100 Ways to Market Your Cake Business

by Michelle Green

thebizofbaking.com
michelle@thebizofbaking.com

Facebook: /bizbake

Instagram: /businessofbaking

Pinterest: /businessofbaking

Twitter: @bizbake
Marketing is one of those business terms which seems to strike fear in the hearts of cake makers everywhere. Since many of us started with cake skills – but few or no business skills – we have a fear around doing “business-ey” type things like marketing. Many of us would prefer to hide behind a cake than be out there telling the world about it. As many of us are women, we also just find this notion of being “out there” or “selling” as kinda yucky.

I'll be honest with you, for many of us shouting about yourself from the rooftops isn't all that easy to do and it's just not in our nature to do so. What we need to remember is that the fancy word “marketing” just refers to letting the (right) people know what we do.

Marketing does not require a megaphone or being pushy or ‘sales-ey’ – it's about finding different ways to get our message across in an effective way.

Marketing isn't something that can be done once a year and that's it – it's got to be a consistent effort otherwise it just won't work. Especially today, when we live in a very noisy world and have to work hard to capture people's attention, consistent marketing is more important than ever.

It's about the smaller, frequent things which will pay off in the longer term rather than the big massive woo-hoo events that you can only afford to do once a year. In other words, it's less about the megaphone and more about the telephone.

You're probably already doing a bunch of marketing already, you just wouldn't call it by that name. You'd call it 'writing a status update" or “uploading a photo” or “giving out a business card." There are plenty of other ways to market our businesses, and if you've ever complained about not having enough orders, this list is for you! Similarly, if some of the marketing tactics you've been using have diminished in effectiveness and you need to breathe a bit of fresh air into your marketing, this list will help.
Here are 100 ways that you can market your cake or baking business. Some cost no money at all, some cost some money, and some are for when you have an actual marketing budget to hand. You might not want or need all of these ideas right now, but store this e-book somewhere safe so you can come back to it when you're ready.

1. Give away a branded freebie with every order (candles are a great choice but you can also do cake servers, napkins, postcards...) Branded = has your name, logo, etc on it
2. Teach a short class or do a short demo at a local school (if you make kids' cakes.)
3. Go to your local library or bookshop and put your business card in relevant books (decorating, baking, throwing parties etc)
4. Hold a contest either live or on social media (an interactive contest is always more fun.)
6. Create a crazy, out of the box product - “World's most expensive cake pop” “Million dollar macaron” “Human sized cake pop”
7. Wear your business wherever you can– wear branded t-shirts or a hat for when you do deliveries, wear aprons with your logo on it in your videos.
8. Get branded stickers or magnets made for your car so it becomes a travelling billboard
9. Print an offer or deal on the back of your business card to entice people to hang onto it
10. Send out a monthly newsletter
11. Reach out to other people in your industry to set up joint ventures (photographers, event stylists, candy buffet companies, party venues)
12. Write an e-book - “10 Tips to a Stress Free Wedding” or “How to Throw a Party Your Friends Will Love”
13. Start a blog for your business
14. Go to networking events in your area for business owners (not just cake makers)
15. Start a loyalty program – for every 5 orders, they get X% off or something else to give them an incentive to come back.
16. Ask for testimonials and publish them publicly

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015 thebizofbaking.com
17. Use an external review website to collect those reviews and testimonials

18. Do a podcast with other people in your industry

19. Comment on relevant blogs (ones which your ideal customer is likely to read)

20. Create a photo-a-day challenge on Instagram (or follow one)

21. Sponsor a local sporting team, Scout troop, or school fund-raising event

22. Develop an ordering app for smartphones

23. In front of your store, have a sign with a joke, inspirational quote or riddle for people to follow. Change it daily or weekly.

24. In front of your store have a visual display to capture attention from further away - a flag, banner, bunch of brightly coloured balloons, or one of those air dancers

25. Have an in-store event – a Christmas pop up shop, a Valentine's Day "last minute gifts" area

26. Host kids parties, bachelorette nights or team building events.

27. Offer gift certificates.

28. Put your business cards on community notice boards

29. Create an event which showcases local producers – perhaps invite other people to have pop ups inside your store

30. Contribute articles to relevant blogs or magazines

31. Send a hand written thank you note to a client you especially enjoyed working with

32. At the end of the year, send Christmas cards and/or a small deal or treat to your most loyal clients

33. Find a social media platform which works well for you, and spend 2-3 months really working hard to grow that one platform

34. Frequent and write reviews for other local businesses. What goes around, comes around.

35. Go crazy with holiday decor at every opportunity to create some local buzz around your store

36. Send some cupcakes to a local radio station to thank them for making your morning a bit brighter

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015
thebizofbaking.com
37. On cold days, offer free coffee/tea or on hot days, a free cold drink or popsicle to people who pop into the store
38. Get into your local newspaper – either via an ad, or write a press release when you have an event coming up
39. Letter drop the local area (yes, this still works!)
40. Create a colourful flyer to pop into the box or bag with every purchase
41. Give freebies away at the events you go to – branded items like pens etc still work because people love to get free stuff.
42. Advertise on relevant blogs or give bloggers a product to review or write a sponsored post about
43. Collaborate with other creative industries to create a brand new product you both can market and sell.
44. Use an email signature which invites people to interact with you in other ways (social media, your newsletter, your blog)
45. Offer a special deal or discount for a very limited time
46. Add interaction to your website, so people can comment on a pic, or share a post via social media.
47. Add a personal “about me” page to your website, and make it relatable to your target market. Make it really about you and your brand as a whole rather than just “I've loved cake since I was 8 years old.” There is more to you and your company than just cake!
48. Give really excellent customer service, always
49. Offer a guarantee – for example. “If you don't love it, we'll give you a 100% refund.” - this one is a little risky, but you'll find simply having a guarantee like that available does a lot to build trust with potential clients.
50. Enter awards and competitions – not just for cake makers but for business owners
51. Make your voice mail message welcoming, engaging, and informative.
52. Get a QR code and put it on all of your printed marketing materials as well as on the front door of your shop.
53. Create videos – either behind the scenes of your business or informative, educational ones. You only really need a smartphone and a YouTube account
54. Have a business “mascot” and create a story around the mascot – here she is making cupcakes with us, etc. People love to follow a
good story and a mascot is a great way to engage people in a more fun way, “Oh, I should go see what Miffy is up to these days!”

55. Offer a package deal – the cake AND a smash cake, or a wedding cake plus a first anniversary tier, and so on.

56. Follow through on leads. All those business cards you picked up at that wedding fair- call, email, or interact with those people on social media. You’ve got to keep the contact going in order to create the relationship

57. Speak up. At some point the opportunity will naturally come up for you to tell people what you make or do. Put on your big girl pants and sing it, sister!

58. Create a survey (you can do this for free via sites like Survey Monkey). Ask your clients and potential clients how you're doing and what else they might like to see from you.

59. Sponsor a local event like a theatre group, charity event or local dance school performance.

60. If you work from home, plan to have a public pop-up store for the major holidays. Short term rentals are not that hard to find, or you can have 'carts' in malls, etc.

61. Hire a local urban artist (or your kids!) to create a pavement chalk artwork outside your front door or on the external walls of your premises

62. Get some temporary tattoos made with your logo. Give them away to kids who come into your store or at kid-friendly events.

63. Know anyone famous local to you? Get them to agree to a picture with your product or write you a review

64. Barter products or services with other industries – swap a cake for some website design, some cupcakes for graphic design services

65. Rent out your equipment such as cake stands or platforms

66. Product placement – as a local wedding dress company if you can place a dummy cake in their shop which reflects the design of a new dress they have

67. Create a tutorial from a cake or figurine you're already making for an order

68. Do a time lapse video of a cake or figurine being made

69. Hire some local kids or university students to create a flash mob for your business

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015 thebizofbaking.com
70. Post-It notes printed with something funny and your business information. Keep a few pads of these in your handbag and stick them in the pages of magazines at doctor waiting room, on noticeboards, on the back of bathroom stall doors, or anywhere your target market might be hanging out

71. Pay it forward – pay for the coffee or food order of the person behind you in line and ask the cashier to give them your business card.

72. Fish bowl business card contest – do a monthly draw, then add those details to your email database

73. Have a client appreciation event – hold a BBQ, an ice cream sundae bar, or a decorate-your-own-cupcake party to thank your customers for being loyal

74. Have a business Pinterest account and include a board or two just of 'fun stuff' rather than directly business stuff so you are engaging with people on more than one level

75. Talk about your existing marketing or publicity. If you were featured in a magazine or blog, let people know about it. Print out and frame your article with “As seen in XYZ Magazine.”

76. Pin up your thank you cards and notes somewhere visible – have a “happiness wall” of happy customer pictures with their products

77. Send samples of your product to people and places you want to connect with, then follow up afterwards

78. Attend trade shows and events and give out business cards, talk to people, and go with the mindset of as a business owner rather than just a consumer.

79. Give a few of your business cards to family and friends and ask them to pop one on their workplace notice board, or just hang onto them in case people start to talk about events that might need cake or sweets. (I got lots of business from my husband's work colleagues that way!)

80. Start a small business support group that meets once a month for lunch

81. Pay for advertising – this doesn't need to be expensive! A local school newsletter, parenting magazine, social media ads. Sometimes, you've just got to invest a bit of cash.

82. Invest in your website and treat it like a shop front – and change the photos often as your skills improve and you get more clear about the kind of work you want to be doing

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015
thebizofbaking.com
83. Use automated mass text messaging to promote your weekly special – notify customers via text about the special of the week

84. Answer general cake questions on Facebook or Google+, make yourself known as an expert

85. Interview other people in your industry

86. Brainstorm with others in small business – perhaps they've got an idea they tried which worked well and can be adapted to your business

87. Listen to your customers to figure out trends. If you get asked the same questions every week, or if people keep asking if you make a certain flavour and theme, that probably means it's hot right now and you might want to get involved early on.

88. Be socially responsible and get involved with local clean up campaigns, blood donation drives, environmental initiatives.

89. Offer live chat or live customer support on your website – I've also seen the option to leave a voice mail on a website

90. Be charitable – support a local charity or have a certain percentage of each sale go towards that cause.

91. Get your employees to help you come up with marketing ideas, often because they are not running the business they have some great ideas

92. Host a guest teacher

93. Give a talk about your career at a local high school careers day

94. Get bumper stickers made with relevant funny sayings. These are great to use on your own vehicles or give to customers – include your website address

95. Volunteer your skills and products to your community just because it's a wonderful thing to do – for example become an Icing Smiles baker

96. Join local cake clubs (ICES etc) and become a part of the community off-line

97. Chat to your hairdresser about what you do – she or he speaks to other people all day about what they do and what's happening in their lives and those things include weddings, parties and special events.

98. Attach your business cards to balloons and then give those out at family-friendly events or to every child who comes into your store

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015
thebizofbaking.com
99. Attempt to break a world record having to do with your product – most number of cake pops eaten in one sitting, tallest cake every made etc

100. See marketing as an everyday exercise, not as something you do when you get around to it. Almost every activity you do in your business is marketable. Next time you write a blog post, share it (that's marketing!). Next time you take a photo of a cake you made, share it (that's also marketing!). Marketing is not a big scary beast, it's just what you do because there are people out there who need and want your skills and expertise. Every time you're telling them about it, you're making their lives better. Don't hide your talent – doesn't the world need more reasons to smile? I've yet to meet anyone who doesn't love the world of sweet art – it's our job to share that world with them.

I'd love to hear if you've done any of these suggestions.
Feel free to send me an email and get in touch – tell me how you're doing or if you've come up with some ideas of your own!

For more about how to run a cake business, take a look at my recent Craftsy Class: How to Start A Cake Business.

For more info on pricing your creations, please look at my class, Confident Pricing.

Happy Marketing!

Michelle

thebizofbaking.com
michelle@thebizofbaking.com
Facebook: /bizbake
Instagram: /businessofbaking
Pinterest: /businessofbaking
Twitter: @bizbake

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015 thebizofbaking.com
About Michelle and the Business Of Baking

Michelle Green is the sole author of the Business of Baking blog. She owned a kick ass cake company for over ten years before deciding to sell it so she could write a blog full time and mentor other business owners. She has qualifications as a chef and pastry chef as well as degrees in other things she no longer finds use for. She works as a consultant to a number of small hospitality businesses and as a writer for the food/business industry. She has been featured or written for a number of publications and websites including Family Circle, candyaddict.com, Cake magazine, Sweet magazine, The Baking Sheet blog, allrecipes.com.au and Cakes Decore website.

If you would like permission to reprint this publication or any of the posts found on Business of Baking or would like Michelle to write for your publication or give a talk to your audience, please feel free to get in touch

In 2016 Michelle and her colleague Sharon Wee will be teaching business classes in Australia, Europe and the United States. For more info on these classes, please visit: bizbakeontour.com

Get in touch:

Via email: michelle@thebizofbaking.com
Instagram: @businessofbaking
Facebook: /bizbake
Pinterest: /businessofbaking
Twitter: #bizbake

The official hashtag: #TuesdaysWithBob

The Business of Baking on Tour information can be found here: www.bizbakeontour.com

Copyright Michelle Green and The Business of Baking 2014, revised 2015 thebizofbaking.com