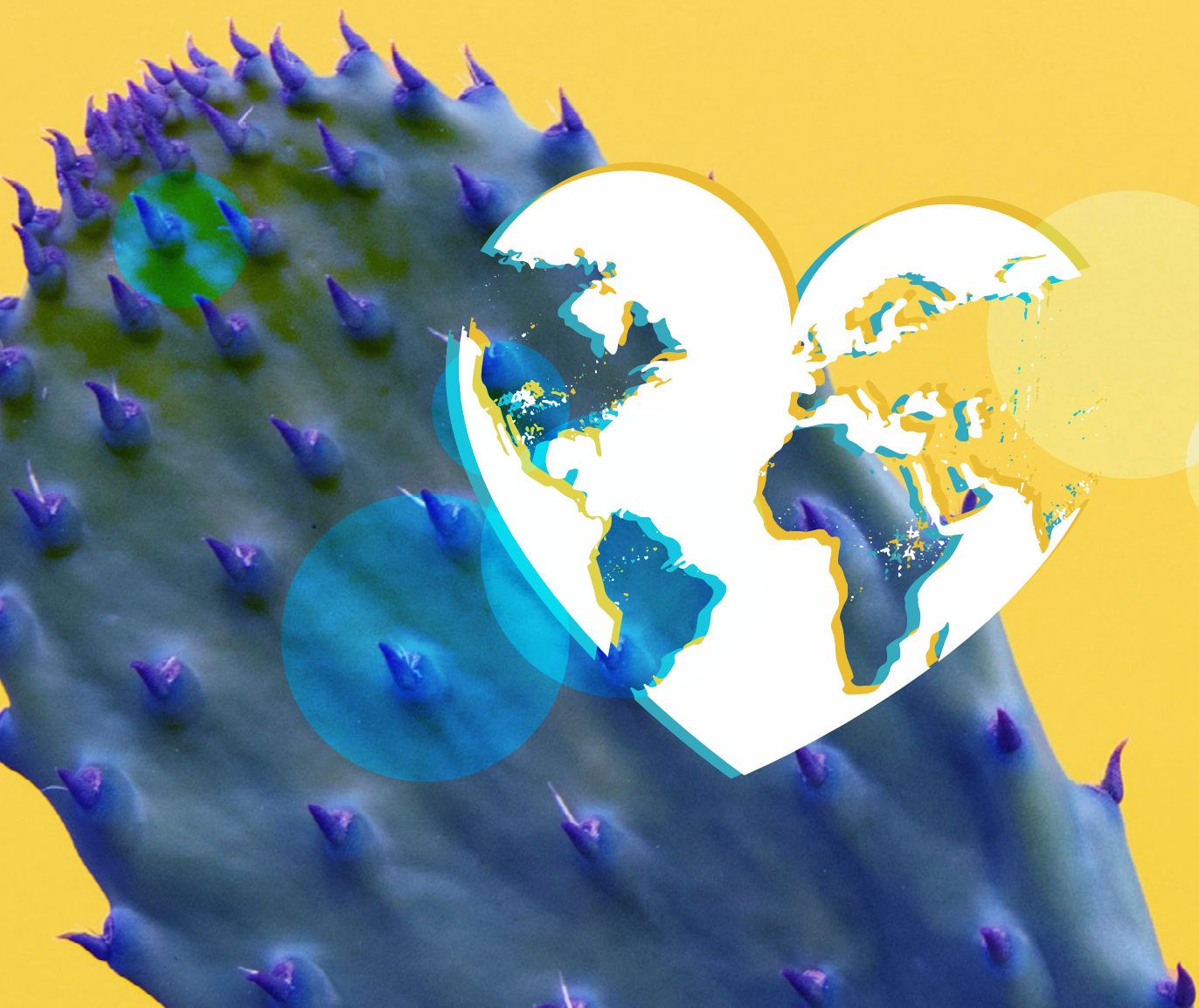


BLUECACTUS

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE MARKETING?





// WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE MARKETING?

Sustainable marketing, also known as purposeful or mission-based marketing, is the principle of communicating your eco friendly, or sustainable ethical business practices, through your marketing.

However, the term “sustainable” has become weathered down of late, as the practice of greenwashing has become a growing consumer concern. Therefore, we’ll refer to “mission-based marketing” or “purposeful marketing” in this e-book, as it far better encapsulates what traditional sustainable marketing has become.

A lot of businesses are moving towards the idea of mission-based marketing now, as consumers increasingly question the source of products and services. Mission-based marketing may include introducing and communicating initiatives such as recycled packaging, organic or ethically sourced materials, cutting carbon emissions and other impactful actions that have a positive impact on the world around us. However, it can also refer to a process of sustaining the traction with your marketing efforts to ensure a steady stream of clients or customers.

Regardless, the two ideas are very much interwoven and should be considered as such.

Mission-based marketing has its roots in responsibility and, as a result, businesses are increasingly promoting their brand values on their websites and across other marketing channels.

It’s essential, if your roots are in sustainability (ie., using materials and processes that have the least impact possible on the environment) or ethics, that you communicate these and are totally transparent with your processes. Including what you’re doing to make a difference, whether that’s having a better impact on the environment every day, where your products are manufactured, or where you’re sourcing your products.



It's vital that staff are fairly treated and are paid a living wage, whether partners are in the UK or overseas. So, it might apply to the materials you use to produce your packaging and it could relate to the materials that your products are made of. So, for example, using something like bamboo, which uses less water to produce, compared to using cotton that uses a lot more water and has a much bigger impact on the environment.

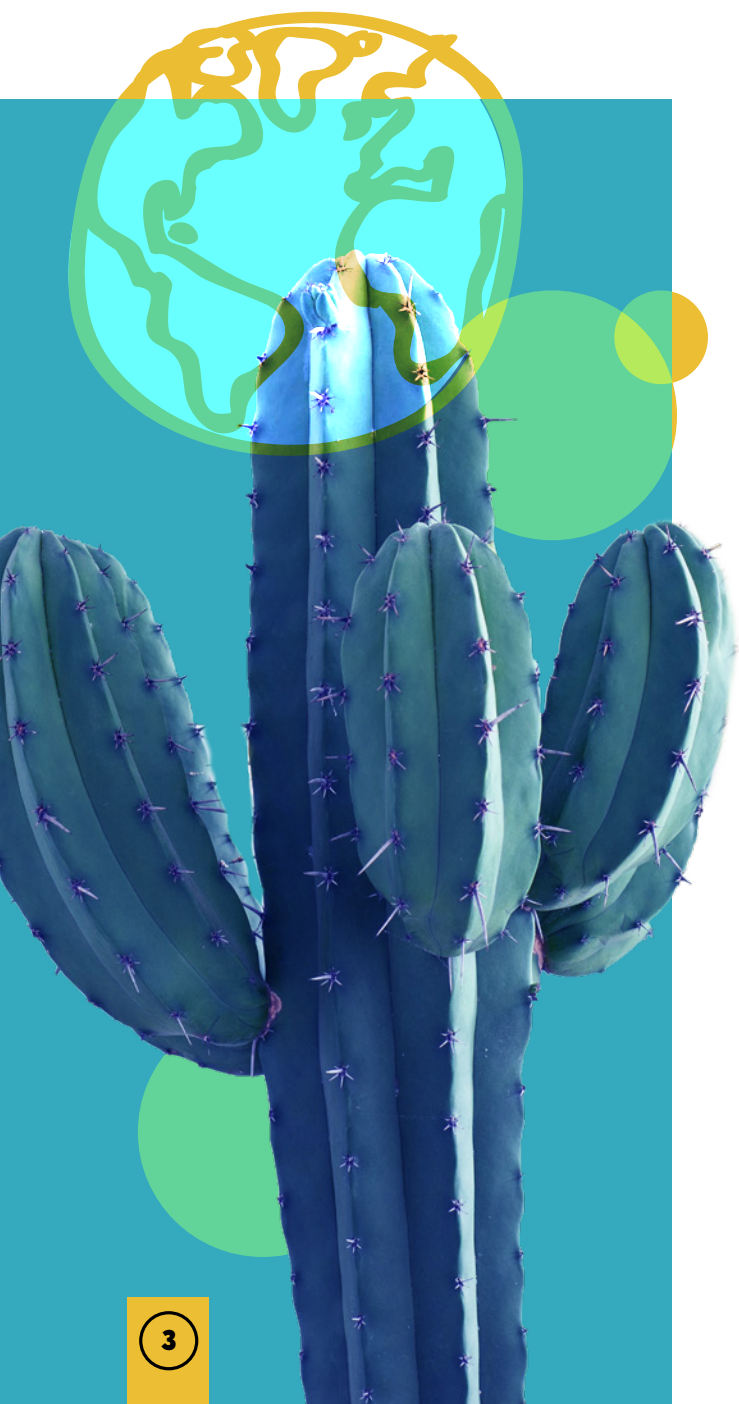
Mission-based marketing relates to promoting the way that you do things across your marketing collateral. Whether this is having an area on your website that addresses your values and which suppliers you're using, or through communicating this through educational emails and social media posts.

There are lots of examples of businesses that are using mission-based marketing to promote what they're doing, as being in the greater good, and some businesses do it a lot better than others. To some, it can be a bit of a farce. A 'greenwash', some may call it.

But what's important, when we're talking about mission-based marketing, is making sure that you're transparent and open about your processes and how your products and services come to market. Everything must be consistent, including your messaging, and it is essential that your staff are properly briefed on your values.

Ensure you are staying one step ahead of your competitors by keeping yourself informed of the latest trends and global concerns.

Mission-based marketing is also about putting those ethical values at the heart of everything you do, even before profit. When talking about mission-based marketing, it's important to understand that you can still generate a profit, but in most cases, there are ways that you can use mission-based marketing to also generate revenue.



// WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT PURPOSEFUL MARKETING?

Consumers are **becoming more aware** of the decisions they make every day and are researching where those products come from, how they're produced and under what conditions.

There has been an abundance of news stories and TV programmes aired of late that demonstrate human destruction of the environment, including Blue Planet 2 and A Plastic Ocean. These, combined with countless news stories of devastating working conditions in overseas factories demonstrates consumer behaviour needs to change.

All generations are becoming more aware of consumer goods' route to market and out. Therefore, if you want to secure sales in years to come, mission-based marketing is the way to capture the hearts of your ideal clients.

In fact, according to a report by IBM, "Nearly six in 10 consumers surveyed are willing to change their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact.

"Nearly eight in 10 respondents indicate sustainability is important for them. And for those who say it is very/extremely important, over 70 percent would pay a premium of 35 percent, on average, for brands that are sustainable and environmentally responsible."

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In future, we can expect these numbers to rise, as consumers are presented with more choice in the goods they purchase and bigger brands bow to consumer demand to take sustainability and ethics more seriously.

Things have to change and this means you have to adapt to consumer trends.

// WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF MISSION-BASED MARKETING?

We've identified the **three key principles** of mission-based marketing. You may choose to focus on one, two, or all of them, depending on your brand and where you want to take your business.

But remember - you don't have to do everything at once. Focus on those that mean the most to you and your audience.

Be open and transparent in your commitment to working on the rest. Also, communicate the changes and/or impact you're making or are seeking to make.

1 PEOPLE

How we treat people is more of an ethical principle. Yet, this is also increasingly being taken in account by those looking to buy your products or utilise your services.

Analyse how you treat your employees, consultants or freelancers, as well as your entire company culture. Make sure you promote the benefits of working at your company to your employees and review employee satisfaction often. Show you are open to their requests. That could be unlimited holiday (countless reports show that employees are more likely to stay motivated and be more productive if they choose how much holiday they have each year). It could be a promise of an annual pay increase above the rate of inflation. Or it could be bonuses. Even non-financial rewards can have a positive impact on employees, such as monthly get-togethers or even just enabling them to real input into business decisions and development.

Next, it's time to analyse your supply chain. The same principles apply. What bonuses do the workers across your entire supply chain have? Ensure you're auditing your factories and suppliers. What legislation do they adhere to? What certifications do they hold?

Do thorough research into any legislation that applies in each country your products filter through and only use suppliers that adhere to these regulations.

An even better solution is to visit all your suppliers annually, so you can meet the workers and factory owners, but we understand this may not be financially or logistically possible.

The people element should also include looking into what you're doing for the community to make people's lives better. You might run a charitable programme that encourages people to get back to work, or it might be that you finance charity work to support disadvantaged people in your area.

All of these areas should be carefully considered and researched in order to create a mission-based marketing plan with people at its heart.

2 PLANET

The second mission-based marketing principle focuses on **care of the planet**. What impact are you having on the environment? Are you importing goods from overseas? Are you making efforts to reduce your carbon footprint? If so, how are you promoting the sustainability values of your business?

If there is a local option to produce materials, then consider switching suppliers. Obviously, if the raw materials are produced overseas, then sometimes manufacturing near to where they have been sourced has a lower carbon footprint.

Explore whether it's better, from an environmental point of view, to produce your products overseas or to produce locally.

One of the biggest considerations might be whether the materials you're using are the best for the job, with the lowest impact on the environment.

This environmental impact question can cross over into the people-based principle. For example, are the materials you're using damaging the environment of others or putting pressure on workers to meet demand?

Deforestation is a clear example of this. Whilst it is caused by people, it's actually our consumer demand that puts pressure on the environment and completely upsets the ecosystem.

Consider how materials are shipped to your factory, or to you, from all angles. For instance, if shipping glass, it's heavier and more carbon-intensive than cardboard. However, recycled cardboard takes a lot of water to produce, and if you're using virgin cardboard what impact is that having on the trees and the wider environment? Shipping by boat usually has a lower environmental impact than shipping by plane, but it's also a lot slower and therefore, depending on the ship, has the potential to be just as polluting.

Another consideration is waste. Are your products compostable, biodegradable or recyclable? How can they be disposed of at the end of their life?

Of course, this is just scratching the surface on what some of your considerations should be when choosing your mission and priorities, but these are good places to start.

3 PROFIT

The third principle you could consider when choosing your mission is how you might **use your profits for the greater good**.

Businesses need to generate a profit, or at least some kind of income, in order to survive and continue sharing their mission.

The key is getting that balance right between the people, the environment and your profit.

So, how are your profits being used? Are they being pumped back into the business, or are they being reverted back to the people and the environment?

In an ideal world, we would have a circular economy where profit isn't the be-all and end-all.

Could you donate a proportion of your profits to charity, or invest in goods to send to charitable organisations or vulnerable groups?

Although giving away a proportion of your profits does seem counterintuitive to growing a business, the more you are willing to support people and you communicate that, the more sales you're likely to pull in.

// HOW TO AVOID GREENWASHING

Greenwashing is defined as **promoting green values that are not followed through by your actions**. For example, a business claiming they're doing everything they can to help the environment, but are actually flushing chemicals into the sea, dumping plastic, or even claiming something is organic, when fertilisers are used.

Greenwashing is a big issue as consumers become more aware of their impact on the environment. Businesses want to keep customers happy and investing in their products and/or services, so they may release unsubstantiated claims to win over eco-conscious consumers. This has a detrimental impact. It means more of that company's goods will be purchased and therefore the negative environmental impact will be worsened.

You can avoid greenwashing by being open and honest with your customers and clients. Although it may be tempting to exaggerate your green credentials, this is doing a disservice to everyone who invests in your brand.

It's more important to decide upon your mission, whether that be people, profit, the environment, or all three, then genuinely practise these values and promote them across your marketing touchpoints.

NEVER make false claims. Admit mistakes if/when you make them and if you're not quite meeting your goals yet, tell your audience. Invite them onboard your journey to become greener/more ethical/more sustainable.

It's also not good enough to claim you're eco or green if only SOME of your product lines are. Unless you highlight those that aren't and explain how you're taking steps to make your entire portfolio meet your mission, this is considered to be greenwashing too.

When speaking of your brand as a whole, be mindful that any products or services that are not aligned with the values you promote could well end in claims of greenwashing and this could negatively impact your brand reputation.

// WHAT IS A B CORP?



One way to promote yourself as moving toward a more mission-led approach is to become a **certified B Corp**.

A B Corp is a business that has committed to operating as purpose-led - ie., making a positive impact on the environment and on their people comes before profit.

To become a B Corp you'd have to agree to the Declaration of Interdependence, which sets out the expectations of businesses that become B Corps.

WHICH STATES:

- ✓ **THAT WE MUST BE THE CHANGE WE SEEK IN THE WORLD.**
- ✓ **THAT ALL BUSINESS OUGHT TO BE CONDUCTED AS IF PEOPLE AND PLACE MATTERED.**
- ✓ **THAT, THROUGH THEIR PRODUCTS, PRACTICES, AND PROFITS, BUSINESSES SHOULD ASPIRE TO DO NO HARM AND BENEFIT ALL.**
- ✓ **TO DO SO REQUIRES THAT WE ACT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE EACH DEPENDENT UPON ANOTHER AND THUS RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OTHER AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

More and more companies are becoming B Corp Certified, which is great if you're a mission-driven business. In fact, at the time of writing, there were more than 370 B Corps in the UK, ranging from product-based businesses to service brands.

However, many accredited or certified B Corps say that becoming a B Corp is much more than just about the status - it's also about being part of a community dedicated to making positive change in the world.



// HOW DO YOU BECOME A B CORP?

To become a B Corp, you must produce a **B Impact Assessment**. Not only should this check your products and services are in line with the B Corp Declaration of Interdependence, it should examine the company's ENTIRE set up, including all of its processes, to measure its impact on its workers, community, environment and customers.

Remember those missions we were talking about earlier? These are all measured in the B Corp Impact Assessment. In addition, the assessment will also look into your transparency and accountability procedures.

It's a pretty tough process to become a certified B Corp. Despite this, many businesses that are certified say that one of the best things about going through the process was digging deeper into their business than they had ever done before. In some cases, putting together a B Corp Impact Assessment requires far more detail than even putting a business plan or budget together. So be prepared for hours of work.

Yet, if you want to become known for your mission and be trusted by customers and clients, then the benefits far outweigh the effort.

There's also a long waiting list to join the other 375+ businesses with a B Corp status because, over the last six months, so many applications have been put forward. But don't let this put you off - It only supports the need for mission-based marketing to be a part of your strategy.



// HOW CAN I DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MY STARTUP?

So the biggest question is how to create a sustainable marketing plan for your startup. Inevitably there's no 'one size fits all' approach. It's really important to consider that every business is different.

However, there are some key things you need to do to create a mission-based marketing plan for your startup, and to then ensure you are communicating your values clearly.

BE INNOVATIVE

Don't be afraid of being different, or breaking away from your competitors - be innovative. Think about how to tackle problems in an alternative way to your competitors. Be aware of what they're doing and consider how you can do it better.

A lot of startups and small business owners are scared of comparison because it's very easy to get stuck in that trap. However, being aware of what your competitors are doing, whether they're multinational corporations or smaller businesses, is extremely useful. You should also be aware of their methods of communicating their sustainable values.

Where are they sourcing their products? What decisions are they making? How can you be progressive and stay ahead, and how can you take inspiration from them?

REMEMBER whatever they're doing doesn't mean that they are better than or making more money than you. Nor does it mean that you should copy them. Just take on board what they're doing and apply it to your business, if you like it, in a way that's unique to you.



BE TRANSPARENT

Be responsive, open, and own up to mistakes. Accept if you've still got some way to go before you meet your mission and show your human side to your clients and customers.

It's not possible to always be right or spot on. You might make mistakes and, if you do, accept that. Being open to criticism and being open to change is something that's really important because we're all learning. We're all trying to make a difference in our day-to-day lives.

If you're called out on something you're doing, do as much research as you can before you jump in and reply, all guns blazing. Rectifying mistakes as soon as you can or accepting fault is really important, as is ensuring you have some kind of crisis management set up. For example, you may onboard the right customer service representatives to manage your social media or email customer complaints. By outsourcing or bringing this in-house you can ensure you have a team/person responding to customers swiftly, on-brand, and in a sensitive tone.

BE RESPONSIVE

Listen to your team when they have comments or suggestions. It's not necessarily just the customers that bring things to your attention, those you work with, or friends and family, may highlight issues or improvements too. These are the people that know your business best, and also are the best positioned to keep their ear to the ground, whether we're talking competitor research or finding holes in your supply chain. Have respect for them and they will have respect for you.

Make sure anyone working on your brand knows that you're open to change and take on board what they're saying. There's nothing worse than having a boss, or someone in charge, who just doesn't listen to you or make changes when you truly believe it will make a big difference.

Perhaps formalise the feedback process. For example, once a week, you could host a team meeting where you invite feedback and show, by example, that you're addressing their suggestions.

Make sure that you know your supply chain inside out. Ensure that you are aware of where all your products come from, where your suppliers are, where your manufacturers are. Even if your manufacturers are overseas, visit them regularly to assess their working practices. Have an audit trail to ensure you have all the answers if you're questioned by anyone.



BE PATIENT

Think about the long term effects of your strategy. Mission-based marketing, like any marketing, is not a quick fix. It's something that takes time, and the key to success is customer connection through storytelling.

To tell those stories, you have to identify your ideal client's problems and help them understand how their problems can be solved by your products or services.

Communicating these values and building trust can take time. In fact, you'll need to attract the attention of your ideal clients 5-10 times before they convert (the average is 8 touches with your brand).

Focus on building a community first and conversions second.

BE COMMUNITY FOCUSED

Start building a community by communicating what makes you different to other brands (ie., your competitors). How are you making a difference? Be totally transparent to your community. Your community could be public on Instagram, in a closed group on Facebook, Twitter or Clubhouse. It could be your own forum or developed on your email platform.

For example, in Clubhouse, you might create a room where you generate conversation around your products and services. Or on Facebook, it could be a group of brand advocates or ambassadors.

The purpose of generating a community is to encourage people to believe in your brand and product. It's a place where you can communicate your ethics and also ask for feedback.

Your community should feel they have a safe space to question you or provide feedback. It's a place where you can build loyalty and gain trust.

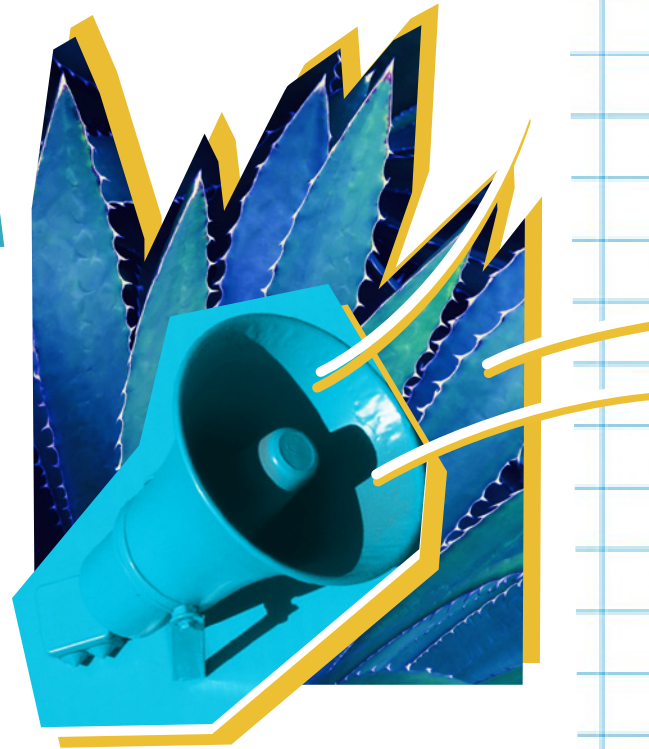
Consider every possible angle and be prepared to stand your ground in that community, to make sure you surround your people yourself with people who are aligned with your values.

The more that you create a community, the more the community will build and that will result in a loyal following who can do a lot of your marketing for you!

// COMPONENTS OF A SUSTAINABLE MARKETING STRATEGY

If your mission is only in your head, they're not written down anywhere, they're not communicated to people, then **how are people going to be able to make a decision to purchase from you?**

If you're just starting out then communicating your values should be a priority. When you are putting your branding together, when you're profiling your ideal client, your values should be at the forefront of your business plan. All of these components need to be communicated to your customers, as often as possible, and filter out through your entire marketing funnel.



BUSINESS PLAN & KPIs

The key thing to remember about a mission-based marketing strategy is that completing that mission is your priority. From the outset, you'll need to be able to measure your success. All good business plans and marketing plans should start with KPIs. These should be clear, achievable and measurable.

INVESTOR/PARTNER MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

If you're hoping to raise investment, your mission should be included in your investment plan. It should be in any presentation you make to investors, whether angel investment, equity, reward or just borrowing from friends or family.

Now it's becoming more important for businesses to consider their environmental footprint and the persons involved in the supply chain, all brands should be communicating their mission. You must also be open and transparent about what you're doing to increase your positive impact, across your entire business plan.

IDEAL CLIENT IDENTIFICATION

When you first have an idea for a business, your first task is identifying your target market. This is the most important thing to your business because without an audience you will not be able to sell your products or services.

Identifying who you're selling to, what their problems are and how you can solve that problem, applies whether you're talking mission-based marketing or general marketing.

Consider what your ideal client's priorities are and what they are looking for from your brand.

Map out their entire lifestyle, and understand how they make decisions about the products they wish to buy and how their concerns impact the rest of their lives.

BRANDING

Branding doesn't just cover visual branding (although this is important when promoting your mission), but when we're talking mission-based marketing, your tone of voice and way you communicate information is even more important than how it looks.

It is important to make sure everything you put out on social media, in your emails, on your website, or even on phone calls, communicates your brand values. Map out exactly what you're trying to achieve, how you're trying to educate and what you're doing. Within your branding, this should be presented first and foremost.

Then comes the look and feel of your brand - brand colours, fonts, shapes and graphics will help customers recognise your brand and remember it.

WEBSITE

Without exception, your purpose or mission should be clearly outlined on your web properties. Whether you're using a marketplace such as Etsy or Not On the High Street or your own website. This could be in the 'about us' section, a 'mission' section, or even on its own 'sustainability' section on your website.

To improve your presence in search engines you should have an active blog on your website and you need to send out those blogs to your subscribers or customers, communicating your ethics, producers and suppliers, so they know about your business mission.



Ideas include profiles on the suppliers you use and demonstrating that your supply chain is as fair as it possibly can be. If you change suppliers, or you're planning to introduce a new product, then tell people about it and how it's contributing to your mission.

If you find potential clients or customers ask the same questions regularly, consider introducing a frequently asked questions section on your website.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is the cheapest and most effective marketing channel to reach people who might be genuinely interested in your products and services.

Using a combination of platforms that connect most with your ideal clients or customers is vital. Generating meaningful conversations, rather than just showcasing your products, is essential to building trust and loyalty.

You should talk about your ethics and be transparent about your process and your sustainability values across your social media. Education is key to attraction.

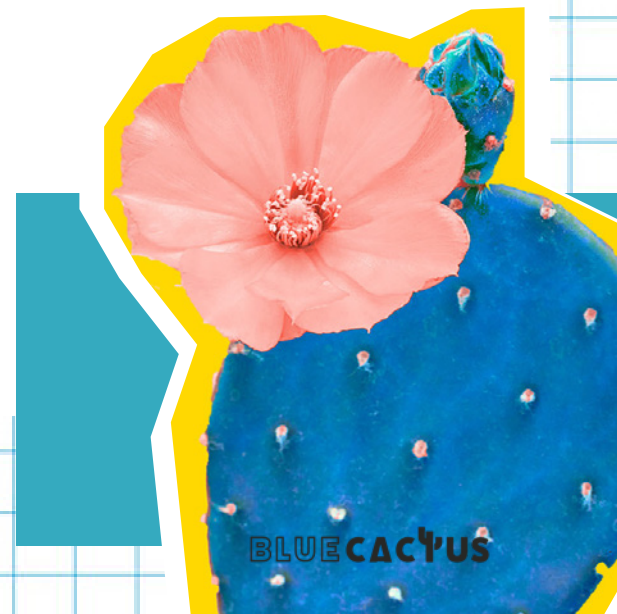
Interaction and engagement with your ideal clients is also a vital part of your strategy. You should be getting involved in conversations about your values. So, on LinkedIn, make sure that you're interacting with people who are in similar industries as you, and join relevant groups on Clubhouse. Ensure that your voice is heard across these groups and rooms. Present yourself as a thought leader and new customers will follow.


EMAIL MARKETING

At least 20% of your sales should come from your email marketing strategy. Having the right email funnels set up can have a huge impact on your sales process.

THERE ARE THREE FUNNELS EVERY BRAND SHOULD HAVE SET UP:

- ✓ **LEAD MAGNET**
- ✓ **NEWSLETTER**
- ✓ **FEEDBACK**





E-commerce brands should also have an abandoned cart funnel set up, as well as a post-purchase follow up.

Within each marketing email you should not just include information about your products or services (with a call to action on every single email), but keep potential clients or customers informed about your mission, suppliers and the difference you're trying to make.

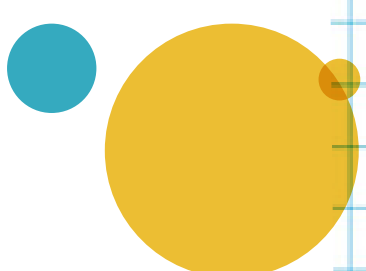
ADVERTISING

Being sensitive to your clients' lifestyle is so important across your entire marketing strategy and when promoting your mission.

This includes your advertising, whether on social media, on Google, or elsewhere. Don't just stick purely to sales posts. Map out a strategy or journey for consumers. It may be that you use your mission to attract customers. Then you might lead them to your products or services, reinforcing that mission to convert them, retain them or draw new customers in.

Whichever approach you take, preparation is key and mapping out a sales cycle using a top of funnel, middle of funnel, and bottom of funnel stage is vital to conversions.

Be aware that you may need to register to promote social causes before your ads start showing on Facebook and Instagram, for complete transparency.



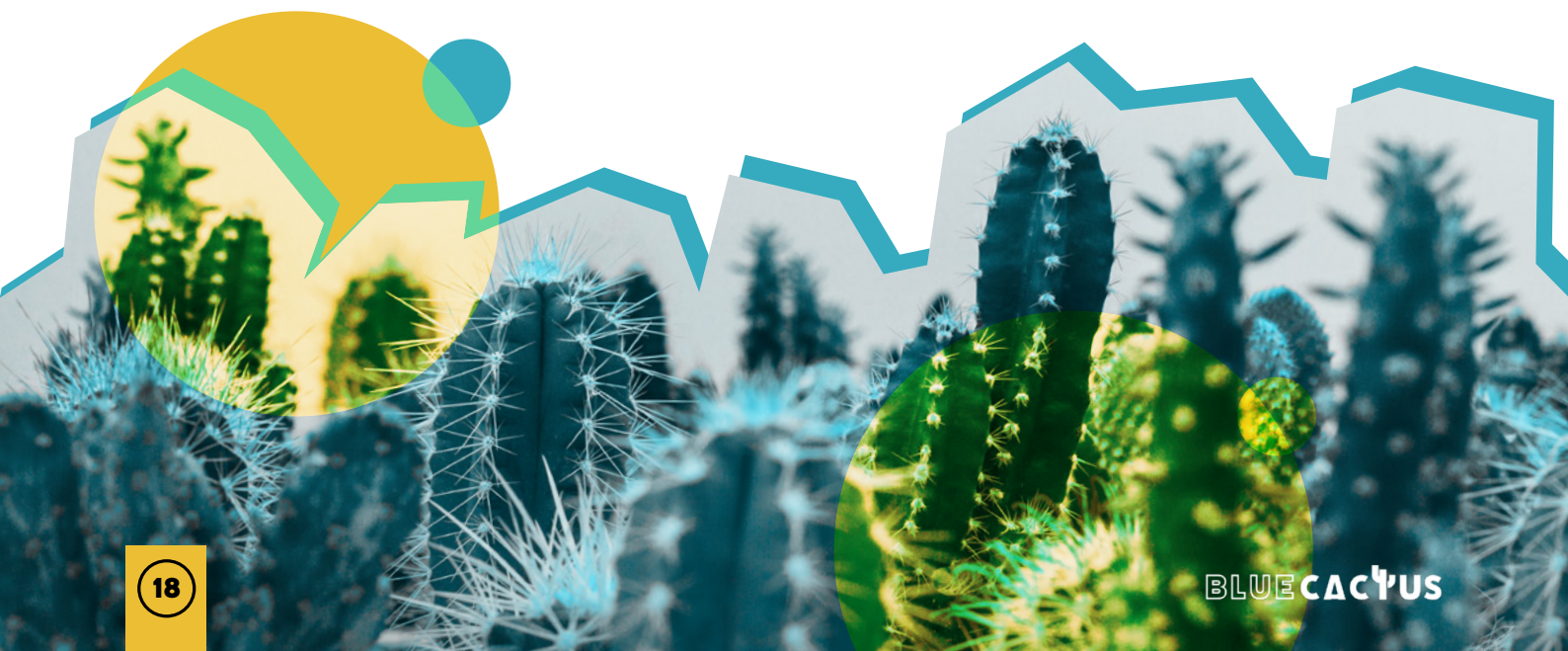
// CONCLUSION

Purposeful marketing is becoming increasingly important for all brands, whether you have a personal interest in ethics and sustainability or not. Consumers are becoming savvier about the environment and where their products come from. Therefore, it's so important you integrate your purpose and customer concerns into your marketing strategy.

By clearly defining what your brand purpose is, what you're doing to reach those goals and how you can improve upon your current purpose, you will gain trust, build loyalty and become more profitable. Whether that's in pursuit of earning a higher income or helping other causes.

Blue Cactus Digital understands how conscious customers make their purchasing decisions. Our brand portfolio comprises eco e-commerce brands including Wear 'Em Out (reusable sanitary pads), Organically Epic (an eco dental brand), and Pulp27 (a sustainable coffee subscription service). Our service-based clients also include Rethink Partners, a health and care transformation agency.

ORDER A FREE MARKETING AUDIT OR BOOK A CALL AND LET'S GET YOUR PURPOSE DEFINED AND COMMUNICATED.



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