

The Greater Cleveland SMB Marketing Guide



I'm Jake Krafczyk at Voltaic Marketing. I built this guide because most marketing advice is written for big brands, and it doesn't fit a Cleveland small business. This guide is what works for the people I work with: owners who wear many hats and need marketing they can do in an afternoon.

The three rules that hold it all together

Everything worth doing in marketing comes down to three things:

- 1. Be Excellent.** Get better at what you do.
- 2. Look Excellent.** Look professional and earn trust online.
- 3. Be (Tactfully) Generous.** Give real value, without giving away the store.

☰ What's inside

1. Find the tools that help you get more done	(Be Excellent)	page 2
2. Create quality content in an AI-saturated landscape	(Be Excellent)	page 3
3. Make the most of your data	(Be Excellent)	page 4
4. Look professional and trustworthy online	(Look Excellent)	page 5
5. Put the right things on your website	(Look Excellent)	page 6
6. Build a client base without being pushy (and Misny's Secret)	(Be Generous)	page 7
7. If you've tried everything and nothing's working	(Important)	page 8

Getting stuck? If you've already tried multiple channels and nothing has worked, go straight to **page 8**.

★ **BE EXCELLENT**

Find the tools that help you get more done

There's a new tool every week, and most of them waste your time. Before you pay for anything, ask one question:

What's the exact outcome I want?

Then work backward: what's the simplest way to get there, and which parts are truly necessary?

How to actually pick without getting caught up:

1. Name the job. "I want to reply to reviews faster" or "I want to schedule my posts in one sitting."

2. List the minimum. What steps are genuinely needed, and what's just fancy?

3. Identify what steps in your task take the most time. That's the step worth automating. The tool that shortens the slowest part is the tool that's worth keeping.

● **The trap:**

Buying a tool to avoid a small task you could do by hand, or paying for automation on a part of the job that's already quick. Find the slow step first. Ask, "would I keep this if it cost me \$50 a year?" If not, skip it.

⚡ **Quick Win:**

This week, list your three most time-consuming marketing tasks. Find the single slowest step, and look for a free tool (or a simple process change) that cuts that one step in half.

★ **BE EXCELLENT**

Create quality content in an AI-saturated landscape

Most AI is trained on how big brands talk, so it talks like a big brand. That doesn't fit a small shop in Lakewood any better than it fits what your customers actually ask. Here's how to create content that doesn't sound like everyone else, with free tools.

Start with your own material. AI can't tell the story of the regular who's been coming in since 2009, or the job that went sideways and how you got it fixed. Keep a running list of what happens in your week, and post the real ones.

Find what people are actually asking. Use AI to brainstorm five search terms a customer might use, then search those on Reddit, which is full of real, honest questions from people in your line of work. The thread that keeps coming up is a post you can answer tonight.

Watch what's already getting attention. Grok on X scans trending topics and answers "what are small business owners struggling with lately." Meta AI, built into Facebook and Instagram, can summarize what people around you are posting about. Listen, then answer with your own story.

📍 **Local Example: Sixth City Cycles**

A local shop nailing this is Sixth City Cycles in Old Brooklyn, whose posts about its customers and neighborhood (like a bike light giveaway at the farmers market) build community, not sales pressure.

📅 **Batch, Schedule & Show Up:**

Keep a simple note with a week of post ideas. Set aside one hour a week, write the week's posts, and schedule them with the free Meta Business Suite. And let them see you: post pictures of yourself at the shop or working around town. People do business with people.

★ **BE EXCELLENT**

Make the most of your data

You're probably collecting more data than you use: website visits, bookings, income, questions from customers. The point of data isn't numbers. It's to align your digital approach with your personal and financial business goals.

First, name the goal you're optimizing.

"More good fit customers" or "better retention" works better than vague numbers.

Then look at your few most useful signals:

Where your bookings come from: That's where you should put your time.

What actually gets asked: The questions you get are content gold.

Your own week-in, week-out: The jobs and fixes you do tell you what you're best at, and what to lead with.

☒ **The rule:**

Tracking is only worth it if it changes what you do. Data that sits unread is as expensive as a tool you don't need. Pick the goal, watch the one signal that matters, and act.

⚡ Quick Win:

Check your last ten new customer inquiries or sales. Write down exactly where each one heard about you. Double down on that single top source next month.

◆ LOOK EXCELLENT

Look like a professional, trustworthy business online

Before anyone buys from you, they look you up. Here's what they see, and what to do about it.

Check what they find:

Search yourself. Google and Bing your name and your company name. What's on the first page of results decides first impressions.

Fix the easy wins. A bad review you can answer, an old photo you can replace, a Yelp page that's out of date. These take minutes and lift your look fast.

A note on Yelp specifically:

Yelp pages are notoriously difficult to take down, so don't waste time trying to remove a bad one. Instead, claim the profile, get a few of your existing clients to leave nice reviews, and add updated pictures if they're relevant. A handful of fresh, real reviews outweighs one old complaint.

Make your profiles look cared-for:

1. Same photo everywhere. Use the same logo and headshot on every platform so you're recognizable. And a high-quality headshot makes a big difference. If you paid under \$200 for yours, it's probably not high quality. It's worth the money.

2. Fill in the whole profile. Bio, hours, service list, location. Profiles next to incomplete boxes read as sloppy.

3. Answer your reviews, good and bad, calmly and in person. People notice.

◆ Local Example: Jeff's Candy Shop

A shop doing this well is Jeff's Candy Shop in Collinwood, which pairs a wall of five-star reviews with the owner Jeff out front making the sweets. The person behind the business reads as trustworthy.

● LOOK EXCELLENT

Put the right things on your website

Most small-business websites try to be fancy and end up confusing. Your site doesn't need to impress, you need to **build trust and make it easy to contact**.

What to include:

What you do and who it's for: One clear sentence up top.

How to reach you: Phone, email, address, and hours. Front and center.

What you charge or what it costs: (or a clear path to ask).

Trust signals: Reviews, the area you serve, a recent job or case.

One next step: Book, call, or email. Don't hand the visitor five choices.

What to skip:

- **Paragraphs of filler.** If it doesn't build trust or help a decision, cut it.
- **Fancy features** unless your work is visual. People care that you're easy to reach, not that your pages animate.

🕒 The 10-Second Rule:

Someone who lands on your site should know what you do, why they can trust you, and how to take the one next step, in about ten seconds. Johnny Mango in Ohio City is a good example, a local cafe whose site makes its booking and catering paths obvious instead of burying them.

♥ BE (TACTFULLY) GENEROUS

Build a client base without being pushy (And Misny's Secret)

The customers who stick around are the ones you actually helped before you asked them to buy. That's what "tactfully generous" means: give real value first, and make the sale feel like a natural next step, not a pitch.

Three ways to give value tactfully:

1. Answer a real question someone asked you this week, publicly. If ten customers ask the same thing, there are a hundred more thinking it.

2. Make one useful thing before you worry about whether it's perfect. Digital works (cheat sheet, checklist, guide). So do simple physical items (branded magnet, notepad, water bottle). *And do the make-a-splash version too:* like the yard cleanup crew mowing an overgrown yard for free and posting the video. It's generous, entertaining, and people root for them.

3. Lead with the person, not the product. Tim Misny has built one of the most recognizable brands in Cleveland with little more than his face on a billboard and a friendly line people remember. People care more about a face than a logo. So post yourself, say hi, and be the person people already trust before they ever buy.

📍 Local owners doing this well:

West Side Market, which keeps its vendors and their stories in front of the city instead of just selling to it, and branding strategist Lorraine Schuchart, whose posts are a steady drumbeat of helping Cleveland owners, not pitching them.

🛡️ The Chamber Test:

If you'd be embarrassed to say it at a chamber event, it's too pushy to post. Tone it down.

▲ **IMPORTANT · READ FIRST IF STUCK**

If you've tried everything and nothing's working, fix your offer

This is the hard truth and probably the most important page here. If you've run paid ads, posted several times a week for months, or put your business in front of hundreds or thousands of people and gotten no meaningful response, **chances are the problem isn't your marketing. It's your offer, or your price.**

What this really means:

People are seeing you, and not caring. Before you spend another dollar on the same marketing, make a significant change to what you're offering, or what you're charging for it.

How to test it:

Ask your best customers why they buy. Their answer teaches your offer.

Change one thing at a time. Price, the package, the guarantee. See what makes a difference.

Look at the data. If a campaign has people reaching out but they don't pay, it's likely the price. If they don't reach, it's the offer.

★ **The takeaway:**

This change in perspective is what most struggling small business owners need to hear, and what most marketing companies won't tell you. Your offer is ALWAYS king.

✓ **CLOSING**

Let's build something in Cleveland

Thanks for reading. All this breaks down to the three things up top: be excellent, look excellent, be tactfully generous. Get those right, and the rest is detail.

**Jake Krafczyk****Voltaic Marketing · Lakewood, OH**

I help Cleveland small businesses with their websites, email, and marketing, and I run the West Shore Chamber newsletter.

Ready for a next step?

If any of this feels like more than you have time for, that's the point. I do this work for a living, so a hand is a message away.

Or just say hi:

Not ready yet? Happy to grab a coffee and make a connection. I'm located in Lakewood.

Voltaic Marketing

Websites · Email · Local Marketing

voltaicmarketing.com · info@voltaicmarketing.com · (216) 539-5878