

20 reasons why businesses use ebooks to generate leads and sales

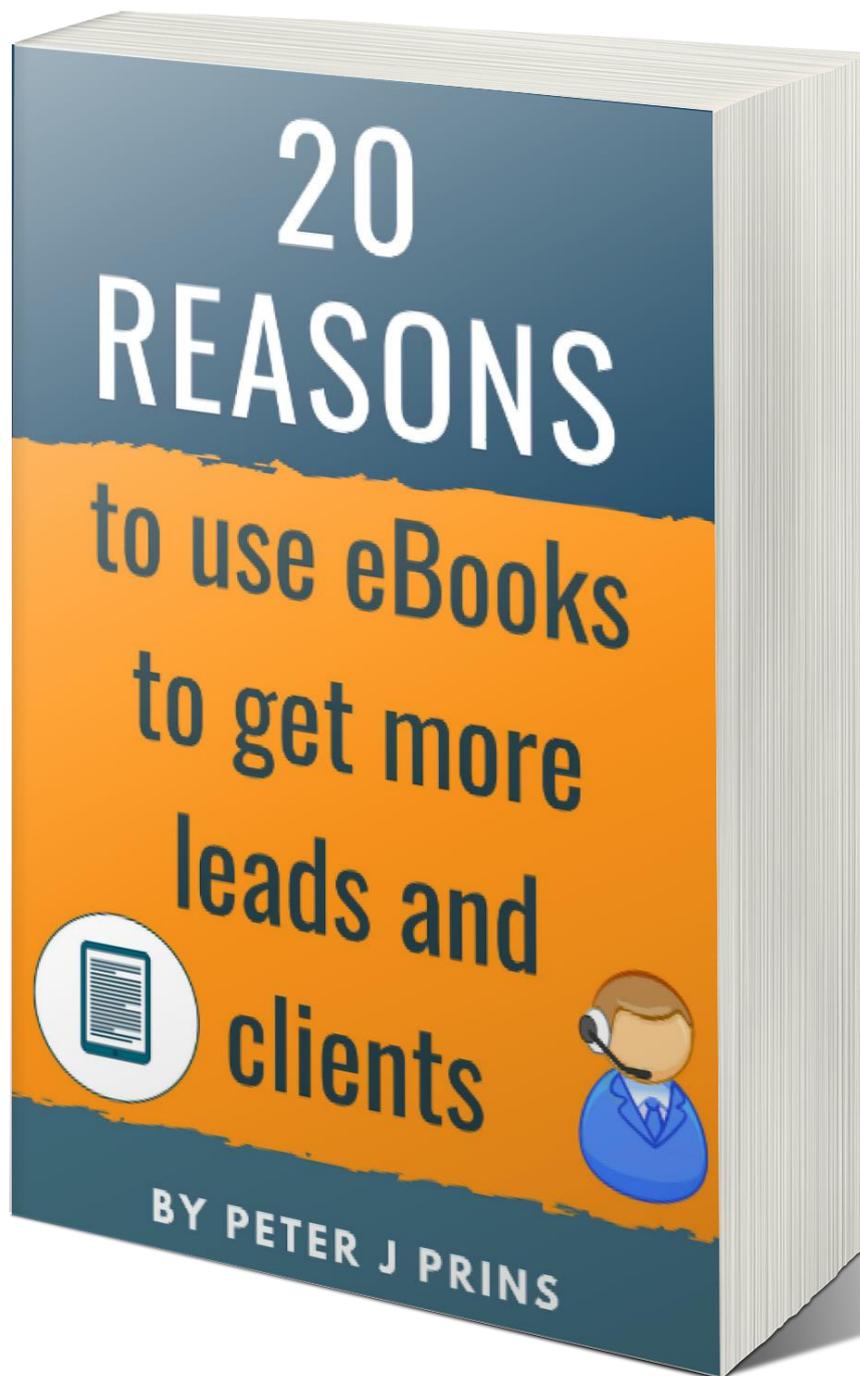
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Introduction:

Let's face it...

When it comes to marketing options, the business owners of today are spoiled for choice. There is a boatload of print publications, online publications, websites, social- and professional networks to choose from - not to mention things like billboards, flyers/leaflets, brochures, business cards...

In fact, all of these options for marketing and advertising create a new problem in itself:

How do you choose which one(s) to use?

Twenty years ago the choice would have been simpler. Through trial and error, you would test to see what would yield the best ROI, and then stick with that. Unfortunately, though, the internet messed that up pretty badly.

Allow me to explain...

Instead of simply comparing a number of direct marketing alternatives, there are now a few more things to consider when choosing your marketing channels:

1. Some things take longer before yielding results, but become very cost effective once they do. These include things like social media marketing (building an audience), and search engine optimization.

Both of these can require a considerable amount of time and/or money before any results are observed - but once those results come in, the continued costs are minimal compared to paid advertising.

Of course, that depends on whether the person or company appointed to do the job were able to achieve the promised outcome.

2. Some things require a higher initial outlay, but the resulting benefit can be long-lasting. Examples of these would include things like setting up a sequential email marketing campaign, spending money on a website with high quality SEO content, conversion optimization, and of course, offering free ebooks to your prospective clients or customers.

Compared to all of the other options listed before, using (short, approximately 5,000 words) ebooks for marketing is relatively cheap. Fair enough, depending on the existing exposure you already have, and the existing number of people visiting your website, it might not be as lucrative as say, SEO (search engine optimization)...

But dollar for dollar, it might just offer a better ROI in the long run.

Why?

Here are 30 reasons why people use ebooks to generate sales and leads - decide for yourself which of these apply to you, or are of value to your clients and your business:

1. To showcase your expertise/products

Even a short ebook of 5,000 (roughly 10 letter-/A4 sized pages of written content) words contains a lot more information than say, a brochure. Keep in mind that, when you create a brochure, any pictures or graphics added will reduce the available space for text. In an ebook, there is no such problem.

Being able to use 5,000 words will allow you to explain several concepts to your potential client or customer. Think of it along the lines of addressing the questions and concerns that your typical client/customer would normally have. Most of those questions are aimed at deciding whether you or your company/service/product is a good fit for the task/need/desire in question.

An ebook allows you to address those concerns without even being present. Not to mention that every person who reads it will save you, or someone who works for you, a lot of time (because the questions/concerns were already addressed).

In many cases, especially those cases requiring larger amounts of money, trust becomes an issue for the client/customer. An ebook can showcase your abilities to get the job done, or showcase the product in detail - in similar fashion to how you would have described it to a new client/customer yourself.

There is just one small difference: Your ebook is available 24/7 - you aren't. Just like the rest of your website, it speaks for you when you can't. As such, it helps you to establish your credibility in the eyes of those who have never met you (or your team) before.

2. Longevity

Depending on what you offer, the information contained in an ebook can continue to be relevant for many years to come. Let's say, for instance, that you are a car dealer, and you publish an ebook on selecting the right vehicle (needs, tastes, safety, budget, etc.).



The advice contained in the ebook will remain relevant for many years. Fair enough, you may want to add or change some information as the available technologies change over time - but most of the ebook will remain intact. The same goes for niches like gardening, plumbing, real estate, food and hospitality, most B2B services, etc.

There are, however, some niches for which ebook longevity may not be attainable - like fashion, for instance. In that case, you will have to make an educated guess as to whether the ebook will be read by enough people (before the next season) to make it worthwhile creating it.

Many other books will remain relevant, but from time to time you may want to update the pictures - for instance if you are an interior designer.

For the most part, however, ebooks have a longer life span than most other forms of marketing - at a relatively low cost.

3. Zero reproduction costs

Unlike items like brochures, leaflets, and even print ads, there are no reproduction costs involved - ever. Once you have the ebook up on your website, there are no additional costs. Whether one person downloads it, or a hundred thousand, the ebook is paid for.

In fact, you can distribute the ebook in various different places (several websites allow you to upload your ebook and give it away for free), and it still won't cost you anything to reproduce - because there is no physical item that need to be recreated.

There is one possible exception, though: If your website is hosted on a very "limited" hosting package (severely limited monthly bandwidth - it doesn't happen much anymore), you may need to upgrade your hosting package if too many people download the ebook.

But then again, that would be "a good problem" to have.



4. To showcase skills or products your clients/customers are not aware of

In many cases, a given set of skills - even though aimed at one specific set of tasks - also enables the person/company to offer additional services which may be of value to the client.

For instance: In my case, I chose to specialize in writing ebook for small businesses - for various reasons. However, in the process of developing my skill set, I acquired the necessary skills to write blog posts, articles, social profile content, product descriptions, and I mastered basic copywriting skills. In the process of learning how to market these skills, I learned about building websites and blogs, search engines, social media, email marketing, email management systems, and even about paid advertising in various forms.

If the need should ever arise, I can offer any of these as value-added or stand-alone services - but many people don't know that I am capable of performing these tasks.

Similarly, while the skill set in your company may be focused on one particular service, there are probably several other services you can offer as value-added services.

And similarly in the case of products, most customers buy from suppliers because they came looking for a specific product or products. In most cases, suppliers are able to supply them with much more, with varying degrees of benefit to the customer.

5. To share case studies or past projects

Most people approach businesses because of a need to have a problem solved, or the desire to improve or attain something (whether it be on a car, a house, or something personal like clothing or travel).

By showcasing how others have been able to achieve the desired outcome to their needs/wants, you will not only be showing the potential client/customer that it is possible, but you may even be able to provide options that he or she was not even aware of.

In addition to that, case studies provide what is referred to as 'social proof' - which is an incredibly powerful tool to build trust.

The concept can be applied to a wide range of services (and even products). It is just as easy to showcase the process a family went through to plan, prepare for, and finally enjoy, their



dream vacation, as it is for a plumber to take pictures step by step while fixing a particularly nasty problem.

As for products, case studies can revolve around the problem that the product solved, and how it unfolded.

6. A wide reach

If you print brochures or booklets, wide distribution costs money. If you wish to leave brochures in several different places, all of those can be considered "dead capital" until they are taken and read by potential clients or customers.

In the case of ebooks, however, there are a multitude of spaces and places where you can distribute your ebook for free. In addition to that, people can pass it on to one another via email, uploads onto social networks and document sharing sites, and share the download link in a multitude of additional ways.

Fair enough, if your business only targets a small geographical area, many of the people who read your ebook will be beyond the area that you service - but it will also be systematically shared among your potential clients and customers locally.

However, instead of picking up brochures or booklets in different local locations, they are likely to end up downloading them from a diverse range of online locations.

At the end of the day, however, it is exactly the fact that it was spread so wide that will improve the penetration of your ebook marketing. Unlike the people visiting your physical business location, those who use the internet "don't always come through the front door".

On the internet, with people sharing one another's stuff every day, there is no telling where someone who lives just two blocks away from your business will come across your ebook.

7. Qualify your prospects

If you choose to specialize in specific services or products (while you do still offer the rest), offering an ebook will help you to attract the right type of client or customer.

For instance: If you are a plumber, but you specialize in replacing old problematic plumbing, you could write (or commission the writing of) an ebook about the dangers of patching old plumbing (the side effects eventually cost more than replacing the system). That will specifically attract people who are stuck with old plumbing systems in their homes and business premises - your favorite client (in this hypothetical case).

8. Serve an upsell without sounding pushy

In many cases, people who need a problem solved become defensive when they find out it will cost more than they are ready to spend. Instead of listening to your argument, they simply clam up, and adopt the "he/she wants to milk me dry" stance.

If, however, you can make that same argument - and substantiate it - in an ebook (which the client or customer can read at their leisure), they will have all the facts without you having to convince them. Any reasonable person will be able to see the costs could be more than they hoped for, and that should put them in a different frame of mind by the time they contact you.

For instance: If you sell computers, and a customer wants a machine that can fulfil a specific need, you can - in an ebook - explain in detail why they would need a machine with specific minimum specifications to get the job done.

If you had to have that same conversation face to face - or on the phone - during first contact, the customer might clam up. He or she could eventually go buy somewhere else, where an unscrupulous supplier will simply sell them what they can afford - even if it won't do the job they want it to.

9. eBooks allow you to cover specific topics in great detail

Let's face it: Nobody wants to read a blog post of 10,000 words. It's boring. However, if you package the same amount of information into an ebook, the reader approaches it with a different mindset - books are supposed to be longer.

As such, you can delve into any topic as deeply as you want to. In the process, you may also reduce the average amount of time spent on answering questions from new clients or customers.

For instance: How much time do you typically spend on explaining/clarifying things to prospects before each job/sale? Now, imagine if you could cut that figure by say, 20%.

How much more time would that free up per year?



10. eBooks can make you money directly

If your ebook is longer - say, 10K words and up - you can sell it. For instance: let's say you wrote (or commissioned the writing of) an ebook of 20K words. You can give an "extract" of 5K words away, and use that as a promotional tool to sell the 50K words ebook.

That might also allow you to make money off people you could never do business with - if your business is localized.

Depending on your target market, and the topic of the ebook, it could become a significant revenue stream.

11. eBooks are shared with friends and co-workers

In the digital age, there is a myriad of ways to share documents. People send them to one another via email. They share them via Dropbox. They upload them to document sharing sites. They share the download link on social networks, Whatsapp groups and via Skype or other chat software.



If you state in your ebook that it can be shared freely (as long as it is not altered in anyway), there is no telling in whose hands it could end up. Fair enough, much of that might be people who live outside the area that you service - but some of those will be people who can use your services, or buy from you.

12. You can use ebooks to build a mailing list of prospects or potential customers

Affiliate marketers and bloggers have already been using ebooks to build their mailing lists for more than a decade...

Why? It works.

Most people who land on a website will leave without buying or submitting an inquiry. However, if you can offer them something in return for their email addresses, you will have an "excuse" to follow up with them. In fact, the whole follow-up process can be automated as well. You can send a whole series of emails with additional information (and a gentle nudge to buy/contact you in each one), spread out over as much time as you see fit.

You can also use the ebook to build a list of newsletter subscribers - with or without the follow-up sequence.

Note: It has been proven time and time again that most people only take action after 5 to 7 exposure to a product or service. Having a follow-up email sequence in place will allow you to automate the process, and close prospects that could otherwise have been lost to you.

13. eBooks are Eco-friendly

When people think in terms of ecology and printing, most people only think about the paper that will be saved. It does, however, go much deeper than that. There are machines that create the paper, and that do the printing. Both of these have a carbon footprint. The printed material is delivered or collected - by a vehicle that has a carbon footprint.

eBooks allow you to avoid leaving a carbon footprint in their creation and distribution.

14. eBooks can be updated or changed at any time

When something is printed, it's done. Yes, you can have some changes made to the next batch, but what if you want to change something before you have distributed all the printed material? You can end up being stuck with thousands of useless brochures because of say, someone leaving your team.

(That person's email address may no longer be active, and his or her phone number could still be on the brochures. Not to mention the picture...)

If you use ebooks for marketing, it is as simple as making the changes to the source document, saving it as a PDF again, and uploading the new version to your website.

That also means that you can update the content from time to time as things change in your industry, and that you can change the cover from time to time. In fact, even if you decide to change the title of the ebook you can do so quickly and easily, and you can do so at any given time.

15. eBooks can be accessed at any time

Unlike brochures which are only available when their distribution points are open, ebooks can be accessed at any time of day or night



- whenever someone accesses your website (or any other website you distributed them to).

As such, your ebook is available whenever your potential client or customer wishes to access it - regardless of their time zone, or the hours they keep.

16. No physical distribution needed

Physical brochures need to be distributed physically. Typically, they would be placed in locations where many people could come across them - like shops, consultation rooms, events, etc. This requires not only man-hours, but also transport costs, and the cost of the brochures themselves. The more distribution points you choose to employ, the more brochures are needed, and the more "dead capital" you have to carry.

When offering ebooks, there is no need to pay for stock or for delivering them to their destinations. Even if you choose to upload your ebook to a number of websites that distribute ebooks for free, all that will be needed is the time of the person who does it. Once completed, there will be no additional costs.

17. eBooks can be searched

If your ebook covers different topics or products, anyone who wants to know something specific can use the internal search function of the PDF reader (usually Adobe Reader) to find it directly. That allows the prospect to find the information he or she needs without having to read the whole ebook - which is important to busy and impatient people.

18. Always available to the prospect

eBooks can be stored on any electronic device - so your potential client or -customer can always have it handy. As such, he or she can easily show it to others, or even share it with them (if it is in PDF format) as and when it may be required.



19. eBooks are easier to read - for anyone

In an ebook, space is not an issue (unlike in say, a brochure). As such, the text/font can be as large as you want it to be, and the line spacing can be as high as you want it to be. In addition to that, the built-in zoom function will allow people with poor eyesight to read it with ease - unlike printed matter, which is bound to a specific text/font size.

20. eBooks can include links to resources

Due to the fact that an ebook is an electronic medium, you can add as many links to webpages as you choose to. You can link - depending on your industry and needs - to websites or Youtube videos that clarify specific issues, to websites that contain legal documents or research papers, information on Wikipedia, or to industry news articles.

On top of that, of course, you can link to your own products, services, and your contact page.

In conclusion

Using ebooks as a marketing channel makes sense - from a multitude of angles. They are not only effective and cost effective, but also convenient for both the business owner/manager and the person who reads/accesses it.

In addition to that, depending on your industry, the concept may as yet be under-utilized, allowing you to get an edge on your competitors.

Would you like to know what an ebook can do for YOUR business? Let's talk.

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To YOUR Success

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