



LEO Kerry

Digital Marketing Programme

Week 3 – Canva and Website Marketing

Session Summary

Delivered by The Marketing Crowd on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Kerry

Introduction

This is the summary for Week 3 of the six-week Digital Marketing Programme organised by Local Enterprise Office Kerry. The session covered two major topics: how to use Canva to design professional graphics and images for social media and your website, and practical tactics for turning your website into a more effective sales tool. This document is designed so you can revisit the key points and follow the step-by-step guidance at your own pace after the session.

Part One: Getting Started with Canva

Canva is a free, browser-based graphic design tool that gives small business owners access to professional-looking design without any technical background or expensive software. While tools like Photoshop require significant training and cost, Canva is built for everyday use — businesses use it to create social media posts, flyers, posters, presentations, email designs, business cards, and more.

To get started, go to canva.com, click Sign Up, and enter your email address and a password. No credit card is required. Once inside, Canva saves everything automatically — you never need to press save, and if your computer crashes mid-design, your work will be waiting for you when you return.

There are three main ways to use Canva. The first is designing from scratch on a blank canvas. The second is working from templates — Canva has over 100,000 professionally designed templates created by graphic designers, which you can customise by swapping in your own images, text and colours. The third is using Canva's AI tools to generate designs,

images or videos — though this was not covered in depth in this session, as it falls within the full three-hour version of the course.

Canva also has a paid version at €12 per month, which unlocks additional templates, stock photos, and features like the background remover. Items available only on the paid plan are marked with a crown icon. Approximately 60–70% of what's available in Canva is free.

Choosing the Right Canvas Size

Before designing anything, you need to choose the right size for your output. Canva handles this by offering preset sizes under categories like Social Media. The key size to know for general social media use is **Instagram Post 4x5** — this format works well on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, so it's the single best choice if you want one image that works across platforms. For Stories, use **Instagram Story (1080x1920)**, which is the tall portrait format. For a Facebook cover image, select the Facebook Cover preset so it fits perfectly.

If you want to replace an existing image on your website with a new one, you need to know the exact pixel dimensions of that image. To do this, right-click the image on your website, save it to your computer, then hover over it in File Explorer — the dimensions will appear. You can then go to Canva's **Custom Size** option and type in the exact dimensions, so your new design fits perfectly without disrupting your page layout.

Designing on a Blank Canvas — Key Skills

Evan walked through a series of practical exercises showing how to build a design from nothing. The core principle throughout was: **if you want to change anything, click on it first**. Menus and options only appear once you click on the element you want to edit.

Backgrounds and Colour To change the background colour of a canvas, click the background and then click the colour wheel. There are five ways to choose a colour in Canva: (1) selecting from the default solid colours shown; (2) searching by colour name in the search box; (3) using the colour picker tool, which opens a full gradient chooser where you can dial in brightness and shade; (4) entering a hex code if your brand designer has given you one; and (5) using the eyedropper tool to pick a colour directly from something on your screen — useful for matching the background to a colour in your photo. The same colour-choosing methods apply to text, shapes and any other element. Canva also offers gradient backgrounds — where two colours blend into each other — which gives designs a more polished, contemporary feel. Designers typically graduate one colour into a slightly different version of itself, rather than combining very different colours.

Adding Text There are four main ways to add eye-catching text. The first is via the Text panel on the left, where you can add a Heading, Subheading or Body text box and type directly. The second is to search for styled text graphics within Text — Canva has pre-designed text treatments that already look professional. The third and fourth involve going to the Elements panel and searching under Graphics for text-based graphic elements (such as "SALE" or "WOW" animations) that you can drag onto your canvas. Using the filter in Elements, you can narrow results to free-only items and to animated graphics, which are particularly effective in Instagram Stories.

Uploading Your Own Images and Removing Backgrounds To add your own photos or logos, go to Uploads on the left panel and click Upload Files. Once uploaded, your files stay in your Canva library for future use. If you want to place a photo on a coloured background (rather than the white background it was photographed on), you'll need to remove the background first. Paid users can use Canva's built-in BG Remover. Free users can use **remove.bg**, a free tool where you upload your image, click Download, and it returns the image with the background removed, ready to upload into Canva.

Shapes and Layers Under the Elements panel, you'll find a Shapes section. Adding a shape — such as a star or circle — behind or around your text can make it stand out significantly. The eye is drawn to text that sits inside a shape. You can colour the shape using any of the five colour methods covered, including picking a colour from your photo for a cohesive look.

Duplicating Pages to Compare Options When you feel a design is almost finished, Evan recommended duplicating the page (using the + icon below the canvas) to create a second version with a different treatment — a different shape, different colour, or different layout. This gives you options to compare and choose from before downloading. You can download multiple pages at once by clicking Share → Download.

Using Canva's Stock Photo Library

Canva has a library of 10 million images, accessible via the Photos section in the left panel. Free users have access to around 2.5 million of these; paid users can access all 10 million. To use a stock photo as your background, right-click the image and select Set Image as Background. This is particularly useful for service businesses that don't have visually interesting products to photograph — an image of a person, a landscape, or an animal can create an eye-catching post with your text overlaid.

Using Templates

Templates are pre-designed layouts created by professional designers, which you adapt by replacing images, text and colours with your own. To find a template, click Templates on the left panel and search using a keyword relevant to your business (e.g. "new arrivals", "art exhibition", "dog groomer"). Filter by category (poster, Instagram post, Instagram Story, etc.) and by style (illustration, black and white, collage) to narrow down the options.

A key piece of advice: **ignore the images in the template and focus purely on the design layout**. If the structure and visual hierarchy look good to you, you can replace all the photos with your own. A menswear template designed around women's clothing becomes a menswear template the moment you swap in your own photos. If you can't find templates specific to your industry, search for a related category — jewellery, fashion, travel — and adapt the design to suit your business.

Once you've chosen a template, click Customise This Template. From there, use the Uploads panel to bring in your own photos, change any colours by clicking the relevant element, update the text, and download when ready.

Part Two: Website Marketing — Turning Your Website into a Sales Tool

The second half of the session shifted focus to your website and how to make it work harder as a marketing and sales tool. The starting point is understanding the concept of a marketing funnel. At the top of the funnel, your goal is to be discovered — through Google, social media, word of mouth — and drive people to your website. Once people land on your site, the job changes: now you need to **engage** them and then **convert** them into enquiries or sales.

A typical website conversion rate is 1–3%, meaning for every 100 visitors, you might get 1–3 sales or enquiries. This can feel low, but online behaviour is fundamentally different from in-store behaviour — visitors are almost always comparing you against other options, and most (around 80%) aren't yet ready to buy. The challenge is real, and a passive "brochure" website won't cut it. You need a site that understands the environment it's operating in and actively uses proven tactics to engage and convert.

Engagement Tactics

SSL Certificate (HTTPS) Before anything else, check that your website address begins with **HTTPS**, not HTTP. If it shows HTTP, visitors see a "Not Secure" warning, which damages trust immediately. An SSL certificate costs around €30 per year and your web designer can add it. Most modern websites will already have this in place, but it's worth checking.

Page Speed If your website takes more than three or four seconds to load, a large proportion of visitors will leave before the page even appears. A study by Meta found that 40% of people who click a Facebook link to an external site abandon it if it loads slowly. Use the free tool [GTmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com) — enter your web address and it will show you how quickly your pages load and flag any issues. This was also covered in Week 2 in the context of Google rankings, but it matters just as much for keeping visitors on your site once they arrive.

Headlines That Resonate Studies show that the first thing people look at when they land on a page is the headline. If your headline doesn't make them immediately think "this is exactly what I'm looking for," they'll leave. Every main page on your website — homepage, service pages, product pages — needs a clear headline.

To write a headline that genuinely connects with your audience, use ChatGPT. Ask it to act as a marketing expert and identify the three main things people look for in your product or service. Then ask it to act as a web copywriter and write a headline factoring in those three things. For example, for a will-writing service, ChatGPT identified that customers are really looking for trust, simplicity and peace of mind — not just a legal document. The resulting headlines spoke directly to those needs. Always review, edit and fact-check what ChatGPT

produces before using it, and run it through a free tool like **ZeroGPT** to check that it reads as human-written. Asking ChatGPT to write in your own style, using bullet points and scannable language, significantly reduces how "AI-like" the output sounds.

Scannable Body Text Research shows that website visitors typically read only around 20% of the text on a page. They scan rather than read. This means large blocks of text work against you. Structure your page content around short paragraphs, bullet points and sub-headings so the key information is visible to someone spending just a few seconds on the page. When asking ChatGPT to write web copy, specifically ask it to make the text easily scannable with bullet points.

Video If there is a video on a webpage, visitors are statistically 300–700% more likely to engage with that page. Video is especially important for service businesses — solicitors, life coaches, consultants — where you are essentially the product and people have no way to assess your expertise from text alone. A short, reassuring video of you speaking directly to a potential client builds trust far more effectively than any written content. If you're unsure what kind of video to make, ask ChatGPT: describe your business and ask it to act as a video marketing expert and suggest what kinds of videos would work on your website.

Conversion Tactics

Credibility and Trust Signals Once visitors are engaged, you need them to feel your business is credible and worth their time. One of the most effective ways to do this is to display proof of recognition — media logos, awards, or well-known client logos. For example, a glamping business in Killarney features "As seen on Newstalk, Irish Independent, Today FM" prominently on their homepage. Visitors see this and immediately think the business is established and reputable, even if they've never heard of it before. If you've had any press coverage, create a simple banner in Canva showing those logos and add it to your homepage. If you're a service provider, this could also include logos of certifications, professional bodies or well-known companies you've worked with.

Getting media coverage is also increasingly important for AI search visibility. AI tools like ChatGPT and Google's AI summaries look at whether businesses are mentioned in articles and third-party sites when deciding who to recommend. You can ask ChatGPT to act as a PR expert and explain how to approach getting written up in magazines, newspapers or radio — it will give you a step-by-step guide tailored to your type of business.

Stats and Credibility Numbers Numbers build trust quickly. A driving instructor who has taught over 1,200 students and achieved a 94% first-time pass rate is instantly more convincing than one who simply says they're experienced. Even if you're a new business, you can draw on your professional track record. Thirty years of industry experience is a legitimate and powerful statistic. Use ChatGPT to help you identify which stats from your career or business best demonstrate your credibility, then include those prominently on your website.

Clear Calls to Action Every page of your website needs a clear, visible call to action — a button or instruction telling visitors what to do next. This should not be buried at the bottom of the page. It should appear in the navigation, at the top of pages, and repeated throughout.

"Get a Free Quote," "Book a Consultation," "Call Us Today" — whatever action you want people to take, make it easy and obvious. Ask ChatGPT to suggest appropriate calls to action for your specific business type.

Offers and Time-Limited Promotions Special offers can lower the barrier for first contact and encourage people to take action. However, offers need to be relevant to your business — for a vet practice, for example, an offer focused on discounted medical care might feel inappropriate, while a free first health check for new pets works well. Ask ChatGPT whether offers would work for your particular business and what form they should take. Online, **short time-limited offers** are more effective than long-running ones. A month-long promotion gives visitors no sense of urgency — they'll think about it and never return. A 72-hour offer ("ends this Wednesday at 7pm") creates genuine urgency and concentrates the mind.

Testimonials and Reviews Very few people will enquire or buy from a business they've never heard of without seeing evidence that other people have had a good experience. Reviews and testimonials are essential conversion tools. They should not be hidden at the bottom of a website or linked out to TripAdvisor — they need to be **visible on your website itself**, ideally on multiple pages including your homepage, services pages and contact page.

A recommended tool for embedding reviews is **Trustindex.io**. It has a free trial and costs around €60 per year after that — far cheaper than alternatives like Trustpilot. Once you connect your Google Business Profile (or TripAdvisor, Facebook, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), Airbnb), Trustindex creates a widget — a badge, slider or grid — that you embed on your site with a small piece of code. Your reviews then appear directly on your pages and update automatically.

Key Takeaways

This was a packed session covering both the creative and commercial sides of your digital marketing. The core messages to hold onto are:

- Canva is free, easy to use, and powerful enough to create professional graphics for social media, your website and print — you don't need design experience.
- The Instagram Post 4x5 format works across all major social platforms; use it as your default for social media images.
- Your website is not just a brochure — it is a sales tool operating in a competitive, fast-moving environment where visitors are always comparing you with others.
- Every page needs a strong headline, scannable text, visible trust signals, and a clear call to action.
- ChatGPT is a powerful ally for website copy, headline writing, video ideas, PR strategy and generating stats — but always review, edit and fact-check the output.

Action Points

1. Sign up for a free Canva account at canva.com if you haven't done so already.
2. Create your first social media post using the Instagram Post 4x5 format — add a coloured background, your logo, and some text using one of the four text methods covered today.
3. Check that your website address begins with HTTPS. If it shows HTTP, contact your web designer about adding an SSL certificate.
4. Test your website's loading speed at [GTmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com) and take note of any recommendations.
5. Review each of your main web pages and ask: is there a clear, specific headline at the top? If not, use ChatGPT to help you write one based on the three things your customers are really looking for.
6. Ensure the body text on your service or product pages is easily scannable — short paragraphs, bullet points, no long blocks of text.
7. Consider whether you could add a short video to one of your key pages. Ask ChatGPT for ideas suited to your business type.
8. If you have any press coverage, awards, certifications or well-known client logos, create a "As Seen In" or "Trusted By" banner in Canva and add it to your homepage.
9. Check that you have a clear call to action on every main page — make it visible and make it specific.
10. Create a free account on Trustindex.io and try embedding your Google reviews on your website. If you don't yet have enough Google reviews, focus on gathering them as a priority.
11. If you want to replace an image on your website, right-click it, save it, check the dimensions in File Explorer, then create a Canva design at exactly those dimensions using the Custom Size option.
12. Explore Canva's Templates section by searching for your business type or a related category — find three templates you like the look of and practise customising one with your own images and text.

This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊