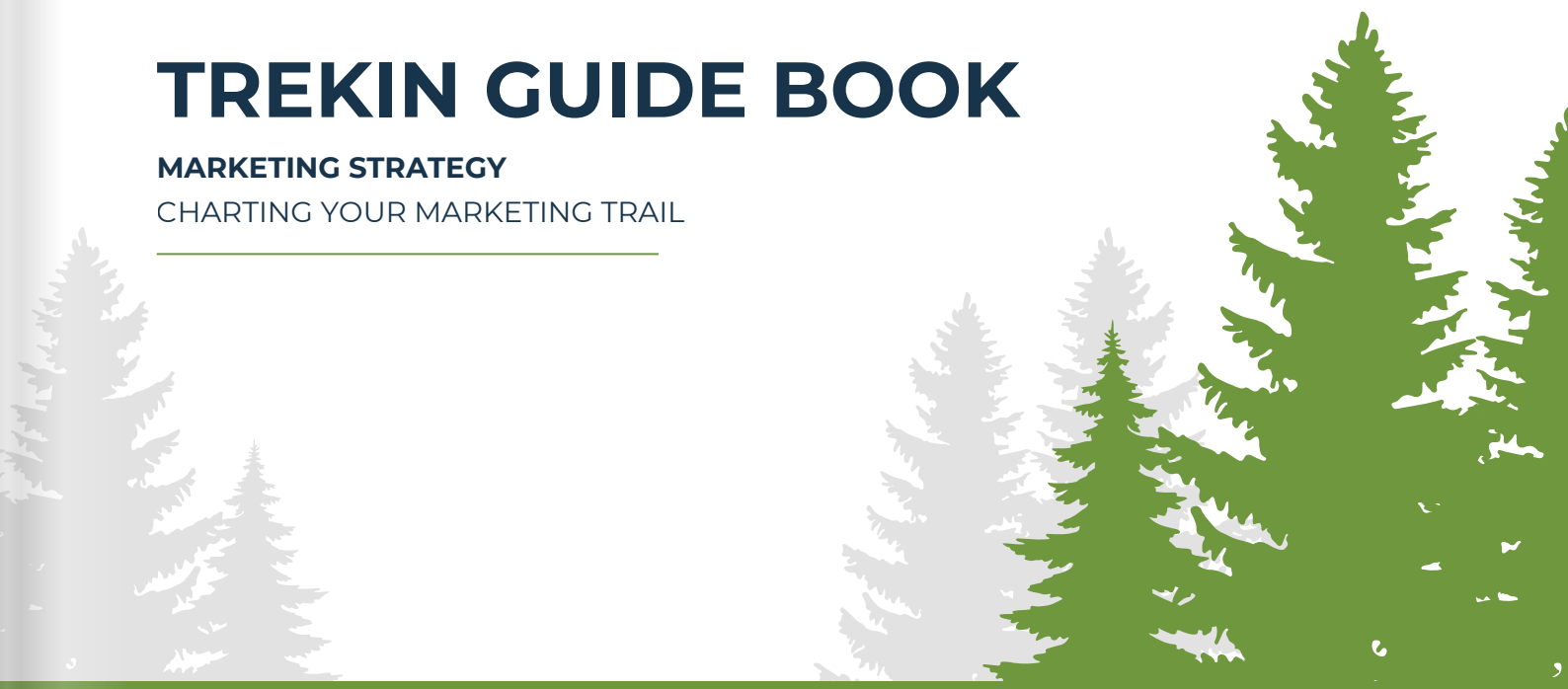




TREK INSTITUTE
A BASE CAMP CO-OP FOR SUCCESS

TREKIN GUIDE BOOK

MARKETING STRATEGY
CHARTING YOUR MARKETING TRAIL





MARKETING ISN'T AN INDEPENDENT EFFORT

MARKETING IS A DIRECT EXTENSION OF CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Marketing often feels like an independent effort; separate from the actual work of advising, planning, and managing client relationships. However, so many advisors and teams fall into the pattern of running marketing campaigns sporadically, posting on social media without a clear strategy, or sending out occasional newsletters without measuring engagement. The result? Marketing becomes reactive, inconsistent, and disconnected from the client experience.

It's important to remember that marketing is a direct extension of your client experience. Every message, campaign, and touchpoint communicates something about your business, shaping how prospects and clients perceive your value. A well-defined marketing strategy is one that is aligned with your ideal client profile, speaks directly to their needs, and reinforces the engagement journey from awareness to advocacy.

To build a strong marketing strategy, it's essential to view it through the lens of the client journey map, understanding how potential clients first engage with your firm, what influences their decision-making, and how ongoing touchpoints reinforce their experience. Whether it's an initial referral, a social media post, or an educational webinar, each interaction should feel intentional, reinforcing trust and strengthening the relationship over time. When marketing and the client experience are aligned, you can create a seamless, engaging journey that not only attracts the right clients but also nurtures long-term retention and advocacy.





Creating **MARKETING STRATEGY** that flows from one phase to the next

A common mistake in marketing is focusing only on one phase at a time, pouring energy into lead generation but neglecting engagement, or emphasizing onboarding while overlooking long-term retention. A true marketing strategy ensures that as a client moves through each phase, they are met with the right type of communication, outreach, and engagement.

The four phases of client engagement—Universal (Brand Awareness), Prospective (Building Trust & Credibility), New Client (Reinforcing the Decision), and Existing Client (Retention & Advocacy)—serve as key checkpoints in your marketing strategy. But understanding them in isolation isn't enough. To make marketing truly effective, these phases must be woven together into a cohesive plan that drives engagement at every stage.

A strong marketing strategy isn't built on one-off campaigns or random outreach, but for a structured, intentional approach that ensures the right message is delivered to the right people at the right time. The best way to do this is by mapping each phase to a strategic marketing initiative and ensuring all efforts align with the overall client journey and firm objectives.

Aligning Content with the Journey

Every piece of content should be mapped to a specific phase in the client journey. Introductory blog posts and general thought leadership serve well in the Universal Phase, while in-depth case studies and educational webinars nurture the Prospective Phase. Status check emails should be streamlined for the New Client Phase, while milestone messages are perfect for the Existing Client Phase.

A strong strategy ensures consistent communication from initial contact through onboarding, retention, and beyond. For example, a referred prospect might first hear about you through a client who values your expertise, then attend a small client appreciation event where they get a sense of your approach. Following that, they might receive a personalized follow-up with educational content relevant to their situation, leading to an introductory conversation. By the time they move through onboarding, they've already built trust in your process, making for a seamless transition from prospect to engaged client.

Avoid Gaps

Gaps in the marketing journey create client disengagement. A strong strategy ensures consistent communication from initial contact through onboarding, retention, and beyond.

For example, a prospect who attends a webinar but hears nothing afterward may lose interest. A strong strategy follows up with relevant content, a personalized check-in, and a clear next step, keeping them engaged from interest to onboarding and beyond.

When marketing and the client experience are aligned, you create a seamless, engaging journey that not only attracts the right clients but also begins to nurture long-term retention and advocacy.





Creating **MARKETING STRATEGY** that flows from one phase to the next

Phase	Strategic Marketing Focus	Key Actions
<p>Universal (Brand Awareness)</p>	<p>Build a reputation through trust, expertise, and word-of-mouth</p>	<p>Strengthen referral networks, engage in community, and establish credibility</p>
<p>Prospective (Building Trust & Credibility)</p>	<p>Create meaningful connections and supportive content that make it easy for others to talk about you</p>	<p>Leverage strong existing client advocates, host strategic, value-driven events, personalize outreach to referrals, and ensure content across channels aligns with credibility</p>
<p>New Client (Reinforcing the Decision)</p>	<p>Strengthen relationships through early engagement and seamless onboarding experience journey</p>	<p>Create a structured, personalized onboarding journey that sets clear expectations, highlights value, and maintains proactive, trust-building communication throughout the early part of the relationship</p>
<p>Existing Client (Retention & Advocacy)</p>	<p>Elevate the client experience to drive long-term relationships and natural advocacy and referrals</p>	<p>Prioritize relationship-driven touchpoints, ensure service matrix alignment, recognize milestones, facilitate opportunities for introductions through specialized and strategic events</p>



After this episode, you'll dive into what key elements will make your marketing trail intentional and proactive.




CHARTING YOUR MARKETING TRAIL



Aligning Your **IDEAL CLIENT** With Your Marketing Strategy

Defining an ideal client is just the first step. Understanding how they interact with your business and aligning your marketing accordingly is what makes strategy effective. A successful marketing strategy ensures that your messaging, outreach, and engagement efforts are structured around the way your ideal clients think, act, and make decisions. Without this alignment, marketing can feel disjointed, leading to confusion, missed opportunities, and disengaged prospects.

It's Not Just Who They Are - It's How They Interact With Your Business

Every ideal client has their own preferences, expectations, and decision-making process when engaging with a financial advisor. Some may be methodical researchers, consuming educational content before ever reaching out. Others may rely heavily on referrals and word-of-mouth, choosing an advisor based on trust and social proof.

Recognizing how clients prefer to engage helps tailor marketing efforts to their natural behavior, ensuring that the business is visible, accessible, and aligned with the way ideal clients seek guidance.

For example:

- If ideal clients rely on referrals, marketing efforts should focus on nurturing client advocacy, strategic partnerships, and referral messaging.
- If they prefer educational engagement, hosting workshops, webinars, and publishing thought leadership content becomes critical.
- If they are community-driven, visibility through industry events, networking, and personalized introductions strengthens credibility.

Understanding the interaction points of who your client is, where their mindset is, and how they might engage, gives you the power to be less about broadcasting and more about reinforcing the right conversations, on the right topics, at the right time, and in the right place.

Tailor the Strategy

A strong marketing strategy shifts from attracting new clients to optimizing the experience for existing ideal clients. It's a seamless, value-driven client journey that allows for clients to naturally become advocates. Every touchpoint should feel effortless, proactive, and highly personalized, making every interaction feel like a natural extension of the relationship.

- **Every touchpoint should be frictionless:** From onboarding to ongoing reviews, each step in the client experience should feel seamless, easy, and natural.
- **Make ongoing engagement effortless:** Keep up regular, valuable interactions (not just annual reviews) through personalized outreach.
- **Recognize and anticipate needs before they arise:** Clients should feel like the team is always one step ahead, reinforcing trust and confidence in the relationship.

Rather than focusing on marketing as an external outreach, align messaging, engagement, and communication strategies around the ideal client and their journey with your business, at every phase.



CASE STUDY

The High-Touch Promise That Fell Flat

Greenfield Capital positioned itself as a white-glove, high-touch advisory firm, promoting a deeply personalized experience with tailored investment strategies and concierge-level service. Their website emphasized "bespoke portfolio management" and "customized financial planning," setting the expectation that every client would receive unique, hands-on attention. During the prospective phase, interactions reinforced this image. Advisors spoke about deep relationships, proactive outreach, and ongoing personal touchpoints that ensured each client's financial plan was continuously optimized for their evolving needs.

However, once clients onboarded, they encountered a vastly different reality. Rather than receiving a custom-tailored investment portfolio, they were all placed into the same model portfolios with minimal customization. Rather than proactive outreach, communication was limited to scheduled reviews, and clients rarely received personalized check-ins. Milestones such as retirement, business transitions, or significant liquidity events were not proactively acknowledged. Instead of an elite, tailored experience, clients received the same standardized process, regardless of their individual needs.

The Results:

Disengagement: Clients who expected high-touch engagement quickly realized they were receiving a templated experience. Their enthusiasm waned, and trust eroded.

Declining Referrals: While initially excited about the business, clients hesitated to refer friends and colleagues once they recognized the gap between marketing promises and reality.

Reputation Risk: Clients who had spoken highly of Greenfield Capital early on later shared their frustrations with others, leading to a diminished reputation in key referral circles.

Increased Client Turnover: Disappointed clients began exploring other options, feeling that they weren't receiving the unique attention they were promised. Some transitioned to firms that genuinely delivered the level of service they had been seeking.



How Greenfield Realigned Their Strategy

For Greenfield to bridge the gap between their marketing and client experience, they needed to make fundamental adjustments to both service execution and client engagement. The issue wasn't just about marketing accuracy, but ensuring that every phase of the client experience matched the expectations set during the prospecting process.

Here is how they switched the script:

- They simply said what they do, no longer overpromise what they don't. Instead of crafting messaging that overinflates and misrepresents the level of service, Greenfield simplified and clarified their messaging to accurately reflect what they actually deliver. They focused on highlighting investment frameworks and financial planning strategies, rather than implying a bespoke approach they don't offer.
- Instead of overpromising a white-glove experience, they revised marketing content throughout touchpoints to reflect what they actually do well, trained advisors on brand language continuity, and set expectations of service
- They implemented a client touchpoint system ensuring proactive outreach at key financial and life milestone. They also introduced personalized check-ins based on client interest, events, and anniversaries in their financial journey.
- They created a structured referral appreciation program that recognizes and rewards engaged clients who became advocates, keeping clients emotionally connected to Greenfield, and making them more likely to refer others.



Strategy vs. Execution: Making **MARKETING INTENTIONAL**, Not Reactive

Businesses often approach marketing like setting off on a big trip without a map; hoping for the best but lacking direction, consistency, and a clear route forward. This reactive approach leads to sporadic outreach, disconnected messaging, and inconsistent engagement, ultimately creating missed opportunities and disjointed client experiences.

Marketing shouldn't be an afterthought or something that happens only when there is time. It should be an intentional, structured strategy that supports business goals and growth. Just as financial planning requires a disciplined and strategic approach, so does marketing.

Planning Ahead with a Marketing Map

A structured strategy ensures that every initiative has **purpose, consistency, and alignment with the client experience**. The most effective way to stay intentional is to build a map that outlines:

- Key initiatives and themes for the year ahead.
- Quarterly priorities that align with client engagement efforts.
- Monthly execution plans to ensure consistency and follow-through.

Rather than reacting to trends your hearing about, calendar reminders, or sudden inspiration, a roadmap keeps your marketing efforts efficient, focused, proactive, and measurable.

Annual Strategy Planning

- Establish broad marketing themes that align with overall business goals and growth, branding, and engagement goals.
- Map out a high-level timeline for major initiatives, such as events, campaigns, strategic partnership efforts, etc.
- Identify which resources you will need to use to ensure efficiency and execution throughout the year.

Quarterly Strategy Planning

- Establish Focus on 1-2 quarters at a time and refine your marketing map so you have a better idea of what specifically you want to tackle.
- Identify key events, opportunities, and outreach that is best fit for the coming quarters.
- Set measurable objectives for engagement.

Monthly Strategy Planning

- Establish Breakdown quarterly initiatives into specific action steps (emails, client check-ins, educational content, event promotions, etc.)
- Assign responsibilities to ensure marketing is a shared effort, not an afterthought.
- Monitor engagement and feedback to refine and optimize strategies going forward.



Avoiding Common **MARKETING PITFALLS**

Even with a structured marketing plan, execution can still be a challenge, often due to common pitfalls. These traps stem from assumptions about client priorities, lack of intentional engagement, and investments that don't align with how clients truly make decisions. Recognizing these challenges allows for a more refined, purposeful, and results-driven marketing approach.

Pitfall #1: Assuming what clients care about instead of asking and listening

So many businesses build themselves around what they think clients want, rather than what actually resonates, and marketing is no exception. This results in generic messaging, overly broad content, or promotional efforts that don't resonate. If you assume that all clients care about market updates, but their actual concern is trust, accessibility, or life planning, then marketing efforts will fail to create meaningful engagement.

SOLUTION: The best marketing insight comes from the clients themselves. Regularly collect feedback through direct conversations or post-meeting surveys. Then track engagement and analyze the feedback to understand what clients are connecting to. ***By actively listening, you can refine your messaging and outreach so it reflects real client priorities and concerns.***

Pitfall #2: Neglecting engagement that drives advocacy, not leads

Remember that marketing is so much more than bringing in new prospects. Impactful marketing is about deepening relationships with existing clients to foster organic growth and referrals. Lots of financial advisors focus too much on lead generation while failing to nurture their current client base, missing opportunities to create brand advocates.

SOLUTION: Prioritize meaningful, personal engagement strategies that reinforce long-term relationships. Be sure to recognize client milestones such as retirement, career changes or family achievements, even goals met. Then make sure connecting beyond scheduled meetings. Consider reaching out with thoughtful touches like handwritten notes, small personal gifts, or exclusive events. When you make clients feel valued, they naturally become your best marketing asset!

Pitfall #3: Investing in Marketing Channels that Won't Support Your Business Efforts, or the Clients

Many financial services businesses pursue trendy marketing tactics, such as paid social media ads, generic SEO strategies, or aggressive lead generation programs, without first taking the time to understand how their ideal clients actually engage. While digital ads might work for e-commerce brands, they are often ineffective in a relationship-driven business like financial advising, where trust and credibility come from referrals, reputation, and long-term engagement.

SOLUTION: Invest in marketing strategies that align with how clients find and trust advisors like you. Focus on referral-driven marketing, strategic partnerships, and community engagement. ***Discover where your most valuable clients are coming from and put your marketing dollars and efforts there.***

Pitfall #4: Failing to measure and adjust marketing efforts

Without tracking engagement, you put your business at risk for repeating ineffective marketing strategies and failing to optimize what's actually working. Financial services businesses tend to focus on output (how many emails they send, how many events they hold) rather than measuring results (how many referrals and engaged clients those efforts produce).

SOLUTION: Implement tracking in CRM and track everything you can! Track referral sources, client introductions, event attendance, and follow-up activity. Pay attention to which outreach efforts lead to real engagement and conversations. The more consistently you track, the more clearly you'll see what's gaining traction, and what's not worth continuing. This kind of insight helps you focus your time and resources where they matter most.



CASE STUDY

When Trendy Marketing Becomes an Expensive Mistake

Bridgcore Financial was eager to modernize its marketing approach. Looking to expand beyond referrals and community engagement, they decided to invest heavily in digital advertising and paid lead generation services, believing that these efforts would bring a flood of new prospects into their pipeline. With the goal of accelerating firm growth, they allocated over \$100,000 toward various marketing efforts including social media ads, Google PPC (pay-per-click) campaigns, and paid lead funnels.

Within a few months, it became clear that they were seeing little return on investment. The paid leads they generated were often low-quality, price-sensitive, and not well-aligned with their ideal client profile. Many booked initial consultations but either failed to show up, were not ready to commit, or were simply looking for free advice. Meanwhile, the advisors were spending a disproportionate amount of time chasing unqualified leads, which pulled focus away from serving their existing high-value clients.



Financial and Operational Impact:

Massive Marketing Spend with Little ROI: Bridgcore invested over \$100,000 in various marketing channels over three years but onboarded fewer than five clients from their efforts in that time, generating little revenue and never breaking even on marketing spend.

Loss of Referral Momentum: Because attention shifted toward these new trendy marketing tactics, client engagement and referral activities declined, leading to a slowdown in organic growth.

Wasted Time: The team spent significant time on follow-ups, consultations, and proposal meetings with prospects who were never truly a good fit, pulling resources away from existing clients and referral relationships.

Failure to Track and Adjust: Instead of recognizing early on that these channels were not delivering meaningful results, they continued spending money on ineffective marketing without adjusting their approach.

Lessons Learned

After acknowledging their missteps, Bridgcore made strategic adjustments to rebuild its marketing in a way that aligned with its true strengths.

- Redirected resources toward relationship-driven marketing, focusing on referrals, strategic partnerships, and thoughtful leadership events.
- Reallocated budget to enhance existing client engagement, including personalized outreach, milestone recognition, and targeted events.
- Tracked and measured engagement at every stage so they could make sure their marketing dollars and resources were directed toward strategies that strengthened long-term client relationships, rather than short-term low-quality leads.

After shifting its focus, Bridgcore had doubled its client referral rate, saw an increase in high-value client acquisition, and ultimately recovered from its marketing misstep by leaning into what had always worked best—delivering an exceptional client experience