



Freight & Analytics

Marketing 101

**A no-nonsense
guide for freight
brokers**

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Why value marketing?

It's easy to gloss over the importance of marketing your business. Unlike sales or customer service, it's a bit detached from a direct correlation to revenue and should be viewed as an investment into the long-term success of your brokerage. To many, this means it's a "nice to have" and not a "need to have."

Don't make that mistake.

Marketing is the way you decide to present your business to the world. It runs the gamut from branding to reputation management and includes other niches like sales enablement and social media.

We see several brokers that confuse marketing with advertising. They're related, but not synonymous. Let's get specific with a quote from the American Marketing Association (emphasis ours):

"In basic terms, marketing is the process of **identifying customer needs and determining how best to meet those needs**. In contrast, advertising is the exercise of promoting a company and

its products or services through paid channels. In other words, **advertising is a component of marketing.**"

Take a cue from its name – your business has a finite limit to the customers it attracts, known as your total addressable market. Marketing is how you position yourself to your customers within that group. It can help inform your pricing strategy, measure your market penetration, and guide your business' offerings.

**To say it plainly:
Marketing is not
a luxury**

In this guide, you'll get a new broker's education on how to get your marketing off the ground and headed in the right direction. With dead simple language, we'll show you everything you need to position your business for success.

Core principles of marketing

We'll explore demographic targeting, crafting a strong brand image and voice, creating effective marketing campaigns, and learning from successful case studies. This background information is the very foundation of your marketing efforts.

Understanding demographic targeting

Demographic targeting is about identifying and understanding who your ideal customers are, what they want, and how they behave. This includes factors like age, gender, income level, education, and location. For brokers, consider looking at specific markets, lanes, or sectors you want to specialize in or focus on. Think deeply about what unique challenges your target audience is up against. By understanding these aspects, you can tailor your products, services, and messaging to resonate with your target audience.

Remember: Your product or service won't appeal to everyone. The key is to focus on those who are most likely to find value in what you offer.

For brokers, don't assume every shipper is for you. Pardon the pun, but what is your lane? What will you specialize in? Where will you find the most wins in an ultra-competitive environment? Questions like that will help you identify who your shipper customers are. When you're starting out, consider looking for shippers in your immediate area – everyone loves keeping business local.

Creating a strong brand image and voice

Your brand image and voice represent the personality of your business. They differentiate you from your competitors and create a unique identity in the minds of your customers.

A strong brand image starts with a compelling logo, color scheme, typography, and imagery. These elements should consistently reflect your brand's values and mission.

Your brand voice is the tone and style in which you communicate. How you sound and present in communications is up to you. But spend time with it and craft a style that reflects you and what you want for your business. Whether you're writing a blog post, an email newsletter, or a social media update, ensure your voice remains consistent.

Developing effective marketing campaigns

An effective marketing campaign starts with a clear objective. Are you looking to increase brand awareness? Drive more sales? Retain existing customers?

Once you've set your objective, identify your target audience, choose the right marketing channels for each objective (e.g. social media for awareness, email for driving sales and increasing customer loyalty), and craft your message.

Remember to make your message compelling, relatable, and in line with your brand voice.

Finally, set a budget, execute your campaign, and measure the results.

This will help you understand what worked, what didn't, and how you can improve in future campaigns.



Learning from successful marketing case studies

Studying successful marketing case studies can provide valuable insights and inspiration. These real-world examples show how businesses have effectively used marketing principles to achieve their goals.

For example, consider Airbnb's "Live There" campaign. They understood their demographic (travelers seeking unique experiences), crafted a strong brand image and voice ("Belong Anywhere"), developed an effective campaign that highlighted real hosts and their homes, and achieved tremendous success as a result.

In conclusion, understanding the core principles of marketing is crucial for any business. It allows you to reach the right audience, create a memorable brand, develop effective campaigns, and learn from the best in the industry.

Messaging pillars and value propositions

Your messaging pillars are the core ideas or themes that your brand stands for.

They form the backbone of your communication strategy. Your value proposition, on the other hand, is the unique value that your product or service offers to customers. It's what sets you apart from the competition. Both your messaging pillars and value proposition should be consistently communicated across all your marketing channels. Both of these elements will inform your brand voice, so keep them handy.

As an early-stage broker, your value proposition may sound something like: "Our boutique brokerage delivers white-glove customer service that helps shippers keep goods moving." This sort of messaging will help you create consistent campaigns.

For your marketing pillars, consider choosing three words or phrases that outline your business. After that, create reasons to believe those statements and fact-based claims to go along with them.

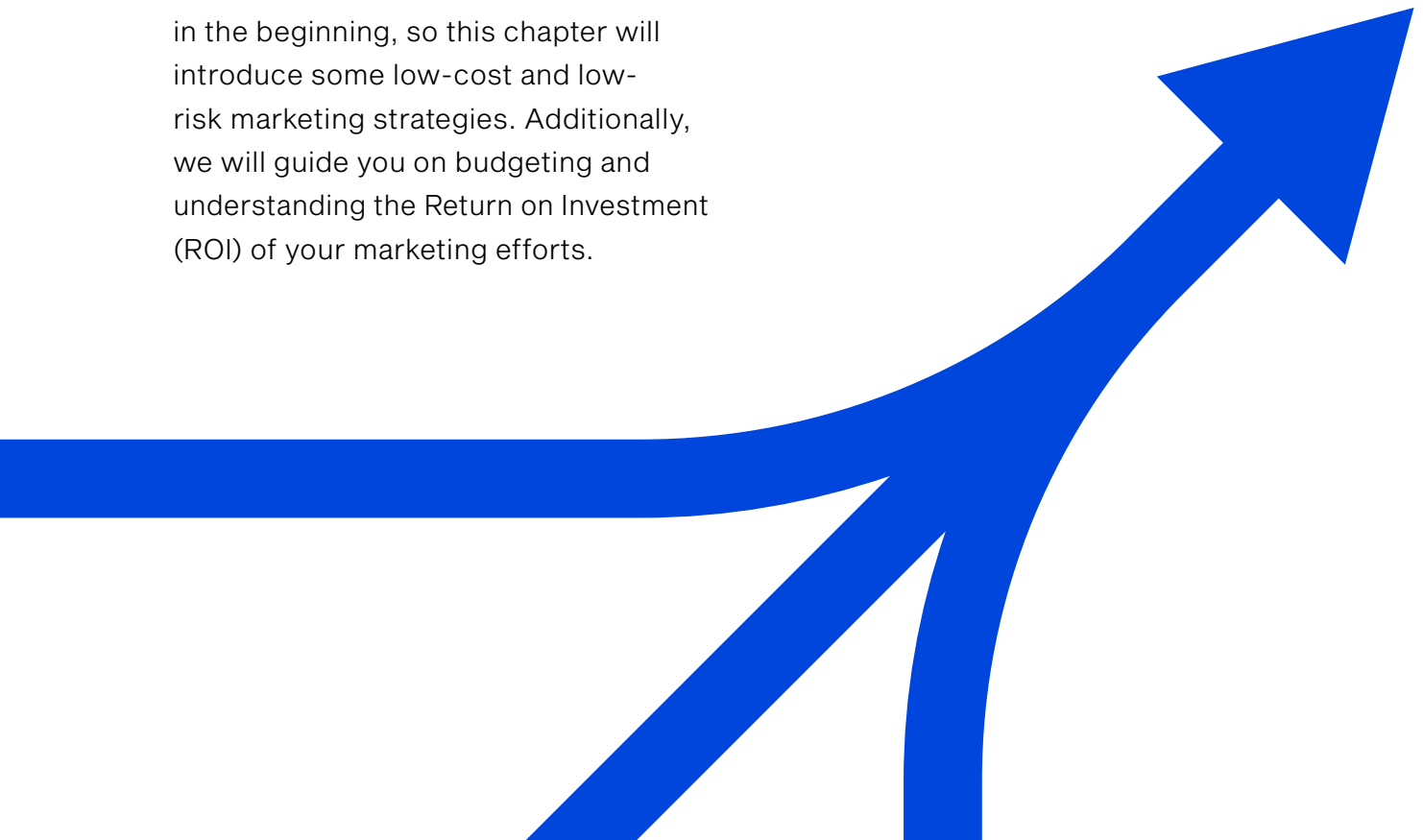
Your marketing pillars may look like this:



Kickstart your marketing journey:

Cost-effective strategies and understanding ROI

It makes sense to stick to the basics in the beginning, so this chapter will introduce some low-cost and low-risk marketing strategies. Additionally, we will guide you on budgeting and understanding the Return on Investment (ROI) of your marketing efforts.



Low-cost marketing techniques to set the foundation

Social Media Presence

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn allow businesses to connect directly with their customers. Create engaging content that resonates with your target audience, answer queries, and build a community around your brand.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) can help your business gain visibility. By optimizing your website with relevant keywords, you can rank higher in search engine results, driving organic traffic to your site. This can be done on your own with some studying, but many freelance SEO experts can quickly set your website up with a foundation.

When you start out, keep your SEO localized. Creating web pages targeting keywords like “broker” or “broker near me” is far too broad. Get specific by targeting keywords or phrases like “affordable freight broker in [city]” or “the best freight broker near me.”

Networking

Attend local events, join online forums, or become a member of industry-specific groups. Networking allows you to establish relationships that could lead to partnerships, collaborations, or referrals. Begin creating a name for yourself, but always be mindful of how you’re presenting your ideas. The way you speak will be synonymous with your company. Represent yourself well.

Brokers need to include load boards like [DAT One](#) as a place to network and manage their reputation. New brokers get dedicated support reps at DAT to guide them through starting a brokerage. One customer said this of DAT One:

“Our brokers are constantly in the DAT One load board throughout the day. It has helped us to venture into new lanes of responsibility, win new business consistently over the last 3 to 4 years and really has helped us to, to, to grow.”
– Kevin Bender, Director of Support Services, Sunrise Logistics

Email marketing

Collect email addresses from visitors to your site and send them regular newsletters or updates about your products or services. This keeps your brand fresh in their minds and can lead to repeat business.

Get set up online

Get the basics down first. From Google MyBusiness to business reviews on Facebook and freight-specific sites, you can show your responsiveness to shippers and any issues that arise throughout your time as a broker. Positive reviews are great, but how you deal with negative reviews can be equally impactful. Make sure that your business, phone numbers, and website are correctly set up in Google MyBusiness, and ensure that you have an email domained to your website (i.e. not a Gmail or Yahoo email address).



Budgeting and understanding ROI

Understanding the financial dynamics of marketing is critical for the growth and sustainability of your business. Here's how you can manage your budget and measure ROI effectively:

Setting a market budget

A common rule of thumb is to allocate 5-10% of your gross revenue to marketing. However, this can vary depending on your industry, business size, and growth stage.

Tracking expenses

Keep a record of all marketing-related expenses. This includes ad spending, the cost of creating content, software subscriptions, and any other costs incurred during marketing campaigns

Calculating ROI

ROI is calculated by dividing the net profit from a marketing campaign by the total marketing cost, then multiplying by 100 to get a percentage. A positive ROI indicates that your marketing efforts are paying off. Be sure you know the average duration of a new partnership as well as the average lifetime value instead of just what you get from an initial contract to get the true ROI from your efforts.

Analyzing results

Use analytical tools to monitor the performance of your campaigns. This provides valuable insights into what's working and what needs improvement.

Remember, marketing is an investment, not an expense. The goal is to generate more revenue than what you spend on marketing.

Starting with low-cost marketing strategies helps set a strong foundation for your business. Understanding budgeting and ROI ensures that you're making the most of your marketing spend. As your business grows, you can gradually scale your marketing efforts to reach bigger audiences and achieve greater success.

Traditional Marketing



It can be easy to overlook the value of traditional marketing tactics. However, these time-tested strategies still hold significant power in creating brand awareness, establishing connections, and driving business growth.

The power of networking events

Networking events provide a valuable opportunity to meet like-minded professionals, potential customers, and industry influencers. They allow you to share your expertise, learn from others, and build relationships that could lead to

fruitful partnerships or collaborations. Remember, while networking, your aim should be to create lasting connections rather than making immediate sales. After conversations or after the event, be sure to write notes on who you talked to and what you talked about so that you can effectively continue conversations via phone or email to transfer connections into customers.

Direct mail and print advertising

Direct mail and print advertising may seem old-fashioned in the age of digital media, but they continue to offer unique advantages. These methods allow for targeted marketing, high visibility, and a tangible connection with your audience. Well-designed print materials can leave a lasting impression and drive engagement.

Your initial forays into direct mail don't need to be expensive. It can be as small as identifying ten shipping customers you believe are a good fit for you, writing them a handwritten letter, and putting it in the mail. Direct mail often conjures images of smart graphic design on fancy cardstock – don't let that deter you. Start small using a contact list you've built yourself, then scale up. Easy ways to build contact lists include writing handwritten letters or internet searches for potential customers. Use their addresses or phone numbers to build your contact lists.

Trade shows and industry events

Participating in trade shows and industry events can put your brand in front of a highly targeted audience. By showcasing your products or services and interacting directly with potential customers, you can generate leads, gain valuable feedback, and increase brand recognition.

In conclusion, while digital marketing channels have their advantages, traditional marketing tactics remain a vital part of a comprehensive marketing strategy.

By combining these approaches, you can reach a wider audience, create a more diverse marketing mix, and maximize your business growth potential. Keep notes from your conversations and use them to feed your new relationships.

If you've got the means, consider going to industry events such as [MATS](#), [TIA](#), [DATCON](#), or [IFDA Distribution Solutions Conference](#).

Digital Marketing



Digital marketing strategies are no longer optional; they're essential. They offer unprecedented opportunities to reach niche audiences globally, engage with them interactively, and convert them into loyal customers at no to very little cost.

This chapter will explore various facets of digital marketing, including website optimization, search engine strategies, social media marketing, email campaigns, and video marketing.

An intuitive, well-designed website, legitimate contact methods (like a

professional email address), and active social media profiles are prerequisites when starting your business.

Remember, you don't need to do too much or spend a fortune at the onset. Start small, focusing on the basics, and scale as your revenue increases.

Role of social media platforms in brand image creation

Social media platforms offer an excellent opportunity to build and enhance your brand image. Consistently sharing valuable content, engaging with your audience, and showcasing your brand's personality can help cultivate a strong, positive image.

Remember, while you might not see an immediate impact on sales from your digital marketing efforts, especially in a B2B environment, you're building brand awareness. This foundation is crucial and will support your sales outreach activities, like emails and calls.

Website optimization for lead generation

Your website is often the first point of contact between your brand and potential customers. By optimizing it for lead generation, you can ensure visitors are not just browsing but are also taking action. This could include filling out a contact form, signing up for a newsletter, or making a purchase. Key elements of website optimization include intuitive navigation, compelling call-to-actions, and valuable content that addresses your audience's needs and interests.

Search engine strategies: SEO and PPC

Search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising are two powerful digital marketing tactics. SEO involves optimizing your website and its content to rank higher in search engine results, increasing visibility and organic traffic. On the other hand, PPC allows you to place ads in search engine results for specific keywords, driving targeted traffic to your site.

[Start here](#) if you're new to concepts like SEO and PPC.

Social media marketing: beyond likes and shares

Social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram offer unique ways to connect with your audience. They allow you to share valuable content, engage in conversations, and build a community around your brand. Don't maintain a poor presence on multiple platforms; having a consistent and engaging presence on a couple of platforms is more effective than profiles that seem abandoned.

Reputation management

Company reviews are standard fare for purchasing decisions. Smart businesses leverage them to entice and inform potential buyers, to great effect.

77%

of consumers always or regularly read company reviews before making a purchase.

But now, reviews have moved away from consumer-facing spaces. They've put down roots in the B2B world, too. Thousands of brokerages around the country use reviews on DAT's load board to identify future partners, expand their network, and find carriers they can trust.

Speaking about DAT One, Stone Mattingly, the operations manager of Abba Freight Systems said:

"If we post a load up on the DAT One board, we always get immediate response from carriers of that lane, whereas it seems like other boards that we've tried in the past, they get bogged down, they don't get posted immediately. We don't get that immediate response that we get out of DAT."

It boils down to this: Positive reviews affect your bottom line. More positive reviews equal more money. It's as simple as that.

Give good reviews

Generosity and goodwill are just good business. If a carrier does a good job, let others know about it with a positive review. This is a subtle tactic that requires patience – think of this as the long game. Over time, carriers will notice complimentary and supportive brokerage partners. These are the brokers they'll do business with in the future. We gravitate toward people we know think fondly of us.

Additionally, leaving positive reviews consistently helps foster a culture of review-giving. When reviews are more commonplace, you'll receive more, too. Giving reviews more often serves as an example to other brokerages.

Ask for them in return

If giving reviews is a long game, asking for reviews gives more immediate gratification. Doing so after you've written a review for a carrier entices them to return the favor. Again, this is an extra step that reinforces a culture of review-giving within DAT One that benefits everyone.

You can give good reviews and you can ask for good reviews, but giving and asking don't matter much without the third tactic.

Do good work

Ready for a dose of reality? None of this matters unless you're doing good work. Reviews stem from the quality of your work. If you receive a positive review that isn't backed by strong, consistent, and memorable service, it's only a facade.

Treating customers and partners with respect, keeping your word, and living up to the standards you hold others to are the most effective ways to receive positive reviews. Once your own house is in order, that's when giving and soliciting reviews begins to elevate your business.

DAT is here to help

As always, DAT is ready to help. We've helped thousands of brokers, from the top brokerages in the country, to start-ups like yours. Our products and resources are built to fit your growth journey.

If you want to take one of our tools for a test drive, [click here](#) to set up a demo. For more resources on growing your brokerage, [click here](#).

About DAT Freight & Analytics

DAT Freight & Analytics operates the largest truckload freight marketplace in North America. Transportation brokers, carriers, shippers, news organizations and industry analysts rely on DAT for market trends and data insights based on 400

million freight matches and a database of \$150 billion in annual market transactions.

Founded in 1978, DAT Solutions LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Roper Technologies (NYSE:ROP), a diversified technology company and constituent of the S&P 500 and Fortune 500 indices.



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