JAVIER SUGO

# 90

# THE FIRST 90 DAYS

How to plan the marketing of a new business, one decision at a time.



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Fractional CMO in Vienna. Twenty years of senior marketing in international companies.

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# THE FIRST 90 DAYS

## How to plan the marketing of a new business, one decision at a time.

Thirteen weeks, nine short chapters and one worked example. Each chapter ends with a card to fill in, so by day 90 the plan on your desk is one you wrote yourself.




**Javier Sugo**
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## THE 90-DAY MAP

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

### FOUNDATION

1 One customer first
2 Why you, in one sentence
3 Three numbers for day 90

### THE BASICS

4 Name, look and voice
5 An offer that is easy to buy
6 Easy to find

### FIRST CUSTOMERS

7 The first twenty customers
8 Reviews and word of mouth

### REVIEW

9 Keep, fix, drop

# WHY NINETY DAYS

A new business has many first jobs at once: the product, the paperwork, the money, the space. Marketing often arrives last: a logo, a website and a social media account, all opened in a hurry the week before the doors open. Those things matter, but they belong at the end of the work, not at the start.

In twenty years of marketing in international companies, I saw the same pattern again and again: the plans that worked were short. They started with one clear customer, said one thing well and tracked a few numbers honestly. The same logic works for a bakery, a law firm or an online shop. Only the scale changes.

Ninety days is long enough to see real results and short enough to stay focused. This guide splits it into four stages. Each chapter takes one decision, shows how a made-up business makes it and gives you a card to fill in.

### MEET THE EXAMPLE: HALM BAKERY

A small bakery opening in a Vienna neighborhood, with one oven, two people and €3,000 to spend on marketing in the first three months. It sells bread and pastries over the counter and wants regular orders from offices nearby. Halm Bakery is made up, so every number and every choice can be shown openly. Each chapter also shows how the same step looks in other kinds of business.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. Read it once from start to finish. It takes about thirty minutes.
2. Go back to chapter 1 and work on one card at a time, at the pace of the map.
3. Keep every card. At the end they fit together into a one-page plan.

1 WEEKS 1 TO 2

# ONE CUSTOMER FIRST

Every later decision depends on who you serve first: what you say, what you charge, where you show up. So the first decision is a person, not a logo.

### HOW DO YOU CHOOSE YOUR FIRST CUSTOMER?

List every group that could buy from you, each described as a real situation. Score each group from one to three on need, value and reach. The highest total is your first customer. Then talk to five of them and write down their exact words before spending money on anything else.

A message written for everyone is hard for anyone to recognize as their own. A message written for one clear customer gets noticed, repeated and passed on.

Choosing a first customer is a decision about focus. Other customers stay welcome, but the first ninety days are designed around one group. Once that group knows you, the next one is easier to reach.

## 1 LIST EVERYONE WHO COULD BUY

Write down every group that could buy from you. Describe each one as a situation, not as an age range. “Parents buying breakfast on the way to school” tells you far more than “women aged 30 to 45”.

## 2 SCORE THEM WITH THREE QUESTIONS

Give each group one to three points for each question. The group with the highest total is your first customer. When two groups tie, choose the one you can reach sooner.

| | |
|---|---|
| NEED | Who needs this most often? |
| VALUE | Who can pay what it is worth? |

| | |
|---|---|
| REACH | Who can I reach this month, with the time and money I have? |

## 3 LISTEN TO FIVE OF THEM

Before spending money on anything else, talk to five people from the winning group. Ten minutes each is enough. Ask about the past, not about your idea, and write down the exact words they use. Those words come back later as your headline, your offer and your posts.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | When did you last buy something like this? |
| 2 | What was annoying about it? |
| 3 | Why did you choose the place you chose? |

## HALM BAKERY SCORES ITS GROUPS

The bakery lists four groups and scores each one. Families nearby come close, but offices win: they order every week, they pay by invoice and the owners can walk in with a sample box tomorrow morning.

| GROUP | NEED | VALUE | REACH | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Families in the neighborhood | ●●● | ●●○ | ●●○ | 7 |
| Commuters on the way to the tram | ●●○ | ●○○ | ●●○ | 5 |
| **Offices within one kilometer** FIRST CUSTOMER | ●●○ | ●●● | ●●● | 8 |
| Cafes that could buy bread wholesale | ●●○ | ●●○ | ●○○ | 5 |

In the five conversations, one office manager put the problem in a sentence the bakery still uses:

> “ Breakfast for the Monday meeting is always the same supermarket pastries, and someone has to go out and get them.

| CARD 1: YOUR FIRST CUSTOMER | HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN |
| --- | --- |
| My first customer is<br>---<br>one group, described as a situation | My first customer is office managers within one kilometer who organize the team breakfast. |
| They need<br>---<br>the problem, in their own words | They need fresh breakfast for the team, delivered, so nobody has to leave the office. |
| They usually buy when<br>---<br>the moment or the day | They usually buy when on Thursday or Friday, for the meetings of the following week. |
| I can reach them through<br>---<br>a place, a person or a channel | I can reach them through walking into their offices with a sample box, then a short email. |

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

### AN ACCOUNTANT

freelancers in their first year, worried about their first tax return.

### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

couples furnishing their first home who want pieces that feel personal.

### A HAIR SALON

people who work nearby and want a cut during the lunch break.

### A CONSULTANT

owners of family companies preparing to hand the business to the next generation.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 2

- ✓ A list of every group that could buy from you
- ✓ A score for each group, and one winner
- ✓ Notes from five conversations, in their own words
- ✓ Card 1, filled in

---

A second opinion on this step can save weeks. Choosing the first customer is where my strategy work with a new business begins. How I work on strategy

2 WEEKS 1 TO 2

# WHY YOU, IN ONE SENTENCE

Every customer compares. One clear sentence about why you, written in your first customer's words, does more work than a long list of qualities.

### HOW DO YOU WRITE A POSITIONING SENTENCE FOR A NEW BUSINESS?

Fill in four parts: who it is for, their problem in their own words, what you offer, and the one reason to choose you over what they use today. Keep the reason specific and true. Test the sentence on five people from your first group, then build every page and post on it.

Every new business is compared with something: a competitor, a supermarket, a spreadsheet, or doing nothing at all. The positioning sentence answers the question every customer asks in silence: why this one?

It is a working tool first. It rarely appears word for word on the website, but every headline, price and post grows out of it.

## 1 NAME THE REAL ALTERNATIVE

Write down what your first customer does today instead of buying from you. That is your real competitor, and it is often a different kind of business altogether. For an office breakfast, it is the supermarket and the colleague who goes out to get pastries.

## 2 FIND THE ONE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

List what you do better than that alternative, then keep only the one your first customer cares about most. Use the words from your five conversations. "Fresh" is a quality. "Delivered before 8:30, so nobody leaves the office" is a difference.

## 3 WRITE IT AND TEST IT

Fill in the sentence on card 2 and read it aloud to five people from your first group. Watch their faces. A question means the sentence is still unclear. A nod, or "that is exactly it", means it is ready.

## HALM BAKERY WRITES IT TWICE

The first draft sounds like a bakery. The second sounds like Halm.

FIRST DRAFT

~~Halm Bakery makes high-quality artisan bread with love and tradition.~~

It could describe any bakery in Europe. It names no customer, no alternative and no reason to choose it.

FINAL SENTENCE

For office managers near the bakery who organize the team breakfast, Halm delivers a fresh breakfast box before 8:30. Unlike supermarket pastries, it comes to the office, so nobody has to go out and get it.

One customer, their problem in their words, a clear offer and one difference that matters to them.

### CARD 2: WHY YOU

For

---

your first customer, from card 1

who

---

their problem, in their own words

we offer

---

what you sell, said plainly

Unlike

---

the real alternative, and your one difference

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

For office managers near the bakery

who organize the team breakfast and lose time buying it.

we offer a fresh breakfast box, delivered before 8:30.

Unlike supermarket pastries, it comes to the office, so nobody has to go out.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

### AN ACCOUNTANT

Unlike a large firm, one person who answers the phone the same day.

### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

Unlike mass-made homeware, every piece is signed and comes with the story of who made it.

### A HAIR SALON

Unlike salons that need booking days ahead, a 30-minute cut you can book the same morning.

### A CONSULTANT

Unlike large advisory firms, the person who sells the project is the person who does the work.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 2

- ✓ The real alternative your customer uses today
- ✓ One difference, in their words
- ✓ A sentence tested on five people
- ✓ Card 2, filled in

3 WEEKS 1 TO 2

# THREE NUMBERS FOR DAY 90

A goal without a number is a wish. Three numbers, written down in week 2, tell you on day 90 whether the plan worked.

### WHICH MARKETING GOALS SHOULD A NEW BUSINESS SET FOR ITS FIRST 90 DAYS?

Three numbers: new customers, money coming in, and one early signal you can see every week, such as conversations held or quotes requested. Write each one with today's value, a target for day 90 and the day you will check it. Check all three every Friday, in ten minutes.

In large companies, the weakest page of a marketing plan is often the goals page. "Increase awareness" sounds like a goal, but on day 90 nobody can say whether it happened.

A new business needs only three numbers. More numbers spread attention thin. Fewer leave the plan to guesswork.

## 1 ONE NUMBER FOR CUSTOMERS

How many new paying customers by day 90. When your business lives on repeat orders, count customers who come back, not single sales. Ten offices ordering every week are worth more than a hundred one-time visits.

## 2 ONE NUMBER FOR MONEY

Revenue, orders or average order value: choose the one that pays the rent first. Write it per month, so you can see it grow.

## 3 ONE EARLY SIGNAL, EVERY WEEK

Customers and money move slowly at the start. Pick one number that moves within days and shows the plan is working: conversations held, samples given, quotes

requested, visits to one page. It is your early warning.

## HALM BAKERY SETS ITS NUMBERS

The bakery works backwards. If one in three offices that try a sample box becomes a weekly customer, 40 samples should bring about 12 offices.

| NUMBER | TODAY | DAY 90 | CHECKED |
|---|---|---|---|
| Offices ordering every week | 0 | 12 | Every Friday |
| Office orders per month | €0 | €2,300 | End of each month |
| Sample boxes delivered | 0 | 40 | Every Friday |

Small numbers, chosen on purpose: twelve weekly offices keep the oven busy on quiet mornings and make the delivery run worth the drive.

### CARD 3: YOUR THREE NUMBERS

By day 90, new customers:

---

how many, and how you count them

By day 90, money in per month:

---

revenue, orders or average order

Every week, my early signal:

---

one number that moves within days

I check them every

---

one fixed day and time

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

By day 90, new customers: 12 offices ordering every week.

By day 90, money in per month: €2,300 in office orders.

Every week, my early signal: 5 sample boxes delivered.

I check them every Friday at 4 pm, before the weekend baking.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

### AN ACCOUNTANT

15 new clients, €3,000 in monthly fees, 4 introduction calls a week.

### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

60 orders, €4,500 in sales a month, 300 visits a week to the shop.

### A HAIR SALON

80 regular clients, €9,000 a month, 25 first-time bookings a week.

### A CONSULTANT

3 clients, €18,000 in signed projects, 2 first meetings a week.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 2

- ✓ Three numbers, each with today's value and a target
- ✓ A fixed day each week to check them
- ✓ Card 3, filled in

4 WEEKS 3 TO 6

# NAME, LOOK AND VOICE

Now, and only now, the logo. With a clear customer and one sentence behind it, the look of the business has something to say, and every choice gets quicker and cheaper.

### WHAT DOES A NEW BUSINESS NEED FOR ITS BRAND AT THE START?

A name that is easy to say and free to use, one simple logo, two colors, two typefaces and three words for how the business sounds. Put them on one page and use them everywhere, from the shop window to the invoice. Repeating the same few choices builds recognition faster than a large budget.

At the start, a brand is a small set of choices repeated without exception. People recognize a business by the same colors, the same letters and the same tone, seen again and again.

Spend in proportion. A new business needs a clean, professional starter kit, not an eighty-page brand book.

## 1 CHECK THE NAME

Say it aloud, spell it on the phone, and search for it before printing anything: in the official company register, as a web address and on the main social networks. A name that is easy to say and free to use saves money later.

## 2 CHOOSE A SMALL KIT

One logo in two versions, a full one and a small one for tight spaces. Two colors plus a neutral. Two typefaces: one for headings, one for text. Fewer choices mean everything matches without effort.

## 3 WRITE THE VOICE IN THREE WORDS

Three words for how the business sounds, each with a short “this, not that”. They guide every text, from the website to the reply to a complaint.

## HALM BAKERY’S ONE-PAGE KIT

Everything the bakery needs to look the same on the window, the boxes, the website and the invoice.

NAME

**HALM**

German for a stalk of grain. Short, and easy to say in German and English.

LOGO

The word Halm with a single stalk, plus the stalk alone for stickers and the website icon.

TYPEFACES

A warm serif for headings, a plain sans serif for text.

| | |
|---|---|
| RYE | #5C4030 |
| CRUST | #B4793F |
| FLOUR | #F3EEE5 |

HOW HALM SOUNDS

| WARM | DIRECT | LOCAL |
|---|---|---|
| not sweet | not cold | not old-fashioned |

### CARD 4: NAME, LOOK AND VOICE

The name is

---

checked in the register, as a web address and on social media

The colors are

---

two colors and one neutral

The typefaces are

---

one for headings, one for text

We sound

---

three words, each with “this, not that”

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

The name is Halm.

The colors are rye brown and crust gold, on flour white.

The typefaces are a warm serif and a plain sans serif.

We sound warm, not sweet. Direct, not cold. Local, not old-fashioned.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

#### AN ACCOUNTANT

Calm, not dull. Exact, not stiff. Plain, not technical.

#### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

Personal, not cute. Tactile, not rustic. Unhurried, not slow.

#### A HAIR SALON

Quick, not rushed. Friendly, not loud. Sharp, not cold.

#### A CONSULTANT

Experienced, not old. Direct, not harsh. Discreet, not distant.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 6

- ✓ A name checked in the register, as a web address and on social media
- ✓ Logo, colors and typefaces on one page
- ✓ Three voice words, each with "this, not that"
- ✓ Card 4, filled in

---

Brand identity is part of my work: from the positioning sentence to the name, logo, colors and voice, all on one page. See how I work on branding

5 WEEKS 3 TO 6

# AN OFFER THAT IS EASY TO BUY

People buy offers, not businesses. One clear offer with a name, a price and a next step makes the decision easy. A long menu makes it hard.

### HOW SHOULD A NEW BUSINESS PACKAGE AND PRICE ITS FIRST OFFER?

Turn what you sell into one named offer for your first customer, with a clear price and one next step. Add a small way to try it and a larger option for those who want more. Set the price from three points: your costs, the customer's alternative and what the price says about you.

A long price list asks the customer to do the work. A named offer does the work for them: what it is, who it is for, what it costs and what happens next.

## 1 NAME THE MAIN OFFER

Build one offer around the problem on card 1, for the customer on card 1. Give it a plain name that says what it is.

## 2 ADD A WAY IN AND A WAY UP

A small first step lowers the risk of trying. A larger option serves the customers who want more. Three options are enough, and the middle one is often the one people choose.

## 3 SET THE PRICE ON PURPOSE

Start from three points: what it costs you, including your own time; what the customer pays for the alternative today; and what the price says about you. A price is a message as much as a number.

## HALM BAKERY'S THREE OPTIONS

One main offer for the office managers, with a free way in and a larger way up.

WAY IN

### TASTE BOX

Breakfast for ten, delivered once, to try

**Free**

MAIN OFFER

### MONDAY MEETING BOX

Breakfast for ten, delivered before 8:30 every Monday

**€48 a week**

WAY UP

### EVERY MORNING

Delivery Monday to Friday, one monthly invoice

**€210 a week**

## A REAL CASE: THE 60-DOLLAR LOAF

In September 2026, a baker from Austria opened a shop in New York that sells a single product: a large rye sourdough loaf of about 1.5 kilos, for 60 dollars. A comparable loaf costs a fraction of that in Austria.

The shop explains the price with flour imported from Austria, a family sourdough culture more than fifty years old, skilled hands and Manhattan rent. Within weeks there were lines outside, loaves sold out, and videos of people buying and tasting the bread spread online. The price itself became the story, and the story traveled for free.

It went viral for the opposite reason too. Many people were angry: for them, 60 dollars for bread had little to do with what bread costs, at a time when many families count every dollar they spend on basic food. A supermarket chain even parked an advertising truck outside with a 3.99-dollar loaf.

### WHAT A NEW BUSINESS CAN TAKE FROM IT

1. A price is a message. The same bread says one thing at 60 dollars in Manhattan and another at a neighborhood price in Vienna.
2. A high price needs a story people accept. When the story is missing, the price becomes the story.
3. Being talked about is not the same as being liked. A business that lives on its neighbors' trust needs a price its chosen customer sees as fair.

As reported by Euronews (16 September 2026) and The Korea Times (31 October 2026).

### CARD 5: YOUR OFFER

My main offer is called

---

a plain name that says what it is

It costs

---

one price, explained in one sentence

A small way to try it is

---

the way in

A larger option is

---

the way up

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

My main offer is called the Monday Meeting Box: breakfast for ten, before 8:30.

It costs €48 a week, about the price of supermarket pastries plus the time to buy them.

A small way to try it is the free Taste Box, once.

A larger option is Every Morning, Monday to Friday, at €210 a week.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

#### AN ACCOUNTANT

Way in: a free 20-minute tax check. Main: a fixed monthly fee, tax return included. Way up: bookkeeping done for you.

#### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

Way in: a single cup. Main: a set of four. Way up: a table set made to order.

#### A HAIR SALON

Way in: a fringe trim. Main: the 30-minute lunch cut. Way up: cut and color, booked monthly.

#### A CONSULTANT

Way in: a half-day workshop. Main: a three-month succession plan. Way up: a year as advisor.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 6

- ✓ One named main offer with a price
- ✓ A way in and a way up
- ✓ A price you can explain in one sentence
- ✓ Card 5, filled in

6 WEEKS 3 TO 6

# EASY TO FIND

Before anyone buys, they search, check and compare. Three places, done well, cover most of it: a simple website, a free map listing and one social channel.

### WHERE DOES A NEW BUSINESS NEED TO BE ONLINE AT THE START?

In three places. A simple website with what you offer, a price or starting price and one clear way to get in touch. A free business listing on Google Maps and the other map apps, with hours and photos. And one social channel where your first customer already spends time. Keep all three complete and current.

Many people check a new business on their phone before they call, visit or buy. In a few seconds they look for three things: what it is, whether it is open or available, and whether other people trust it.

At the start, the goal is presence, not volume: three places, complete and consistent, do more than six accounts left half finished.

## 1 A SIMPLE WEBSITE

One to five pages: what you offer and for whom, a price or a starting price, where and when, and one clear way to get in touch. It is the only place online that you fully own, and every other place points back to it.

## 2 A FREE MAP LISTING

Create the free business listing on Google and on the other map apps people use in your country. Add the exact category, opening hours, real photos and the link to your website. For a local business, it is often the first thing a customer sees.

## 3 ONE SOCIAL CHANNEL

Choose the one channel where your first customer already spends time, and use it well. Office managers read LinkedIn. Parents may be on Instagram or in neighborhood groups. One channel, used every week, beats four used now and then.

## HALM BAKERY'S THREE PLACES

Each place has one job, and all three say the same thing in the same look.

| 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|
| **WEBSITE** | **MAP LISTING** | **LINKEDIN** |
| Three pages: the Monday Meeting Box with its price and an order form, the shop with hours and address, and a short story about the two bakers. | Category bakery, opening hours, ten photos of the counter and the boxes, the office delivery service and the website link. | One post a week from the owners: the morning bake, a new box, a thank-you to an office that orders. |
| Built in week 4 | Set up in week 3, photos renewed monthly | 30 minutes a week |

### CARD 6: WHERE TO FIND YOU

My website shows

---

offer, price, where and when, one way to get in touch

My map listing has

---

category, hours, photos, website link

My one social channel is

---

where your first customer already spends time

I post there every

---

one fixed day

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

My website shows the Monday Meeting Box, its price, an order form, hours and address.

My map listing has hours, ten photos, the delivery service and the website link.

My one social channel is LinkedIn, where office managers read.

I post there every Wednesday, after the morning delivery run.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

#### AN ACCOUNTANT

A website with fixed prices, a map listing for the office, and LinkedIn.

#### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

The shop website does most of the work, with Instagram showing each piece being made.

#### A HAIR SALON

A one-page site with online booking, a map listing with photos of real cuts, and Instagram.

#### A CONSULTANT

A website with three client stories, and LinkedIn. A map listing matters less when clients come by referral.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 6

- ✓ A simple website with a price and one way to get in touch
- ✓ A complete, free map listing
- ✓ One social channel, with a fixed day to post
- ✓ Card 6, filled in

---

Websites are a large part of my work: designs ready to personalize with your content, or a website built from a blank page. See the website designs

7

WEEKS 7 TO 10

# THE FIRST TWENTY CUSTOMERS

The first customers rarely come from advertising. They come through people: your network, your street, and the customers you already have. Twenty is a number you can reach by hand.

### HOW DOES A NEW BUSINESS FIND ITS FIRST CUSTOMERS?

By hand, through people. List everyone who could buy or introduce you, go to the places where your first customer already is, and ask every happy customer for one introduction. Track each contact in a simple list, and follow up once, about a week later, with something new.

Paid advertising works best once you know what sells and to whom. In the first ninety days, the faster route is personal: conversations, samples, introductions. They cost time rather than money, and every one of them teaches you something.

1

## LIST FIFTY PEOPLE

Write down everyone who could buy, or who knows someone who could: former colleagues, suppliers, neighbors, friends, other business owners. Ask them for an introduction, not for a favor. It is an easier question to say yes to.

2

## GO WHERE YOUR CUSTOMER ALREADY IS

Visit, call or write to the places where your first customer spends time: offices, associations, local groups, events, online communities. Bring something useful: a sample, a short tip, a clear offer.

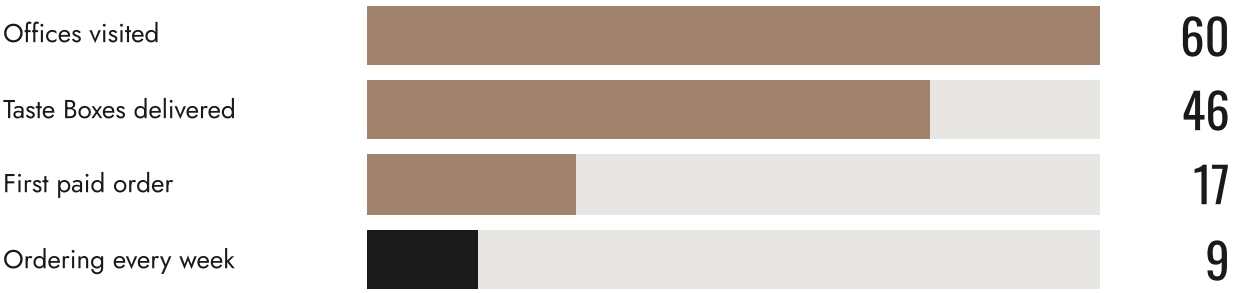
3

## FOLLOW UP ONCE, WITH SOMETHING NEW

Many first contacts end in silence, and that is normal. Write once more, about a week later, with something new: a photo, a date, a small offer. Then move on. Keep a simple list with the name, the date and the next step.

## HALM BAKERY'S MORNING WALKS

From week 7, the owners walk a one-kilometer circle every Tuesday and Thursday morning, sample boxes in hand.




Two of the nine came through introductions: an office manager told a friend two floors up.

### CARD 7: YOUR FIRST TWENTY

My list of fifty people is in

_____

one place: a notebook or a simple spreadsheet

My customer already spends time at

_____

places, groups, events or communities

My follow-up brings

_____

something new, about a week later

I ask happy customers for

_____

one introduction, in one sentence

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

My list of fifty people is in a spreadsheet: office, contact, date, next step.

My customer already spends time at their offices, every Tuesday and Thursday before 10.

My follow-up brings a photo of next week's box and the date of the next Monday.

I ask happy customers for the name of one office that deserves a better Monday.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

#### AN ACCOUNTANT

Introductions from a lawyer and a bank adviser who serve the same freelancers.

#### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

A stand at two design markets, with a card that leads to the online shop.

#### A HAIR SALON

#### A CONSULTANT

A first-cut offer for the staff of the three largest offices on the street.

Ten coffees with tax advisers and lawyers who already advise family companies.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 10

- ✓ A list of fifty people, and ten introductions asked for
- ✓ Every contact tracked with a date and a next step
- ✓ Every first contact followed up once
- ✓ Card 7, filled in

8 WEEKS 7 TO 10

# REVIEWS AND WORD OF MOUTH

People trust other customers more than any advertising. A review asked for at the right moment, and an easy way to pass your name on, turn the first customers into the next ones.

### HOW DOES A NEW BUSINESS GET ITS FIRST REVIEWS?

Ask at the moment the customer is happiest, usually right after something went well. Make it easy with a direct link, suggest what to mention, and reply to every review by name. Then give happy customers a simple way to recommend you, such as a card or a message they can forward.

A business with no reviews asks every new customer to take a small risk. A handful of honest reviews, with real details, takes most of that risk away.

Buying or writing fake reviews is banned in the European Union, and readers spot them quickly. Five real ones are worth more than fifty that sound alike.

## 1 ASK AT THE RIGHT MOMENT

The best moment is right after something went well: a delivery on time, a thank-you, a repeat order. Ask in person or by message, with a direct link to the review page.

## 2 ASK FOR DETAILS, NOT STARS

Suggest what to mention: what they bought, what problem it solved, what they would tell a friend. A specific review persuades the next customer far more than "great service".

## 3 MAKE PASSING IT ON EASY

Give happy customers something to pass on: a card in the box, a short message they can forward, a small thank-you for an introduction. Reply to every review, the

warm ones and the hard ones, calmly and by name.

## TWO REVIEWS FOR HALM BAKERY

Both are kind. Only one helps the next office decide.

A REVIEW THAT SAYS LITTLE

~~Great bakery, very nice. Five stars.~~

Friendly, but it gives the next customer nothing to go on.

A REVIEW THAT SELLS

We order the Monday Meeting Box for our team of ten. It arrives before 8:30, everything is fresh, and nobody runs to the supermarket anymore. Our Monday meeting starts on time now.

Who bought, what, which problem it solved and what changed. Office manager, design studio nearby.

### CARD 8: REVIEWS AND WORD OF MOUTH

I ask for a review when

---

the moment something went well

My message says

---

short, personal, with a direct link

Passing my name on is easy with

---

a card, a message, a thank-you

I reply to every review within

---

a fixed number of days

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

I ask for a review when an office orders for the third Monday in a row.

My message says "Thank you for three Mondays with us. Would you write two sentences about it? Here is the link."

Passing my name on is easy with a card in every box: "Know an office that deserves a better Monday?"

I reply to every review within two days, every review, by name.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

### AN ACCOUNTANT

Asks right after the first tax return is filed, when the relief is greatest.

### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

A note in each parcel with a link, and a request for a photo of the piece at home.

### A HAIR SALON

Asks at the mirror, when the client sees the finished cut, and sends the link that afternoon.

### A CONSULTANT

Asks for a short recommendation after the first milestone, not at the end of the project.

## BY THE END OF WEEK 10

- ✓ A moment and a message for asking
- ✓ Five honest reviews with real details
- ✓ A simple way for customers to pass your name on
- ✓ Card 8, filled in

9 WEEKS 11 TO 13

# KEEP, FIX, DROP

Day 90 is a checkpoint, not a finish line. Put the results next to the targets, keep what worked, fix what almost worked and stop the rest. Then plan the next ninety days.

### HOW DO YOU REVIEW A MARKETING PLAN AFTER 90 DAYS?

Put the three numbers from week 2 next to the results. For every activity, decide: keep it, fix it or drop it, based on numbers and on what customers said, not on the effort it took. Then choose one new thing to try and set three new numbers for the next ninety days.

The hardest part of a review is stopping things that took effort. An activity that cost many hours and brought few customers is still a result: it shows where the next ninety days are better spent.

## 1 PUT RESULTS NEXT TO TARGETS

Write each result next to its target. Look for the gap, and for the surprise: what worked better than expected often matters more than what fell short.

## 2 SORT EVERY ACTIVITY

Keep what brought customers or clear signals. Fix what almost worked, where one change could make the difference. Drop what took time and showed nothing after a fair try.

## 3 WRITE THE NEXT NINETY DAYS

Carry over what you keep, add one new thing to try and set three new numbers. Then fill in the one-page plan below and put it where you will see it every Friday.

## HALM BAKERY ON DAY 90

Nine offices instead of twelve. The samples worked better than expected; the gap is in what happened after them.

| NUMBER | TARGET | DAY 90 |
|---|---|---|
| Offices ordering every week | 12 | 9 |
| Office orders per month | €2,300 | €1,730 |
| Taste Boxes delivered | 40 | 46 |

### KEEP

The Tuesday and Thursday walks with Taste Boxes

Asking for introductions: two of the nine offices came that way

### FIX

The follow-up: many offices that tasted heard nothing more. Next: a short email two days after every Taste Box

### DROP

Paid social media ads tried in week 8: €400, a few clicks, no orders

The Every Morning option, for now: no office chose it yet

### CARD 9: KEEP, FIX, DROP

I keep

---

what brought customers or clear signals

I fix

---

what almost worked, and the one change

I drop

---

what showed nothing after a fair try

My three new numbers are

---

for the next ninety days

### HALM BAKERY FILLS IT IN

I keep the walks with Taste Boxes, and asking for introductions.

I fix the follow-up: an email two days after every Taste Box.

I drop paid social media ads, and the Every Morning option for now.

My three new numbers are 15 weekly offices, €2,900 a month, 30 Taste Boxes.

## THE SAME STEP IN OTHER BUSINESSES

#### AN ACCOUNTANT

Keep the lawyer introductions, fix the prices on the website, drop the trade fair stand.

#### AN ONLINE CERAMICS SHOP

Keep the design markets, fix the product photos, drop the second social channel.

#### A HAIR SALON

Keep the office offer, fix the booking link on the map listing, drop the flyers.

#### A CONSULTANT

Keep the coffees, fix the client stories, drop the newsletter with few readers.

## BY DAY 90

- ✓ Three results next to three targets
- ✓ Every activity sorted: keep, fix or drop
- ✓ Three new numbers for the next ninety days
- ✓ Card 9 and the one-page plan, filled in

# YOUR ONE-PAGE PLAN

The nine cards on one page. Fill it in as you go, print it, and put it where you will see it every Friday.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1 FIRST CUSTOMER**<br>Who, their problem, when they buy, how to reach them | **2 WHY YOU**<br>The sentence, tested on five people | **3 THREE NUMBERS**<br>Customers, money, one weekly signal |
| **4 NAME, LOOK, VOICE**<br>Name, colors, typefaces, three words | **5 OFFER AND PRICE**<br>Way in, main offer, way up | **6 WHERE TO FIND US**<br>Website, map listing, one channel |
| **7 FIRST TWENTY**<br>Fifty people, the places, the follow-up | **8 REVIEWS**<br>When to ask, the message, passing it on | **9 KEEP, FIX, DROP**<br>And three new numbers |

# QUESTIONS

### HOW MUCH SHOULD A NEW BUSINESS SPEND ON MARKETING IN THE FIRST 90 DAYS?

There is no single right amount. The order matters more than the sum: customer and message first, then the basic kit, then reaching people. The Halm Bakery example works with €3,000, and most of its early results come from time spent with customers, not from money.

### DOES A NEW BUSINESS NEED A LOGO BEFORE IT OPENS?

A simple, clean logo is enough at the start, made after the first customer and the positioning sentence are clear. A small kit used everywhere builds more recognition than an expensive logo used inconsistently.

### SHOULD A NEW BUSINESS USE PAID ADS?

Paid ads work best once you know who buys and which offer sells. In the first ninety days, conversations, samples and introductions are usually faster and cheaper. Test ads later with a small, fixed budget and one clear offer.

### WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNEL IS BEST FOR A SMALL BUSINESS?

The one where your first customer already spends time. For businesses that sell to other businesses, that is often LinkedIn; for local shops and services, often Instagram or neighborhood groups. One channel used every week is enough at the start.

### HOW LONG DOES MARKETING TAKE TO SHOW RESULTS?

Early signals, such as conversations held or quotes requested, can move within weeks. Customers and revenue usually take longer. Ninety days is enough to see which activities work and which to stop.

### DOES THIS GUIDE WORK FOR A BUSINESS THAT IS ALREADY RUNNING?

Yes. Start with chapter 1 as if the business were new. Choosing one customer and one sentence often sharpens a business that has been open for years.

# YOUR NEXT NINETY DAYS

If a second pair of eyes on your plan would help, I offer a free 30-minute call. Bring your cards. We look at them together, and you leave with one clear next step.

calendly.com/hello-javiersugo/30min

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Javier Sugo is a fractional CMO in Vienna, with twenty years of senior marketing in international companies. He works with founders and their teams on strategy, brand and websites.

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