

9 Steps for Growth and Export Success

Strategic Marketing
For Irish SMEs



Accelerate Consulting





For many small and medium-sized businesses in Ireland, “marketing” is often thought of in terms of ads, brochures, or social media. But strategic marketing goes much deeper. When it’s done right, it becomes a powerful tool to help Irish businesses align sales and marketing efforts with customer needs, shifting industry trends, competitor moves, and new technologies.

Most importantly, it provides a pathway for sustainable growth at home and expansion into export markets.

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#1

Align Marketing to your Business Goals

Everything begins with your overall business objectives. Are you aiming to grow in Ireland, diversify your customer base, or explore export opportunities in the UK, EU, or further afield? Marketing should be directly linked to these goals. Every function in your company — but especially marketing — plays a role in delivering on those ambitions.



#2

Define your Marketing Objectives

Once your company's strategic priorities are clear, set your marketing objectives. These might include winning new customers in Ireland, building brand recognition in export markets, or strengthening loyalty among your existing customer base. Very often, business goals and marketing goals are one and the same.



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#3

Know your Market & Customer

Too many businesses jump straight into activity without first identifying who they are targeting and where. Take the time to put this on paper. Who is your ideal customer? Which counties, regions, or overseas markets hold the best potential? How do you know this? This clarity helps ensure every euro spent in marketing delivers real impact.



#4

Gather Market Intelligence

Expanding into a new sector or exporting to a new country requires research. Understand your target customers' buying behaviours, pain points, and price sensitivities. For exports, look at regulatory requirements, cultural differences, and the competitive landscape

Enterprise Ireland has a network of international and offer tremendous insights and assistance to their clients. The more you know about this potential export market, the better prepared you'll be to build a plan that works.



#5

Your Value Proposition

Once you know your market, align what your business can deliver with what your customers truly want. Your value proposition should clearly answer: Who are we serving? What do we offer? And why should they choose us? This is the cornerstone of competing effectively — whether in Dublin, Galway, or Düsseldorf.



#6

Position Your Business

Positioning is about perception. It's making sure that your brand, product, and company are seen the way you intend — by customers at home and abroad. This involves building a brand identity (look and feel) and developing messaging that speaks directly to customer needs and motivates them to take action.



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#7

Build a Marketing Plan

Now it's time to map out the "how." This could include attending trade shows, running digital campaigns, leveraging email marketing, or using social media to raise awareness in both Irish and export markets. But without the groundwork in steps 1–6, even the best campaign risk falling flat.



#8

Execute, Measure, Refine

Put your plan into action, but don't stop there. Measure results, track return on investment, and refine your activities as you go. While some outcomes (like brand reputation) are harder to measure, many activities — from lead generation to website traffic — can be tracked and optimised over time.



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#9

Repeat the Cycle

Strategic marketing is not a once-off project. As your business grows, new opportunities will arise — whether that's diversifying into new sectors in Ireland, entering the UK post-Brexit, or tapping into EU and global markets. Each shift in direction calls for a refreshed strategy to keep marketing and business goals aligned.



A Quick Example: An Irish Tech Firm Expanding Abroad

Take the case of a Galway-based software company specialising in workflow automation. At home, their corporate objective was to increase recurring revenue from SME clients. Their marketing objectives focused on building credibility, educating the market, and creating digital campaigns to drive inbound leads.



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When they decided to expand into the UK, they followed a structured marketing approach:

- ❑ **Market intelligence:** They analysed competitors, regulatory issues (such as data protection standards), and customer buying habits in the UK.
- ❑ **Value proposition:** They refined their messaging to emphasise time-saving and compliance benefits — issues that UK SMEs care deeply about.
- ❑ **Positioning:** They developed a new brand message tailored for UK audiences, supported by thought-leadership articles and case studies.
- ❑ **Tactical plan:** They invested in LinkedIn advertising targeting decision-makers in London, partnered with Enterprise Ireland on trade events, and launched a PR campaign in regional UK business media.

The result? Within 18 months, the firm had signed contracts with three UK clients, turning export ambitions into tangible sales growth.

Key Takeaway

For Irish SMEs and businesses in general, strategic marketing isn't just theory — it's a roadmap to sustainable growth, stronger positioning at home, and a springboard into export markets.

Done well, it ensures that every effort in sales and marketing connects back to your broader ambition: building a business that thrives in Ireland and competes successfully abroad.



