



***Cats,
Mats and
Marketing
Plans***

Roger Edwards

**How to build a simple marketing strategy and
avoid complexity as your business grows**

Cats, Mats and Marketing Plans

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your business grows

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First printing: 2020

ISBN-13: 979-8686909212

British Cataloguing Publication Data:

A catalogue record of this book is available from
The British Library.

Also available for Kindle.

“There is a saying, often misattributed to Einstein, that everything must be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler. Roger has accomplished just that – he has provided a clear roadmap on how to avoid complexity and how to make your marketing strategy simple. Do your business a favour – read this book!”

Vladimir Vulic, Montenegro

Digital transformation strategist. Co-founder of Digitalizuj.me. Programme Director of Spark.me conference. Keynote speaker in twenty countries across four continents.

“From the outset, Roger sets the perfect tone for an unforgettable marketing know-how experience. From helping you figure out what needs to be fixed, through to the importance of keeping things simple to avoid complexity, this book serves it all up in a great bundle of business brilliance!”

Chris Ducker, UK

Founder, Youpreneur.com and author of ‘Virtual Freedom’ and ‘The Rise of the Youpreneur’

“Man alive, the world needs this book! At a time when so much online noise makes it harder than ever to get your message across, we all need to understand true marketing like never before. Roger brings decades of practical experience to bear and a fierce passion to rid the world of jargon and bullshit and has produced a book of superb clarity and practicality. I learned loads and am already applying what I've learned to great effect!”

Pete Matthew, UK

Host of the ‘Meaningful Money’ Podcast and author of ‘The Meaningful Money Handbook’

“Roger cuts through the marketing jargon and mumbo jumbo to bring us a highly practical guide to business marketing for the 2020s. This easy to follow and practical guide for anyone wanting to implement a marketing plan (or ‘strategy’, to use a bigger word than necessary) is both valuable and, delivered in Roger's inimitable style with many amusing anecdotes, a pleasure to read and absorb. If you want your small business to grow, build relationships with your customers and sell more, this is the guidance you need in a painless and entertaining manner.”

Paul McIntyre, UK

Coach, Mentor, Entrepreneurial Guide

“Clarity is in short supply these days, despite being one of the most precious qualities of our media sphere. Roger has it in abundance. Marketing, that mysterious discipline full of buzzwords, myths, misconceptions, and fog, will never look so simple to you. As it should be. Marketing is, after all, deep down, just common sense of understanding who you are marketing to.”

Lazar Dzamic, Serbia

Co-author of ‘The Definitive Guide to Strategic Content Marketing’

“Our amazing digital world gives us so much choice in how we can market our businesses, but that doesn't mean we have to use everything! Roger is the undisputed master at keeping marketing simple, and his fantastic book proves that simple is best. If you want to spend more time on giving your customers an amazing experience and less time stressing over your marketing, this is the best book you'll ever read.”

Philip Calvert, UK

LinkedIn Expert and Keynote Speaker

“Clever people make complex things simple. Fools make simple things complex. And when it comes to marketing, how do you learn to juggle cats and make it look simple? Roger Edwards is one of that very rare group of people who has been there and done it, right up to being CEO of a major FS company. He has worked with some of the best and brightest brains and now mentors, cajoles and influences today's and tomorrow's leaders too. It's a great track record but he's had his failures as well and he learns from failure every single time. If we're smart, we'll learn from his experiences and analysis, avoid the many pitfalls and – whisper it – start to enjoy the journey as well as the destination. Good heavens, this book even has cartoon zombies!”

Andy Couchman, UK

Bankhouse Communications

“Just like watching Roger on stage! He manages to perfectly transfer his stage energy into a book. Great read. Easy, simple and yet extremely useful and insightful. If you've watched Roger on stage, you'd enjoy this book. If you haven't already seen him on stage, you'd want to do that as soon as possible.”

Darko Buldioski, North Macedonia

Newmedia.mk and host of AllWeb Macedonia Conference

“I run a small business and marketing has always felt to me like black magic. There seems to be a select few who ‘know’ and then there’s the rest who must pay a fortune to get a slice of the knowledge. Not with this book though! Roger really digs deep into his personal (marketing) journey and after you’ve read the book, a lot of things become much clearer. I really like his down to earth approach and his denouncing of pointless corporate speak. Follow the steps outlined in his book and you will be much closer to understanding what to do in your business to achieve a much clearer marketing plan going forward.”

Nadin Thomson, UK

Lead at Business Image

“Following a wobble in the clouds above the Alps, Roger was inspired to dispel the myth of marketing as a black art. He has reflected on what drives us to hit ‘unsubscribe’ more frequently these days, what we loved in the 80s about simple, easy to watch TV ads that we still remember with fondness today and how writing like we talk removes complexity. A thoroughly enjoyable and insightful read for everyone – not just budding marketers.”

Vicky Churcher, UK

Intermediary Director, AIG Life.

“In this enthralling book, Roger Edwards has created not only a ‘No BS’ guide to marketing but also a value-packed handbook for anyone who wants to become (or is) a marketing pro. It’s packed full of useful examples and tips as well as making excellent use of Roger’s hallmark: brilliant storytelling. You will laugh out loud, cringe, gasp – maybe even need a stiff drink at times. But most of all, you will be educated and entertained by the bucket load. The perfect mix from this marketing maestro!”

Eleanor Goold, Hungary

Founder, Kreativ Copywriting

“Roger seriously gets it when it comes to marketing. Read this book to tap into his vast experience and transform your results. Roger’s war against marketing complexity is a noble cause; your business and your customers will thank you for heeding his call to arms and joining the battle.”

Martin Bamford, UK

CEO of Bamford Media

“Cats, Mats and Marketing Plans explains the core principles of marketing in a way that is accessible to those who just don’t need the hyperbole and waffle of many books on marketing theory out there. Let’s face it, there are plenty of people marketing businesses and products who don’t have a degree and yet are at the coal face of delivering strategies to businesses. Edwards demonstrates the solid reasoning of keeping it simple, yet ensures marketers understand the importance of expanding the reader’s knowledge from just delivering comms messaging. Intertwined with personal stories of campaigns delivered and arguments had, this is an easy read and a more direct route to marketing success.”

Paul Ince, UK

Founder of MarketedLive

“This book by Roger Edwards fills a desperately needed gap in many unsuccessful online business person's skill sets, that of considering the areas of marketing that aren't the new sexy trends like live video or influencer marketing – the good old-fashioned idea of actually having some kind of consistent overall strategy in place. It also drives home the need for marketing to be part of the whole process of a business, all the way from initial product creation to delivery of the product to the customer. An essential resource for any serious small business owners in the new internet economy.”

Tim Lewis, UK

Stoneham Press

For my wonderful wife, Trisha; our son Andrew, who has made us both so proud; and our cats: Lotty, who sits on our mat, and Jek and Sid, who now sit on stars and watch over us all.

Foreword

I've had the pleasure of knowing Roger as a client, friend and work colleague for many years. We've worked together on many projects and shared stages at conferences around the world. I know how passionately he feels about marketing.

This book is a distillation of a career in marketing and a visceral reaction to the gobbledegook that so alienated him as he made his way through the conventional channels that tried to introduce him to the subject.

The first time I met Roger he was addressing his company field force at an internal company briefing. I remember thinking, even before we had spoken, that he was someone who tailored his message perfectly to his audience – a great and very necessary quality and one that he exhibits continually throughout this book.

I've discussed a lot of this stuff with Roger whilst enjoying a beer or two over the years and have experienced similar frustrations for similar reasons. The structure and process of business life, along with the strangleholds that the big consultancies have on our thinking, prevents us from doing what he has done, which is to challenge and adapt his own ideas. He's never let his focus on the customer and simplicity be worn down by corporate institutions that thrive on complexity.

What emerges from this experience is a very readable, deeply practical book with a strong emphasis on understanding and valuing customers in a way that so many companies in the financial services industry, where Roger and I have spent our working lives, are so often unable to do.

The construction of an 'Offer–Goal–Activity' model is logically and entertainingly explained, and Roger is not afraid to debunk conventional wisdom based on his personal exposure to some very practical challenges during his time in corporate life.

I really enjoyed the book and found it extremely easy to get into. It's very readable throughout but didn't develop in the way I expected. I

had thought it was going to be the sort of book I used to buy at the airport to read on a flight to Dublin or Zurich.

But it's more heavyweight than that – justifiably and entertainingly heavyweight. Every section is well-crafted and argued but it is not a long read by marketing textbook standards. I like the practical diversions into Roger's own experience that make it real and explain why he thinks what he thinks.

So, despite his strong emphasis on simplicity, this is also a book with depth and robust argument. And it is also fun. Someone wanting to understand marketing, really understand it, could not do better than spend an afternoon delving into this very enjoyable and educational read.

Peter LeBeau, MBE

MD of LeBeau Visage and Co-chair of Protection Review

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Introduction, and who this book is for

What if the audience thinks my messages are too simple?

This thought came rushing into my mind as I sat on an aeroplane, 35,000 feet above the Alps. Beyond the oval window I could see clear blue sky, snow-tipped mountains and lakes glistening in the sunlight. Sipping my free orange juice, I tried to clear this question from my thoughts and get back to running through the speech I would give in a couple of days' time.

If everything goes to plan, I'll run onto the stage to techno dance music: a pounding beat, the swirling melody of a synth. With my right foot forward, I'll punch the air with my right hand – a good hard jab to an imaginary opponent's jaw – followed by a left cross and another knockout right jab. Switching to left foot forward, I'll attack again with a left jab, right cross and left hook.

Then, with a pre-agreed signal to the audio-visual guys, the music will cut out and I'll start my speech.

Complexity. Bureaucracy. Bloat. Management-speak mumbo jumbo. And just plain idiocy.

These are the enemies of effective customer-focused marketing. Whether your company is small, growing or a big corporate, these enemies can creep up on you. Infiltrate you.

Today we're going to fight back against complexity.

Are you up for a fight?

If the audience reply to my question and I sense they're game, I'll try to get an even louder response.

I said, "Are you up for a FIGHT?"

Hopefully 200 people will shout back, "YES!"

I smiled at this image and for a moment I feel elated. But then the nagging little voice of doubt raises itself again.

What if the audience thinks my messages are too simple?

If only Montenegro Airlines gave out wine or beer as well as free soft drinks. I felt like I needed something a little stronger.

I was on my way to a marketing conference in Podgorica to give a speech called *Fighting Complexity in Marketing*. The organisers invited me because they had seen a video of my performance at CMA Live, an earlier conference in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh went well. At that point it was perhaps the most important speech of my entire 25-year marketing career, containing so many ideas and stories about keeping marketing simple, which I'd collected and filed away in my anecdote drawer while working in companies small, medium and large. The Edinburgh audience lapped up my material, responded loudly to my questions and took part in my examples.

They loved my *cat sat on the mat* story, which has since become my signature presentation segment (and which gave me the inspiration for this book and its title).

So, I should have been feeling confident, motivated and ready to rock the Montenegro stage. Instead, I felt a sinking feeling and a rush of nerves.

Pushing a trolley between them, the cabin crew made another pass up the aisle. I asked for a black coffee instead of another orange juice. As the attendant handed me the hot paper cup, the self-doubt began again.

What the hell are you doing? In two days, you're going to be on a

stage in front of an audience of 200 people for whom English is not their first language. And they're marketing directors of big companies, or marketing agency people. Can you really teach them anything? Will they be remotely interested in keeping things simple?

I wondered what the odds were the plane would develop a technical fault and we'd divert to Austria.

What was wrong with me? What was the problem? Why was I suffering from imposter syndrome right now?

The Edinburgh audience were also marketing directors of big companies or marketing agency people. And lots of small business owners and entrepreneurs, too. They enjoyed my talk and took copious notes. They tweeted out positive comments. One delegate even made fancy drawings on artwork paper to go with her notes (they're called sketchnotes, I believe). She later sent me Polaroids of them, along with a thank you.

I had sturdy material. Perhaps the language barrier was generating my anxiety? Or the fact I wouldn't know anyone in either the audience or the conference team? In Edinburgh I knew the conference organisers and quite a few people in the audience, too. They were friendly, reassuring and supportive faces.

The reality was that I was experiencing classic imposter syndrome: the inability to acknowledge my own accomplishments and an ongoing fear of someone exposing me as a fraud. I was doubting my own abilities despite a strong track record.

Giving myself a virtual kick up the backside and drinking down a slug of hot, strong, black airline coffee, I dragged my thoughts back to running through the speech.

The captain announced 15 minutes to landing. Time to focus.

The stunning views on the approach into Podgorica side-tracked my thoughts again. After flying over Dubrovnik in Croatia, we descended over mountains into Montenegro. Podgorica nestles in a flat area of land surrounded by mountains. The plane flew over the city and swept around Skadar Lake to the south to line up for final approach.

Despite my worries, everything turned out fine.

Andrijana, a member of the conference organiser's team, met me at the airport, and over the next few days she and the team made me feel so welcome. She took me to the hotel, checked me in, and later collected me and the other speakers for dinner and wine tasting with the team in a restaurant on the shores of Skadar Lake.

By the time I took to the stage to the sounds of the pounding techno music two days later, I felt I knew the conference team well, and I'd already had many great conversations with the other guests.

The audience loved the speech.

I'd adapted it, of course, to compensate for the language difference. In the version of the talk I gave in Edinburgh and other UK cities earlier in the year, I'd used the word *muppetry* in the opening instead of *idiocy*. *Muppetry* is one of my favourite made-up words; it encapsulates the bureaucracy and stupidity some companies show in their marketing. But the audience in Montenegro wouldn't know what *muppetry* meant in the context of big companies doing stupid things.

But other than a few similar minor changes, it was the same *Fighting Complexity in Marketing* speech I'd done in Edinburgh and many times since.

And guess what?

They applauded the simple messages. They loved the *cat sat on the mat* segment. They wanted to talk afterwards about how simple marketing could be and, perhaps more importantly, how simple marketing strategy could be.

My fear that the audience would think my messages were too simple was unfounded. They positively embraced the simplicity – they were crying out for it. Afterwards, I was somewhat embarrassed but humbled that some of the guests wanted to take selfies with me.

That's when I realised I had to write this book.

Because companies the world over make marketing, especially the strategy part, far too complicated. Marketing is vital for business success and yet people starting businesses and trying to get to grips with it find it overwhelming.

If you haven't done a course at college or a degree at university, or worked in a marketing department, trying to learn the basics can be bewildering. There's so much on the internet about marketing that it's difficult to know where to start.

You'll find hundreds of thousands of articles, online courses, e-books and books (the irony of me adding another one to the list isn't lost on me!). There are degrees and MBAs, and we've created a whole language, jargon and mythology reinforced by all these authors, academics and practitioners.

You'll hear talk of SWOT analysis. PEST analysis. Boston Grids. Ansoff's matrices. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. You'll find models such as the STP (Segment – Target – Position). You'll learn about the 4Ps of marketing. Or is it the 7Ps of marketing? Or even the 11Ps of marketing! It can be all of them.

Some talk about strategy when they mean tactics. Others talk about marketing purely as a discipline of communication. And as a result, many people see marketing as synonymous with advertising and promotion. It isn't simple and it isn't engaging. It's just about communications, or more likely spam email and intrusive bombardment of annoying messages.

My aim with this book is to make marketing simple. And, most importantly, to make marketing strategy simple.

Marketing is so much more than advertising and promotion. We must think about the customer – what they need and how our products and services can help them – before we ever put pen to paper, or type words on a screen, or press send on an email, or sign off an advertising campaign.

You *must* have a strategy.

But strategy is a word people associate with complexity and painful, long awaydays locked in meeting rooms with piles of Post-it notes and marker pens.

Young people shy away from strategy because the way some companies do it sucks the energy and creativity out of them. The veterans resign themselves to it because they lack the will to fight

against the way some companies do it: strategy sucked the energy and creativity out of them long ago.

In this book I'll show you how to put together a simple marketing strategy. We're aiming for simple. And we're aiming for engaging.

Who is this book for?

This book is for people running small businesses. People wanting to start small businesses. People who don't know much about marketing. Maybe people who think it's a black art. Or complicated, expensive and full of snake oil salesmen.

I want everyone to understand what marketing is. The full process, not just the bit we call communications. Or digital marketing, or social media marketing.

My aim is to teach you about marketing without getting complicated or using jargon, management-speak mumbo jumbo and gobbledegook. To avoid the word strategy as much as possible but still allow you to put one together using a simple method.

Maybe after reading this book, you'd like to explore a bit more of the traditional discipline and, dare I say, the more academic stuff.

While I'd love everyone to read it, this book isn't going to do much for people with marketing degrees, marketing MBAs or people high up in big corporate marketing roles. You're likely to find it too simplistic – basic, even. And you'll probably disagree with many of the things I say. But if you do read it then I'd love your feedback. My heart's in the right place, after all, and I'd be delighted if I made you question any complexity in your environment.

After the little wobble in the clouds above the Alps, the Montenegro conference made me confident people won't think my messages are too simple. I then knew I wanted to get something out there and help others find the simplicity they crave.

Can I really teach them anything? *Yes.*

Will they be remotely interested in keeping things simple? *Damn right!*

The book you're holding is the result.



How do we keep marketing simple in a complex world? How can we make an offer that stands out? How do we craft our communications to engage, not enrage our customers?

With the tools available in the digital world, marketing is more accessible than ever, no matter what your budget. But there's more to marketing than email, adverts, and social media.

And if you don't have a background in marketing, knowing where to start can be tricky. Academic institutions and big corporates can make it appear complex and bewildering.

This book is your guide to keeping your marketing simple. Using the easy "Offer Goal Activity" model you'll be able to build a simple marketing plan. The stories and tips will help you avoid complexity creeping in as your business soars to success.

"Man alive, the world needs this book! Roger brings decades of practical experience to bear and a fierce passion to rid the world of jargon and bullshit and has produced a book of superb clarity and practicality."

Pete Matthew - Host of the 'Meaningful Money' Podcast and author of 'The Meaningful Money Handbook'



Roger Edwards



Roger Edwards is a marketing consultant and international speaker on a career-long mission to fight back against bloat. He helps businesses keep their marketing simple in a world where business bullshit and complexity threatens to stifle success.