

# 101 Ways to Advertise on the Cheap

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As a small business owner myself, I am always looking for ways to advertise on the cheap or for free. Bootstrapping is a way of life these days, not just a start-up problem. Here are 101 marketing ideas that are inexpensive and easy to implement. My favorite ones are “free” of course! See if a few of them fit your market or customer and give it a try. You can also join my email list on my home page to get more ideas, and to find out about my free classes schedule. <http://www.yellowrosemarketing.com>

1. Get a professional website. You'd be amazed how much you can do with a website to get more business! You can create your own for as little as \$10 a month.
2. Add a blog to your current website at no additional charge using WordPress. Your clients and prospective clients will appreciate the free information, and it will speak volumes more than just a brochure. You have to reach out so that people will feel the compassion and integrity of you and your business.
3. Join your local chamber of commerce. It's a perfect place for networking with the local community members, and getting inexpensive advertising opportunities. Price the ones around your town, my nearest chamber has a monthly charge of only \$34 a month.
4. Create unique business cards and hand them out whenever you can. Vistaprint has sales for as little as \$3.99 for 100 cards.
5. Give people two business cards, one to keep and one to give out.
6. Write and submit articles related to your field. Many websites, blogs, newspapers and magazines welcome new ideas to fill their space from your perspective.
7. Speak on panels related to your subject area. Look at your industry trade shows. You can submit a speaking topic and if selected, you will speak for free (if you can afford the travel). Look for local opportunities to save on airfare.
8. Use your professional email address when emailing absolutely anyone. Including cub-scouts parents, club members, friends and family.
9. Comment on blogs in your field. Make sure your commentary adds value to the post. <http://bloggerlinkup.com> is a resource connecting you to other bloggers that need articles.
10. Add a signature block with your contact information on all outgoing e-mails.
11. Offer yourself as a resource to local reporters looking for expert opinions. <http://HelpAReporter.com> “Help A Reporter Out” is the best way to get noticed in a story.
12. Pitch story ideas to local newspaper and magazine reporters.
13. Join InHouston networking group for free. <http://inhouston.ning.com> or other large networking groups in your city. InHouston happens to cover surrounding cities such as The Woodlands and Katy. Send me a friend invite!
14. Write a regular e-Zine or newsletter. Many email software companies start out for free or low cost. They help you keep your list of subscribers organized.
15. Write guest articles for other peoples' publications especially in your industry.
16. Give away a free report, like this one!
17. Appear as a guest host on radio, online and offline.
18. Have a creative and clear answer to “What do you do?” Otherwise known as your 90 second “elevator speech”. I can help you write one.

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19. Make sure all your friends and family know EXACTLY what it is you do.
20. Offer to teach a course at your local community college in your area of expertise.
21. Get a laptop skin with your business name on it. <http://www.schtickers.com> or <http://skinit.com>.
22. Learn to write great headlines for articles and emails. Ask me about my free class on this topic.
23. Publish case studies after finishing successful customer engagements. Customer success stories do very well to explain your processes that work for other clients.
24. Ask for referrals from past clients.
25. Make sure all your children's teachers know what you do.
26. Send out holiday cards with your business information on them.
27. Register with local associations that are related to your profession.
28. Place free ads whenever you can. Craigslist.com is a great place to start.
29. Speak at local universities and colleges.
30. Leave copies of your free reports and articles on airplanes. (Best to tuck them into the Sky Mall magazines).
31. Write White Papers and distribute them among your clients and colleagues.
32. Host a free conference call. Give out free, practical advice.
33. Write letters to editors on topics or subjects related to your industry.
34. Attend industry conventions and seminars that apply to your business. You'd be amazed at how many are free or low cost to attend. If you are a speaker, you get in free. See #7.
35. Attend industry conventions and seminars that your target market attends. For example, if you are a sales consultant, you can attend a "VP's of America" convention.
36. Staff an event. Sign on as a staff member or volunteer at a public event and network away! Our local Rotary Club has an annual Oktoberfest that always needs volunteers.
37. Advertise in local school and church newsletters.
38. Write and submit Press Releases for every notable occasion. Don't ignore local newspapers. Local papers will usually let you submit for free –they are always looking to fill space.
39. Post your business cards on bulletin boards.
40. Remind clients of important dates. If you are an accounting firm, be sure to remind your clients when their taxes are due!
41. Ask current clients how you can improve. Then, Implement their suggestions.
42. Create a yearly survey to find out more about your customers and how you are doing. Don't make assumptions about your clients, ask them! I use a free service called <http://www.surveymonkey.com>
43. Forward articles of potential interest to your clients.
44. Get a bumper sticker or car magnet with your business name on it.
45. Write letters of congratulations to other local business owners on their success.
46. Never apologize about what you cannot change. Example, if you are a small firm, there is no need for an apology. Play up your strengths! Tell your clients about the one-on-one attention they will receive.

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47. Look for free listings in as many various directories. Get listed in many as possible, such as the free listing on Google Places <http://www.google.com/places>.
48. Optimize your website with high ranked keywords to attract search engine attention. Use Google's free keyword tool at <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
49. Give out key-chains or pens with your company name on it, if you get them at a good close-out price. Call a promotional items company, or ask me.
50. Get on the morning show of your local channel by offering to share tips related to your profession. Take the video from the interview and post it on your website.
51. Create how-to videos and distribute them through <http://YouTube.com>.
52. Invite a reporter to lunch and offer your expertise.
53. Mentor newcomers in the field. You never know where they will be tomorrow!
54. Next time you get an inspirational email, add your business information to it and forward it.
55. Volunteer at a favorite charity. Network with fellow volunteers.
56. Give away t-shirts with your business name and website on it. See #49.
57. Donate prizes to charitable organizations or radio giveaways.
58. Create and distribute a podcast on the topic of your choice. Free podcast services everywhere you look.
59. Create a mastermind group with fellow business owners.
60. Start your own industry or business club. Have a weekly breakfast and share ideas.
61. Participate in online chats and forums related to your subject area.
62. Re-connect with old friends from college and let them know what you are up to. I always find them on <http://Facebook.com> and <http://LinkedIn.com> – both free.
63. Be a matchmaker; introduce people to others who might be able to help them.
64. Follow up with potential clients.
65. Handwrite thank-you notes.
66. Get on the phone and call potential leads!
67. Focus on specific clients and specific projects. Carve out a specialty niche for yourself and become the expert.
68. Collect testimonials whenever you can.
69. Make it known that ALL LEADS ARE WELCOME.
70. Offer complimentary introductory sessions to those who may not be familiar with your work.
71. Host a party for current clients. Ask them to invite a guest!
72. Host a Webinar.
73. Offer a money back guarantee.
74. Create a short, simple quiz for your business. Use it as part of your training or sales.
75. Create an online TV show that is all about your industry or business.
76. Write a book! It's really cheap to do now-a-days.
77. Learn to think like your clients. What is their greatest need?
78. Know your competition. Even if you think that we all have something unique to offer and there is no competition, remember that your clients always have a choice. Why should they choose you over another? Or over nothing at all? Apathy and indecision are also competitors.

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79. Create customer comment cards and put them with your customer's bill, invoice, or other payment transaction. Draw one card a month for a giveaway. Add an opt-in message for their email on the card. Great for building your email lists. Also great for restaurants and cafes.
80. Anticipate objections and have some answers ready!
81. Network locally through <http://Meetup.com> usually free or low cost to join Meetups.
82. Network outside of your industry.
83. Offer free help.
84. Create and learn to tell the "captivating" story behind your business. People love (and remember!) stories more than anything else.
85. Talk about the benefits of your service, not the features.
86. Dress for Success! You are the physical representation of your business.
87. Accept credit cards. This one can be free by using two free tools, ask me how.
88. Be open to learning new things. Like how someone markets their business? Borrow the technique!
89. Get a professional photo taken. Use it with all your materials.
90. Believe in yourself! Marketing is a lot about confidence.
91. Cross promote your business with someone who offers services that complement your own.
92. Submit your website to search engines. Google "link submission" and add your link to Google, Yahoo, MSN, and others.
93. Create a marketing plan and FOLLOW it. I have a 30-minute marketing plan class if you need it.
94. Create a powerful self introduction.
95. Upsell. If you think a client could potentially need something more, offer them the option.
96. Think of yourself as a trusted advisor, rather than a car salesman. You are providing value that your clients need!
97. Remember birthdays and major occasions in the lives of your clients.
98. Keep in touch with people you meet. You never know where a lead can stem from!
99. Don't discredit any encounter. Treat everyone with respect.
100. Use Social Media Marketing. Join two online social networks and participate regularly. I highly recommend <http://Facebook.com> and <http://LinkedIn.com>.
101. Use a comprehensive marketing strategy which involves online and offline marketing methods.

We hope you utilize a few of these ideas in your marketing plan. Join my email list on my home page to get more ideas, and to find out about my free classes schedule.

Thank you for letting me connect with your business!

Yours in marketing,

Cynthia Thomas  
Owner, Yellow Rose Marketing