AI + SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING

A Practical Guide to Smarter, Leaner, More Profitable Marketing

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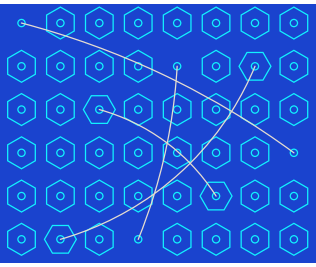
Substrate Media



AI is making it easier for small businesses to execute effective marketing at a lower cost.

Giving you a head start is what this guide is about. But before you dive in, let me answer the first question you might have:

Why am I giving this away?

Short answer? Because I want your business.

Longer answer? Because I'm tired of seeing small businesses being sold overcomplicated strategies and overpriced retainers by agencies, or getting sub-standard service from freelancers. What they really need is clear, practical marketing help that actually moves the dial.

Most "free guides" are just bait. Download it, get spammed. This isn't that. Here's what I believe:

If the advice is real, useful, and built for the way small businesses actually run, it doesn't need a paywall.

That's why I'm giving this away. No email gate. No fake urgency. Just practical, tested ways to use AI to market your business faster, smarter, and with less waste.

Because that's what we do at **Substrate**:

- We simplify the mess
- We save you time
- We help you get real results with leaner, more effective marketing.

If this guide helps you make one better decision, great. And if you want to know more about how we think and how we can help, head over to:
👉 substratemedia.com.au

You'll also find our newsletter there. No fluff, no theory, just real-world ideas that help you do more with less. For now, dig in. And if this clicks with you, let's talk.

Mike

(Owner, Substrate Media)

AI + Small Business Marketing

Substrate Media

The marketing world has changed. But if you're running a service-based business you've probably noticed one thing hasn't changed: *the cost of marketing.*

Agencies are still charging big retainers. Campaigns still take too long. And "reports" still show everything *except* how many real leads or sales came in.

But behind the scenes, there's a shift happening. Tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) are making marketing faster, more accurate, and far more cost-effective.

At Substrate Media, we believe in keeping things honest, simple, and commercial. That's why we created this guide — to help you understand how AI actually works in small business marketing, and how to use it to your advantage without getting lost in the tech.

If you've ever felt you're spending too much on marketing without results — this will help change that.

Need an expert to help review your current agency or explore a better fit?

We're a Brisbane-based digital marketing consultancy that believes:

- **Honesty** as our best policy
- **Integrity** as non-negotiable
- **Simple solutions, real results**

Unlike big agencies, we don't bill you for overheads, long meetings, or fluff. Just effective, commercial marketing that works.

Substrate Media

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Introduction: A Smarter Way to Do Marketing

AI isn't some futuristic tech reserved for Silicon Valley. It's already reshaping the way small and mid-sized businesses do marketing every day.

In practical terms, **AI in marketing** means using smart software to:

- Automate repetitive tasks (like sending emails or reporting)
- Optimise decisions (like bidding on Google Ads or picking keywords)
- Personalise customer experiences (like tailoring emails or offers)
- Speed up execution (from content to lead scoring)

It's not about replacing humans — it's about *making the humans you have more effective.*

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7 Real-World Ways AI Helps Small Business Marketing

1️⃣ Faster, Smarter Content Creation

Every business needs content — blogs, social posts, email newsletters. But for lean teams, content takes time.

AI can now generate content ideas, outlines, headlines, and even full drafts in seconds. This doesn't replace your expertise — it just gives you a strong head start.

Example: We use AI to draft blog post frameworks, then layer in your voice and insights so it actually sounds like *you*.

Tools: ChatGPT, Jasper, Copy.ai

Tip: To get a more personalised, tailored outcome include your business' target market, specific area of expertise, values and tone of voice in your prompt. Follow-up by reviewing and refining the output wiht your personal perspective and language preferences.

2️⃣ Automated Email That Feels Personal

AI-driven email tools don't just send newsletters. They learn from your contacts' behaviour and send targeted, timed, relevant messages.

Think: welcome sequences, abandoned enquiry follow-ups, or interest-based nurture emails — all triggered automatically.

Example: A potential client visits your "pricing" page twice. AI sends them a tailored email offering a strategy call.

Tools: Mailchimp, ActiveCampaign, ConvertKit

Tip: Start with 1–2 key automation triggers — then build more over time.

3️⃣ Predictive Analytics That Show You What Matters

AI doesn't just gather data — it helps you use it.

Smart platforms can now:

- Score your leads based on likelihood to convert
- Identify which pages or campaigns are driving real results
- Forecast where to spend more (and where to stop)

Example: Know which leads are ready for sales — and which need nurturing.

Tools: Google Analytics 4, HubSpot, Segment

Tip: Focus on actionable data, not just pretty dashboards.

4️⃣ AI Chatbots That Qualify Leads (and Save Time)

AI chatbots can now handle routine enquiries, book meetings, or route messages to the right team member — all without manual input.

Done right, they create a better user experience while saving your staff hours each week.

Example: A new website visitor answers 3 chatbot questions and gets booked directly into your calendar.

Tools: Drift, Intercom, Tidio

Tip: Use bots to filter, not replace. Humans still close the deal.

5️⃣ Smarter SEO = Faster Wins

SEO is still one of the best investments for service-based businesses. But most agencies drag it out to lock in long retainers.

AI has changed that. Today, you can:

- Audit your site
- Identify keyword gaps
- Benchmark against competitors
- Optimise content faster than ever before.

Example: AI spots which local competitor outranks you for "Brisbane physiotherapy" — and helps you close the gap in one article.

Tools: Surfer SEO, Semrush AI, Clearscope

Tip: Use SEO tools to prioritise, not overwhelm. Focus on the top 10 keywords that move the needle.

6️⃣ Social Media Tools That Do More Than Schedule

Yes, AI can help schedule posts — but that's just the beginning.

It can also:

- Recommend the best time to post
- Suggest captions or hashtags
- Analyse which content is performing best

Example: You schedule 2 weeks' worth of content in 30 minutes, and get automated reports showing what to double down on.

Tools: Buffer, Later, Hootsuite

Tip: Schedule in batches, then optimise weekly based on engagement trends.

7️⃣ Visual Content in Half the Time

Designers are still critical — but for everyday visual content (like social tiles, ads, or PDF guides), AI tools can help create polished drafts fast.

Example: Need a Facebook ad graphic by tomorrow? AI gets you 80% of the way there — fast.

Tools: Canva Magic Design, Adobe Firefly, Lumen5

Tip: Use AI as a shortcut — then apply your brand style on top.

What You Should Expect From Your Marketing Agency When It Comes to AI

Not every agency is using AI responsibly.

And unfortunately, many are using it to *increase margins* — not pass savings back to clients.

Here's what we believe every agency should be doing:

✅ Be Transparent About Where AI Is Used

If your agency is using AI tools to plan, write, or optimise — great. But they should tell you exactly how and why.

👉 Ask your agency: *What tools are they using, and how does it benefit you?*

✅ Use AI With Purpose — Not to Cut Corners

AI should help agencies deliver faster and better work — not lazy content that looks and sounds robotic.

👉 Ask your agency: *Are they using AI to empower results? If so, ask them what guidelines they have in place to ensure quality and compliance.*

✅ Pass the Value On To You

If a task takes 80% less time with AI — you should see that reflected in cost, speed, or scope.

👉 Ask your agency: *How is AI reshaping your business model and delivering efficiencies — and how are you passing that value on to your clients?*

How Substrate Media Uses AI to Serve Clients Better

We built **Substrate Media** around a lean, transparent model — designed for commercial results, not complexity.

We use AI behind the scenes to:

- Deliver smarter content strategies
- Optimise SEO campaigns in real time
- Automate low-value admin tasks
- Focus more on strategy, creative, and outcomes.

What we don't do is push a button and call it "done." We use AI where it makes sense — and only if it creates real value for your business. And we make sure you're getting the benefit of a leaner, more efficient business model in lower fees.

Final Word: Start Small, Scale Smart

If you've read our report *The Marketing Revolution*, you know our view:

You don't need more marketing. You need better marketing.

And now, AI gives you a way to do exactly that — without spending more or doing more.

So here's your next step:

1. Pick one or two of the ideas from this guide
2. Test them in your business
3. Ask your agency smarter questions
4. Track what's working

And if you want a partner who's already doing this every day — we'd love to show you how.

Want to see what smarter, AI-powered marketing could look like in your business?

Book a 15-minute discovery call today

Need an expert to help review your current agency or explore a better fit?

We're a Brisbane-based digital marketing consultancy that believes:

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Bonus Material

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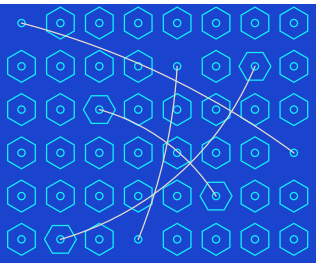

10 ChatGPT Prompts Every Service Business Should Be Using

New to AI? Don't worry.

Here are 10 high-impact prompts you can paste into ChatGPT to save time, improve your marketing, and get work done faster — without fluff or guesswork.

Just fill in the blanks with details from *your* business, and let the AI do the heavy lifting.

1. Blog Post Generator (Topic + SEO Ready)

"Write a blog post for a small business in the [insert industry] industry. The topic is: '[insert topic]'. The tone should be professional but conversational. Include a clear structure with H2 subheadings, and optimise it for the keyword '[insert SEO keyword]'. Add a short CTA at the end."

Example:
Write a blog for a physiotherapy clinic.

Topic: "5 Mistakes to Avoid When Choosing a Physio."

Keyword: "Brisbane physiotherapist".

2. Email Welcome Sequence

"Write a 3-part welcome email sequence for new leads of a [insert type of business] that just downloaded a free report titled '[insert lead magnet name]'. Each email should be short, friendly, and provide value. Include soft CTAs in emails 1 and 2, and a direct call to action to book a call in email 3."

Example:

Business: Financial planning firm

Lead magnet: "7 Costly Retirement Mistakes (and How to Avoid Them)"

3. Google Ads Copy for Local Services

“Create 3 Google Search ads for a local [insert service] business targeting customers in [insert location]. The focus should be on commercial results, reliability, and trust. Each ad should have two headlines, one description, and a strong call to action.”

Example:

Service: Bookkeeping

Location: Brisbane

Tone: Straightforward, no fluff

4. Local SEO Page Outline

“Create an outline for a service page targeting the keyword ‘[insert local keyword]’ for a business in the [insert industry] industry. The page should include sections like intro, services overview, FAQs, and a contact form CTA.”

Example:

Keyword: “Tax Accountant Brisbane”

Industry: Accounting

5. Weekly Social Media Calendar

“Create a 1-week content calendar for a [insert industry] business targeting [insert audience]. Include 5 social media post ideas across Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Vary the types: educational, behind-the-scenes, client testimonial, myth-busting, and promotional.”

Example:

Industry: Allied health clinic

Audience: Busy professionals, ages 35–55

6. Lead Magnet Title Ideas

“Give me 10 lead magnet title ideas for a [insert type of business] that wants to attract more qualified leads. The focus should be on commercial outcomes, avoiding costly mistakes, or giving strategic insight. Avoid generic or gimmicky titles.”

Example:

Business: Mortgage broker

Audience: First-time home buyers

7. Cold Email Script for B2B Outreach

“Write a short cold email for a [insert business type] introducing our services to [insert target audience]. The goal is to create curiosity and book a discovery call. Keep it under 120 words, professional but conversational. Add a soft CTA and signature.”

Example

Business: Marketing consultancy

Audience: Private medical clinics

8. Client Testimonial Rewrite for Website

“Take this raw testimonial: ‘[paste real client quote here]’ and rewrite it into a polished, concise version suitable for a website. Keep the original sentiment but improve clarity, grammar, and flow. Format it as a short quote with attribution.”

Example:

Client: John, Owner of Apex Plumbing

Raw: “Yeah, they did great, we saw more calls coming in after like 2 months. Definitely good results, happy with it.”

9. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Draft

“Write 5 frequently asked questions and answers for a [insert type of business] that offers [insert main service]. Keep the language clear and reassuring. Include one question that addresses pricing, one about timeline, and one about process.”

Example:

Business: Digital marketing agency

Service: SEO for local financial firms

10. LinkedIn Post to Build Authority

“Write a short LinkedIn post (max 200 words) for the owner of a [insert business type] who wants to build authority in their field. The post should share one insight, client win, or market observation that positions them as a trusted expert — without sounding like a sales pitch.”

Example:

Business: Business coach

Insight: “Why most consultants underprice themselves — and what to do about it.”