

Portfolio Note: This piece was written for a small business client as part of a marketing campaign for SaaS businesses. The idea here was to ground SaaS technology and sales marketing in old-school roots by making the bridge between effective but older sales and marketing tactics while inviting readers how to apply those practices directly to their own product.

It's a conundrum that puzzles many a marketer: When dealing with software as a service (SaaS), how do you talk to people about it?

On the surface, it might not seem that hard, but think about the real issues with explaining SaaS to someone:

- The product is intangible. There's not even a box for anyone to put their hands on!
- Software changes constantly and can experience major changes practically overnight.
- The client doesn't own it and must pay a fee.
- The software itself may not exist on the client-side machine, a la Google Docs.

A lot of marketers try to override these common client objections with fast facts, hard data, and easy words. While that approach might work for the more technically minded, [it can leave behind an entire generation of business owners](#).

Fortunately, throwing numbers around isn't the only solution. Many proven sales and marketing techniques are flexible enough to get you by if you know how to use them.

Here are 7 old-school ways to market your SaaS business:

1. Define your product in one sentence.

If you were trying to market Adobe Photoshop, you might say that it's the darkroom for digital photographers. Google Drive might be: an online productivity suite, available for free. Dropbox makes your digital files available anywhere, anytime, from any device.

Ask yourself this: How can I describe my product in the simplest way possible?

By taking a step back and getting clear of the details you might find a way to better describe your product to skeptics and fence-sitters. Features are great, but if your client doesn't understand the fundamental purpose of your product, they'll never stick around long enough to hear them.

2. Build marketing campaigns that inspire trust and enlighten clients.

A lot of marketers play fast and loose with trust. They're looking for the likes on the social media posts and the social shares that drive traffic and boost visibility. All of that is well and good, but it misses the fundamental point of branding: building trust and authenticity with a target market.

And trust matters. [Just ask the media at large, where trust in news and reporting is at an all-time low.](#)

So instead of building flash-in-the-pan marketing campaigns, build campaigns around trust. Use your campaigns to provide free information about your product, services, and the market at large. [This is content marketing in its purest form](#), and it's still one of the most powerful opportunities that brands (big and small) have to win customers away from the behemoth brands that everybody already talks about.

3. Make sure your client is the right fit for your solution.

If you were in a hardware store looking for hammers and someone told you a hacksaw would solve all your problems, how frustrated would you be when you found out that the product you needed wasn't the one you were sold?

While it's true that the dollars matter, marketing to the wrong clientele—or worse, selling them a product that doesn't suit their needs—doesn't win loyalty in the long term. It loses clients, busts brands, and sinks a business.

Market research helps make sure you're talking to the right people, but every customer is different. Particularly when working with a client directly, ask yourself if the customer is really the right fit for your product and prevent hard feelings all around.

4. Ground your software in your service.

One of the largest client complaints has everything to do with the subscription fee. Why should a client pay monthly for something in perpetuity? What do they get beyond the slow burn on their wallet?

The aspect of service in a SaaS solution is something lost on most big brands and major players, but it's where smaller companies have an opportunity to shine. If you can provide [outstanding customer service](#) and support like some of the top-ranked companies, your customers will love you for it.

Market your SaaS business with service solutions. If you're a decision maker, build a strong technical support team or draft extensive supporting documentation. If you're a marketer,

build campaigns around tips, tricks, and easy-to-understand shortcuts which highlight software simplicity and ease of use.

Give your customers a reason to count their money subscription as a well-spent investment.

5. Offer a test drive and put the customer behind the wheel.

If you're purchasing a car, you want a test drive to see how the machine handles and whether it's worth the investment. But imagine this: What if, instead, you only got to ride shotgun while the salesperson drove you around the lot?

This is the difference between a trial and a live demo.

Give your clients a chance to integrate your software into their workflow for a limited amount of time. Whether it's ten days or thirty, give them a chance to see if your setup is right for them. There's no harm in offering a live demo so they can see how the software operates in skilled hands, but there's no excuse for forcing the client into a purchasing ultimatum just to see if it's a solution they can actually use.

6. Match your product features to your client's needs.

Marketing teams like to throw numbers and new features around. They look good on infographics and, to the technically- and statistically-inclined, they make sense. For the rest of your clientele, though, they're out-of-context numbers that which do nothing to sell your service.

If you're unfamiliar with how features different from benefits, [here's the short version](#): Features highlight the major selling points of a product or service. Benefits highlight how those features work to solve client problems.

Figure it your product benefits and use them to market your solution.

7. Don't forget to follow up.

One of the biggest blunders any company can make is to ignore a client. Relationship management seems simple enough, but it's hard to get right—especially when you're managing hundreds or thousands of customer accounts.

The implication in many SaaS solutions is that it's self-service. The client downloads the software, pays the fee, and that's it. Mission accomplished. That leaves many teams scratching

their head when that same customer drops their service without notification and disappears a few months later.

Even as a marketer, it's important to remember that **the client relationship doesn't end at the transaction**. As long as your client is paying for your service, the relationship is ongoing. Use that. Reach out to them to check in. If they have concerns, find a way to address them.

Go Back to Basics

There's no doubt that marketing SaaS has its challenges, and the traditional methods of business marketing won't always apply. However, the SaaS marketing toolkit includes more than just a box of screws.

Clearly defining your product and how it relates to your customer and your target market are still sturdy pillars of good marketing for any product. With SaaS, leaning more heavily on the service aspect of the software is a way to bring grounding back to the conversation, and with the right touch, customers will be more than happy to pay that subscription for all the benefits your product (and service!) provides.

Document is also available here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PW7aLCvvlslHP9o5Ph4vp0Rvf6hnB5FtmSM4S-M3Rlc/edit?usp=sharing>