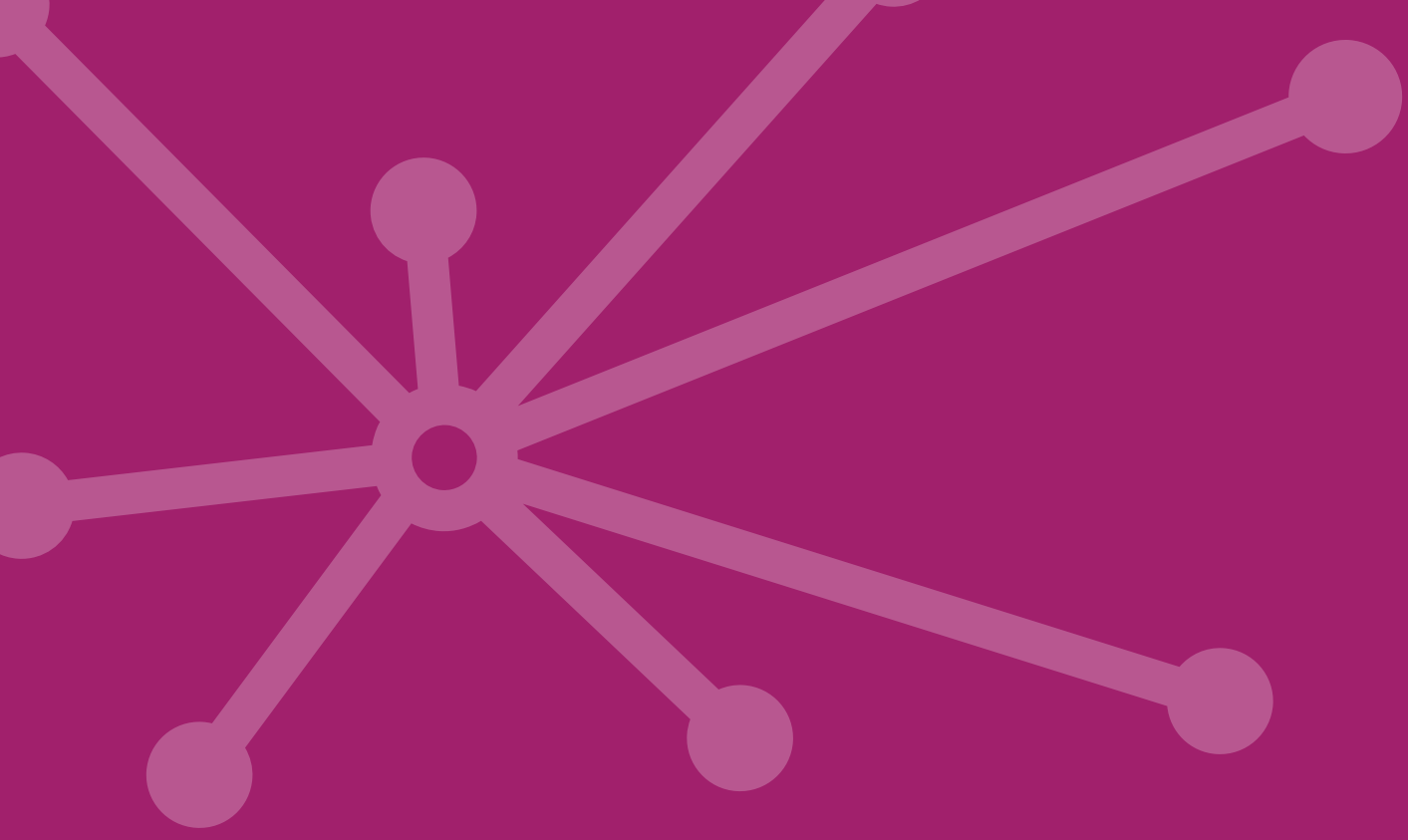
Good luck to you all!

If you have found this booklet helpful or if you have suggestions for improvements/additions please email paul@thoughtsparkagency.com



[**thoughtsparkagency.com**](http://thoughtsparkagency.com) is a strategic consultancy focusing on business development and marketing infrastructures/strategies and their successful deployment.

[**mindmetreresearch.com**](http://mindmetreresearch.com) is a market research agency specialising in the technology, healthcare, financial services and professional services markets.



ThoughtSpark

www.thoughtsparkagency.com

info@thoughtsparkagency.com