

EXCERPT OF:

FLEX YOUR MARKETING

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CHAPTER 15:

HOW TO SAVE THOUSANDS ON YOUR MARKETING BUDGET THIS YEAR

The average small business spends five percent of its annual revenue on marketing, according to The CMO Survey.¹ That's \$5000 if you're bringing in \$1 million.

We learned in Chapter 3 that **marketing should be an investment, not an expense**. One way to increase the odds of a positive ROI is to lower the initial marketing cost. Let's see how you can save on several popular marketing items on your budget.

Save on Graphic Design

From the very beginning, **start with great branding**. A quality logo, the right corporate colors, and well-chosen fonts and textures will save you money on graphic design in the long run.

In my book, [Flex the Freelance: An Unconventional Guide to Quit Your Day Job](#), we workshop logo creation because it is one of the first things a new business needs to create.

Once you have a logo, you'll want it in every size and color combination you need.

Ask your designer for:

- The design files of your logo (Even if you can't open design files because you don't have design software, ask for them! You'll need to share them with others in the future.)
- A copy of your logo sized for social network profile pictures
- A black-and-white version of your logo for print and embroidery.

Getting all the logos designed at once will be more economical and time-saving than approaching a graphic designer whenever another need arises.

Get Good Results from a Graphic Designer

Creating a quality logo and choosing the right fonts will make creating all your branding material easier. You may choose a designer to create your logo, ads, brochures, or other designs. But first, let's discuss what to bring to your designer.

When you consult a professional to create a graphic design, **have a clear plan of what you want**. Never approach your artist with a blank slate. There's too much room for misinterpretation, and you're likely paying by the hour.

Even if you can't draw, sketch out a basic idea of what you want. Simply describing an abstract concept in words will frustrate both of you. So, instead, give them the sketch, any written content you'd like to include, and related photos.

Be clear on **where** the art will be used, the audience, and the **outcome** you're looking for. Know the exact **size** of the art, and if it is for print, know your **bleed** (how much larger the image should be in case the edges get cut off in the printing process).

If you haven't worked with the graphic designer or firm before, provide your brand standards or identity guide and samples of what you've done before (previous ads).

Bring samples if you're starting and haven't created any other art or logos. Pin on Pinterest, screenshot things you see online or cut pictures of ads and logos you like from magazines. Find examples of designs that you *don't* like, too. The more direction you can give a graphic designer, the faster they'll work and the fewer (costly) revisions you'll need.

Then, let the expert do their work. Often, they'll return with several design options. You'll be able to see how your text does or doesn't fit in your design, and you'll likely only need one round of revision.

How to Ask for Revisions

If your graphic designer's first attempt isn't spot on, clarify your revision requests. Use your PDF viewer's draw and comment tools to circle or make notes on the design. You can print the proof and handwrite your instructions (make sure it's easy to read your writing).

Then, take a picture or scan your notes to email your suggestions to the graphic artist. If necessary, number the sections of the art and type your comments for the corresponding section in a Word document or the email body. Schedule a phone call or video conference to share screens if you're concerned about how to express your needs.

Stick to the Budget

It's easy for design costs to skyrocket, especially if you have multiple revisions. So closely monitor your design time. Did the designer or agency give you a flat rate? Likely, they specified the number of revisions allowed or the timeframe for it. Check your proposal.

When you get your first proof, request an update on hours/budget. Being mindful will help you get the project done faster and within budget. When in doubt, be a "helicopter client," especially for the first project.

Let your agent or designer know you're new to this. Remind them that you're learning and would like to ensure you figure out the best way to handle this process so you can streamline it in the future. (they'll better tolerate the questions and hovering if they know it's temporary and you intend to be a long-term client.)

Save on Design with AI

Save even more on design by doing more of it yourself. With the help of AI, you can now create beautiful, on-brand designs in minutes. I love [Canva](#), and it just keeps getting better. The Magic AI tool can create images from a text description. Try it out to give you a headstart on your design. Then, tweak it to get it the rest of the way.

Save on Your Website

Yes, you need a website. A website will legitimize your business, house your portfolio, give people a place to learn more about you, and allow your customers to spread word-of-mouth efficiently. Here, you'll find a quick rundown of how to get a website. Of course, the more steps you handle yourself, the more economical it will be. With basic computer skills, you can build a starter site in less than a day.

Register your Domain Name

Your domain name, website address, or URL is where you'll direct people. In most cases, you're looking for a .com that is short, easy to spell, easy to remember, intuitive, and still available.

You can do a domain name search on most hosting providers' websites. But you'll also want to know if your name is available as a username on social media. You can check both at once at <https://www.namecheck.com/>.

Then, move quickly to purchase your domain. Web crawlers can spot popular searches, pick up the domains in demand, and squat to drive the price on the most desirable URLs.

Register your domain name with a reputable hosting company. I prefer GoDaddy or HostMonster. The domain name should cost you \$30 or less per year unless it's a highly desirable premium domain.

A premium domain may be worth the investment if there is a lot of search traffic for that word or phrase. Use Google Trends to check the keyword popularity. Then, pay \$4.99 to gain access to GoDaddy's auction tool. From there, you can see which domains are currently being bid on.

Then, choose a hosting package. GoDaddy currently has specials starting at \$6.99/month. For someone on a budget, you should be able to find hosting for \$200 for the first year. After that, you'll increase your savings if you purchase a multi-year plan. Start with something basic; you can upgrade later if you buy another domain name.

Select a Website Theme or Template

The theme or template provides the overall aesthetic of your site. Start with the website builder included with your hosting to keep costs low. GoDaddy's site builder is straightforward.

Pick a template that looks close to your desired website. You can swap out the text and pictures, but site builders limit how much you can edit the site, so find one that already looks like your brand.

Warning: Getting caught up here and wasting time building a website is easy. If your goal is to get it done and get it done on a budget, you'll need to just pick one! Scroll through and pick three website themes that catch your eye and look like your brand. Right-click and open them in new tabs. Look a little closer. Can you envision your content in the layout? Does it make sense for your business? Choose the one that looks and feels the best for you.

If you're interested in more options than your free or low-cost site builder provides, consider WordPress. Free WordPress themes exist, but the learning curve is more significant than that of website builders. You can buy a premium WordPress theme from [studiopress.com](https://studiodpress.com) or themeforest.net.

WordPress offers a range of possibilities from simple to robust, from affordable to a fully customized, one-of-a-kind site that makes you look like a national brand.

What to Put on Your Website

When it comes to website content, start with the basics. Your website is a digital business card or brochure. It should contain, at a minimum, **your contact info, who you are, and what you do**.

Make your **Home** page short and simple. Address your customers' pain points, tell them how you can help, and ask them to do something (call, click, buy, schedule an appointment). Make it easy.

Then, flesh out who you are on your **About Us** page. Explain why you started, where you are now, and why you're the right person for the job. Include a few personal details so they know you're a three-dimensional human being.

Your **Services** or **Shop** page should highlight your offerings. Don't forget to include several ways they can get in touch with you on the **Contact** page and link to your professional social media profiles.

Create a Professional Email Address

Set up an email address at your domain name. This is an optional step that further legitimizes your business.

Most hosting companies will give you yourname@yourdomain.com with their free email tool. Unfortunately, most free email tools are not very good, so you'll want to forward it to your Gmail or set up an account at <https://workspace.google.com>. **Google will get you a fantastic email program at a reasonable rate.** You can also integrate all your other work stuff there.

Save on Social Media Management and Ads

You'll likely want to invest in social media ads to get more exposure and build awareness of your brand. But don't spend until you have a clear plan.

As a small business, your advantage over the big brands on social media is your ability to keep up with conversations. The big brands struggle to keep up. Even if they have teams of social media experts to deal with the volume, they struggle because it's hard to stick to the right tone of voice and keep a consistent brand personality.

The most important thing to do on social media is to engage your fans. Increased engagement means the social media algorithms will show your posts to more people, growing your audience. Try asking customers to post pictures of your product or place of business on social media: welcome reviews, questions, and comments. As a small business, you can likely handle all the conversation yourself (at least initially).

Focus on individuals and the community. Save money by partnering with your chamber of commerce or local businesses to get the most out of your ads. For example, you can post on Instagram that customers can get a free sample from another local company if they buy from you and vice versa.

Team up with a complementary company for a social media giveaway or contest. Winners can get a prize that includes products from both (or several) businesses. If your audience is local, limit your Facebook ads to your geographic area. Partnering is a great way to keep ad costs down.

Save on Radio Ads

Radio ads have a similar reach to local cable television channels but are more affordable. In addition, it is easy for even amateurs to put together a radio ad. (No video editing skills required!) Plus, the turnaround time is quick! An ad can be on air in a couple of days.

Bring the demographic profile of your best customers to the station. They'll help you find the listeners that best match your target. (They know what shows and times of days your ideal clients are listening.)

To be most effective on the radio, create a catchy ad, use your slogan, and repeat important info. Purchase an ad package that will garner enough exposure to make an impact. A short ad played several times a day will likely see quick results. The peak return on your investment will be in about three months.

Outside of paid ads, there are other radio opportunities. Look up your local station's editorial calendar (outline of topics to be covered). Are you an expert on a subject they will discuss? Call the station's office to learn how to get on the show!

I was interviewed on the "Lake Effect" show by Milwaukee, Wisconsin's National Public Radio station. It was an excellent opportunity to promote my book, [*Flex Your Communication: 47 Tips for Every Day Success at Work*](#).

Save on Events and Experience Marketing

Look for events you'd like to attend. For example, is there a business conference or expo near you? Would you like to attend for free? Consider offering to speak!

Before you say, "No way!" hear me out. How much was a ticket to the last conference you attended? There's a conference in April I want to attend with my son. Tickets are \$700 each! Of course, you or I could give away our money. But **would you rather get paid to show you're a subject matter expert to hundreds of potential customers?** Give speaking a try!

Most conferences don't allow self-promotional presentations. But you don't have to self-promote. The conference organizers will put your name, picture, and link to your website on the event website and the conference agenda. Then, you simply talk about a subject you know (that's related to your business). People will line up to speak to you afterward. You'll get a dozen meetings and a few new clients out of it. (That has been my experience.)

OK, where are you? Check off what you've accomplished and put a sticky note on this page to return to the items you haven't figured out yet.

- ☐ Website
- ☐ Social media

Do a quick search for events that make sense to promote your business. Write them down here and put applying to speak on your task list.

- Events I'd like to attend:

- Events I'd like to speak at:

- Ad techniques to try:

ⁱ The CMO Survey. 2021. Survey Results Archive - The CMO Survey. [online] Available at: <<https://cmosurvey.org/results/>> [Accessed 10 May 2021].

Thank you for reading this sneak preview chapter!

[Follow Terra on Amazon](#) to get updates on this book's release.