



Employing tactics without a strategy is like hiking into the wilderness without a map, provisions or a plan. Yet many novice and veteran business owners take this cart-before-the-horse approach when marketing their product or services, often with underwhelming results.

As a marketing consultant for the nonprofit economic development organization WESST, Mark Gilboard helps entrepreneurs reach and attract customers by first identifying why their business exists in the first place.

In May, the veteran marketing and advertising research professional leads a three-part workshop to help small-business owners develop a strategic foundation for their marketing message. "All three of the classes are about having a strategy before you employ tactics," Gilboard told Finance New Mexico. "It's about honing your mission statement and letting your brand and mission statement drive your marketing decisions."

The first session, "Intro to Marketing," reviews marketing concepts, strategies and activities for small businesses. "The first activity that we do is something I call 'just write,'" Gilboard said. "I ask participants to write anywhere from three sentences to three pages, and they can write a poem or a song, and we turn that into marketing; it's making marketing from what you already know and do."

In the next session, "Building a Brand," participants consider different marketing plans and promotional mixes to lay the groundwork for creating a distinctive brand and effective mission statement. "Why do you do what you do? Why is this your business enterprise? Why do you make what you make?" Gilboard said. "It's much more compelling for a small business to have a story that has a why. When you establish those brand pillars, they become the guiding force

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of your marketing.”

The final session, “Marketing in Action,” focuses on developing a succinct pitch for the business’s product or service and deciding where to broadcast that message to reach the target customer. If a business prides itself on inclusivity, for example, advertising on a divisive cable news network might not be the best marketing choice, he said. “You will learn how to make marketing decisions based on what your brand stands for.”

Those decisions include what logos and images complement the brand, Gilboard said. Many startups jump straight to the graphic assets: “They’ve already got their font and their colors picked out, but they don’t even really know enough about their business and their marketplace and their competition and their customers to make those decisions.

“Your font or your logo represents your brand. If your business is built around baby clothes and fuzzy warm things and your logo has lots of harsh lines and jagged edges, that doesn’t make sense. Or say your product is ‘Hop quick’; writing a ‘p’ next to a ‘q’ just looks funny.”

The Marketing Essentials course isn’t just for startups, Gilboard explained. It can also help existing businesses sharpen their marketing theory into a cohesive strategy.

Sessions run from noon to 2 p.m. Thursdays beginning May 17 and ending May 31 at the WESST Enterprise Center, 609 Broadway Blvd NE, Albuquerque. The cost is \$75.

To register online, visit [www.wesst.org](http://www.wesst.org) , or call Lorena Schott at (505) 246-6939.

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