

The
R.A.V.E.
Toolkit

*Super-simple marketing systems
to get your business noticed*

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Introduction

RAVE stands for:

Reputation
Authority
Visibility
Expertise

Every small business owner, entrepreneur, independent consultant and speaker who pays attention to these four elements will see the results in their bank account. In other words, taking action on these four key aspects of your business will improve the quantity – and quality – of the business that comes to you.

Let's look at them in more detail:

Reputation – your reputation is, effectively, based on what other people say about you. Can you control that? No. But you can influence it.

Authority – we all have our areas of specialism. If you can establish yourself as the 'go-to' person in your industry, you'll stand out from your competitors.

Visibility – this may appear to be obvious, but it also takes effort and often the activities that contribute to your visibility are the first to fall off your to do list when you get busy.

Expertise – nobody knows how good you are unless they see evidence. Does that mean that only former customers can vouch for you? Certainly not! You can demonstrate your expertise by sharing your knowledge and people will soon see how good you are.

These themes are all related to marketing. In today's world they are mostly related to online marketing and that includes everything from your website, your social media activity, email newsletters and marketing campaigns, lead funnels, PR and much more.

If you're just getting started in business it can all seem a bit overwhelming, but ignore your marketing at your peril. Growing your business without marketing is an uphill struggle; if you have a sound marketing plan and ensure you keep up with it, long-term you'll reap the benefits as business flows to you almost effortlessly.

Many people find marketing a bit 'woolly' and I'm often asked "How will I know if it's working?" Measuring specific results is not always easy, but my answer is "Stop doing any marketing and see where you are in three months' time." That may be somewhat cynical, but it's very true.

Of course you can measure your marketing activity, but the secret is to know exactly what to measure. Chasing likes and comments on social media isn't a direct measurement, especially as many people who read your posts don't stop to like or comment – but that doesn't mean they aren't influenced by your content.

If you've done your homework (and we'll be discussing that in Chapter 1) you should be able to create highly targeted content and put it right where your ideal customer will see it. That's the start of your influence campaign.

Why did I write this book?

Because I found most of my clients hadn't done that homework and thought that they could just ask me to write copy to promote their products or services and magic would happen.

It wasn't laziness, it was simply that they were so involved with their business that they hadn't stepped outside of it to see how others perceived them. And they certainly hadn't taken any steps to actively influence both the people who already knew them or, more importantly, the people who had yet to hear about them.

Before I'd been in the copywriting business for long I discovered that, in order to write good copy for my clients, I needed to know not just about them and their company, but also about their customers and what they were looking for.

That was the first step and the second one was to create messages targeted to those people and their problems. Fortunately, social media had begun to emerge, along with blogs and email marketing platforms.

I guess I was an early adopter of all these tools and I have two advantages, I'm lazy and I love a good system!

I don't mind admitting I'm lazy, I don't want to spend my time doing anything that I don't have to do. They say if you want to find the most efficient way to do something ask a lazy person. The theory is that they'll find the most efficient way to do it as they don't want to spend any more time than necessary on any given task. I don't see that as bad, just sensible.

While I'm not a big fan of numbers (I can add up the same column of figures three times – even with a calculator – and get three different answers) I love a good spreadsheet. Spreadsheets offer a way to organise my thoughts and create a replicable process that anyone can use. It probably won't be much of a surprise to discover that I planned this book on a spreadsheet!

Back in the mid-2000s I learned about the importance of marketing lists, the influence of a good blog article and discovered a tool that allowed me to post to about thirty social media platforms. I did a lot of learning and spent a lot of time and money – some of it without getting the results I was hoping for. However, I was doing better than most of my business networking contacts.

Before long I was getting requests to show people how I did what I was doing. After promising to spend a couple of hours showing one person what I was doing, and then another and another, I realised that running a course was the answer to deliver the information to a group of people all at once. As I have been a management trainer in a former career, training wasn't at all daunting to me, so I put together my first course.

From hiring a room and delivering information to groups of about a dozen people, I went digital, first with teleseminars and then with video webinars. And this was back in 2010.

From this it was soon apparent that many people liked the idea of this kind of marketing, but found it a massive struggle to do themselves and the copywriting business transformed into a broader content marketing service.

It's all about delivering value. It's based on the concept of 'how can I help you?'. If you keep delivering valuable information, you're influencing people and they want more of that. As your reputation for delivering value grows, the more people will be willing to pay for your kind of expertise.

And, we're back to where we started!

This book aims to give you the guidelines to put together a straightforward content marketing plan and deliver it consistently, without spending half your life doing it.

It's not necessary to do everything in every chapter – except for the first two chapters, which will be the foundation for everything else. Treat the book as a reference guide with advice on each area of marketing. Take a look at everything and then choose the marketing tools that will work best for you, and ones that you feel you can manage without busting a gut.

Creating systems that become habits is the key to success. Anything that is difficult is likely to get dumped/ forgotten/ pushed to the bottom of your to do list and won't help your business to grow. You'll find useful charts at the end of each chapter to get yourself organised and save you reinventing the wheel!

If you decide that a particular strategy would really help your business, but you really don't want to do it yourself, then get one of your team trained and delegate it, outsource it or face reality and accept that it's not going to happen!

Are you ready to get started?

Read on ...

1: Your brand

In another career I delivered a range of management training and, one day, I was asked to come into a large international organisation and deliver some training to their secretarial staff. This included business letter writing, phone strategies and more.

The delegates were secretaries from across the organisation and most didn't know each other as they worked in different divisions. When we arrived at the letter writing section I asked them how they laid out their letters – and got almost as many variations as there were people in the room.

Some put the date at the top, others put it under the addressee, some put it on the right opposite either the first or last line of the address. This was only one of the differences.

I asked if they had a set of templates. The answers were either 'No' or 'I've never seen anything like that.'

I did a bit of research and it turned out that there was a set of templates for almost every document in the organisation – but they were in a folder on a dusty shelf and most of the administrative staff had never been shown them, or had even known they existed.

This opened a nest of worms as everyone had their own way of answering the phone too. Nobody had ever given them a format to use. We had everything from "Hello," to "Good morning, this is Nesta from Accounts Receivable, how can I help you?"

This may sound unnecessarily pedantic on my part, but every time someone connects with an organisation their experience moulds their opinion of the organisation. If their communications with different departments are inconsistent, there is an unspoken message that the organisation can't get its act together!

As a branding expert friend once commented "It doesn't matter how slick your logo is, if the rest of the organisational assets aren't up to scratch, it's like putting lipstick on a gorilla."

When you're starting a new business every expense is a drain on your nest egg, but establishing your brand from the start is important.

You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

Will Rogers

What is a brand?

Your brand is more than just a logo, it includes your overall ethos and values. Having thought about how you want your company to be perceived will help to ensure that all written content created for your company is congruent with these.

What you want people to think when they hear or see your company name? Your brand needs to be congruent.

How not to do it

A company who were building a network of high-net worth individuals made two critical mistakes:

Firstly, they chose a bright red for their logo. Think Sales posters, the 'redtops' (the slightly derogatory term sometimes applied to tabloid newspapers). This didn't shout 'quality'. This was coupled with a sans-serif font in a blocky style.

Secondly, their website style was full of cartoon people and primary colours, more suited to services or products aimed at kids or the family market.

What would I advise? If they were fixed on red, take it into a darker red spectrum with rich undertones – more like a royal red. Choose a modern serif font that looks elegant and stylish. Redesign the

website in a lower-key with subtle references to luxury, exclusiveness and wealth.

How do you want to be seen? What qualities do you want your company to be known for? What will achieve that perception?

Your brand is embodied in everything your company does. It's not just the logo and company fonts, but also how people dress – whether that's a uniform or their own clothes, how they speak and communicate with customers and with each other and their attitude overall.

Part of your brand is demonstrated in the level of engagement you get from your employees. Given that in the average organisation only about 30% of the staff are actively engaged, that is a big job – and starts from the moment a new recruit starts work. However, the rest of the team need to be walking the talk or that induction training will quickly come unstuck.

It may seem easier when you're just getting started because the business is usually just you. However, that doesn't mean you can safely ignore the issue – having a clear image of your brand will guide your activities and ensure you start off the way you intend to continue. As that quote aptly points out, you only get one opportunity to make an impact. If you get it wrong, it's going to be an uphill slog to change people's perception.

So that's why your brand is important.

How to create a strong brand

To be sure that your brand is authentic and highly targeted it's useful to carry out a values generation exercise. This is a simple process and works like this:

The business owner(s) plus a third party who will act as questioner and recorder sit together.

The recorder asks the question 'what is important to you?'

The business owner(s) respond and the recorder writes down everything they mention. These might be things like:

Recognised as an industry leader

Transparency

World-class customer service

Energetic

Enthusiastic

Informal

Caring

Remember these are the company's values, not the individual's.

When the ideas run out, the recorder should ask the question again. To most people's surprise this triggers more ideas!

Ask the question three times until no further values are forthcoming.

Now the values need to be ranked. There are plenty of ways to do this – either in a spreadsheet or, if you get your recorder to write each value on a separate sticky note, find a nice big blank wall and arrange the sticky notes in order of importance from top to bottom. This makes it easy to move things around when you change your mind.

When you've made a final ranking, photograph the list and save it in your company brand folder (you have got one, haven't you?)

Realistically, you won't be able to live up to dozens of values, most companies have a handful that are critical to their operation. It's up to you to decide how many you want to include – ideally, at least three and no more than seven.

At this stage it's useful to define what each of those values looks like in action.

The first time I did this exercise in a self-development workshop we worked in pairs and took turns in being the recorder. When we'd both generated our long list, we noticed that we both had 'Independence' at or near the top of our lists. When we explored

what that meant to us, we discovered it meant something entirely different to each of us.

Mine was 'being my own boss, making my own decisions and setting my own goals'.

My partner's was 'being financially free to travel with my partner whenever I want to'.

It will also be useful to educate new members of staff and outsourced partners about your values to ensure they are on the same wave-length.

Your logo

This is the visual representation of your company and it can be used in many different places:

- Website
- Stationery (letterhead, forms, folders, etc.)
- Business cards
- Email signatures
- Social media profiles/pages
- Documentation
- Invoices
- Posters
- Marketing flyers
- Exhibition banners
- Pop up banners.

While your brand isn't just a logo, your logo is an important element. It defines a look and feel that represents your company. So if you're a laid-back, informal kind of person creating a formal, corporate-looking logo will cause people to feel uncomfortable when they try to relate to you and your brand. It's simply not congruent. This feeling is unconscious, but it can be a strong enough feeling for that person to step back from potentially working with you.

Most of us don't examine why we like some people and don't like others. However, people don't usually want to work with people

they don't like. And that word 'like' means they need to feel comfortable and 'get' what you're offering. A disconnect between you and your brand (or anyone who represents you and the company brand) will inhibit that.

If it's your business, you want your marketing material to reflect your style.

The best advice I got when I was in the process of reinventing our brand was from a designer who said, "Look through cards, websites, ads etc. and send me all the logos you like – with the reason why you like them."

I followed her instructions and the logos I'd collected were all very different, but when I'd written 'sharp and clean, lots of white space' for the fifth time, the penny dropped. Our original logo was quite clunky and busy and on a yellow parchment background. Needless to say the new logo was much more 'us'.

My advice is to get a good graphic designer and don't just ask them to design a logo, but do that exercise so the brief you give them gives them lots of information to guide their designs.

So now you've got a logo you like – what next? This is the practical part.

Save as ...

It's important that you have suitable files and versions for all situations.

Your printer will probably need a hi-res version, usually a .png file to produce sharp images on your business cards, stationery and marketing material. However, if you want to have a banner stand or exhibition backdrop with your logo, you'll need an .eps file that can be blown up into a large scale image without losing its sharpness.

A .pdf version is not much use as the only way to apply it anywhere is to take a screenshot and convert it to an image file. Ensure you ask your graphic designer to supply all the above file options.

N.B. You will not be able to open an .eps file unless you use graphic design software, but if you're having anything large scale made (like a pop up banner), the production company will need this file.

Version

You will also need versions of your logo that fit in different places.

- If your logo is wide, you will need a version that fits into the square/round space on most social media pages.
- If your logo is to appear on a page that is monochrome, you'll need a monochrome version, as many colours do not convert well into greyscale.

Where should it go?

You should also consider how your logo is presented. Do you want it to appear consistently top left everywhere or would you prefer it to be centred? Top or bottom, right or left on a page? You may be happy with more than one position, but you should give it thought and see what it looks like in different positions.

Fonts, colours and systems

There's more to branding than just your logo and the colour scheme you use. One of the things that few companies – even quite big ones – pay attention to is consistent presentation.

Your designer will probably have created a version of your logo with the company name and maybe even the strapline – and those fonts are important as they are part of your brand.

You should know what fonts your logo uses and, ideally, these should be from the same 'family' as the fonts you use in your company documentation.

Many of the people I ask "What are your company fonts?" don't know. They just use whatever their system defaults to. In MS Office that tends to be Calibri, which is not only quite a small font, but isn't the most attractive font.

You can set up MS Office applications to default to your chosen font. This means that every time you open an email or a new document it automatically applies your chosen font. If you're using fonts you've paid for, you may need to upload them on your system, unless MS Office has a very close equivalent.

For instance: we use Century Gothic, but our artwork uses Frutiger. Some applications don't have either of these, the next best option is Open Sans. Your graphic designer should be able to help with this.

It may be a small thing, but it all contributes to your overall brand image.

Glorious technicalour!

Colours can look different on a screen to in print so having the correct colour references is important, rather than guessing or trying to match by eye.

- RGB is the simplest mix and works on most MS Office docs
- CMYK or Pantone are required for printing
- Hex for online and some digital tools.

Your graphic designer who has created your logo should be able to supply all these.

If you're creating documents to share with clients or your networking connections, these colours are important as they represent you. Different colours create different responses too. These are just some examples:

Bright red – Powerful, dangerous

Dark red – opulence, luxury, secret

Pink – girly, feminine

Magenta – energy, enthusiasm

Yellow – warmth, optimism

Orange – cheerful, but also caution

Green – associated with health, environment and nature

Mid-dark blue – conservative, corporate

Pale blue – free, light-hearted

Mid-dark purple – wisdom, respect, royal

Lighter purple – quirky, creative

Grey – serious, practical, but can be associated with old age

Black – strong, authority, power, strength

White – purity, clean, neutral

Choose carefully, when you select a colour (or more than one) to represent your business.

The rule of thumb is that, if you have two colours in your brand colours from opposite sides of the colour wheel usually work well together, but different tones of the same colour can work – e.g. light blue writing on a darker blue background. With a three colour combination, choose three colours that are equally far apart on your colour wheel.

TIP: If you don't have a colour wheel handy, look at the colour options to change your font colour in your document – there's usually a diagram with all the colours in a circular layout. However, your graphic designer will be helpful here too.

Invest your time

When you have all the elements of your brand in place it's worth investing time in setting everything up to make delivering a consistent image easy. This means getting the details right.

If you've worked with a professional designer they may produce a printed or at least pdf document of your brand guidelines. This document is important to share with anyone you work with, as it will tell them how your brand can and cannot be presented. That includes any agencies or outsourced services you employ.

The System

1. Select your brand style, colours and fonts
2. Get your brand designed with every aspect of your branding considered

3. Set up your email signature and ensure that everyone who represents your business also uses the same so communications display the correct brand attributes
4. Create document templates for invoices, proposals, reports, letters, etc.
5. Set up your social media in line with your brand.

Why is it important?

It may seem obvious that a brand is important, but when your brand is memorable, visible, congruent and professional it will draw people to you. Unfortunately, the other side of the coin is that if you don't look professional, people will make judgments about you – and nobody wants to be seen as a disorganised amateur.

A smart and professional brand is a subtle and often overlooked marketing tool. It's worth making the effort.

The Template

Brand Essentials	
Brand colours	<p>Main colour RGB CMYK Hex Pantone</p> <p>Secondary colour RGB CMYK Hex Pantone</p> <p>Spot colour RGB CMYK Hex Pantone</p>
Brand fonts	<p>Logo Company docs Normal: Headline: Headline 2: Headline 3: Print</p>
Logo style & position	<p>Email:</p> <p>Letterhead:</p> <p>Website:</p> <p>Social media:</p>

Ideally, create a folder with all versions of your logo and the information in this form that is accessible to everyone who needs it.