**Marketing**

Marketing refers to [promotion](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-promotion.htm) and can also involve pricing, product placement and distribution when relevant. Promotion can be limited to a specific target group, or it can be aimed at the general public. Although marketing is often interchangeably used with the word *advertising*, marketing can be more specifically described as the game plan by which the advertising will be carried out, as in a *marketing strategy*.

Marketing strategies differ depending on the product, [target market](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-target-market.htm) and budget. Many marketing strategies for individuals, teams, charities, clubs and even small businesses can revolve around free and low-cost advertising. An example of free advertising might be to include a hyperlinked signature line to your website in all of your online posts. An online [mailing list](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-targeted-mailing-list.htm) -- ideally an opt-in list to avoid [spamming](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-spamming.htm) -- can also be a form of free advertising. [Press releases](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-press-releases.htm) are yet another. Low-cost marketing strategies include items like customized mouse pads, pens, stickers and tee shirts. Flyers and local newspaper ads can also be part of a low-cost marketing strategy.

On a larger scale, getting an unknown [brand name](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-brand-name.htm), product or service into a viable moneymaking position requires robust marketing. Online advertisements placed on key high-traffic websites might be one option, while advertising in national newspapers and magazines might be another. One of the most expensive marketing strategies includes well-placed [billboard](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-billboard.htm) ads and television commercials.

Marketing is unlimited by creativity and can go beyond conventional means. If the business relies on local beach traffic, for example, a small plane can pull a banner along a busy beach on a hot summer day. If the desired target market fills the busy inner city, an advertisement on a bus line might be a cost-effective means of marketing. Radio is another marketing tool that has wide coverage.

Regardless of product, the marketing objective is to reach the intended audience with a message and delivery system that reflects the product itself -— or at least does not detract from it. For example, an upscale Beverly Hills jeweler would waste advertising dollars placing billboards on a bus line. Hiring a graphic designer to put together a full-page ad for a magazine like *Vanity Fair* is a more likely marketing strategy. Conversely, a major studio marketing a new movie starring former wrestler *The Rock* will not likely divert money into a costly magazine ad that caters to a market outside the movie's main target audience. Inner city buses, billboards, television trailers and online advertisements will be a more likely marketing choice.

Aside from *acquisition*, or expanding the [customer base](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-customer-base.htm) or brand awareness, marketing is also concerned with *base management*. This refers to "in-house" marketing that keeps current clientele coming back. Sales, discounts for customer loyalty based on [punch cards](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-punch-cards.htm), and other strategies can all be part of a good marketing plan.

Marketing is an investment that, if done wisely, not only pays for itself but allows a business to grow. When proper marketing gets the message to the right audience, delivered in the right context, at the right price, you can't go wrong. Hiring an experienced marketing consultant can help the [new business](http://www.wisegeek.com/how-do-i-start-a-new-business.htm) owner to develop effective strategies. Various books are also available on marketing strategies and can shed more light on the options available.